

2024 DEAN'S ANNUAL REPORT



ON A MISSION

Patricia Margarido '19 EMBA
Leads the LIFE STAR Team
That Could Save Your Life

U CONN SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS



FROM *The* DEAN

With a mixture of awe and respect, I've witnessed the **LIFE STAR** critical-care medical helicopter race across the sky, a beacon of hope for someone in crisis. I'm thankful that such lifesaving care is available to those in Connecticut and beyond.

With alumna **Patricia Margarido '19** EMBA co-directing this exemplary program — and its 1,200 emergency flights each year — I know we are all in good hands.

Patricia is a veteran respiratory therapist who has been associated with the LIFE STAR program for more than 20 years.

As she rose up the ranks, she yearned for more knowledge about business, budgets, and how to lead her talented team. She found the answers through our **Executive MBA** program, one of three UConn MBA programs that prepares ambitious, high-performing managers to advance their leadership skills and their careers.

We tend to use the word “hero” broadly, but I believe you'll feel the honor is fitting when you read about Patricia and her LIFE STAR team, and the mission they undertake, beginning on page 6.

I hope you will also enjoy reading about our programs, our people, and our many achievements during this year.

“[We're] continuously evolving to meet the needs of our students and the business world.”

Our curriculum is continuously evolving to meet the needs of our students and the business world. I am particularly excited about our extensive redesign of our graduate programs, including the recent launch of a fully online MBA and a new master of science in FinTech. Our newest graduate business degree in **Social Responsibility & Impact in Business** (page 13), launched this fall.

Our **national rankings** remain strong (see page 5), evidence that our hard work is recognized far beyond Connecticut and the Northeast. A dynamic faculty and dedicated staff deserve tremendous credit for these achievements. Among those faculty, I know you will enjoy reading about finance professor **Lingling Wang** (page 14), a well-respected educator and researcher. You'll also read about our **recently promoted faculty** (page 12), who will shape

the school's educational expertise for years to come. You'll enjoy meeting alumnus **Rich Eldh '81** and his wife, **Joyce Eldh**, whose dedication to our students is extraordinary. Often during a fun trip to the bowling alley, they offer students the most valuable advice (page 18). Speaking of great advice, there was plenty shared during our **School of Business Hall of Fame** ceremony in April. We celebrate the gifted business leaders who were inducted this year (page 9).

The popularity of UConn as an educational destination continues to skyrocket, boosted in part by *The Wall Street Journal* ranking UConn No. 9 among public colleges and universities nationwide. In 2024, more than 56,700 aspiring students applied to join our Husky ranks. As the semester began, the newly enrolled first-year student population in the **School of Business** was 845, and our total student enrollment was 4,445.

We take our mission seriously and seek to provide plentiful opportunities to a growing student base with a passion for business. We offer business as an academic major, minor, or elective, and we provide a growing array of graduate and doctoral programs to lead business practice, research, and academics into the future.

We invite you to be involved! We welcome alumni and friends of the university to join us as a guest lecturer, to offer an internship, to mentor our students, to provide a corporate tour, or to sponsor a case competition or a scholarship. Please feel free to contact me to learn more at dean.business@uconn.edu.

Sincerely,

John A. Elliott, Ph.D.
Dean & Auran J. Fox Chair in Business

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Head of Insurance Operations
Massachusetts Mutual
Life Insurance

Asim Zaheer '90
Chief Marketing Officer
GlassBox

FACTS & FIGURES

REACH



3,046

FALL 2024 UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT



1,399

FALL 2024 GRADUATE ENROLLMENT



651

2024 MASTER'S DEGREES AWARDED



122

FULL-TIME FACULTY



774

2024 UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED



64,742

CURRENT ALUMNI

RESULTS



90%

EMPLOYMENT

undergraduates employed/continuing education/in military within three months of 2024 graduation



90%

STARTING CAREERS IN THE NORTHEAST

Class of 2024



\$72K

AVERAGE UNDERGRADUATE STARTING SALARY

Highest compensation: \$127K



\$110K

MEDIAN MBA SALARY

Class of 2024



\$58.5M

TOTAL SCHOOL ENDOWMENT

FY 2024

RANKINGS

#1

FLEX MBA

Public Part-Time MBA in New England

U.S. News & World Report (2024)

#1

MBA

Public MBA in New England

TFE Times (2024)

#20

EXECUTIVE MBA

Executive MBA in the U.S.

Fortune (2024)

#1

ONLINE MBA

Online MBA in Connecticut

Fortune (2024)

#1

MS IN FINANCIAL & ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT

Public Master's in Finance in New England

TFE Times (2024)

#5

MS IN BUSINESS ANALYTICS & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Master's in Data Analytics in North America

Eduuniversal (2024)

#9

MS IN ACCOUNTING

Online Graduate Business Program (Non-MBA) in the U.S.

U.S. News & World Report (2024)

#16

MS IN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Master's in Human Resources Management in North America

Eduuniversal (2024)

#23

MS IN BUSINESS ANALYTICS & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Master's in Business Analytics in the U.S.

TFE Times (2024)

#5

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Graduate Entrepreneurship in the Northeast

Princeton Review (2024)

#6

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Undergraduate Entrepreneurship in the Northeast

Princeton Review (2024)

2024

Our Top Employers

- Accenture
- Aetna/CVS Health
- Barclays
- BNY Mellon
- Cigna
- CohnReznick
- Commonfund
- Deloitte
- EY
- FactSet
- FDIC
- Gartner
- Goldman Sachs
- Google
- The Hartford
- Henkel
- HIMCO
- JPMorgan Chase
- KPMG
- Moody's
- NBCUniversal
- Otis Elevator
- PepsiCo
- Pratt & Whitney
- PwC
- RTX Corporation
- Spectrum
- Synchrony Financial
- The TJX Companies
- Travelers
- Webster Bank
- Wells Fargo

ON A MISSION

“WE ALL HAVE AN INNER DRIVE, A LOVE OF OUR JOB, AND AN UNRELENTING DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS.”

— Patricia Margarido '19 EMBA



Patricia “Tricia” Margarido, a 2019 graduate of UConn’s Executive MBA program, leads a critical care team that takes care of patients in the most desperate, dire, and frightening moments of their lives.

She and her colleagues at Hartford Hospital’s **LIFE STAR** program treat patients 1,500 feet in the air, in the tight confines of a moving helicopter, assisted by equipment with the technological capacity found in an ICU. Their workspace is 11-by-5 feet, and their missions often take place in the darkness of night.

“There are many difficult days in this line of work. But when we’re able to help save the life of a patient in crisis, this is the best job imaginable,” said Margarido, who is the co-director of the LIFE STAR program with emergency medicine physician Dr. Lauri Bolton, and partners with Nurse Director Heather Standish. “We all have an inner drive, a love of our job, and an unrelenting desire to help others.”

The three-member team includes a nurse, a respiratory therapist or paramedic, and a pilot. On board, they have more than 50 different medications, blood products, ultrasound technology, a ventilator,

a cardiac monitor, and IV infusions. The team is supported on the ground by aviation mechanics, communication specialists, and administrative professionals.

“The short time that we’re together in the helicopter is very, very intense,” Margarido said. “Most of the time we’re working without talking. We can anticipate each other’s needs.”

LIFE STAR is staffed 24 hours a day, can transport patients who have suffered heart attacks, strokes, burns, and other traumatic injuries and illnesses, and is prepared to care for everyone from infants to the elderly. The program operates three helicopters, based in Meriden and Norwich, Conn, and Westfield, Mass. Air Methods provides aviation operational control, and the Westfield program is a partnership between Hartford HealthCare, Air Methods, and Baystate Health.

Cheryl Ficara, President of Hartford Hospital and Senior Vice President of Hartford HealthCare, said the program and its people are exceptional. “LIFE STAR serves a critical need in caring for the most serious injuries and illnesses in our community.

It is supported by highly skilled, dedicated experts,” she said.

“As the program director of LIFE STAR, Tricia is a dynamic, trusted leader and mentor who is highly regarded by her colleagues,” Ficara said. “I’ve witnessed firsthand how advancing her education inspired Tricia to dive deeper into her inherent leadership qualities, enhancing her ability to confidently facilitate positive changes in our organization.”

“She has built strong relationships with regional health care, fire, and EMS colleagues; led the LIFE STAR team through the COVID-19 response; and successfully expanded to a third base in Westfield, Mass. She consistently fosters colleague engagement and talent development, and genuinely cares for her work and colleagues,” she said. “Tricia is a remarkable leader in our community.”

Margarido recently spoke with the UConn School of Business about her job, the approximately 1,500 missions she has flown, and how her UConn Executive MBA degree helped her to become a stronger and more confident leader. Following are excerpts of the conversation.

What are the most difficult missions?

The toughest calls are definitely those that involve children or teens. When you see the families of the injured, it is devastating. It is also hard to see people injured at work, like at a construction site or those who are injured traveling to work.

But those calls are often also the most rewarding. Years ago, we had a child who had an intracranial head bleed and was unresponsive. We helped treat her and get her to the hospital and directly into surgery. She went home with no lingering injuries, with no functional deficits. If the whole system was not in place to care for her, the outcome could have been devastating.

Why did you pursue this career? And is there, in your experience, a certain type of person drawn to this work?

I come from a family of health care professionals. I have a sister and a brother who are nurses, and another sister is a physical therapist. While I was completing my bachelor’s degree at Boston College, I was working as a respiratory care practitioner at Tufts Medical Center. I met the LIFE STAR representatives at a



respiratory care conference. I wasn’t looking to change jobs at the time, but the opportunity at Hartford Hospital’s LIFE STAR program was so unique that I couldn’t pass it up. I came to Hartford to complete an observation shift with the crew shortly after 9/11, and I was hooked. Over the past two decades, I witnessed Hartford Hospital’s impressive transformation into

what Hartford HealthCare is today, and was privileged to impact the growth of its LIFE STAR program.

I think this position appeals to someone who is very caring, someone who wants to help others, and someone who is very autonomous. I think the members of our team are very courageous because this job has risks that aren’t found in a traditional medical setting.

We are very safety-focused, consider all factors before flight, and make an alternative plan to transport the patient, if necessary. We have sophisticated equipment, including night-vision goggles, helmets with microphones, and advanced terrain-awareness tools.

We don’t know anything about the injury of a patient until we’re in the sky, so that the decision to fly is based purely on the weather and the team’s safety, and not influenced by the emotions of a patient’s need.

You were very experienced in your career when you enrolled in the UConn Executive MBA program. Why did you pursue the degree?

My background was as a medical professional. Business was totally foreign to me. I became a manager, and I needed to lead



Members of the LIFE STAR crew gather on the thirteenth floor of Hartford Hospital prior to an emergency call. From left: Janet Diaz, senior administrative associate; Justin Pedneault, flight nurse/paramedic; alumna Patricia Margarido '19 EMBA, LIFE STAR Program Director; Brendon Colt, flight paramedic/base lead; Bob Lynch, pilot; and Adam Dawidczyk, flight nurse.

teams, understand budgets, and learn “the business language” that people were speaking.

After earning my EMBA at UConn, I was more confident. I developed a better understanding of finance, leadership styles, synergy. I learned business acumen. Now I’m confident pulling meetings together and leading well-prepared presentations. I feel like I’ve earned my seat at the table. The EMBA program has had a lasting impact on my career.

In the EMBA program, I enjoyed meeting a variety of leaders, people who worked in finance, tech, defense, and nonprofits. Those experiences were great. I also gained a global vantage point of the world during the EMBA trip to South Africa. Witnessing the depth of the poverty there was profound, and it left me thinking about how I could help at home. The trip will stay with me always.

Has this job changed your perspective or the way you live your life?

Yes, everyone on the LIFE STAR team agrees that you live differently, with a deeper appreciation for life, because of what we do. You see how everything can be gone in a moment.

How do you cope with the stress of your job?

We rely on each other for support. There is always someone here who you can talk to when

things go badly. And when we’re off duty, we disconnect. For me, that’s family time, trips to the beach, and bike rides.

Is there a common misconception about the LIFE STAR program?

Many people think we just help victims of car accidents, but we don’t just address trauma. We do so much more, including a great deal of medical- and inter-facility transportation to hospitals that can offer higher-tier care.

Sometimes people question whether LIFE STAR is really needed. As medical professionals, we see firsthand what would happen if we didn’t have this program and it took longer to get critical emergency care. We recognize the impact of faster care, earlier intervention, high-quality critical care transport, and better outcomes.

How has your role changed in recent years?

I rarely go out on emergency calls now. Instead, I do a great deal of training with fire departments and other first responders to teach them about LIFE STAR early activation, utilization, safety, and communication. Our partner emergency responders are key to our success by knowing when to call for help and how to identify a safe landing zone. We typically complete more than 1,200 patient flights a year, and our team also conducts about 200 emergency transports

via ground transportation.

Are there any strange places you’ve landed?

Cornfields are particularly tricky, especially moving the stretcher over them. But we’ve landed on highways, in backyards, on mountaintops, in the woods, adjacent to a dam, and on several golf courses. Although we’re mainly in Connecticut and Massachusetts, we’ve flown over Fenway Park, over beaches on the Fourth of July, and to the Berkshires and Vermont. But when there is a patient on board, we are focused on providing patient care and always maintain situational awareness.

Do you have LIFE STAR groupies?

We do. We have some LIFE STAR enthusiasts who track our flights, photograph the helicopter when it lands or takes off, and occasionally call asking for merchandise, like LIFE STAR helicopter pins and key chains. We value them and their support, as we share a respect for emergency response. We also have a very impressive following on LIFE STAR’s Facebook page.

Are there other moments that stay etched in your mind?

Some of our patients come back to thank the crew, and their comments are so heartfelt. Patients are grateful for the care they’ve received, and equally thankful for their health. For me, that’s the biggest reward for the hard work that we do. ■



CEREMONY RECOGNIZES FIVE INDUCTEES WHO LEAD WITH HEART

The School of Business Hall of Fame ceremony in April featured a collection of stories, both funny and powerful, an abundance of heartfelt gratitude, and enough great business advice to fill an Adam Grant bestseller.

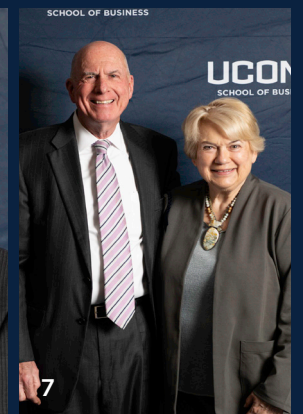
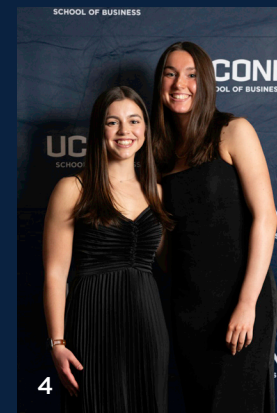
The School inducted five alumni, honoring them for their professional achievements and dedication to UConn and the community. Some 300 people attended the School’s premier event at the Hartford Marriott Downtown.

UConn President Radenka Maric described the inductees as amazing and resilient people who lead with heart. They set a great example for students and other young adults because of their hard work, commitment to great ideas, and perseverance, she said.

“Each inductee gave heartfelt and inspiring remarks that illustrate why they are so deserving of this honor,” said David Souder, former Senior Associate Dean and master of ceremonies. “The energy in the room was palpable, and many people told me how glad they were to have been able to attend.”

Next year’s ceremony is scheduled for April 11, 2025. Please consider joining us! For more information, visit alumni.business.uconn.edu. ■

1. 2024 HoF inductees, l-r: Toni Boucher '02 MBA; Randy Siller '79; Jamelle Elliott '96, '97 MA; Lee McChesney '94; and Mary Jane Fortin '86. 2. UConn President Radenka Maric. 3. Tammy Hendricks '11, '19 MBA (right) with daughter Ava. 4. Student fellow Carolyn Cumello '24 with Emma Phelps '24. 5. Nicole Straus '12, '20 MBA with Ian Straus '21 MBA. 6. Patrick Harris '70, '01 HoF Inductee (right) and Robin Stewart. 7. Norman LaCroix '72 MBA '15 HoF Inductee and Celeste LaCroix '99.





COMMENCEMENT

CLASS OF 2024 ONE BOLD MOVE

Alumna **Medina Jett '08 EMBA** delivered a powerful commencement speech to the Class of 2024 that emphasized values she knows well: the importance of being brave and thoughtful in the face of change, whether celebrated or not.

"I stand before you not only as a fellow Husky but as someone who understands the challenges and triumphs that come with the journey of life," Jett told some 700 enthusiastic business undergraduates assembled in Gampel Pavilion.

Jett is an attorney, a former executive for three Fortune 500 companies, and presently owns a real-estate development company in Atlanta.

She recently wrote a book titled *Peace Be Still: Navigating My Son's Bipolar Disorder*. His diagnosis, as a college junior, turned her life upside down. But today she advocates for mental illness awareness, especially of its impact on young adults.

Change, she said, happens when one person makes a bold move and others are inspired to join.

"Whatever path you choose, and whatever its outcomes, embrace the journey with courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to your well-being," she said. "It is in the challenging moments that we discover our greatest strengths."

1. Commencement speaker Medina Jett '08 EMBA gave valuable advice to the soon-to-be graduates. **2.** Vaughan Piccirillo-Sealey, Raj Dave, and Tashjinae Kelly stopped for a group photo. **3.** Friends Shannon Kane, Devon Yaghmaie, and Taylor Yaghmaie celebrate together. **4.** Luis Quisumbing prepares to receive his degree.



STUDENT LIFE

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

1. Women's Hockey Standout: The UConn Women's Hockey Team clinched its first Hockey East title this spring, with the School of Business' **Camryn "Cam" Wong '24 MBA** named a First Team All-Star.

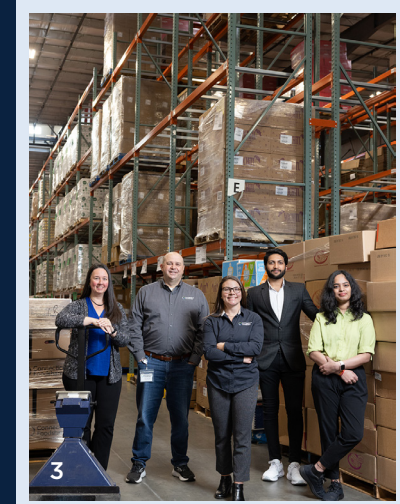
Wong, a native of Canada, previously competed in the **2022 Winter Olympics** as part of the Chinese national team. Her international exposure, paired with an interest in management, operations, and sports marketing, fueled her decision to pursue an MBA. She completed it in just one year.

"If there is anything I have learned about myself, it would be that anything is possible and that success can truly be found when you push yourself beyond measure," Wong said.

2. Wall Street Visit: Fifty students from our Student Managed Fund program, which enables students to manage real stock portfolios, spent a day at the New York Stock Exchange in March, hosted by alumnus **Chris Taylor '89**, a NYSE Vice President.

3. Helping the Community: A team of business graduate students studying data analytics developed real-world experience by helping **Connecticut Foodshare** optimize food purchases and donations to provide more meals to the 1 in 8 Connecticut residents who struggle with hunger. (photo courtesy of Steve Laschever/Hartford Business Journal)

4 & 5. International Immersion: Forty-four students from the **Business Connections Learning Community** traveled to Prague and Vienna for an eight-day business-immersion trip this summer. They participated in a consulting project with a Prague chocolatier, visited Mitsubishi Electric, attended a discussion on sustainability innovations, toured Karlštejn Castle and Schönbrunn Palace, and took a Czech cooking class.



Six Faculty MEMBERS RAISING THE BAR

The School of Business celebrated the promotion of six faculty members this spring based on their demonstrated excellence in the classroom and prominence in their field of expertise.



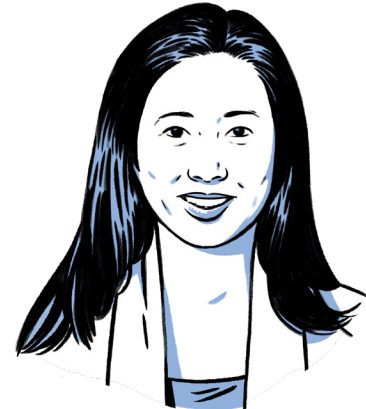
Alexander Amati, Finance, Associate Professor-in-Residence

Favorite course to teach: Derivatives. The students fancy the speculative uses of options, so we get to discuss valuation and trading strategies, and sometimes we get to trade my account in class.
Research focus: The potential for cryptos in development.



Resul Cesur, Finance, Professor

Favorite course to teach: Health Care Economics. Helping students develop critical thinking skills and applying an economic approach to understanding healthcare markets is rewarding.
Research focus: Health behaviors and outcomes, as well as the effects of governmental programs on health care, providing insight for policy and organizational decision-makers in the U.S. and beyond.



Christina Kan, Marketing, Associate Professor with tenure

Favorite course to teach: Intro to Marketing Management because I enjoy helping my students connect concepts from class with what they see in their everyday life.
Research focus: Consumer financial decision-making. The outcomes of these decisions are central to consumer well-being, and it is interesting to uncover the underlying psychology behind them.



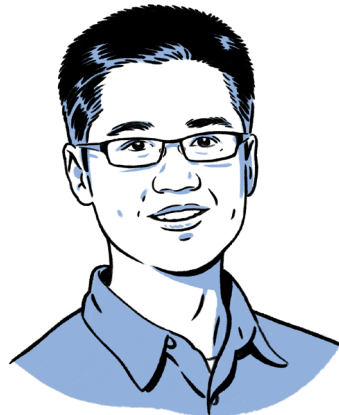
Vishal Narayan, Marketing, Professor

Favorite course to teach: Marketing Management for MBA students because it is fun when they realize that good marketing is often very logical and analytical.
Research focus: Consumption behaviors of underserved communities in developing markets. I'm curious to understand, and share, how marketing can have a positive social impact.



Stefan Hock, Marketing, Associate Professor with tenure

Favorite course to teach: Consumer Behavior because students enjoy learning about the psychological processes that underlie our decision-making.
Research focus: Helping consumers and firms make better decisions. For instance, in one of our recent projects we studied the financial and non-financial impact of product recalls.



Tao Lu, OPIM, Associate Professor with tenure

Favorite course to teach: Supply Chain Analytics to graduate students. I love connecting analytics with real-world supply chain challenges in class and engaging with my students from varied business backgrounds.
Research focus: Supply chain management. A specific focus of my current research is on the implications of disruptive technologies for supply chain sourcing and sustainability issues, aiming to gain insights into how to improve supply chain efficiency while making a positive impact on our planet and society.

Illustrations by Kyle Hilton

GATEWAY TO GLOBAL IMPACT

New Master's in Social Responsibility & Impact in Business Welcomes Students from Varied Majors

The School of Business' Marketing Department is launching a 30-credit master of science degree in Social Responsibility & Impact in Business this semester.

The program reflects significant student interest in pursuing careers that impact economic, environmental, and social sustainability, as well as an escalating demand for professionals in the field.

This new program prepares graduates to drive innovative and impactful business decisions for positive social change. New graduates will pursue various positions, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) manager; marketing strategist; environmental, social, and governance (ESG) analyst; sustainability consultant; and policy advocate.

The program is offered as a traditional master's program and as an accelerated program for current UConn undergraduate students.

"This is a unique opportunity to serve students from all backgrounds and give them additional credentials to enhance their careers," remarked Professor **Robin Coulter**, head of the Marketing Department. "Our new degree program is not just for people in business or on a business trajectory. The Accelerated Master of Science program is open for UConn students from all majors to supplement what they have learned, to gain professional advantage in the marketplace, and to make a difference in our global society." These UConn undergraduate students can apply 12 graduate level credits to both their undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Gerlinde Berger-Walliser, a business law professor and the academic director of the program, said the

program is "traditional" in that it is a 30-credit graduate degree open to those seeking career development in social responsibility and impact in business.

"The regulatory environment and customer expectations are

changing," she said. "Environmental, social, and economic sustainability has evolved from a nice-to-have element to a business imperative. Our program prepares students to participate in the world of doing better by doing good." ■



Caroline Keary

Student, Accelerated MS in Social Responsibility & Impact in Business Senior, Dual Major: Environmental Studies and Human Rights

Ultimate Goals: To work for a corporation, and ensure that all members of the supply chain get fair treatment.

Recent Experiences: Worked at a refugee resettlement center in Hartford this summer; studied at the Umbra Institute in Italy, learning about food, sustainability, and culture.

"I'm excited to apply what I've learned as an undergrad and expand my knowledge with a practical application for the job market. I want to help businesses address problems, without creating more problems. I really love exploring all the policies in place to help change our behavior to become more empathetic to the world around us."



Arianna Landesbaum

Graduate Student, MS in Social Responsibility & Impact in Business '24 BS, Analytics Information Management

Professional Interests: Social responsibility, nonprofit leadership, international business; became interested in philanthropy in middle school, volunteering with the N.Y. Knicks' Garden of Dreams charity.

Recent Experiences: HuskyTHON marketing captain; volunteer, Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary; former VP of philanthropy/domestic violence prevention, Alpha Chi Omega.

"I think my generation is so attuned to social responsibility because we've grown up in a time of such great change with technology. It has exposed us to much more than any previous generation. We see what's happening around the world and what needs changing. Is this the world we want to live in? Raise a family in? We can take all that knowledge and be the catalyst for change."

MEET THE RESEARCHER

When professor **Lingling Wang** teaches finance to undergraduates, she also shares her personal investment strategy. She explains how she builds her portfolio, mitigates risk, and allocates savings for her teenagers to attend college.

“Not all of my students will be CFO of a corporation, but they will all be the CFO of their personal finances,” she said. “I want them to leave my class with knowledge that will be very useful in their lives.”

In addition to her success teaching Ph.D. candidates and undergraduates, Wang is a prolific researcher, who typically juggles six to eight projects in various stages of development. Her work has won awards at both international and national conferences and been published in leading finance and accounting journals.

‘The Best Moment!’

The impetus for her work stems from an early-career experience designing a database for consumer concerns at Sony Electronics in Miami. Wang attended many business development meetings and was captivated by some of the financial decisions that were made and the way resources were allocated.

“I always draw research ideas from what I see around me and from things that puzzle me,” she said. “When something doesn’t make sense, I love to find the missing piece. When you find the answer, that’s the best moment!”

Wang’s work focuses on corporate and behavioral finance, particularly executive compensation, culture, and social issues.

Companies Balancing War and Responsibility

One of her recent, well-regarded research projects examined how firms handle ethical dilemmas and the response from the stock market. She and her colleagues

Lingling Wang Helps Undergrads Become the CFO of Their Personal Finances



were intrigued by the pressure on U.S. firms to cease operations in Russia following that nation’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Many companies that were serving essential human needs, manufacturing agricultural products, providing utility services, running retail pharmacies, or distributing food opted to remain in Russia. The stock market did not punish those companies for their decisions. The results suggest that investors understand ethical dilemmas and grant exceptions to those caught in a challenging situation. The research was the runner-up for the Best Paper Award at the Loyola Financial Ethics Conference.

Wang and her colleagues also examined a new pay-inequality mandate that requires U.S. firms to disclose CEO-to-employee pay ratios. They found that some companies use estimation discretion to mask pay inequality and present less informative disclosures. Their work highlighted the potential cost of granting discretion in mandatory environmental, social, and governance corporate reporting. The research won the Best Paper Award in Corporate Finance at the 2022 FMA European Conference.

‘The Department Was Vibrant and Poised for Growth’

Wang earned her Ph.D. at Georgia State University in Atlanta and was on the faculty at Tulane University in New Orleans before joining UConn in 2016. After more than a decade of living in the South, she still gets excited when she sees the first snowfall of the year, and allows her students to take a quick break to watch the snow fall.

When she came to UConn as a faculty candidate in February, the campus was white with snow.

“I said, ‘Wow. It’s magic!’ and [Finance Department Head] **Chinmoy Ghosh** said, ‘If you move up here, you’ll realize it is more hassle than magic,’” Wang said, laughing.

“I love the four seasons here, and instantly fell in love with UConn because it is such a welcoming place,” she said. “The faculty who interviewed me had taken time to become well-versed in my research, and the department was vibrant and poised for growth. I saw myself being a part of that. I’ve found my dream job!” ■

msa 25th anniversary

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION, CAREER READINESS, AND ENGAGED FACULTY DISTINGUISH MSA PROGRAM

The MSA program is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, a significant milestone for the trailblazing program that consistently ranks among the best in the nation.

“I wish I could take the spirit, the energy, and the interaction that occurs in this program, bottle it and present it to potential students,” said accounting professor **Steve Pedneault**, who owns a forensic accounting firm and has been teaching in the program since 2007. “If they knew how special it is here, they would all come to UConn.”

“First, our professors are experts in the field. You’re learning forensic accounting from an expert, you’re learning tax law from people who worked at the IRS,” he said.

“What we also do better than anyone else is our level of interaction with students,” he said. “When I started here, the leadership made it clear if you’re not going to have a high level of interaction with students, you’re not going to be here long!”

Leading the Pack in Online Education

The MSA program began in person in 1999 and quickly converted to an online format, an approach to education that was almost unheard of then. In the last decade, *U.S. News* has consistently ranked the program among the Top 10 in the nation.

To honor its history and achievement, the MSA program had a 25th anniversary dinner in October, attended by faculty, alumni, students, and business partners.

“We’re proud that we have maintained the program’s excellence, despite the increased competition, and regularly receive

national recognition among the best online programs in the country,” said professor **George Plesko**, head of the department. “There are many people who have contributed to that success, and I am grateful for them all.”

Part of a World-Class Institution

Professor **Irene Louth** ’02, ’03 MSA is the Chief Tax Officer and Vice President of Taxation at Atlas Air and a two-time UConn alumna.

“UConn is a world-class institution, and it was a privilege to be part of the UConn accounting community,” she said. “My accounting degrees opened doors for me, and I had many companies competing for my skills.”

When she was approached about an opportunity to teach in the program two years ago, she didn’t hesitate, adding that it is an honor to nurture the next generation of professionals.

No Accounting Program Is Better

Alumna **Christine D. Gagnon** ’02, ’03 MSA, ’08 MBA is Chief Financial Officer of Roha Group, a New York-based private equity firm, and CEO of Odin Frigg, a boutique agency and advisory services firm. She said that one of the most memorable aspects of the MSA program is the quality and engagement of the faculty.

“The faculty were very caring and invested,” she said. “My fellow students were all of a solid caliber and were striving for high performance as they prepared to enter the professional workforce. I’m still in touch with many of my classmates today.”

She also appreciated the convenience and flexibility that allowed her to work in the profession, with all the seasonal and client-related demands, while completing her MSA.

Louth said she thinks more milestones are on the horizon for the MSA program. “I wish the UConn MSA program a 50-, 75-, and 100-year anniversary with quality candidates, faculty, and staff,” she said. “I’m biased, but I think there is no accounting program that’s better.” ■



OPIM PROFESSOR CHEN LIANG STANDING OUT IN A ‘SEA OF TALENT’

OPIM professor Chen Liang, a prolific researcher who is always willing to mentor students, received two prestigious awards in quick succession, both recognizing her as a promising young scholar who is making outstanding contributions to the field.

Liang was one of only eight academics worldwide honored with the Information Systems Society’s 2023 Gordon B. Davis Young Scholar Award. Just weeks later, she received the Association for Information System’s Early Career Award.

Both international awards are presented to scholars who are in the early stages of their careers and have already completed quality research, excel at teaching, and are making significant contributions to their field.

Liang joined UConn in 2019 after earning a Ph.D. in information systems at Arizona State University. Her research interests include artificial intelligence, the future of work, fintech, bias and discrimination, and platform economy.

Her recent research has investigated the transformative effects of various cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) applications, such as autonomous vehicles and generative AI, on the future of work and the evolving platform economy.

Liang said the young scholar awards are not only a tremendous honor but will help in her efforts to collaborate with companies for her research, and will be an asset in the recruitment of Ph.D. students to UConn. “These awards make you stand out in a sea of talent,” she said.

OPIM Department Head Cuihong Li agreed. “We have a vibrant group of talented young scholars that are rising to make great contributions,” she said. “I am glad that we are able to provide an environment that attracts talented faculty and fosters their growth.”

Short TAKES Big NEWS



Financial Literacy Expands

The **Financial Literacy Innovation Program (FLIP)** welcomed almost 150 Connecticut teens participating in a voluntary Saturday program at UConn that taught them how to make smart financial choices. The program drew students from nine public and magnet high schools, including Bristol, Bloomfield, Hartford, Rockville, Windham, and East Hartford.



Sustainability Summit

The School of Business hosted another successful **Global Business Leadership in Sustainability Summit** in March, focusing on clean energy. Some 20 expert speakers participated. “If you don’t have a big vision and you’re not bold, you’re not going to get anywhere,” UConn President **Radenka Maric** told the audience. She has pledged to make UConn carbon neutral by 2030.



Entrepreneurship Thriving

The Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation is nurturing dozens of startups in various stages of development. Last fall, the center’s **Wolff New Venture Competition** awarded its grand prize to **Feel Your Best Self**, a toolkit designed to enhance elementary students’ emotional-coping skills. The competition awarded close to \$60,000 to six startups, ranging from clothing to environmental cleanup technology.



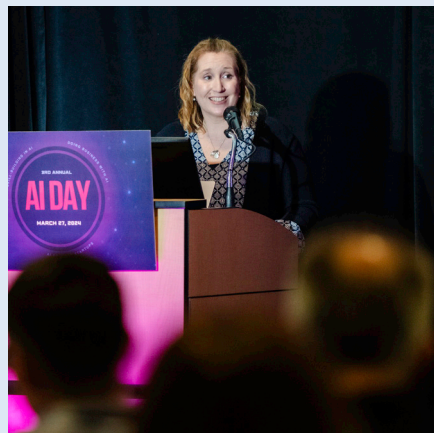
Learning from a Legend

“Everything is being driven by technology. Whether you like it or not, you’re in an AI world ... and you’re not going to stop it!” said **Nicholas Donofrio**, the former EVP of Innovation and Technology at IBM. Speaking to alumni, students, and faculty at the **Rosenberg-McVay Business Leadership Series** lecture in Stamford in March, Donofrio said developing an “innovative mindset” is the key to business success.



Veteran Entrepreneurs

U.S. Coast Guard veteran **Sean Ceccini** and his wife, **Jacquelyn Ceccini**, of South Windsor were among 15 participants in UConn’s **Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV)** this August. The couple developed skills to help them expand **The Dog Bone LLC**, their thriving dog-treat company. Run by the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the EBV program celebrates its 15th anniversary this year.



Hartford AI Day

The School of Business hosted the third annual **Hartford AI Day** in March, drawing 380 business leaders, students, and technology experts. The event featured 36 speakers and 21 breakout sessions. Otis Elevator, Hartford HealthCare, The Hartford, and Connecticut Insurance Department were among the event supporters.

“We designed Hartford AI Day to create an environment for learning, strengthening our community, and for inspiration,” said event organizer **Michelle Cote**, a UConn business instructor and director at Launc[H], a driving force behind Hartford’s innovation community. “This year we saw the energy from everyone involved reach a whole new scale,” she said. “It is clear that people throughout our state recognize the need to incorporate AI into the workplace to remain competitive.”



The Business of Brewing

The School of Business, College of Engineering, and College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources launched **UConn Brewing Innovation** to teach students about brewing beer and to support the craft brewing industry in Connecticut. The kickoff event, at Kinsmen Brewing Co. in Southington, featured a student-created double dry-hopped hazy IPA served to 350 alumni, friends and other brewmasters. “I was nervous to try it, but I’m happy with the way it came out. We nailed it, definitely,” said student **Jordan Aeschlimann** ’24 of Simsbury.



Build Hartford

A popular School of Business course called **Build Hartford**, led by the team at the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, invites UConn students to explore the capital city and develop ideas to increase its appeal and draw more visitors.

“I love Hartford now,” said **Laura Braddick** ’24 from Kennebunk, ME. “But before this class, I really only went to games at the XL Center.”



School Forms New Partnership

The School of Business celebrated a new partnership with China’s highly respected **Shandong University** in June. The alliance will enable top Shandong students to begin their business masters in China and complete it at UConn, beginning in fall 2025. “Partnering with prestigious universities worldwide allows UConn to access top-tier students, enhance research collaborations, and strengthen its global brand presence,” said **Jose Cruz**, Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.



Plesko at White House

Professor **George Plesko**, head of the Accounting Department, and his colleagues met with the **White House Council of Economic Advisers** in June to discuss research on the effectiveness of a new law designed to close corporate tax-avoidance loopholes. Plesko co-authored a research paper on the topic with UConn alumnae **Danielle Higgins Green** ’13 Ph.D., now a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and **Erin Henry** ’14 Ph.D., a professor at the University of Arkansas.



Team Nets Top Prize

A multidisciplinary UConn case competition team, including three business students, won the top prize at the **31st Annual Kogod Case Competition at American University**. The three-month challenge involved marketing, scaling, and financial projections for electric-vehicle infrastructure. “One judge told us it was the best presentation she had seen in her 20 years of judging,” said student **Tyler Martin** ’25.



Alumnus Rich Eldh '81 and his wife, Joyce Eldh, are supporting 13 Bridgeport students who are pursuing their degrees from UConn through the Eldh Family Scholarship Fund. The couple recently attended the School of Business Hall of Fame ceremony with some of their scholars. Pictured from left are Rich Eldh; alumna Jayde Lopez '24; undergraduates Francesca Rameau, Stenielza Marseille, and Elyjeh Ortiz; and Joyce Eldh.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

COUPLE PROVIDES SCHOLARSHIPS, FRIENDSHIP, AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO UCONN STUDENTS

Alumnus **Rich Eldh '81** and wife **Joyce Eldh** will fund scholarships this year that will enable 13 students from Bridgeport to attend UConn. The couple will cover all tuition not funded by scholarships or grants, as well as room, board, and spending money. But beyond their financial gift, the Westport, Conn., couple is tremendously invested in those students' careers and well-being. They've taken their student-scholars

bowling and out to lunch, invited them to be their guests at the School of Business Hall of Fame dinner while encouraging them to network with some powerful alumni, helped them with their LinkedIn profiles and thank-you notes, and even offered advice on what necktie would look best for a job interview.

Supporting Smart, Driven Students

Several years ago, Rich, the Founder of SiriusDecisions, Inc., a global B2B research and advisory firm, and Joyce, a high school

internship director, became involved with Connect-Us. The Bridgeport, Conn. organization, led by Founder and Executive Director **Pam Lewis** and Director of Finance and Operations **Pam Hafer**, teaches young adults the skills needed to thrive in business and in life.

The Eldhs were impressed by the students they met. "We met these great Bridgeport students who were smart, engaged, and driven," Rich said. "They were looking for ways to augment their personal development beyond high school."

That is when they decided to set up the Eldh Family Scholarship Fund through the UConn Foundation to allow these students to further their academic studies and have a complete college experience. Those who graduate from Connect-Us are eligible to apply for the Eldh scholarship at UConn. Some students are studying in Storrs,

and others are in Stamford. All seemed to be going well until the COVID-19 pandemic. "We started to observe that the students were struggling with grades, fear, isolation, and anxiety, and they were beginning to get disillusioned," Joyce said. Some students didn't seem to be aware of or were unwilling to access any campus resources that could have helped assuage these strains and challenges. Others grappled to find friend groups or their purpose, and some worried about supporting their families back home. "We felt more guidance and assistance would be necessary," she said. "Rich and I agreed, 'We can and should try and do more for these young adults.'" The couple have made the effort to meet with leadership experts at UConn to familiarize themselves with the academic and student-support systems that exist at the university as another way to guide their mentees.

Building Confidence and Reassurance

Through Connect-Us, the Eldhs met student **Tageria Davis** about seven years ago.

Davis is now a UConn senior majoring in computer science. She is planning a career in software engineering or project management. Last summer, she interned as a software engineer at Kohl's corporate office in Milwaukee on the core-platform team responsible for managing the retailer's Kubernetes clusters (computing nodes, or worker machines, that run containerized applications). Arriving in Milwaukee, she didn't know a soul, and the Eldhs were able to introduce her to a friend's niece who works in the complex.

The Kohl's job, coming on the heels of a rotational program she completed at Bridgewater Associates, was a great experience. "It was definitely challenging, but that made it rewarding. I discovered more about myself and explored

a new side of software engineering," Davis said. She is appreciative of the help that the Eldhs gave her in charting her career path. "Rich and Joyce provided me with the kind of confidence and reassurance I wanted about the decisions I was making, both academically and for my career. They are very approachable and I could ask them, 'Am I thinking about the right things?'" Davis said. "They have invested so much into my goals, and I like to demonstrate that I'm making the most of new opportunities." "To me, Rich and Joyce live their values. That's rare. They want to see us all succeed," Davis said. "I'd like to do the same thing some day for other students. I view the Eldhs as my mentors, and I want to keep them in my life long after I graduate from UConn."

Watching Students Soar Is the Reward

Rich has been involved in the School of Business through its Dean's Advisory Cabinet, guest-teaching classes, and mentoring the student-run Hillside Ventures program. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the UConn Foundation and has been inducted into the School of Business Hall of Fame.

The Eldhs shared their story in hopes that other alumni would consider a similar type of outreach.

"We can do more for these young adults."

— Rich & Joyce Eldh

Without spending time with students and developing those friendships, they said they would have been unlikely to know the variety of concerns and challenges that students face. "We try to offer them guidance, help, and the recognition that they're not in the professional world alone," Rich said. "One of the big hurdles is that many students today are reluctant to ask for help and feel they should be able to accomplish big things on their own. We have all received help from those around us



Tageria Davis

in our daily lives and our careers." "When the students participate in the business school Hall of Fame dinner, they are meeting UConn alumni and staff members. They have to get out of their comfort zone by asking questions and making conversation," he said. "You can watch them slowly gain confidence and start to open up. Each year we ask them if they'd like to attend the dinner and they enthusiastically say yes. This year we watched them take the initiative to go up to people and make their own introductions. Networking is a career-building skill, and they are learning it quickly."

Joyce agreed, adding that she's seen a dramatic change in the students' self-assurance, poise, and self-worth and knows that it will continue. "Students today seem so much smarter than in the past. They are so well informed and brilliant with technology," Rich said. "UConn graduates can compete with any graduates from any top university in the country. You just have to come and meet them to know that's a fact."

To learn more about supporting a UConn student, please contact Megan Panek, Senior Director of Development, at MPanek@foundation.uconn.edu.

Words Worth Repeating

Quotes that made us laugh, reflect, and celebrate in the last year.

When I think about AI, I'm frightened and excited at the same time.

— student **Samarth Gupta** '26 after delivering a presentation to Connecticut business leaders explaining AI's many applications in everyday life

We had a wonderful year this year. Our entrepreneurs developed everything from wearable tech to personalized gene therapy to really warm yet stylish boots!

— Professor **Kevin Gardiner** '06 MBA, director of the Innovation Quest student entrepreneurship competition, which had a 22 percent jump in applications in 2024

Let's ride the wave and when it crashes, it crashes.

— **Jamelle Elliott** '96, '97 MA, Assistant Coach of the UConn Women's Basketball team, offering advice to players before their NCAA 2024 Elite Eight win. Elliott was inducted into the school's Hall of Fame this year.

Your future is waiting for you to seize it!

— **Mary Jane Fortin** '86 during her School of Business Hall of Fame induction speech

UConn has prepared me for the next chapter in life in countless ways. ... I've gained a love of learning that will continue for the rest of my life.

— alumna **Erica Dean** '23, '24 MSBAPM, who learned Italian, joined the UConn Rowing team, and practiced floral arranging in addition to her studies

It is nothing short of remarkable and truly, I'd say, the American dream!

— alumnus **Rodney Butler** '99, Chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, on the tribe's growth from timbering and maple syruping to a billion-dollar enterprise

Too many leaders don't do anything. Ten thousand people get laid off and it's 'no one's fault.' ... Stand up, and lead the charge.

— **Nicholas Donofrio**, retired Executive VP of Innovation and Technology at IBM and the guest speaker at the Rosenberg-McVay Business Leadership Series

Once you drive down Discovery Way for the final time, don't forget us. Send an email to your professors and your mentors and let us know how you're doing. We are invested in your success.

— **David Souder**, former Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Research in the School of Business, offering advice to the Class of 2024

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Our thanks to all who submitted photos for this report.

