

# The Bottom Line

News from the Nathan M. Bisk College of Business

Spring 2025

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## Message From Dean Theodore Richardson

The university's new strategic plan is exciting and invigorates our college's mission with a focus on four key pillars: People of Excellence, Programs Driven by Innovation, Transformative Partnerships and Optimized Learning and Social Environments.

Already, the Bisk College of Business exemplifies each of these pillars.

With respect to People of Excellence, our students have been successful in many case competitions throughout the United States and the world, as you'll read on the forthcoming pages.

A prime example of Optimized Learning Environments, the COB lobby has been completely renovated with a business-style look and feel. I am sure students will be impressed with the lobby's new architectural look in addition to our various classroom upgrades.

The COB continues to partner with other colleges on projects and programs, while our faculty and staff relentlessly serve students through research, teaching and service.

I look forward to updating you soon with many exciting college events as we continue to imagine new pathways for business education.



Respectfully,  
Theodore R. Richardson III, Ed.D.  
Dean, Bisk College of Business

## Panthers on the Rise

### CHARLES "CHUCK" JULIAN '83 MBA

Chuck Julian isn't just a seasoned stunt pilot—he's the president of Wing Walking USA, where he trains thrill-seekers to ride atop his World War II-era Super Stearman biplane.



Photo: Malcolm Denmark, Florida Today

In August 2024, Julian launched a formal wing walker training program at Space Coast Regional Airport in Titusville, Florida, offering a unique opportunity for daring individuals to experience the exhilaration of soaring through the sky atop his structurally modified aircraft. The Super Stearman, which once flew with the renowned Red Baron Squadron air show team, now serves as the centerpiece of his high-flying adventures.

Beyond wing walking, Julian is also an experienced skydiver with the Air Sports Parachute Team, the group behind the skydiving Santa Clauses that make a spectacular entrance at Cocoa Beach's annual Surfing Santas celebration Christmas Eve.

### HARRY HOBBS '17 DBA

Harry Hobbs has been appointed to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, where he will serve a nine-year term through Aug. 31, 2033. Nominated by local business leaders and lawmakers in North Alabama, Hobbs will help shape the state's higher education policies.

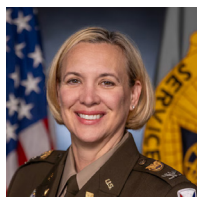


As a commissioner, he will be responsible for approving new academic programs, making budget recommendations, administering student assistance programs and developing a statewide higher education plan.

A U.S. Army veteran with 30 years of service, Hobbs has made a lasting impact in North Alabama, serving as a high school teacher, dean of Florida Tech's Huntsville site and spokesperson for both the Huntsville Police Department and Huntsville Utilities. Since 2018, he has been the vice president of employee engagement for Huntsville Utilities.

### COL. MICHELLE WILLIAMS '99

Col. Michelle Williams assumed command of the U.S. Army Financial Management Command, the Department of



Defense's only financial management command, June 18, 2024.

A trailblazer throughout her career, Williams was the first woman Army congressional budget liaison chief at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller. She also made history as the first female chief of the U.S. Army Finance Corps while serving as the 42nd commandant of the U.S. Army Finance and Comptroller School.

### MAJ. GEN. JAMES M. SMITH '01 M.S.

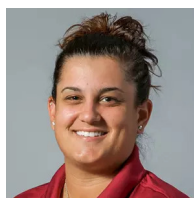
Maj. Gen. James M. Smith was highlighted in *US Black Engineer & Information Technology* magazine as one of the top leaders in the U.S. military.



After earning his graduate degree in logistics management from the Bisk College of Business, Smith has gone on to a decorated career in service and leadership. He currently serves as the deputy commanding general of Installation Management Command.

### DANIELA IACOBELLI '09

Daniela Iacobelli has earned LPGA Tour membership for the third time in her more than 15-year professional golf career. In 19 Epson Tour starts in 2024, Iacobelli made 12 cuts, won her fifth career title at the Hartford HealthCare Women's Championship and finished as runner-up at the Dream First Bank Charity Classic.



Her performance placed her in the top 15 of the Race for the Card standings, securing her LPGA Tour membership for the 2025 season. Iacobelli previously earned LPGA Tour membership in 2012 and 2015, last competing on the tour in 2019.

### THOMAS A. BELL '86 MBA

Thomas A. Bell has been recognized among Virginia's most influential leaders, earning a spot on the Virginia Power 50 List. The list highlights the state's most powerful figures across 21 categories, ranging from finance and real estate to government and energy.



Bell, who became CEO of Fortune 500 federal contractor Leidos in May 2023, has had a remarkable career in the aerospace and defense industries. Before joining Leidos, he served as chairman and CEO of Rolls-Royce North America, a role he had held since 2018.

His journey began at Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin) before moving to McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing), where he served as senior vice president and led strategy for Boeing Defense and Space.

### ROB SALONEN '19 MPA

Rob Salonen, director of government affairs and strategic partnerships at Florida Tech, served as Space Day co-chair alongside Space Florida president and CEO Rob Long.



On March 11, Space Day brought together 85 stakeholders across nine teams, who provided Florida elected officials and policymakers with key information about the state's space industry. Salonen delivered a speech at the Space Day reception, sharing insights on Florida Tech's founding, the inspiration drawn from Sunita Williams '95 M.S. and the relentlessness of the Panther Rocket Team. He also helped facilitate Florida Tech's recognition on the Florida Senate floor by state Sen. Tom Wright during the Space Day resolution reading.

"We definitely have boundless potential here," Salonen said. "The sky is NOT the limit in Florida."

### MISTY MAROT '99, '21 MBA

Misty Marot received the Bisk College of Business Outstanding Alumni Award at the 2024 Alumni Awards Gala during Homecoming.



Marot is the sole owner and CEO of Novel Engineering Inc., Medical Resource Solutions LLC and Construction Resource Solutions LLC. She is also co-owner of Medworx Inc. and launched its first product, worx360, an app that focuses on thorough matchmaking for medical facilities and clinicians. She oversees strategy, operations, culture, HR, finance and policy.



## Staff Spotlight: Jodi Joss

**Jodi Joss** is the director of philanthropy for the Bisk College of Business and a seasoned higher education professional with more than 20 years of experience, specializing in strategic planning, data analysis and corporate relations. She holds a Master of Science in Management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration with a marketing emphasis from St. Andrews University (formerly St. Andrews Presbyterian College). Joss has been married for 20 years—her husband, Jamie, is Florida Tech's athletic director—and has three children: Jansen, 18; Jace, 16; and Jade, 13. She also has a Beabull named Mack.



In her role, Joss will focus on raising funds to support the university and the Bisk College of Business' strategic goals by expanding scholarship opportunities for students and creating endowed opportunities for alumni and partners who wish to contribute to Florida Tech's mission.

1. *What inspired you to pursue a career in higher education and philanthropy?*

**"My path into higher education and philanthropy is deeply influenced by my upbringing in a small town, where my parents—both entrepreneurs—owned and operated multiple businesses. They worked relentlessly to support our family, teaching me the values of hard work, perseverance and taking pride in every task, no matter how big or small. After graduating college, I embarked on my career in higher education within athletics. After six years in athletics, transitioning to the academic side of higher education was a significant change, but it offered a unique opportunity to make an even greater impact. I was able to contribute meaningfully to prospective students, families, donors, industry partners, alumni, faculty and military personnel—experiences that have been deeply fulfilling. Ultimately, it's the ability to create lasting change and make a positive**

**impact on others' lives that continues to inspire and drive me in my work in higher education and philanthropy."**

2. *How do you think philanthropy can enhance the student experience at Florida Tech?*

**"I believe the word 'philanthropy' can be intimidating to some, and it doesn't have a single clear definition. However, philanthropy is something that students experience every day. Alumni and friends of the university contribute to scholarships, campus beautification, lecture opportunities, new equipment and facilities, to name a few, all of which directly benefit our students. In fact, students feel the impact of these philanthropic gifts each time they step on campus or receive their diploma."**

3. *Favorite Quote(s)?*

**"If you are the smartest person in the room, then you are in the wrong room," and "Always strive to learn more and do better; hard work pays off."**

**“** Ultimately, it's the ability to create lasting change and make a positive impact on others' lives that continues to inspire and drive me in my work in higher education and philanthropy. **”**

—Jodi Joss

## Doctor of Business Administration Update

### DBA GOES ONLINE

As the Florida Tech Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program marks its 10th year, the Bisk College of Business has introduced a key update to enhance flexibility and accessibility for working professionals. The redesigned online DBA program now offers an adaptable structure while maintaining its rigorous academic standards.

The program fosters a learning environment that helps develop analytical and leadership skills through live, interactive online classes, while its expert faculty and supportive cohort model prepare students to excel in senior business roles worldwide.

#### The updated program includes:

- 42 credit-hour program
- Part-time terminal degree that can be completed in just under three years
- Synchronous learning: real-time lectures online twice a week
- One required, three-day immersive campus experience
- Classes taught by full-time faculty members who are active scholars in their fields
- International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) Accreditation

"In response to an ever-changing market, we've reinvented the Florida Tech DBA program to be even more convenient, flexible, accessible and affordable, expanding the reach of the College of Business at the doctoral level," said Emily Martinez-Vogt, COB graduate programs department head.

### FLORIDA TECH DBA The Ultimate Business Degree





# COB Refreshes Lobby

with Modern Upgrades



The Bisk College of Business celebrated its newly renovated lobby with a ribbon-cutting ceremony April 14, as President John Nicklow and COB Dean Theodore Richardson welcomed the campus community to the modern, sleek new space.

Designed to inspire connections and support the next generation of business leaders, the new lobby features modular seating with built-in charging ports and power outlets, a large screen featuring business and market news from Bloomberg and a stock ticker scrolling along on the edge of the balcony. The refreshed lobby creates an inviting, professional space where business students can learn, collaborate and recharge.

Originally slated to begin in 2020, the project was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by Dory Sigman, COB director of operations and finance, it was later reclassified as a capital project, and renovations began in summer 2024, wrapping up in late September that year.

The adjoining café area also received a makeover. This update was inspired by a class project led by instructor Tim Muth, who challenged his students to treat the café as a business case. Students presented the concept to Campus Dining, who collaborated with Florida Tech vendor Canteen to bring the student-driven vision to life.

Early reports indicate the lobby and café have been busy with students hanging out, collaborating and enjoying the new space.





“I got an email from the USA triathlon team, and in the top left corner, it had the Paralympic rings.”

— Carson Clough

## Alumni Spotlight: Carson Clough

In September 2024, **Carson Clough** '18 MBA won the silver medal in the triathlon event representing Team USA at the Summer Paralympic Games in Paris.

“Only a few years ago, I thought that people who did triathlons were kind of crazy,” Clough says. “And I honestly still think that. I’m just a part of the crowd now.”

Shortly after graduating from Florida Tech, Clough was involved in a wakesurfing accident, resulting in the partial amputation of one of his legs.

While many people would let an incident like this knock them down, Clough prefers to look back with a sense of humor.

“I tell people: That day, I was awarded a pirate leg on my right side,” Clough says. “The foot is still in the lake, and it can stay there.”

Not letting it slow him down, Clough began his healing journey and credits his doctors, family, friends and lessons learned as a collegiate athlete on the Florida Tech lacrosse team for his speedy recovery.

“In college, while trying to juggle schoolwork, practice and my social life, I learned I did a lot better when I kept myself active,” Clough says. “So, after the accident happened, I just continued with that same mentality, transitioning from a wheelchair to learning how to walk again. Next thing you know, I got an email from the USA triathlon team, and in the top left corner, it had the Paralympic rings.”

In just two years since picking up the sport, Clough had competed to No. 2 in the World Triathlon Qualification Rankings.

In March 2024, Clough automatically qualified for the Paris Paralympic Games by winning the Americas Paratriathlon Championships in Miami, Florida. Over 20 of his family and friends were there to cheer him across the finish line.

“When things do get hard, when I’m tired or I’m not motivated, I just think about all the people that have supported me in different ways,” Clough says. “I am not only chasing my dreams but also theirs.”

Clough partially credits his team members at The Giddy Goat Coffee Roasters, where he is co-founder and CEO, for helping him achieve his Paralympic dreams.

Without an extra push from former Florida Tech professor Scott Benjamin, Clough might not have taken the leap when a family friend approached him with the career opportunity before graduation.

“I’ll never forget going into his office with this crazy business idea and not knowing what to do,” Clough says. “He told me I’d be an idiot if I didn’t jump on the golden opportunity to craft something new and have my own business.”

Five years later, the company has expanded to three locations throughout Charlotte, North Carolina, employing over 40 residents to help create a unique coffee-roasting experience.

“Don’t be afraid to take a chance,” Clough says. “And make it a goal to just reach the finish line—literally or figuratively.”



## Happenings

### COB AND COPLA STUDENTS STUDY IN SPAIN



In June 2024, students and faculty from the Bisk College of Business joined the College of Psychology and Liberal Arts for its annual Global Experience study abroad trip. The two-week adventure focused on the global aspects of conducting business in Spain and the broader European markets.

Traveling through cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Toledo, the group visited several multinational corporations, explored small- and medium-sized enterprises and partnered with ESIC University for a series of seminars and hands-on learning experiences. Along the way, students immersed themselves in Spanish culture, cuisine and daily life.

### 60 PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL COB INNOVATION CHALLENGE



Sixty students from Florida Tech's Foundations in Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (CIE) course participated in the annual Bisk College of Business Innovation Challenge Nov. 22, 2024.

The event, organized by COB faculty members Chris Sonnenberg '04, '07 M.S., '13 Ph.D., Bob Keimer and Tim Muth, tasked student teams with producing a prototype, creating a science fair-style display with information on its target market and product benefits, and delivering concise, compelling presentations to highlight their ideas to a panel of six judges.

The winning team was the ReliefSmart Bracea—brace designed to provide pain relief, improve mobility and promote a healthier lifestyle.

### FLORIDA TECH HOSTS 25TH ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS ETHICS COMPETITION



On Nov. 1, 2024, Florida Tech hosted 27 students who made up nine teams from five Brevard County high schools at the 25th annual Bisk College of Business High School Business Ethics Competition. Two teams from Rockledge High School won first and second place in the competition, designed to encourage high school students to explore the subjects of ethics and leadership, reflect on how ethical principles are related to decision-making in the business world and evaluate the ethical adequacy of actual decisions made by managers. Students competed in two rounds, earning varying amounts in cash and merit scholarships to Florida Tech.

### DATA ANALYTICS STUDENTS ANALYZE LARSEN MOTORSPORTS-SHERWIN WILLIAMS PARTNERSHIP



Master's students from a data analytics course led by Jignya Patel, assistant professor of information systems, recently collaborated with Larsen Motorsports (LMS) to evaluate Sherwin Williams' return on investment through its partnership with LMS.

As part of the project, students audited the Sherwin Williams sales process during LMS events, analyzed orders generated at events, proposed a streamlined process and generated decision-making dashboards for the sales personnel and LMS management.

"Students are often engrossed in analytical thinking that tends to be more technical," Patel said, "and this project got them to zoom out and think about the work from a business perspective."

### FLORIDA TECH TEAM EARNS SPACE COAST STOCK CHALLENGE VICTORY



A team of Florida Tech students and faculty achieved the highest return on investment among the dozens of teams participating in Junior Achievement (JA) of the Space Coast's second annual Stock Market Challenge Nov. 14, 2024, at the Hilton Rialto Melbourne.

The competition featured teams representing area financial firms along with the Florida Tech team and others. Each team had \$1 million to buy stock in 30 fictitious companies and submitted their choices to JA ahead of the event.

The event itself was akin to a busy day on the trading floor of a stock exchange. The "opening bell" rang, and every 60 to 90 seconds was a new trading day. Teams tracked performances and portfolios on event screens, responded to world events, identified trends and made trading adjustments over 60 minutes.

Florida Tech's team ended up boosting the value of its portfolio nearly 124%, the highest return on investment among all the teams. The team from Peoples Financial Planning Group of Raymond James claimed the highest net worth.

"Every second counts on the trading floor. In such a fast-paced environment, timing and liquidity are everything," said Joy Yang, assistant professor of finance and student investment club faculty advisor. "That's why this competition was so valuable. It demonstrated to participants that success in this unique arena comes down to maximizing the efficiency of every dollar spent and every second invested."



## COB STUDENT HELPS TEAM WIN X-CULTURE COMPETITION



Business major Jonathan Moore teamed up with students from Kenya and Italy to craft a winning presentation for the X-Culture Business Challenge at the Academy of International Business U.S. Southeast 2024 Chapter Conference hosted by St. Louis University.

Moore and his student colleagues developed a presentation on why Cape Town, South Africa, deserved to be named host of a major conference, the World Congress of Dermatology.

The team's winning argument centered on how this would be the first-ever conference of this sort in Africa and how it could build its focus around the skin needs and diseases unique to the African people.

## WBC HOSTS NETWORKING AND MENTORSHIP EVENT



On March 5, the Women in Business Club (WBC) hosted a networking and mentorship event featuring speakers Misty Marot '99 B.S., '21 MBA, founder and CEO of Novel Engineering and Worx360, and Joanna Kiel, business development manager for Embraer Executive Jets. The two shared their inspiring career stories and offered valuable insights.

While the event primarily targeted female students, it was open to anyone with interests in business, entrepreneurship and professional development.

The event's main goal was to provide valuable networking and mentorship opportunities for students by connecting them with accomplished professional women leaders and showcasing how networking can advance their careers.

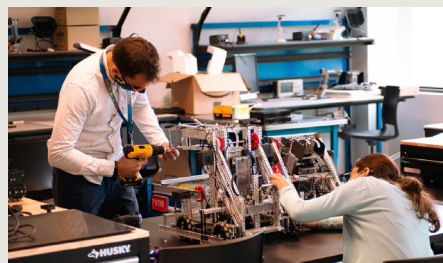
## CATCH UP WITH WEVENTURE

In 2024, weVENTURE Women's Business Center (WBC) had a standout year, continuing to earn recognition and support from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

In April 2024, the SBA honored weVENTURE WBC with two major awards: the South Florida District and State of Florida Women's Business Center of the Year, as well as the 2024 Region IV Women's Business Center of the Year Excellence Award. This was weVENTURE's eighth time earning recognition from the SBA for excellence in service.

During the summer, the center also received \$50,000 in stage-one funding from the SBA's Growth Accelerator Fund Competition. This support helped launch the Florida Techcelerator Summit, which took place July 15–16. The summit featured an open house at the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Innovative Design (CAMID), now Vertex: Applied Innovation Hub, as well as a happy hour at Groundswell Startups, panel discussions a business showcase and a screening of "Show Her the Money."

In fall, weVENTURE received an additional \$150,000 in stage-two funding under the Growth Accelerator Fund Competition, which it is using to expand its proprietary Ignite 360 business mentoring model to better support high-tech industries.



## A+ Accolades

The Bisk College of Business and its programs continue to be recognized as some of the best in the nation. Some of our most exciting recent accolades:

### 2025 Online Program Rankings

*U.S. News & World Report*

Florida Tech's information technology programs were among the standout offerings in the 2025 online program rankings from *U.S. News & World Report*, which also highlighted the strength of the university's veteran-related programs.

This year's rankings assessed nearly 1,800 online programs from colleges and universities across the country. Florida Tech stood out in several key areas, including a No. 36 ranking in Best Online Master's in Information Technology Programs, where it was one of just two private universities in Florida to make the list. The university's online bachelor's in business program also earned national attention, ranking No. 104.

Florida Tech's dedication to serving veterans was another focal point in the rankings. The university ranked No. 18 in Best Online Master's in Computer Information Technology Programs for Veterans, making it the highest-ranked private school in Florida in this category. Additionally, Florida Tech earned the No. 82 spot in Best Online Bachelor's Programs for Veterans, standing out as one of only two private Florida universities among the 10 total Florida institutions recognized.

Overall, Florida Tech ranked No. 142 in Best Online Master's in Business Programs (Excluding MBA) and No. 151 for its online bachelor's programs, where 357 schools were ranked.

### Top 50 Online MBA Programs for 2025

*The Princeton Review*

The Bisk College of Business has been named to *The Princeton Review's* Top 50 Online MBA Programs for 2025 list. The list considered key program elements, such as career outcomes, technological infrastructure, academic rigor, cost and affordability, and a combination of institutional and student survey data.

### 2024 Global DBA Listing

*CEO Magazine*

The Bisk College of Business was recognized on *CEO Magazine's* prestigious 2024 Global DBA Listing. This list highlights top Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programs worldwide, showcasing schools based on accreditation, faculty quality, geography and international standing.

## Expert Perspectives



### ***Slotkin Speaks at Local State of the Economy Event***

Mike Slotkin, professor of economics, served as the keynote speaker at the annual State of the Economy event hosted by Accelerate Brevard: Chamber of Innovation, formerly the Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce, at the Space Coast Association of Realtors March 25.

Slotkin has presented his feature, "Economic Status Report—Inflection Point?" at the event the

past three years. Soft data points, such as eroding consumer sentiment, lost stock market valuation, tariff-induced uncertainty and U.S. Department of Government Efficiency layoffs, in conjunction with an inspection of hard data production, jobs, income and pricing metrics, provided for an interesting and fruitful discussion for a genuinely curious audience.



### ***Peer-To-Peer Borrowing Surged During Pandemic, Research Finds***

Research by Florida Tech assistant professor of business Alina Malkova explores how small businesses sought financing amid the COVID-19 pandemic's unstable economic environment.

Her paper, "Beyond banks: Navigating the shift to peer-to-peer lending for small enterprises," published in *Research in Economics*, developed a model to find whether the COVID-19 pandemic affected small-business owners' demand for peer-to-peer (P2P) lending.

Malkova found that more small-business owners turned to P2P platforms during this time, primarily because they were more accessible and flexible

than traditional banks. Borrowers could access P2P platforms online for convenient use, and the platforms' advanced algorithms gave lenders more information about borrowers, such as neighborhood demographics, leading to a better understanding of their financial situation.

"If you are an owner or borrower and you have short-term financial problems, it may help you," Malkova says. "It helps you signal your situation."

Ultimately, Malkova says P2P platforms played a critical role in overcoming financial barriers that inhibited small businesses in times of limited access to traditional funding.



### ***Walton and Halstead Evaluate Leadership Styles in HR Florida Review***

In their feature, "Motivational Carrots and Sticks Revisited," published in *HR Florida Review* magazine, faculty members Abram Walton and Shellie Halstead explore two contrasting leadership styles: Theory X and Theory Y.

Theory X leaders assume employees dislike work and need constant oversight, using rewards and punishments to drive performance. In contrast, Theory Y leaders believe employees are self-

motivated, eager to learn and thrive when empowered.

In their piece, Walton and Halstead argue that Theory X leadership undermines trust, engagement and innovation, while Theory Y fosters a more productive and positive workplace. They encourage organizations to evaluate their leaders' assumptions about motivation and promote a culture of support, development and discretionary effort.