

IMPACT REPORT

2024 ANNUAL ACTIVITIES



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Steven Elias, Ph.D.

Dean of the Katz School of Business

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we reflect on the impacts of the transformational gift leading to the naming of the Katz School of Business, I am filled with pride for the exceptional work being done on our campus, within our community, and beyond. Our students have been gaining real-world experience by working on projects with industry and local government partners. They have been traveling around the globe, representing the Katz School at conferences, engaging in enriching study abroad opportunities, and touring leading professional organizations like the Securities and Exchange Commission. Additionally, our faculty members have gone above and beyond, providing invaluable pro bono business services that empower local entrepreneurs and organizations. For example, through our workshops at the Center for Innovation, our faculty members have shared their expertise and insights, fostering a spirit of collaboration and creativity that is transforming our local business landscape. Together, we are not just shaping future leaders but also making a tangible difference in our community, while also engaging in activities to support our commitment to reconciliation and Nation Building. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey.

In the Katz School, it's business and it's personal!



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STUDENT UPDATES

Community-Oriented Senior Research Project

Louise Holland's (Economics major) senior research project supported the local Durango community by assisting the City of Durango Utilities Department create a new rate structure for water and sewer services. This project helped inform a new policy for the city of Durango, which directly impacts the water rates community members are charged for water usage. Creating a water rate structure is essential for cities and communities to ensure that the cost and work associated with water and wastewater treatment are covered and that cities can continue to provide service for customers effectively. The results of Louise's research project were presented to the Durango City Council.

"Dr. Deborah Walker and I had three students serve as research assistants for an economic impact study for the City of Durango. We estimated the economic impact of lodgers' tax funds on arts and culture projects. Liam Goettelman, Emaliah Sawyer, and Ryan Smith's work was invaluable to this study. They have helped us analyze data, make sense of it, and finalize our results. Additionally, the students have made valuable connections with City employees, which has given the students a better understanding of career opportunities.

-Dr. Nate Peach, Associate Professor of Economics



Research Assistantship Leads to a Career Path

Christopher Dantine (Computer Information Systems) served as a research assistant to two faculty members focused on advancing research in the areas of project management, project scheduling, and the assessment of schedule risk. Chris was tasked with validating a new mathematical paradigm for scheduling management through Python-based simulations. The project's initial phase yielded valuable insights but uncovered additional research questions that required further exploration. Ultimately, this project successfully contributed to the development of new scheduling techniques and is expected to result in multiple peer-reviewed publications. For his efforts, Chris was honored with the prestigious Undergraduate Research Scholar Award, an achievement made possible in part by the generosity of the Katz School of Business. Following his award-winning research, Chris was introduced to a professional connection in Durango, who recognized his talents and offered him a position in coding. This opportunity led to a job at UST, a prominent IT company, where Chris continues to excel.

"Christopher collaborated with Dr. Huggins and I to create a simulation model in Python to analyze the PERT project management tool, which helps estimate project timelines. This model incorporated expert insights on potential delays for key tasks that are essential to project completion, especially useful in fields like construction. Chris applied programming, optimization, statistics, and algorithms to complete the project successfully.

-Dr. Ivan Guardiola, Professor of Management

STUDENT UPDATES

American Indigenous Business Leaders (AIBL) Win Big at National Conference

Fort Lewis College's AIBL Chapter achieved remarkable success at the 2024 AIBL National Conference held in Las Vegas, Nevada. They were awarded the Chapter of the Year Award for the second year in a row, signifying their continued commitment to excellence within the organization. At the conference, AIBL members participated in both the business plan and elevator pitch competitions, showcasing their business plans alongside peers from other universities. The conference also provided valuable professional development opportunities, including a tour of the UNLV campus and insights from AIBL board member Sam McCracken, the General Manager of Nike's N7 Program. Two exceptional students, Devyn Valandra (Entrepreneurship & Small Business major) and Rowan Lutz (Engineering major), received noteworthy "Standout Awards." Devyn was recognized for "Traditional with a Business Twist" exemplifying his innovative approach to coffee, while Rowan's distinction as "Inquisitive and Engaged" highlighted his valuable contributions to the chapter.

"At last April's American Indigenous Business Leaders (AIBL) National Business & Leadership Student Conference, the AIBL FLC chapter showcased remarkable talent and dedication, earning the National University AIBL Chapter of the Year award for the second consecutive year. Through AIBL conference workshops, guest speakers, as well as events at the Reservation Economic Summit (RES 2024), students engaged with leaders in Native economic development, connected with Indigenous-owned businesses, and gained hands-on experience through competitive events. These experiences underscore AIBL FLC's commitment and readiness for impactful careers and leadership roles."

–Dr. Michael Valdez, Professor of Management and AIBL Faculty Advisor



STUDENT UPDATES

Marketing Practicum Class Provides Real-World Experience for Students and Student-Founded Startups

One section of this year's Marketing Practicum course offered students the opportunity to gain hands-on, real-world marketing experience by partnering with two local, student-owned businesses - Wakhályapí Coffee and San Juan Surf Co. Throughout the semester, students from the practicum course worked closely with representatives from both startups to address critical marketing challenges. Their efforts encompassed a comprehensive range of activities, including brand identity development, product presentation, website development, optimization, and outbound sales strategy development. This semester's Marketing Practicum served as a testament to the Katz School's commitment to experiential learning. Students gained practical marketing experience that will be instrumental in their future careers. At the same time, Wakhályapí Coffee and San Juan Surf Co. received valuable marketing support, propelling them forward on their paths to entrepreneurial success.

"The Katz funding was instrumental to the success of our Marketing Practicum course. The funding afforded students the opportunity to get firsthand experience implementing real world marketing initiatives for local companies. On behalf of our faculty and students, we're extremely grateful"

-Heath Anderson, MBA, Visiting Lecturer for Marketing





Beta Alpha Psi Officers Go to Washington, D.C.

The Katz School had an exciting opportunity for Beta Alpha Psi (BAP) officers Tristan Hanrath, Tyera Claw, and Gibran Silva, along with faculty advisor, Dr. Lacey Donley, to visit the offices of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in Washington, D.C. The trip offered the students firsthand insights into the operations of the PCAOB and SEC, two of the most influential bodies in global capital markets. The SEC oversees companies in the \$100 trillion U.S. capital market, and the PCAOB regulates approximately 1,600 public accounting firms auditing these companies. The experience gave students an enhanced understanding of high-level accounting oversight, valuable networking opportunities, and inspiration to pursue excellence in their careers. This initiative also increased engagement in the Beta Alpha Psi honor society, informed students of career opportunities within the PCAOB and SEC, and strengthened ties with successful alums.

Beta Alpha Psi Visits Accounting Firms in Denver, CO

BAP took its annual trip to Denver to visit accounting firms (Kurtz Fargo, Eide Bailey, Forvis, and Plante Moran) to learn more about accounting careers and available internships. This event allowed students to build their networking skills and introduced them to firms looking for interns and future hires. This annual trip continues to build interest in the accounting program, as well as the Katz School of Business as a whole. FLC has alumni who work at the firms visited, and maintaining a strong relationship with these alumni ensures a continued pipeline of FLC students into their firms. A total of 21 students and two faculty members made the trip.

Beta Alpha Psi Officers Go to Their Annual Conference in Florida

BAP officers Tristan Hanrath, Tyera Claw, Gibran Silva, and faculty advisor Chris Lyon attended the Beta Alpha Psi annual meeting in Orlando, Florida. The honors organization comprises over 300 chapters in the US and Oceania and is geared towards students in financial information majors, including accounting, CIS, data analytics, and finance. The organization focuses on the importance of academic excellence and professional development. The theme of this year's meeting was Embracing Innovation and Empowering Professionals. Professional sessions included topics such as workplace readiness, employment, credentialing, networking, DEI, and the impact of AI on the financial information professions. Beta Alpha Psi President Tristan Hanrath participated in Project Run with It. The Moss Adams Foundation sponsors the competition. Participants are randomly assigned to teams of four to work on a consulting project for a nonprofit organization. Tristan's team's nonprofit was the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, which was looking for advice on how to house many homeless people after a Florida state law went into effect that prohibited overnight camping in public places.



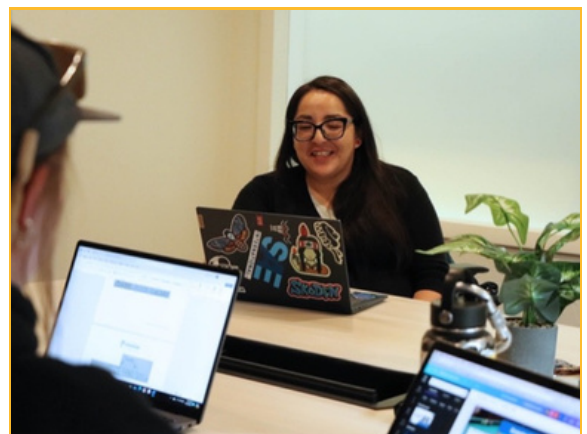
STUDENT UPDATES

Summer Marketing Agency Assists Five Local Businesses

Housed within the Center for Innovation at FLC's Katz School of Business, the Student Marketing Agency allows student teams, guided by faculty and professional mentors, to provide professional marketing services to local businesses and organizations while earning competitive pay. This year, four local companies and one non-profit, including Pine Needle, J.Bo's Pizza and Rib Company, GeekPack, O-Bar-O Cabins, and Local First, benefited from the program, which employed five students from the Katz School. The funding covers student salaries, faculty support, and essential marketing research activities, ensuring local businesses receive top-notch marketing assistance without financial burden. Each project team comprises three or four full-time student consultants, with marketing faculty and professional mentors overseeing their efforts. Junior consultants also received annual memberships to the Professional Women's Network of Durango. This membership offers them valuable opportunities for professional growth, networking, and mentorship within the community. By joining the network, junior consultants are better positioned to develop their leadership skills, engage in career-building activities, and foster connections with professionals across various industries.

"In the past, we could only work with one business at a time. This time, we worked with five businesses. It's always been donor-funded, but now we can just do the work without worrying. We've been able to further our connection to the community significantly."

—Dr. Steven Elias, Dean, Katz School of Business



STUDENT UPDATES

Critical Issues in Tourism & Hospitality Management Students Attended the 2024 Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference in Crested Butte

Eight students from the Critical Issues in Tourism & Hospitality Management course attended the 2024 Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference (GovCon) in Crested Butte. Students were able to network with industry professionals, hear from world-class keynote speakers, and apply course concepts to the real world with breakout sessions on technology, sustainability, accessibility, international demand, housing costs, data trends, and tourism impacts. The conference was an integral component to the course fulfilling its field experience requirement and aligned with the mission of the Katz School to create experiential learning opportunities for students to prepare them for their future careers.

"Thank you so much for allowing our class to attend Crested Butte for GovCon. It was a valuable experience for me and my peers. I learned a lot of information that I found useful when it comes to learning about how tourism is affecting and being brought into Colorado. The information I learned has helped me support assignments for my class that I don't think I would have found online or on my own. Also, I appreciated having a chance to connect with people who are passionate about tourism and get to know what they do. Again, thank you so much and I hope that future business students can get to experience GovCon."

—Alondra Chavez-Diaz, Business Administration major



"As an attendee of the Government Tourism Conference, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in such informative event. The insights shared by the speakers provided a informative perspective on current tourism future of tourism. The conference was a great blend of tourism trends and future policy and regulations that help regulate as well as bring in tourism to Colorado. This conference expanded my existing knowledge and challenged us to think more deeply about the positive and negative impacts of tourism. I truly appreciate the support from the Katz School of Business for making this possible. I look forward to applying the new strategies and insights I've gained in my classes as well as in my own work. Thank you for making this possible."

—Dayna Weber, Business Administration major



STUDENT UPDATES

Katz School Goes to Mercedes in Stuttgart, Germany

Doug and Chris Lyon of the Katz School of Business, along with 14 students, completed a faculty-led study abroad trip this summer in Strasbourg, France. In addition to time in the classroom and travel, the group went on two exciting excursions. The first was to a brewery in Eguisheim, a charming village in the heart of the Alsatian wine country. The second excursion was to the Mercedes factory in Stuttgart, Germany. Here, the students were astounded at the high degree of automation in manufacturing automobiles and the demarcation between jobs done by humans and by robots.



"Students participating in the 2024 Katz School in France Program received a behind the scenes tour of the Mercedes plant. This is the first time that many students had seen an operation of this scale and complexity. This unique experience was only made possible due to the generous funding of the Katz family."

–Dr. Doug Lyon, Professor of Management



"Studying abroad with Fort Lewis College was a life-changing experience. Being in a new culture helped me understand the world and myself better. The people I met and the experiences I had pushed me out of my comfort zone and shaped who I am today. This journey opened my eyes to new possibilities and made me excited for what's ahead."

–Blake Mister, 2024 Katz School in France Student

KATZ ENDOWED PROFESSORS UPDATE



Update from Elizabeth Cartier, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Management

The purpose of my endowment is to lead the Katz School of Business in learning about and contributing to the knowledge associated with the relationship between water and local business in the Durango community. To achieve this goal, my activities throughout the past year have been focused on researching, developing class structure, building relationships within the community, and diving into the water literature. My interest lies in the changing nature of water in Durango and its relationship to demographic shifts in the community. I have also started working on my next research project and am currently collecting data. This research is titled "Viewing the Relationship Between Tourism/Agritourism and Water from a Business Lens." In terms of teaching development, I am currently working on developing a course titled "Business and the Environment." I plan on organizing this class into three sections: Water, Agriculture, and Wildfire. In terms of building community relationships, I have been busy connecting with the Four Corners Water Center at FLC. I have met with the new Director in regard to linking the business school with the Center, marketed the Student Water Fellows opportunity, and worked with a team to review, discuss, and choose the Fellows. Moving into 2025, I plan to develop my current research project focused on tourism/agritourism and start a 2nd project focused on climate change and related discourses within the business realm.

KATZ ENDOWED PROFESSORS UPDATE



Update from Ivan Guardiola, Ph.D., Professor of Management

My endowment proposal consisted of creating a series of training materials for students and community members to attain professional certifications in a series of key computing skills necessary for success in the modern business environment. These skills include using the highly popular programming languages R and Python. In addition, other topics include Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Microsoft Excel. Due to Artificial Intelligence's monumental growth, I prioritized AI over all other topics. During the summer, I developed a course and materials to teach students, faculty, staff, and community members the basics and essentials of artificial intelligence. The course also addresses machine learning and understanding the nuances between artificial intelligence, deep learning, and neural networks. Next, the course reveals how machine learning, neural networks, and expert systems created the foundation model known as Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Co-Pilot, and the like. The course then focuses on learning how a user of these new AI tools (LLMs) can optimize their interactions through learning various prompting frameworks, known as "prompt engineering." Lastly, the course converges on how to make customized LLMs and understand their limitations and strengths. The course enrolled 27 students and two faculty members in its first offering. The students span all disciplines, including business, adventure education, economics, physics and engineering, environment and sustainability, biology, computer information systems, and general studies.

KATZ ENDOWED PROFESSORS UPDATE



Update from Tomasz Miaskiewicz, Ph.D., Professor of Marketing

My professorship has four key initiatives centered around AI. The first initiative involves offering AI workshops at the Center for Innovation for the community. I recently conducted the first workshop in the series, with approximately 35 community members in attendance. The second initiative entails working with the Provost's office to develop the AI Institute, which has been launched and housed in the Center for Innovation. The third initiative involves forming an AI & No-Code Club for students. Students have been recruited for the club's leadership team, and the club should begin its activities in January 2025. Lastly, the fourth initiative includes transforming my Principles of Marketing class by integrating approximately 25 custom GPTs (tailored versions of ChatGPT) to support student learning. I would also like to acknowledge the critical support for AI software, professional development, and other related expenses that the professorship funding has already provided. Simply put, getting quick access to the resources has allowed for the experimentation and exploration needed in the rapidly changing AI landscape.



Thank You for Your Support

Thank you for your continued support of the Katz School of Business. Your contributions enable us to pursue innovative initiatives, develop future leaders, and enhance the quality of education. If you would like to support our mission further, please use the link or scan the QR code below to make a donation.

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