

FAITH IN THE WORKPLACE

Business

ALUMNI SPEAKER SERIES



COBA Chats

Nov. 3, 2023
Room 111

Ivy League Panel
10 a.m.

Entrepreneurship
Panel
11 a.m.

Women in
Business Panel
1 p.m.

Additional
presentations
listed with
speakers' bios.

Welcome!

Today is our annual Faith and Business Symposium in the Carter College of Business Administration. Homecoming is a busy and fun weekend. We know that today's speakers will provide additional value and great preparation for your future as Christian professionals.

Friday, Nov. 3, we have replaced all business classes with various presentations throughout the day. Attendance at the presentations will be required and reported to your professors.

- Attend a lecture during each regularly scheduled Friday COBA class.
- Dress business casual to make a good impression.
- Be engaged and ready to ask questions.
- Bring a notepad to take notes.



FAITH AND BUSINESS

"... inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 Thessalonians 1:3



Brant Bryan

Topic: “The Road Less Traveled: The Hard Road”

2 p.m. | Room 107

One of the founding leaders of Fairways Equities and Cresa Global, Brant is a specialist in creative financing solutions through leases, purchases, joint ventures and other financial structures. Having seen hundreds of different real estate finance transactions, Brant has been called a “technical expert who thinks outside the box.” Brant has provided both financial and real estate leadership for more than \$8 billion in projects for major corporations throughout the country and has facilitated private equity placements for more than 30 start-up ventures. With extensive background in corporate real estate, real estate finance and real estate accounting, Brant is a frequent speaker for real estate and financial organizations and has been quoted as an authority in these matters by the New York Times, CFO, National Real Estate Investor, and The Wall Street Journal. Brant and his wife, Melita, met at Harding. Several of their children and grandchildren have also attended Harding. They live in Dallas where they attend Care Church and are actively involved in many ministries locally and globally. A graduate of the Harvard Business School where he received his MBA, Brant brings a level of creativity to everything he does.



Jimmy Cone

Topic: “M’s & M’s: Mountains, Mazes, Merry-Go-Rounds, Mirrors and MRIs”

11 a.m. | Room 107

Jimmy Cone graduated from Harding University in 1977 with a Bachelor of Science in accounting and a Bachelor of Science in economics. He furthered his education by earning an MBA from Harvard Graduate School of Business in 1981. He is also a certified CPA, although currently inactive. Jimmy began his career at Arthur Andersen, where he served as a staff accountant in the Audit Division. He then transitioned to James H. Cone Construction, where he has held various roles throughout his career and currently serves as president. Outside the professional sphere, Jimmy is deeply committed to Pleasant Valley Church of Christ. He has been an active member, contributing his time and expertise in numerous volunteer capacities. Jimmy is happily married to Andee, a fellow Harding graduate from the class of 1976. Together, they have raised two accomplished sons, Patrick and Alex. Jimmy finds immense joy in the simple pleasures of life. Whether it’s the laughter of his grandchildren, exploring new destinations through travel or gliding down the slopes during a snow skiing adventure, he embraces every moment.



Jessica Counts

Topic: “When Life Doesn’t Go as Planned: A Guide to Navigating the Detours”

10 a.m. | Room 101

Jessica is the senior director for consumables finance with Walmart, supporting merchant leaders for household essentials, beauty and personal care, baby, pets, and over-the-counter pharmacy. In this role, she helps the consumables team with developing and executing their strategies, managing their financial performance, and analyzing and advocating for their investment asks. She has been with Walmart for 16 years in various roles including financial planning and analysis, strategy, store operations, and business and format development. She began her career with Walmart in the Accounting and Finance Development Program that has since brought more than 30 Harding graduates to Walmart. Jessica graduated summa cum laude from Harding University in 2006 with a degree in accounting. Jessica currently lives in Bentonville, Arkansas, with her son Jackson (5). She is an avid Razorbacks fan and enjoys traveling most weekends, trying new recipes and restaurants, chasing waterfalls and fall foliage, and decorating her house for every holiday.



Esperanza Massana Crane

Topic: “Can I Make it in the Business World?”

1 p.m. | Room 114

Esperanza Massana Crane is director of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development Division for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. Massana Crane began her career at AEDC in 2013 as a project manager on the business development team before being named director of marketing in 2016. She served as director of the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Division from 2021 to 2023. She currently serves on the boards of the Central Arkansas Library System, the Little Rock Sister Cities Commission and the UALR College of Business Advisory Council. In 2022, the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas selected her as its Woman of the Year in Business for its Power of the Purse Awards. Massana Crane is also a graduate of Leadership Greater Little Rock Class XXX and a graduate of Leadership Arkansas Class XII. Originally from El Salvador, Massana Crane earned her bachelor’s degree and MBA from Harding. She speaks fluent Spanish and German, as well as intermediate French. She lives in Little Rock, Arkansas, with her husband, Christopher, and son, Sebastián.



Sean Evans

Topic: “Happiness”

10 a.m. | Room 107

Sean (pronounced “Seen”) is the general counsel for Walton Enterprises, a family office serving the business, personal and philanthropic activities of the Walton family. In this role, Sean advises Walton family members on legal, risk and wealth planning matters. He and his team oversee all legal aspects of the Walton Family Office, Walton Family Foundation, Walton Investment Team and affiliated entities. Prior to joining Walton Enterprises, Sean was a lawyer at large, international law firms mostly working on transactional and corporate matters. Sean graduated from Harding University in 2001 with a degree in accounting and a minor in Bible, earned a law degree from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law and obtained an advanced law degree in tax from New York University School of Law. Sean is a licensed CPA in Texas. Sean and his wife Rachel (’00) have been married for 23 years. They currently live in Bentonville, Arkansas, with their three children: Ava (15), Eli (12), and Owen (10). They attend Bentonville Church of Christ. Sean is the president of the board of directors of Bentonville Christian Academy, a private, Christian preschool, elementary and middle school. Sean enjoys watching Kansas University basketball and spending time with his family.



Dave Finley

Topic: “The Hard Thing about Hard Things after Harding”

11 a.m. and 1 p.m. | Room 112

Dave Finley serves as an owner and board member of Leads Online, LLC, a criminal investigations SaaS company in Plano, Texas. The company recently announced its acquisition of Forensic Technology Inc., provider of its ballistic identification system which generates and compares 3-D images of millions of fired bullets and cartridge cases from crime scenes to find links among gun crimes in more than 80 countries. The combined company of more than 300 team members helps law enforcement agencies advance their cases faster — from thefts to homicides and, particularly, gun crimes — and contributes to the arrest of criminals daily. Dave’s experience includes leadership roles in other early-stage companies, finance with Texas Instruments, and finance and national account sales with Sprint. Dave graduated from Harding University with a bachelor’s degree in marketing in 1987 and also holds an MBA from Texas A&M University. Dave and his wife Deb met at Harding and have three grown children and two grandchildren. Dave enjoys fishing and activities involving loud engines and/or power tools.



Jason French

Topic: “Career Development — Getting an Early Start”

10 a.m. | Room 112

Jason graduated from Harding with a degree in professional sales in 1994 and later completed his MBA from Regis University. He has more than 25 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry including sales, sales leadership, sales training and marketing. Jason worked for industry giants Pfizer and Merck and more recently startups including Pharmacyclics and Reata. Currently, Jason serves as director of marketing for BeiGene, a global pharmaceutical company which focuses on developing innovative cancer treatments. Jason has a passion for snow skiing, loves college sports and was a four-year letterman in baseball while at Harding.



Michael and Meg Gullotta

Topic: “Our Journey So Far: The Big 4, Fortune 1 and Financial Freedom”

1 and 2 p.m. | Room 110

Meg and Michael Gullotta currently work at Walmart’s Bentonville, Arkansas, headquarters in the roles of controllership director and corporate finance senior manager, respectively. Meg graduated from Ouachita Baptist University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in accounting and Russian linguistics and graduated from Harding University with a Master of Business Administration in 2018. Michael graduated from Harding University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and finance. They are both licensed CPAs. Meg and Michael began their careers in public accounting working for PricewaterhouseCoopers in Little Rock. Following their time at PwC, Michael worked in corporate finance for the Arkansas-based technology firm, Acxiom, before joining Walmart in April 2023; Meg joined Walmart Controllership in June 2021 and currently serves as the head of financial reporting for Walmart U.S. Since leaving college, both have been involved in various charitable organizations, including Junior Achievement of Arkansas and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. They spend their free time chasing after their one-year old son, Milo; supporting the Arkansas Razorbacks; and traveling.



Joel Reed

Topic: “Whatever is Honorable: Being an Image-Bearer in a World of Extremes”

10 a.m. | Room 114 and 2 p.m. | Room 101

Joel Reed is executive vice president and general counsel of Stanley Martin Homes based in Reston, Virginia. Stanley Martin is a Top 20 national homebuilder with annual revenues of more than \$2 billion from the sale of more than 4,000 homes per year from Maryland to Florida. Joel began his career as a real estate lawyer in large Dallas law firms but has spent most of his career in general counsel and operational leadership roles with companies that have a real estate focus (much of this in homebuilding). Joel met his wife, Lori, at Harding, marrying in 1987. He graduated from Harding with a bachelor's degree in economics and then obtained a Juris Doctor from Duke University School of Law, graduating with honors in 1991. Joel and Lori's three children, Caroline, Daniel, and David are all Harding graduates. Joel has served as an elder, deacon, missions ministry leader, Bible class teacher, and in other roles at congregations in Dallas, Texas; Richfield, Minnesota; Atlanta, Georgia and Fairfax, Virginia. For many years, Joel served on and then chaired the board of Missions Resource Network. He has served on the board of several other Christian organizations including several Harding boards and councils.



Paula Jones Sharp

Topic: “What I Wish I Had Known in College”

10 a.m. | Room 110

Paula Jones Sharp graduated summa cum laude from Harding with a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and management information systems in 2013. While in high school, Paula also attended and later graduated from Rich Mountain Community College in Mena, Arkansas, with an associate degree in general technology. Paula first started her career at Walmart Home Office in Bentonville, Arkansas in 2012 as a summer intern supporting the development of large-scale enterprise systems. In July 2013, Paula started her full-time career in Walmart's accounting and finance development program. During this program, Paula held roles within global controllership, global sourcing, and Sam's Club before relocating near San Francisco, California, to complete her final rotation in eCommerce finance. After completing the leadership program in 2015, Paula was promoted into corporate strategy where she supported executive leadership in the development of Walmart's Enterprise strategy by providing insight into economic and retail landscapes. In March 2023, Paula was promoted to director and is the primary finance support for Walmart's Enterprise CFO. Outside of work, Paula enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband, Logan, and spending time with family and friends



Jeff Smith

Topic: “COBA Chat: Entrepreneur Panel”

11 a.m. | Room 111

Jeff is a professional trout and crappie fisherman. He is the co-creator of the Trout Magnet and Crappie Magnet line of fishing products. More than 25 years ago, he and his partner, Todd Gainer, introduced the Trout Magnet to the public and released the secret that has created a fish-catching frenzy across the nation. The Trout Magnet lure was recently named by Field and Stream magazine as one of the top 30 lures of all time. Leland's Lures sells the Trout Magnet and many other fishing products to all the major retail outlets around the country. Jeff currently operates Leland's Lures and continues to develop new products for the fishing market. Jeff is married to Bridget Johnson Smith and has two children, Zoe Grace(16) and Lane(13). Listen as Jeff shares the story of the lure he created called the Trout Magnet. With God's help it went from his garage to the number one selling trout lure in Wal-Mart.



Alexis Stossel

Topic: “Making Every Moment an Opportunity”

11 a.m. | Room 110

Alexis is a 2015 graduate of Harding where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration. While attending Harding, Alexis served as the president of the Society for Advancement of Management, sat on the student advisory board, was a student ambassador and competed in the Governor's Cup. Following graduation, she began her career in public accounting and payroll marketing and was then given the opportunity to advance into manufacturing. Alexis currently co-owns and operates TopHand Services, a custom manufacturing company in East Texas. She is responsible for the day-to-day operations, job bidding, financials, and all employees. With a mindset to constantly evaluate and improve, she has helped this once-small business reach a multi-million-dollar level in the last five years. Alexis currently resides in Kilgore, Texas, with her husband, Jacob, and son, Samuel.



Jeff Tennyson

2023 Outstanding Alumnus

Topic: “How to Change the World with our Faith and Business”

1 p.m. | Room 101

Jeff Tennyson is president and CEO of Lima One Capital, a leading national mortgage lender to real estate investors. Since joining in 2018, he has led the company's exponential growth with Lima One recently being recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of America's Fastest Growing Companies on the Inc5000 list and led the company's recognition as a Top Workplace and Best Place to Work in South Carolina. In 2021, Lima One was acquired by MFA (NYSE: MFA) marking the 5th company Tennyson has successfully grown and sold. Tennyson has held various C-level executive positions in the single-family rental and residential mortgage lending sectors. Tennyson is a Certified Public Accountant, earned a bachelor's degree from Harding in 1984 and an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1991. Jeff and his wife, Kathy, met at Harding and currently reside in Charlotte, North Carolina. They have three children, Jordon and his wife Allie, who reside in Dallas, Texas, and Kelsey, who works and resides in Charlotte. Tank, their beloved three-year-old black lab is also an important part of the Tennyson family.



Scott Westjohn

Topic: “Living Transformed — Winning at the Game of Life”

1 p.m. | Room 107

Scott enjoyed a 30+ year career following his graduation from Harding with both undergrad and graduate degrees in business. Scott has always enjoyed building things and focused on manufacturing with a number of public and private companies over the course of his career. He worked as vice president for Carlin Manufacturing, Inc., a subsidiary of TCBY Enterprises, where undoubtedly the most interesting product manufactured was a fleet of Wiernobiles for Oscar Mayer. In 1998, he returned to Arkansas and participated in his first business turnaround, taking Spirit Homes, Inc. from an under-performing division of Cavalier Homes, Inc. to one of the best performers within the company. A number of years in Little Rock with Vestcom, Inc. provided private equity experience where he specialized in acquisition integration and participated in three ownership transfers. Finally, he finished his career with Central Moloney, Inc., assisting in taking the company from “destruction to production” following a major fire in 2014. CMI, a company established in 1949, set new marks for profitability under his direction as CFO. Scott is married to Amy Moshier Westjohn, a 1987 Harding graduate, and they have two married sons, Alex and Megan Melchers Westjohn and Austin and Savanna Jackson Westjohn, all Harding graduates.



Mike Williams

Topic: “Leadership in the Gray Zone”

11 a.m. | Room 101

On June 1, 2022, Dr. Michael D. Williams became the sixth president of Harding University. Prior to his appointment at Harding, Williams served as the eighth President of Faulkner University from 2015-2022. During his tenure, Williams led the institution through a time of tremendous growth and progress. A significant achievement of his presidency was the creation of the College of Health Sciences. The crowning jewel of this project was the launching of an autism center. Williams' professional career includes a previous tenure at Harding spanning 28 years. During his leadership tenure, Harding experienced a time of unparalleled enrollment growth. In 2003, Williams was appointed as vice president for university advancement. Harding successfully completed two fundraising campaigns exceeding the goals during this time period. Williams' educational background includes a bachelor's degree in accounting and an MBA from the Paul R. Carter College of Business Administration. In 2008, he completed a Doctor of Education in higher education management from the University of Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Lisa, have been married 35 years.



Jessie Wilson

Topic: “Skills to Standout”

11 a.m. | Room 114

Jessie is the vice president of client engagement and partner of Dale Carnegie Training of the Mid-South. In her role, Jessie works with local and global clients both on the facilitation and sales side of the business. She began her career at Dale Carnegie Training in 2010. She currently serves on the board of directors for the largest Rotary club in Arkansas, Club 99, the board of directors for the Independent Case Management, and the Harding Women of Faith Advisory Board. She is a graduate of the Greater Little Rock Class XXX. In 2016, Jessie was recognized in Arkansas Business' “20 Under 20” list. In 2022, Jessie was recognized in the top eight globally in sales collections for Dale Carnegie Training. Jessie graduated with honors from Harding with a major in professional sales and a minor in Spanish. She lives in Little Rock, Arkansas, with her husband, Spencer; son, Graham (6); and daughter, Collins (2).