

# Scholar

VOL. 15, NO. 4, FALL 2012



KENYA  
SMITH  
(MBA '07)

## Behind the Scenes

CREATIVITY, STRATEGY  
BUILD BUSINESS FOR  
TURNER BROADCASTING

# PERSPECTIVE

By Dr. Randi Reich Cosentino, Provost, Strayer University



**A**s Strayer University marks its 120th anniversary in 2012, we are reflecting on our rich history. Since 1892, this institution has partnered with the business community to help develop the American workforce. For 120

years, we have provided relevant and rigorous academic programs to working adults, first-generation college students and others who often do not have access to higher education.

This anniversary also provides an opportunity to look to the future, and to consider the role Strayer University will play in the next 120 years. In an era in which eight in 10 new jobs require advanced training or education, we know that nations with the most highly educated workforces will take the lead. To highlight this important fact, Strayer University recently hosted a panel of experts from the public, private and higher education sectors who shared their insights and advice for what this country needs to do to ensure we remain a world leader. You can read highlights from the panel discussion on page 19.

This issue of Scholar also includes stories about our outstanding alumni who are a thriving part of the U.S. workforce. They apply their Strayer University education every day to develop new business and build customer relationships on behalf of their employers. Regardless of year, decade or era, Strayer University will provide many more driven students access to the quality education they need to effectively compete in a complex job market.

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Dr. Randi Reich Cosentino joined the University in 2001. During her tenure, she has held a variety of management positions, including senior vice president of academic administration, regional director and director of Strayer University Online. She holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a doctorate in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania.

## Scholar

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Scholar magazine connects the Strayer University community, reaching more than 80,000 students, alumni, faculty and staff. The quarterly magazine provides information on University news, programs and activities, and feature articles with a focus on academic and career issues.

Most articles and illustrative materials are requested by the editor, but unsolicited submissions and photographs are welcomed. Strayer University reserves the right to edit all materials submitted to the editor.

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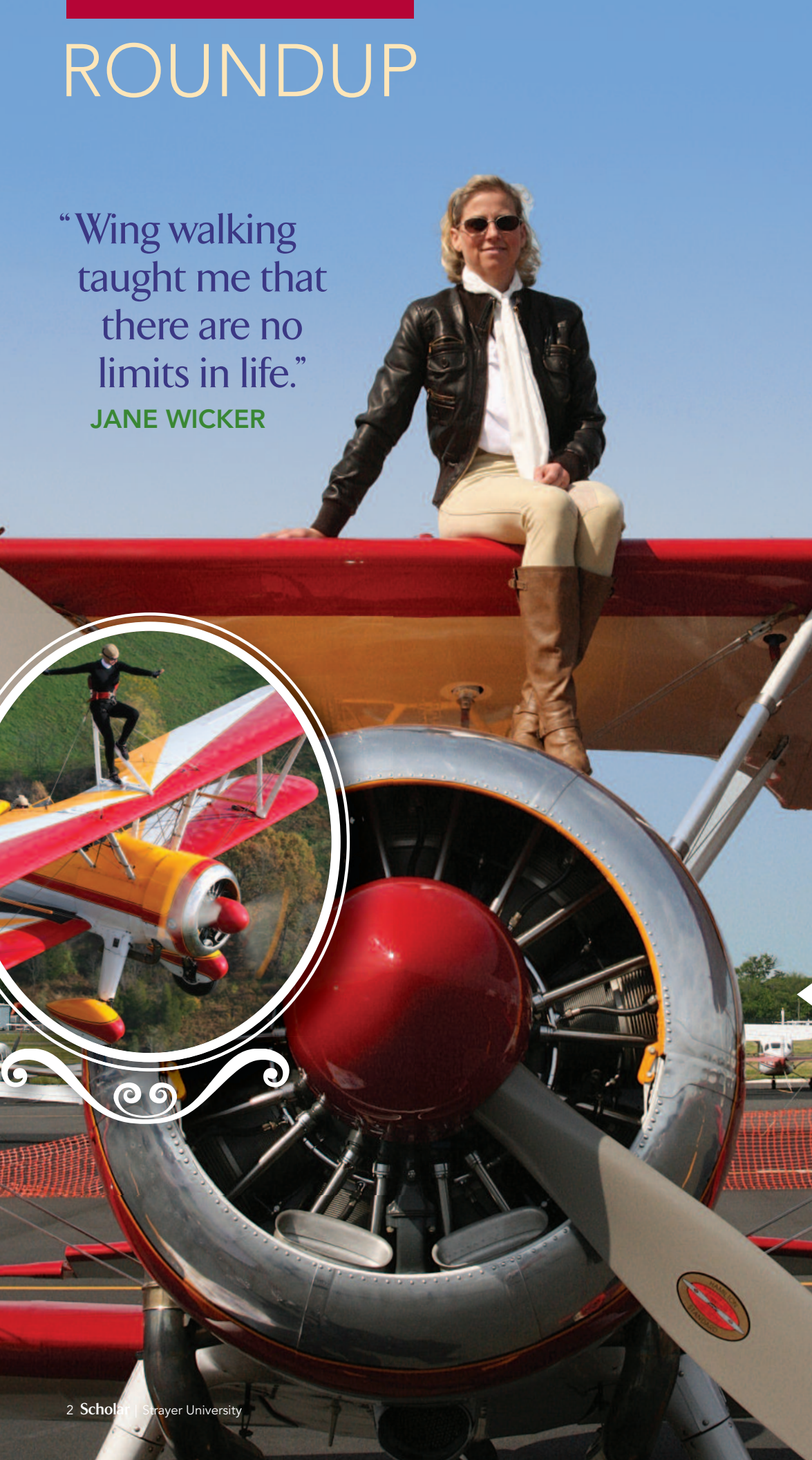
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# ROUNDUP

“Wing walking taught me that there are no limits in life.”

JANE WICKER



## High Flying

If you're trying to find BBA student Jane Wicker on the weekends, you will have to look up—way up. That's where Wicker performs acrobatic stunts on the wings of airplanes in front of up to 100,000 spectators. “When I'm in the air, I feel free. It's just me, the plane and the open air—no parachute and no safety harness,” says Wicker, who is also a licensed pilot.

At the end of every show, children run up to Wicker to get a closer look at the high-flying acrobat. “Wing walking inspires people to pursue their own unique dreams,” says Wicker, who visits local schools and hospitals to talk to children about following their passions in life.

When she is not in the air, Wicker stays busy as a mother, a budget analyst for the Federal Aviation Administration, and as owner of Jane Wicker Airshows, traveling her act to air shows throughout the U.S. and Canada. “It's OK to be busy as long as you're doing what you love,” she says.

For professional wing walkers like Wicker, the sport is more than a hobby—it's a historic art form. Wing walking gained popularity shortly after World War I and today's walkers try to re-enact many of those same stunts.

# The Hard Sell

Attitudes toward career negotiations, like asking for a raise or closing a business deal, vary across world cultures.

**39%** According to LinkedIn, professionals in the U.S. are least comfortable with negotiating—39% of U.S. respondents report feeling anxious about the process.

**47%** The hardest place to make a sale? In India, where 47% of respondents feel confident negotiating.



## Reading List

A career in business development is more than lunch meetings and expense accounts. At the core, you are seeking to create a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship with your client. Check out these books about how to build a relationship, while closing the deal:

### “Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion”

BY ROBERT CIALDINI

### “Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time”

BY KEITH FERRAZZI

### “Spin Selling”

BY NEIL RACKHAM

### “Love Is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends”

BY TIM SANDERS

### “Getting Past No”

BY WILLIAM URY

## INTERNET EXCESS

The Internet is a busy place, processing huge amounts of information from around the world. Here's a snapshot of what it handles on a daily basis:



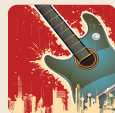
**DATA:** Enough information flows through the Internet in 24 hours to fill 168 million DVDs.



**FACEBOOK:** About 172 million people visit Facebook every day, spending 4.7 billion minutes on the site, updating 532 million statuses and uploading 250 million photos.



**EMAIL:** The U.S. Postal Service would need two years to process the 294 billion emails sent daily.



**MUSIC:** Pandora streams an average of 187.6 million hours of music per day. If a time-traveling computer went back to A.D. 1 and started streaming that amount, the music would still be playing today.



**VIDEO:** People watch 4 billion hours of video on YouTube each month and upload 72 hours of video every minute.

OVERHEARD

“My daily routine starts **WHEN I OPEN MY BOOKS, REVIEW WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, LOOK AT MY SCHEDULE FOR POSSIBLE INTERRUPTIONS AND THEN DETERMINE MY STUDY TIMES.** I put the reading and course work into my calendar and I even book my downtime so that it is a strict routine, just like I would follow at my employer.” MICHAEL FOGARTY, BSIS STUDENT, ONLINE

## Breaking Out of the Box

By Michelle Davis, Writer

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**ALEX HEIDT (BBA '96)**

**TITLE: SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT**

**COMPANY: HARRIS IT SERVICES**

**INDUSTRY: INTERNATIONAL IT CONSULTING**

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**A**lex Heidt manages a large group of employees and aids in growing business for Harris. He spots trends in the industry and predicts the future needs of clients, who are mostly federal government agencies focused on the military and defense. Heidt has also worked on technology issues as a vice president at aerospace giant Lockheed Martin and a senior manager at space and rocket systems developer Orbital Sciences Corp. He has focused on the technology sector since his stint as a technician in the U.S. Marine Corps, which he joined the day after the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. Two hundred and twenty Marines were killed that day, including a close friend of Heidt's.

**You manage 62 people. How do you keep such a large group of employees motivated to do their best?**

I try to help them understand how they play a role in the direction of the company. Most people want to be part of something bigger than they are, and if you can get them on-board with some strategic direction and get them excited, a self-perpetuating motivation effect takes over. I also think it's paramount to have a creative organization with people who can collaborate across different areas within the business. That's where the best ideas come from.

**“GROUPTHINK IS GOOD FOR CREATIVITY,  
but when it's time to execute,  
SOMEBODY HAS TO OWN IT.”**

— Alex Heidt (BBA '96)

**Within such a large company, how do you foster that type of collaboration across departments and groups?**

You have to be deliberate and create venues to do that. I hold town hall meetings, get larger groups together, explain where the company is going and make it interactive. I also like to get people out of the office. Titles go by the wayside and you just get creative people together to come up with a win strategy. I've seen situations where somebody in finance or contracts had a great idea on how to market our capabilities. You can't keep people in neat little boxes anymore. However, you also ultimately have to have accountability and responsibility. Once a decision has been made and you're set in a direction, somebody has to be accountable for it. Groupthink is good for creativity, but when it's time to execute, somebody has to own it, and you'll have a much better product as a result.

**Part of your job is anticipating what your clients are going to need in the future. Isn't that hard to do?**

When the government is your primary customer, it's a double-edged sword. The laws are such that it's very hard for someone in government to wake up one morning and say, 'I want to put in a data center.' They have to get the budget approved, go to Congress, and all of that takes time. I track where the money is going to be spent, not tomorrow but three years down the road, and I ask, 'Do I have the skills in-house to meet those needs? If not, how am I going to get there?' Once you've answered these questions, you can start to build a strategic road map to win opportunities.

**How has higher education served you in your career?**

I wanted to get my business degree as soon as possible to get into management. Strayer University offered a plan that allowed me to do that. As soon as I had that degree, I moved into a master's program and then earned a JD [both from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.] I rely on my education on the job all the time. It gave me the tools necessary to be able to think differently and to apply it to all the different positions that I've had. Without that foundation, I wouldn't be where I am today. ☺

# Steps to Success:

## *Navigating the Sales Lifecycle*

By Leslie Quander Wooldridge, Writer

From the first phone call to a lasting relationship, the ability to identify, land and keep clients is critical to any business. But how do you ensure that each phase runs smoothly? Three sales and marketing professionals share advice.

### 1 IDENTIFY NEW BUSINESS

You can pitch new clients all day, but if you don't first confirm that you can actually help them, you're wasting their time, and yours. "A client is a good fit for your company if the product and services you provide will truly add value to their business," says **Debra King (BSCN '03), director of national accounts at ACC Telecom.** "Identify clients that need your solution, and share with them how it will help."

King currently sets the strategy for the sales force at her company and starts each day by checking in with her sales team via conference call. "Referrals are the heart of every business," she says, "but no matter how you find clients, you must do research before you approach them."

Learn about their business cycles, review their websites and follow them on social media. King and her team also discuss news and trends that relate to their clients' business sectors, which range from health care to legal fields, and she

spends part of each day networking. If you're making cold pitches, remember that "digital tools are the best resource available to find new clients and to find the best person to talk with," she adds. "But that means those potential clients are being called on more than ever, so you better have something of value to say."

### 2 LAND NEW CLIENTS

Once you've identified prospective clients, the next step is to connect with them. "The most critical aspect of business development is the strength of your relationship with the customer," says **Travis Queen (BBA student), director of business development for U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force at Thales Communications Inc.**

That means you have to look beyond your own objectives. "Avoid being a stereotypical 'sales guy,' and focus on what your client





is trying to achieve, rather than your own sales goals,” Queen says. Identify what you have in common with your contacts and talk on a personal level.

“It’s important for your clients to trust you. Finding commonality with them, such as military service, recreational activities or an interest in football goes a long way in developing that bond,” he adds. Queen relies on his 12 years of service in the U.S. Air Force to demonstrate his credibility with military clients. And even though it’s easy to reach out by phone or email, old-school ways of doing business can go a long way. “If you are not in front of your customer, then your competition most certainly is,” Queen says. “Take the time to travel to your customer’s location for face-to-face talks. Look for reasons to drop by for a quick visit. There is nothing more gratifying than a handshake and smile after a productive client meeting.”

### 3 BUILD AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP

Signing a contract doesn’t mean that your job is over: You still have to deliver quality work. “To enjoy long-term success, you have to consistently deliver the right solutions to your customer,” says **Darris Rollins (MBA ’11), major account manager for Verizon Wireless.**

That means you need to keep your promises and provide results. If you told your clients that you would deliver a product at a specific price, you’d better do it. And if you promised to send reports within a certain period of time, make sure you are doing just that. “The customer should see the value in every interaction,” Rollins adds, noting that he is so passionate about his company that he often extols the virtues of his personal (Verizon) phone service when chatting with customers.

That said, he cautions against getting overly familiar. “Professionalism is extremely important when dealing with clients,” he says. “It is important to represent yourself, as well as the company you work for, in a manner that makes the client feel comfortable.” The bottom line: “Believe in what you sell,” Rollins says. “And do what you say you’re going to do.”



# Raising the Bar

By Courtney MacGregor Coder, Senior Editor

The legend of Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO of General Electric, is thriving at the global conglomerate. His innovative methods, leadership style and management practices are still very much a part of the company's culture, where hard work and determination equal success.

**F**or more than 20 years, Joel Suter (EMBA student) has made that culture his own. As director of sales for GE Energy, Suter oversees 14 regional sales managers—helping them grow professionally, providing constructive feedback, celebrating their successes and pushing them to do better. “I am constantly exploring ways to improve efficiency, so they can increase face-time with customers,” he says.

Suter also attends the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University, where he learns from business leaders like Welch. “What I’ve learned so far has elevated my conversations with senior leadership and enabled me to participate more effectively,” says Suter. “That is an important part of learning—you want to practice in a classroom, and then apply it on your own.”

With decades of experience in sales and management, Suter has a few lessons of his own to share.

**FIND A MENTOR.** “If you are serious about a career path, you have to make a strong commitment in that direction,” Suter says. “Find someone who can guide you through the corporate maze and help you define the parameters of success as it relates to your career aspirations.”

**LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.** It’s not about what you know; it’s about what the customer needs. “Even if you have a strong knowledge base in a technical area, you have to really hear the customer—their problems

and parameters—so you can formulate an opportunity statement and collaborate with others to create a winning solution,” he says.

**FOLLOW THROUGH.** Your credibility with customers rests on your ability to deliver on your promises. In a sales role, that means having a strong support function behind you so that what is communicated to the customer is executed throughout the organization. “Execution becomes the challenge,” says Suter. “If the parts do not work, it reflects on the relationship between the customer and sales manager, thus on the results.”

**THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.** “I believe that I can always contribute more to the organization and to its financials,” says Suter. “I want to see evidence of my increasing performance as compared to a previous quarter or year.” He also finds new ways to learn, whether at conferences, a weeklong course or at JWML. “I am realistic about my skill set and recognize when I need to develop a new skill,” he says.

In managing his career and the careers of others, Suter has followed the Welch philosophy. “Jack was always spot-on and pragmatic in his decision making,” he says. “In turn, I have developed a pragmatic style, striving for clarity, simplicity and effectiveness, the way I saw Jack do it.”

COVER STORY

# Behind the Scenes

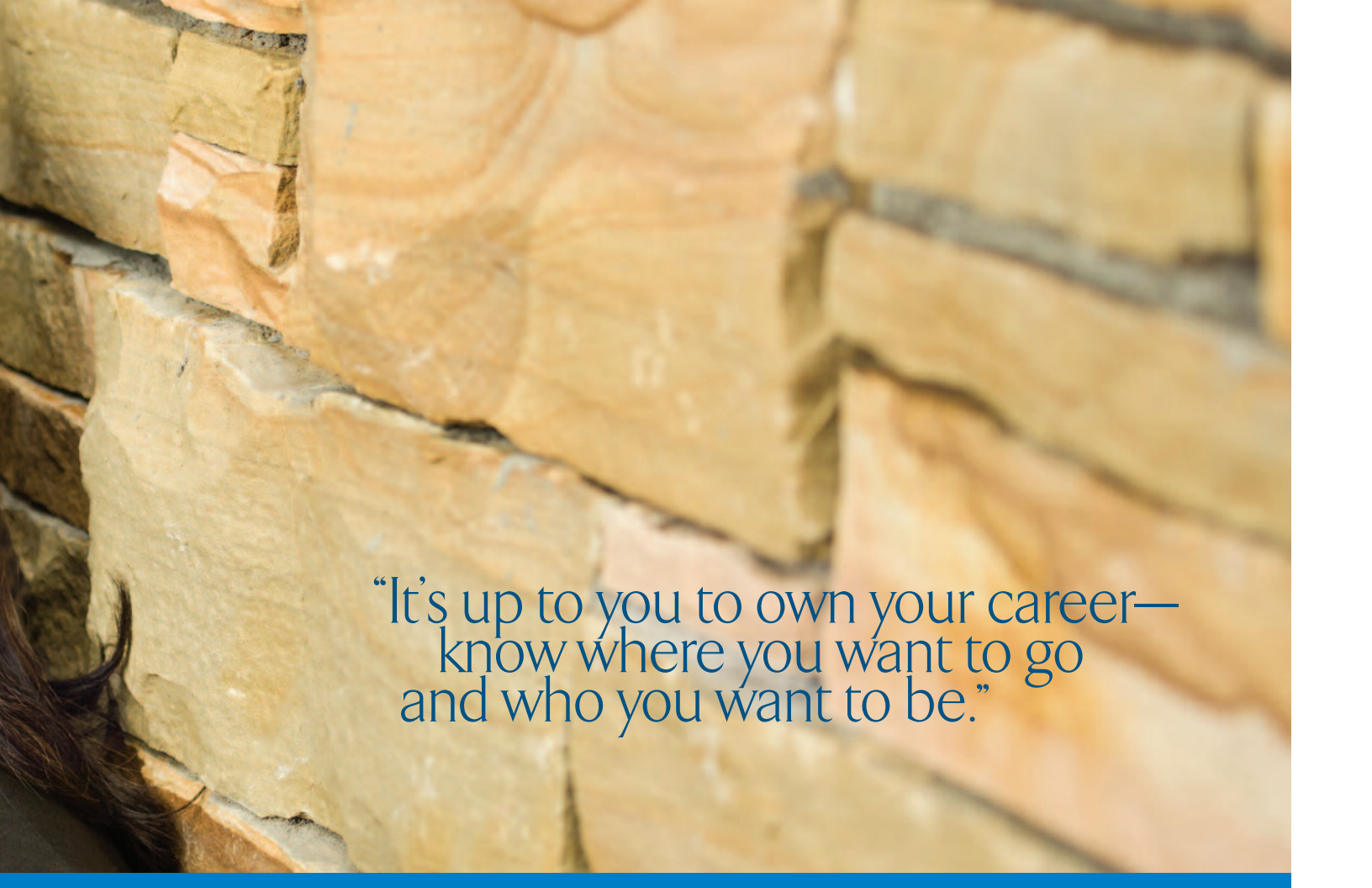
CREATIVITY, STRATEGY  
BUILD BUSINESS FOR  
TURNER BROADCASTING

BY KEVIN MACKIEWICZ,  
SENIOR WRITER



An informational interview with a friend's colleague launched Kenya Smith's (MBA '07) 12-year career and a passion for television and media.

Today, she is the director of TBS, TNT and TCM commerce enterprise for Turner Broadcasting System Inc., a TimeWarner Co. In this role, she develops creative ways to promote the networks and its sponsors.



“It’s up to you to own your career—  
know where you want to go  
and who you want to be.”

**A**fter earning an undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Asheville, Smith wanted a better understanding of the business world. To get a closer look, she drove from her home in Asheville, N.C., to Atlanta, Ga., for that first interview at Turner. Afterward, she was hooked—on the company and the industry. “I wasn’t sure what would come of it, but I applied for an executive assistant position as a way to get my foot in the door,” she says.

During Smith’s first day on the job, she was offered advice that has carried through her career. “My manager said, ‘Kenya, it’s up to you to own your career—know where you want to go and who you want to be,’” she recalls. “That advice has helped me more than anyone could ever imagine.”

Smith used her time as an assistant to learn about the television industry, Turner Broadcasting and company leaders. “I wanted to know everything—I even memorized the television schedules of our networks. I did everything I could to fully immerse myself in the business,” says Smith, who has since moved up through seven positions within the organization.

## **BUILDING THE BUSINESS**

Today, Smith and her team work with TBS, TNT and TCM’s sponsors to develop and execute custom-branded digital sponsorships and promotions that can be displayed on various digital platforms and connected devices such as websites, video-on-demand and mobile applications. “When I first started working with digital sponsorships nearly five years ago, it was a relatively new concept,” Smith notes, “but today, everyone is doing it.”

With consumers now watching their favorite shows on smartphones, laptop computers and tablets, Smith’s team collaborates with sponsors to develop creative ways to reach viewers on those platforms in addition to traditional television and radio commercials.

Smith also leads search engine marketing initiatives for TNT, TBS and TCM network programs. She works with major search engines like Google and Bing and conducts extensive research to determine which terms and phrases are most likely to appear at the top of searches.

Kenya Smith shares her  
**10 FAVORITE SHOWS**  
across all Turner networks:

- |                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| DALLAS <sup>1</sup>          | FOR BETTER OR WORSE |
| RIZZOLI & ISLES <sup>2</sup> | THE MENTALIST       |
| MAJOR CRIMES <sup>3</sup>    | PERCEPTION          |
| ANDERSON COOPER 360          | SOUTHLAND           |
| CNN NEWSROOM                 | FRANKLIN & BASH     |



“Each one of my roles at Turner Broadcasting has been designed to help grow the company’s business,” Smith says, “which means that I have to think strategically in everything I do.”

### TEAM EFFORT

Smith learned early on that in order to own her career, she would have to be willing to take on new challenges and unfamiliar assignments. Recently, she was asked to collaborate with other departments and outside agencies to decide how to promote one of TNT’s newest television programs, Dallas.

The team was tasked with marketing a show that had been popular throughout the 1970s and 80s to a new generation of viewers. After weeks of planning sessions, meetings, phone calls and emails, the team settled on a marketing strategy that highlighted the show’s original iconic cast members, like Patrick Duffy and Larry Hagman (to attract original viewers), as well as the intriguing, modern story lines that appeal to younger audiences.

The collaboration efforts paid off. “Although the show has turned out to be a great success, there was a lot of hard work that went on behind the scenes,” Smith says. “For me, the most exciting part about the project is hearing how much people enjoy the show.”

### THE BIG PICTURE

From the time Smith was a young girl growing up in California, education played a major role in her life. Smith’s mother, who holds a doctorate in nursing, and her father, who holds a master’s degree in human resources, had always stressed the importance of post-secondary education to their three children.

Soon after joining Turner Broadcasting, Smith decided that if she wanted to own her career and continue to move up, then she would need to return to the classroom. Since earning a master’s degree in business administration, Smith has been promoted several times and has gained more insight into the business world.



“Understanding the big picture  
HELPS KEEP ME FROM THINKING ONLY WITHIN  
my own bubble.”

She also credits her education at Strayer University for helping her to “look at the organization from ‘30,000 feet,’—a perspective that makes it easier for me to work alongside the senior executive team and other departments at Turner Broadcasting,” she says.

“My education taught me to think about how my work fits in with the overall goals of the organization,” she says. “Understanding the big picture helps keep me from thinking only within my own bubble.”

Graduate school taught Smith more than lessons in business. She also learned how to better manage her time, a useful skill as she balances her career with planning her wedding to fiancé Anthony and serving as a volunteer on the marketing committee for Imagine It! The Children’s Museum of Atlanta.

Through it all, Smith keeps that early advice close to heart. “It’s been an amazing ride so far in the first 12 years of my career,” she says, “and I look forward to what the future holds.” ☺

## Brewing New Opportunities

STARBUCKS TEAMS UP WITH STRAYER UNIVERSITY TO OFFER EDUCATIONAL PERKS

By Michelle Davis, Writer



Starbucks has long been known for its progressive benefits for eligible employees: health care, even for part-time workers; equity in the form of restricted stock; flexible work hours; and, of course, there's the coffee.

But in the past year, Starbucks added another perk for its more than 100,000 employees—known internally as “partners”—who work in the United States. Starbucks teamed up with Strayer University to provide employees with the opportunity to further their educational goals both within the company and more broadly.

The goal, says Cindy Demeules, vice president of learning and development for Starbucks, is to help employees grow personally and professionally. “Our partners create the magic—that experience between themselves and the customer and the brand, and that’s invaluable to us,” Demeules says. “We want to help our partners become their personal best. And when you put that aspiration out there, you have to deliver.”

### CHOOSING CAREFULLY

To follow through on that promise, Starbucks surveyed employees to determine which benefits they most valued, inquiring about everything from childcare subsidies to aid for transportation. The survey found that 71% of partners preferred educational benefits to other options. With a very diverse workforce, that number was significant, says Demeules, who also leads the company’s education program, Starbucks U. More than half of Starbucks employees are currently enrolled in an educational program, she says, which makes educational benefits a huge focus for them.

Starbucks was selective about determining which higher education institutions to team up with. Strayer University was chosen for its rigorous academics, variety of program offerings and flexibility for working adults. The University







provides credits for select courses that employees take through Starbucks' in-house educational program, and offers many places for students to learn at 96 Strayer University campuses across the country and online. Employees can also take Strayer University courses, such as introductory business and English for professional communication, exclusively with other Starbucks employees.

"We needed a university that would enter into a true collaboration with us, and not just deliver a one-size-fits-all program," says Demeules. "The more we are able to support our employees in achieving their personal best in education, the more they are poised to take on bigger and better opportunities at Starbucks."

That is the case for Maritza Aubourg, a Starbucks store manager in Duluth, Ga., who is pursuing a bachelor's degree with a concentration in business management, despite long believing that higher education wouldn't be possible for her.

"I thought I was never going to get the opportunity to attend college again in my lifetime" due to financial constraints, she says. But a scholarship from Starbucks, plus one from Strayer University, added up to make education a reality.

Despite having significant management experience from her 14 years at Starbucks, Aubourg says she often sensed her qualifications weren't competitive with others. "I'm a high performer at work, but sometimes I felt that not having a higher level of education held me back," she says. Over the next two years her goal is to graduate and then pursue a master's degree in management and seek a district manager position within Starbucks, eventually joining the company's management team.

## LIFELONG CUSTOMERS

The educational opportunity has a direct payoff for Starbucks, says Demeules. "People who feel like the company is helping them further their goals stay longer, which is a huge plus," she says. "And even if they're not going to stay with us forever, we're still helping to make them better educated citizens, and hopefully lifelong customers. We're bettering the world and the communities in which we do business."

Aubourg says her current educational pursuits translate directly into work skills. "One of the most important concepts I've learned and used immediately at work is how to motivate and change behavior," she says. Calling on theories from her course work that focused on goalsetting, she says she was able to motivate employees by being directive and achievement-oriented. "By rewarding my partners more, I can see a big change in them and in the store performance," she says.

More than 100 Starbucks employees are already taking advantage of the new opportunity by attending Strayer University. Despite the challenge of balancing work, classes and home responsibilities, Aubourg urges co-workers to make the most of a valuable benefit.

"I would tell partners to stay focused, stay disciplined and put their hearts into it," Aubourg says. "There are days when managing it all is really challenging, but I learned not to give up and to push myself. Everyone who works for Starbucks should take advantage of this opportunity." <sup>®</sup>



## Strayer University Welcomes New President

*Dr. Michael A. Plater Inaugurated  
as 14th President in 120 Years*

When Dr. S. Irving Strayer founded Strayer's Business College in 1892, he recognized the importance of appointing academic visionaries to lead the school. One hundred and twenty years later, Strayer University continues to follow that model.



On Sept. 20, 2012, members of the Strayer University community welcomed Dr. Michael A. Plater as the institution's 14th president during his investiture ceremony in Washington, D.C.

"When a university has produced graduates over the course of 120 years, it's fair to say it has been a major force in society, and will continue to be into the future. As president, I intend to uphold this rich tradition," Dr. Plater said during his investiture address.

Dr. Plater leads the University in providing a rigorous, relevant higher education to adult learners that will enable them to thrive after graduation. "The best path to strong employment, job satisfaction and personal empowerment is higher education," said Dr. Plater,

who had previously served as Strayer University's provost and chief academic officer.

Friend and former colleague of Dr. Plater, Dr. Quiester Craig, dean of the School of Business and Economics at North Carolina A&T State University, delivered the keynote address, during which he recalled the qualities that he saw in Dr. Plater at A&T. "He had all the C's and the E's—compassion, character, commitment, ethics, enthusiasm and energy," said Dr. Craig. "Strayer University is certainly gaining a qualified, caring leader in Dr. Plater."

## PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

At an early age, Dr. Plater learned that education can lead to transformative opportunities. Growing up with a single mother



Opposite page: Dr. Michael A. Plater takes the presidential oath, delivered by Dr. Charlotte F. Beason, Chairwoman, Strayer University Board of Trustees

This page, from top: Dr. Randi Reich Cosentino, Strayer University Provost, speaks during the ceremony; Dr. Plater and Dr. Quiester Craig, keynote speaker and Dean, School of Business and Economics, North Carolina A&T State University; Dr. Samuel Onipede, Faculty Senate President, leads the recessional



in Washington, D.C., he attended inner-city schools until earning a scholarship at the age of 14 to the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. That experience became a steppingstone that led Dr. Plater to become the first person in his family to attend college.

Dr. Plater earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Harvard University, an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and a doctorate in American studies from the College of William and Mary.

While earning his doctoral degree, Dr. Plater and his wife worked full-time and welcomed the birth of their two children, overcoming similar challenges to what many Strayer University students face today.

“From an early age, my mother reinforced to me the concept of education as a pathway to success in society,” he reflected in his address. “Access to higher education gave me the confidence to find doors of opportunity and knock on them loudly. I intend to share that wisdom with our students.”<sup>5</sup>



From top: Dr. Plater and Dr. Beason after the ceremony; Dr. Plater visits with friends and family at a luncheon following the ceremony; a gift presented to Dr. Plater features original 1920s-era credit slips, an original Strayer College textbook and a reproduction of a sketch of the first campus in Baltimore, Md.

# Panel: Higher Education is Critical to the Future of the U.S. Workforce

*Strayer University hosts discussion about critical needs of today's employers*



LEADERS IN BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION GATHERED AT THE RONALD REAGAN BUILDING IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON SEPT. 6 TO DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN POSITIONING THE U.S. TO COMPETE AND LEAD IN TODAY'S GLOBAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.

## PANELISTS

**Jamie P. Merisotis**  
President, Lumina  
Foundation

**Charlene M. Dukes, Ed.D.**  
President, Prince  
George's Community  
College, and  
President,  
Maryland State  
Board of Education

**Anthony Carnevale, Ph.D.**  
Director and  
Research Professor,  
Georgetown  
University Center  
on Education and  
the Workforce

**Robert J. Bennett**  
Chief Learning  
Officer and Vice  
President, Human  
Resources,  
FedEx Express



**H**eld in honor of Strayer University's 120th anniversary, "Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today: The Role of Higher Education in a Global Economy," focused on the intersection of workforce development, higher education and U.S. competitiveness in the 21st century. Here are some highlights:

### IS COLLEGE WORTH THE COST? IS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, STATES AND OUR NATION?

**JAMIE MERISOTIS:** The reality is that college is still overwhelmingly a good investment, and we know for lots of reasons why that is true. Certainly what Tony and his colleagues at the Georgetown Center have helped to bring into sharp focus is the fact that unemployment, jobs and wages are all still highly correlated with educational attainment, and what we've seen since the recession began in late 2007 is that your chances of having a job and being an active member of the labor market were significantly diminished if you had only a high school credential or less. Their study shows four-out-of-five people who lost jobs in the recession were people with high school credentials or less. We're going to need a lot more people to get through college to meet our economic and social needs as a country, and I think that's where this debate is really going to be in the near term.

**CHARLENE DUKES:** I do think that this is really a non-partisan issue. If we think that colleges are really worth it, if we know that people are going to be more educated in order to take on the jobs of the future, in order to be good citizens, then we have to have the same commitment to higher education as we do to K-12 education.

**ANTHONY CARNEVALE:** Just let me share one statistic: In 1973, at the end of the post war boom, 70% of working Americans had a high school education or less, and the majority of them were in the middle class. That is, they earned in current dollars somewhere between \$35,000 and \$85,000 a year. If you look at those numbers in 2010, what you see is that about slightly less than 40% of people with a high school education or less are in that middle income range of \$35,000 and \$85,000. The shift is stunning. We now have an economy where more than 60% of jobs that pay are jobs that require some kind of post-secondary education.

**BOB BENNETT:** I think that college is definitely a worthwhile investment. The problem is that it's hard to convince someone who doesn't have a degree, who is handling their personal problems, the economic conditions, family, elder care and other responsibilities, to take time out and to incur debt for an education that has a long-term promise without a short-term return. I think there has to be other support systems in place that will help people make the right decision. Yes, it's worth the cost for the state, it's worth the cost for the country, but is it worth the cost for the individual?



This page, left to right:  
Dr. Jonas Nguu, Strayer University alumnus;  
Elizabeth Morgan, National College Access Network;  
Dr. Charlene Dukes, President, Prince George's Community College and President, Maryland State Board of Education

## HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES RATE VIS-À-VIS THE REST OF THE WORLD?

### ANTHONY CARNEVALE:

The United States has always competed pretty well in large measures since World War II because of the size of our domestic market. We were big. So if we only got 5% of our kids to be good

engineers, since we were four times as large, they could be four times as good and we were equal. The difference now is that it's a global labor market and a global economy, and we're not the biggest around. The hallmark of American competitiveness is, one, until lately, we were bigger than everybody; and then secondly, we were more flexible. In the end, the quality of our human capital will matter. And I don't just mean socially—I mean in economic terms. I think there is a broad, almost visceral, recognition of that among Americans, among business leaders and among education leaders.

## DO EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR ACCREDITED COLLEGE DEGREES?

**BOB BENNETT:** I think all companies, all prospective managers, look for somebody who has a college degree because you really don't have any other way to base a decision on their abilities to move forward, their abilities to be successful, their abilities to drive the company or the business to the next level. So, yes, I think a degree is important. The second part, however, is that once you're employed, what matters is what you have done on the job and what you have proven to be—your areas of expertise, your competency, ability to produce results and provide leadership.

## ARE SOFT SKILLS SUCH AS LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO TECHNICAL SKILLS?

**CHARLENE DUKES:** Universities certainly have to consider the "soft skills" that people need when they go out into the workforce. Are we really teaching it in our classrooms? Do students have the opportunity to be engaged in team building? Academic learning is critical, but so is applying that learning in a practical setting. We should all be looking at programs that teach those skills.

**ANTHONY CARNEVALE:** Now, you have to have knowledge, but, in addition, you have to use knowledge to solve other problems or to learn more. Problem solving is a skill. Critical thinking is a skill. There's a whole set of personality traits that are more important now. The one that always takes the lead is conscientiousness. In all the research in industrial psychology, conscientiousness is just as powerful as education level in predicting earnings and career success.

## WHAT SHOULD UNIVERSITIES LOOK LIKE 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

**JAMIE MERISOTIS:** The higher education system is going to have to focus overwhelmingly on producing credentials of value. Our society is demanding a way of demonstrating to the labor market and to society in general that you have knowledge, skills and abilities. In this knowledge economy, credentials of value are the currency. That's what's going to matter most to people.

I think that institutions are going to really have to focus on determining what those competencies are and what society needs—the labor market and our democracy in general—and align themselves toward that.

The demands are growing so fast that we're going to have to fundamentally redesign the system of higher education. That's a big challenge, and I can't think of a lot of policy areas that are going to require more attention than this one. ☺

View excerpts from the panel discussion at [www.youtube.com/strayeruniversity](http://www.youtube.com/strayeruniversity)

**“I ATTENDED A CAMPUS CAREER EVENT TO NETWORK WITH EMPLOYERS. I MET A CONTACT AT THAT EVENT that led to a position IN MY FIELD OF STUDY, AND I AM NOW WORKING IN MY DREAM CAREER IN HUMAN RESOURCES!”**

— Jamila Simmons  
(MSHR '11)

## UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER PREPARES STUDENTS AND ALUMNI FOR **SUCCESS**

Finding a job can require hours of preparation and research, just like higher education. While Strayer University students are accustomed to putting in the time and effort, sometimes a little support can go a long way.

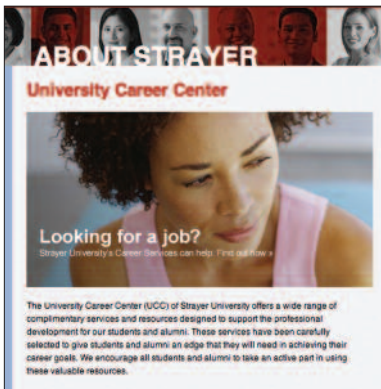
The Strayer University Career Center offers a number of resources designed to support students' career needs and professional develop-

ment. “These services have been carefully selected to give students and alumni an edge in achieving their career goals,” says Margie Decker, executive director of the University Career Center. “Whether you are looking to advance with your current company, transition to a different field or enter the job market for the first time, the UCC can help.”

Like many Strayer University students, Marcus Rahming (BBA '12) wanted to develop the

skills necessary to contribute to the business world in a more meaningful way. “I was unsure of what to expect when returning to school, but Strayer University exposed me to a high-demand industry and prepared me to work in various areas of procurement and contract administration,” he says. After graduating magna cum laude, Rahming landed interviews with five companies and recently accepted a position in strategic sourcing with the State of Georgia.

“The resources offered by the University Career Center helped build my resume and interviewing skills. I was even complimented in an interview with the Georgia Transmission Corporation on my resume and presentation,” Rahming says. “Once skeptical of the benefits of higher education, I am now a strong advocate for it.”



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- Track your job search activity and exposure to employers

**CAREERCHAT:** Submit your career questions online and receive a real-time answer from certified career coaches during the hours of 4–10 p.m. EST; receive a response on the next business day if submitted at other hours.





#### CAREER VIDEO

**GALLERY:** Watch videos on core and specialty career topics presented by nationally known career experts.

#### CAREER WEBINARS:

Participate in live, online webinars on hot topics such as networking, resume writing and job search strategies with open discussion and question and answer sessions.

#### OFF-LINE, ON CAMPUS

The Learning Resource Center at each campus is home to career resources such as books, business magazines and newspapers, as well as a board featuring local career fair information, job listings and career tips. LRC managers are trained to provide career assistance such as resume critiquing and demonstrating online career tools.

**“I was complimented  
IN AN INTERVIEW ON MY  
RESUME AND PRESENTATION.”**

—Marcus Rahming (BBA '12)

## PRIVATE FACEBOOK COMMUNITY OFFERS STUDENT NETWORKING

Facebook is a growing resource for Strayer University students to keep in touch with family and friends, get the latest news from companies and media outlets, and now, to network with classmates.

Strayer University launched Strayer Commons, a private Facebook community to help students connect with classmates, staff and faculty, join discussions around topics related to school and hobbies; affiliate with their campus, student clubs and other organizations; and stay up-to-date on Strayer University news.

The Facebook application is already hosting more than 10,000 students, faculty and staff who have participated in more than 36,000 conversations about topics such as study tips, book exchanges, classes, work/life balance, test preparation and words of encouragement.

In addition to participating in those conversations, users can also join academic clubs and professional organizations, such as the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Toastmasters International, Sigma Iota Epsilon and many others.

JOIN BY VISITING

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# ON THE MOVE

## ALUMNI AND STUDENT NEWS



### Student Success Story Contest Winner Gets Ahead With Education

Strayer University's Student Success Story Contest winner, Angela Christian (MBA '12), was chosen from hundreds of student stories for her determination to earn a master's degree while juggling other priorities.

Christian was a customer service representative for Verizon Wireless when she enrolled at Strayer University in 2009. Christian's manager noticed the hard work and focus she put forth to earn her degree. "The skills I gained through my education led me to be promoted several times," she recalls.

Today, Christian is a technical support supervisor, managing a dozen technical support coordinators. She has also received the prestigious Jefferson Awards for Public Service for her ongoing work through the Verizon Foundation and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"My mother always stressed the importance of education and giving back to others," she says. "I continue to live by those beliefs."

### Florida

#### CORAL SPRINGS CAMPUS

**Stephen Cummings** (MBA student) is a forensic accountant for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in North Miami Beach, Fla.

#### TAMPA EAST CAMPUS

**Donna Colon** (MSAC '12) is a customer service representative for Coca-Cola Refreshments in Tampa, Fla.

#### TAMPA WESTSHORE CAMPUS

**Kristen Kupniewski** (MBA '08) is a contract specialist for the Defense Logistics Agency.

### Georgia

#### DOUGLASVILLE CAMPUS

**Lee Bradley** (MSIS '09) was named the 2012 "Rick Perkins Instructor of the Year" for West Georgia Technical College and a state finalist for the "Rick Perkins Instructor of the Year" for the Technical College System of Georgia.

### Maryland

#### PRINCE GEORGE'S CAMPUS

**Rhelda Easter-Wilson** (BBA '12) is a support officer for the Central Intelligence Agency in Herndon, Va.

### New Jersey

#### PISCATAWAY CAMPUS

**Mike Debiak** (BBA student) is the director of contract management for engineering firm HNTB Corp. in New York. Debiak is also the author of "Leadership: Helping Others to Succeed."

### North Carolina

#### SOUTH CHARLOTTE CAMPUS

**Lisa Conley** (MBA '12) is a premier field engineer for Microsoft Corp.

**Brandi Henderson** (MBA '12) is the co-founder of F.L.A.M.E. Boutique, an online women's apparel and accessories store.

### Ohio

#### COLUMBUS CAMPUS

**Timothy Bush** (AABA '12, BBA student) was promoted to area training manager for Yum! Brands Inc. Bush is responsible for training management personnel throughout Ohio and Indiana.

### Online

**Shari Bonds** (BBA '12) is a research resolution agent for UnitedHealth Group in Roanoke, Va.

**Luis Flores** (BSIS '12) is a network analyst for Verizon Wireless in Arlington, Va.

**Lisa Gentry-Lovelace** (BBA student) is a contracting officer for the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C.

**Glenn Hensley** (BSIT '07) is a senior network engineer for Makino, an engineering services company in Mason, Ohio.

**Craig Stansbury** (BSIS student) is a data communications chief for the U.S. Marine Corps in Camp Pendleton, Calif.

### Pennsylvania

#### CENTER CITY CAMPUS

**Shelba Young** (MBA student) is a contract specialist for the U.S. General Services Administration in Philadelphia, Pa.

#### DELAWARE COUNTY CAMPUS

**Kelley Everett** (MED '10) is a career counselor for Prism Career Institute. Everett is also president of nonprofit organization Youth Angel Scholars Inc. and is chief administrative officer for ASK For Tutoring LLC.

#### LOWER BUCKS COUNTY CAMPUS

**Anthony Pastore** (AABA '03, BBA '06, MBA student) is a senior project manager for the World Trade Center Transportation Hub for Tishman Construction Corp., an AECOM Co. in New York. Pastore has worked on major projects including the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City, N.J.

#### PENN CENTER WEST CAMPUS

**Bryan Boland** (MBA '07) was selected to serve on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Acquisition Response Team in Atlanta, Ga.

#### Virginia

#### ALEXANDRIA CAMPUS

**Jasiri Martin** (BSCN '06, MEd '10) was promoted to program manager for the Farm Credit Administration in Washington, D.C.

#### CHESAPEAKE CAMPUS

**Felicia Blow** (MBA '09) was recently appointed vice president for institutional advancement at Paul D. Camp Community College in Franklin, Va.

#### CHESTERFIELD CAMPUS

**Ricky Johnson** (AAGS '09, BBA '12, MBA student) is a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps instructor and teacher at John Marshall High School in Richmond, Va.

#### FREDERICKSBURG CAMPUS

**Craig Brown** (BBA '12), valedictorian at the 2012 commencement ceremony in Washington, D.C., is a design manager for ManTech International Corp. Technical Services Group.

**Kendra Holmes** (BBA student) is on active duty and is a budget analyst for the U.S. Army.

#### HENRICO CAMPUS

**Barbara Smith** (BSBA '01, MBA '03) is a vice president and branch manager for 1st Commonwealth Bank of Virginia in Arlington, Va.

#### LOUDOUN CAMPUS

**Donna LaBelle-Egan** (MEd '07) is the instructional systems design services manager at Delex Systems Inc. in Herndon, Va.

#### WOODBRIIDGE CAMPUS

**Russell Ives** (AACS '07, BSIS '12) was promoted to technical director for BAE Systems Intelligence and Security in Sterling, Va.

#### Washington, D.C.

#### WASHINGTON CAMPUS

**Koray Kotan** (BSIB '02), Fall 2008 Scholar cover person, is director of operations for the Boston, Mass., branch of American Islamic Congress, a secular, civic and cultural nonprofit organization.

**Kathryn Medina** (BSBA '04), Outstanding Alumna at the 2012 commencement ceremony in Washington, D.C., was appointed executive director for the Chief Human Capital Officers Council at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C. Medina was also presented with Federal News Radio's Causey Award.

#### ARE YOU ON THE MOVE?

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