2015 Session Focuses on Future of Industry, Leadership

The dynamics of working in an increasingly digital industry and the future of leadership were two of the key themes for the 2015 GSB session, held Aug. 2-14 on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. In all, 600 students attended this year’s GSB program, including 45 international students representing seven different countries.

Those themes were reflected in a new tailor-made leadership certificate program for all 209 incoming freshmen, new coursework, and in the words of this year’s speakers during the popular Distinguished Speaker Series.

Drawing on content from his upcoming book, Business as Unusual: How to Future-Proof Your Business Against Tomorrow’s Trends, Today, futurist Jack Uldrich shared insights on top tech trends such as Big Data, mobile banking, crypto currency and his own view on leadership tactics, “The Big AHA.”

Speaker Artell Smith, adjunct faculty at the Center for Professional and Executive Development, Wisconsin School of Business, asked students to think about what authentic leadership will look like in 2050 – and how young leaders of today will pass through the many contextual shifts and technological innovations between now and then.

GSB made a major shift this year to prepare students as leaders, in the form of the new Certificate of Executive Leadership that all GSB students will now earn in addition to their GSB diploma upon completing the 25-month program. Current juniors and seniors – and all GSB alumni – can return to campus for a customized one-week program to earn the additional leadership certificate. That course will be offered for the first time Oct. 5-10.

To begin the certificate program, freshmen took the Life Styles Inventory™ online before coming to campus in August. Students received their individual assessment reports on their first day of class and began interpreting the results, which examine specific patterns of thinking that contribute to, or detract from, personal effectiveness as a leader.

Leadership skills also gained more emphasis in BankSim, the capstone course for seniors in their third year of the program. Students formed executive leadership teams and simulated running a bank throughout their two weeks on campus as they always have – but this year they spent more time analyzing the key skills that individuals bring to successful leadership teams, including strategy, management, communication and execution.

“On the second Monday, instructors asked the teams, how is this working for you? Do you feel you have a cohesive management team running your BankSim bank? We try to keep it as real-world as possible,” GSB President & CEO Kirby Davidson said.

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New classes added this year, taught by a mix of existing and new faculty, included:

- Improving the Efficiency of Banks: Diagnosis, Remedy and Prevention
- Transforming Your Bank from Branch-Centric to Customer-Centric
- Developing and Building Lifetime Business Partnerships Through Insight, Value and Trust-Based Selling
- Providing Effective Feedback, Positive and Not-So-Positive
- Managing Cyber Security Risks in Community Banks
- Leading More Successful Projects: A Learning Lab Approach
- Understanding and Managing Option Risk
- Commercial Real Estate Appraisals, and Cash-Flow Analysis

Updated course offerings each year track changes in the industry. That can mean a new emphasis within a certain core section – such as marketing, bank performance analysis, asset-liability management, or strategic planning – and new classes within various sections. For example, this year’s retail banking core curriculum focused more on growing the banking franchise in the digital world; and the loan portfolio management section covered stress testing from both a bottom-up and a top-down approach.

These areas of focus are not only covered during on-campus classes, but will also be a part of students’ intersession projects.

The transition of leadership within the banking industry has helped generate the enrollment increases the school has seen over the last few years as a new generation of leaders comes up through the ranks.

The school’s primary demographic is still the 35-40 age group with five to nine years of banking experience, Davidson said. But the fastest-growing demographic are 30- to 35-year-olds. Nearly half of all students (46%) work in a role such as vice president, trust officer or loan officer. Another 20% are assistant vice presidents or managers, nearly equal to the 20% who serve as president, CEO, executive vice president or senior vice president. The majority (57%) work at banks under $500 million in assets.

“Current bank executives are making sure that their next leaders have more than just the technical know-how, but also leadership and human relations skills, vision and strategy,” Davidson said.

To stay dialed into these changes, GSB convenes a three-day meeting of its Curriculum Advisory Committee each winter. Lead instructors for each core section, bankers from the school’s Banker Advisory Board, and trustees – leaders from each of GSB’s 18 sponsoring state bankers associations – participate on the committee. Extensive review of the previous session’s evaluations and discussions about industry issues lead to the development of new coursework.

Throughout the session, members of the Banker Advisory Board and education directors from the state bankers associations come to campus to get firsthand feedback on what students liked – or saw as areas for improvement – during their time on campus.
Alumni Profile: Michelle Crume

Bankers Advocate Embraces Agility to Help Members Thrive

Michelle Crume, SVP and Executive Director of OBL (Ohio Bankers League) Bank Services in Columbus, Ohio, describes life as a continual test of perseverance. This perspective has shaped her, motivating her to commit equally to her personal and professional growth. It also drives her unrelenting desire to help bankers navigate this constantly changing industry. So after learning about GSB from alum and president of OBL Mike Adelman, and researching the courses, she was confident GSB could provide her with everything she needed to continue her banking education.

"My GSB experience has proven to be the best investment in my career and on behalf of our members," she says. "After completing the program, I have a great appreciation for the knowledge and strategic vision our members need in order to serve their clients, employees and communities."

Crume, who well knows the challenges of staying abreast of the rapid changes in the banking industry, has built her 30-year career learning as much as possible to stay agile. Having opted for an adventurous path and choosing to work right after high school instead of attending college, she says she soon realized the value of "the piece of paper." This epiphany lead her to invest in herself by returning to school to complete her college degree while working at AMSouth bank in Huntsville, Ala. in 1989. She credits the bank, where she began her career as a teller, with helping her build her foundation by providing her opportunities to develop management, lending and investment experience, in addition to funding her college education.

In 1994, she moved to Ohio where she worked for Great American Advisors, followed by RNJ Insurance and Jackson National Life, selling retail investment services and insurance products to banks and bank financial advisors before being recruited by OBL and Infinex Investments, Inc. to assist its members with establishing retail investment services for their clients. In 2013, she began managing OBL BankServices, a resource for its members who may outsource a particular service or seek information about providers within a product space. OBL works with companies that provide products, services, and solutions to its members as endorsed business partners or affiliate members of the OBL. A 2014 graduate of GSB, Crume says the practical applications of the courses allowed her to understand OBLs members' needs and also connect our members with our business partners and affiliate members when outside experience is sought," she says.

Additionally, Crume says the flexibility of a few of the projects gave her the chance to apply concepts taught in class to real-life opportunities, enabling her to return to OBL ready to immediately implement what she had learned.

"The marketing project allowed me to evaluate our current methods of communication and explore how we would benefit from changes," she says. "We introduced an OBL BankServices newsletter which highlights the companies, products and solutions our members benefit from receiving. The marketing project also allowed me to analyze gaps in our offerings; in turn, we added additional resources in the compliance and information technology area for our members."

Although Crume acknowledges the challenges of the program—among them the 24-month time commitment—she says she was impressed with the dedication and commitment shown by her classmates, many of whom sacrificed important family events to attend.

Time spent out of the classroom was approached with equal gusto. She describes an easy comradery among her peers and counts the opportunity she had to introduce a fellow classmate from Egypt to hard cider as a favorite memory; however, one experience proved to be the most memorable:

"I have a mental picture of Kirby Davidson (president and CEO of GSB) playing the drums forever engrained," she says.

Crume is as enthusiastic about her recreational pursuits as she is her professional. She has an open water dive certification and has dove in Costa Rica, Cozumel, the Grand Caymans, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and the USS Oriskany, also known as the Great Carrier Reef in the Gulf of Mexico. When not engaged in a diving adventure, she enjoys exercising and spending as much time as possible with her children, ages 14, 18 and 31, and vacationing with them at their favorite locations, which include Australia, Cabo, St. Thomas, Costa Rica, and Seattle.

"Life is busy; and I truly value those moments of no worries or distractions, especially when I'm on family vacation," she says. "I love to truly unplug from everything and just focus on the most important people in my world."
GSB’s Kirby Davidson Receives Top Volunteer Award for Excellence in Cancer-Fighting Advocacy

Receives National Recognition from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)

Kirby Davidson, president and CEO, Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was recently awarded the national ACT! Lead Volunteer of the Year by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) for his exceptional commitment to advocacy work to help make cancer a national priority.

This annual award is given to a lead congressional district volunteer who has demonstrated remarkable leadership advocating for ACS CAN’s areas of cancer-related public policy.

“Kirby is a tireless voice speaking for those facing cancer in Wisconsin and across the country,” said Chris Hansen, president of ACS CAN. “We are grateful for Kirby’s outstanding efforts to organize and mobilize local volunteers to champion strong and effective cancer-fighting public policy.”

Davidson leads the Ambassador Constituent Team (ACT!) in Wisconsin Congressional District 02 for ACS CAN, the advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. As the ACT! Lead, Davidson serves as the primary volunteer contact with District 02 lawmakers and recruits and manages other local volunteers to lead district advocacy and fundraising efforts.

Davidson has been a long-time ACS CAN volunteer. His son, Ryan, passed away from brain cancer at the age of 16 after a 10-year battle with the disease. Ryan benefited from cancer research during his 10-year fight and Davidson continues to push for federal research funding so other kids don’t have to endure what Ryan went through.

“Ryan always said that medicine never failed him, but gave him a fighting chance. During his young life and throughout his cancer battle he raised thousands of dollars and fought for cancer research funding to give the next child a better chance and the child after that an even better chance,” said Davidson. “I carry Ryan’s spirit with me every single day to ‘Fight On’ in his memory and am tremendously honored to receive this prestigious award.”

The award was presented in September, in Washington, D.C., as part of the annual ACS CAN Leadership Summit and Lobby Day. More than 750 cancer patients, survivors and their loved ones traveled to the nation’s capital to meet with their elected officials and urge them to make cancer a national priority. Davidson’s passion and determination to advocate for meaningful legislation that helps eliminate the burden of cancer and end suffering and death from this disease is greatly appreciated by all those touched by cancer.