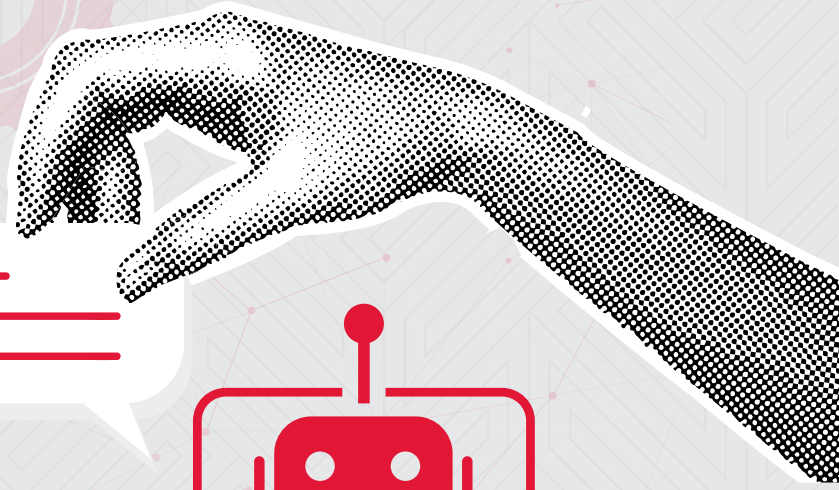
BUSINESS

The Magazine of the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Business
FALL 2026

Engagement.
Innovation.
Impact.

AACSB ACCREDITED







SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE

About the SIUE School of Business

OUR MISSION

The SIUE School of Business prepares diverse, principled leaders to create social and economic value through accessible, high-quality education grounded in experiential learning, applied scholarship, and engagement with industry and community partners.

DIVERSE: Preparing leaders who value and leverage diversity of background, experience, and thought to strengthen decision-making and drive inclusive organizational cultures.

PRINCIPLED: Cultivating graduates who demonstrate integrity, ethical reasoning, and responsible judgment in addressing complex business and societal challenges.

CREATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE: Teaching students to create social and economic value by applying principled, practice-based business skills to generate sustainable organizational and societal impact.

ACCESSIBLE: Delivering flexible, affordable, and student-centered pathways that ensure all learners, regardless of life circumstance, can pursue and complete a high-quality business education.

HIGH QUALITY: Providing academically rigorous, AACSB-accredited undergraduate and graduate programs grounded in impactful scholarship, effective teaching, and continuous improvement.

OUR VISION

The SIUE School of Business aspires to be a premier regional business school recognized for developing learners through creative problem-solving, principled leadership, and the thoughtful application of data and tools to address complex business and societal challenges.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

LEVERAGING DATA AND TECHNOLOGY IN DECISION-MAKING: Emphasizing the application of data analytics, emerging technologies (e.g., AI), and digital tools to improve organizational decision-making, operational efficiency, and competitive advantage across industries.

INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: Focusing on how individuals and organizations identify opportunities, manage change, and create value through innovation, entrepreneurial thinking, and adaptive leadership in dynamic environments.

ETHICS, GOVERNANCE, AND SUSTAINABLE VALUE CREATION: Examining ethical frameworks, governance structures, and sustainable business models that influence organizational behavior and long-term performance. It includes research on corporate responsibility, stakeholder engagement, workforce and community development, and the systemic role of business in addressing complex societal challenges.

10 STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS
including 2 national honor societies

OVER 300
employers engage with SIUE business students through career fairs and campus events every year

AACSB ACCREDITED

TOP 2%
BUSINESS SCHOOLS WORLDWIDE

The SIUE School of Business is accredited by AACSB International, placing its business programs among the top 5% worldwide for excellence and continuous improvement. With separate AACSB accreditation for accounting, a distinction achieved by only 25% of AACSB-accredited institutions, SIUE is part of an elite 2% of business schools worldwide recognized in both business and accounting.

20 YEARS

For the 20th consecutive year, the School of Business is named an outstanding business school by The Princeton Review. "The Best Business Schools: 2026 Edition" lists the School as one of the best institutions in the U.S. from which students can earn an MBA.

49 FACULTY
full-time

54 FACULTY
part-time

2 UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
- BS Accountancy*
- BS Business Administration*

10 UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION SPECIALIZATIONS
- Computer Information Systems
- Cybersecurity
- Data Analytics
- Economics*
- Entrepreneurship
- Finance
- Human Resources*
- Management*
- Marketing*
- Supply Chain Management*

4 GRADUATE PROGRAMS
- MS Accountancy*
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)*
- MS Management and Information Systems*
- MS Marketing Analytics and Insights**

13 GRADUATE SPECIALIZATIONS

MS Accountancy*
- Accountancy**
- Business Analytics*
- Taxation*

Master of Business Administration
- Business Administration**
- Business Analytics*
- Healthcare Administration*
- Management*
- Management Information Systems*
- Project Management*

MS Management Information Systems
- Management Information Systems General**
- Business Analytics*
- Project Management*
- Cybersecurity Management**

**Available on-campus and fully online ** Available online only*



LETTER FROM the Dean

A year ago, I wrote about engagement; the idea that connection transforms a business education into real opportunity. This year, I want to talk about what that engagement is building toward: innovation.

Innovation in the School of Business is not a single initiative. It is reflected in our research, our teaching, our partnerships, and our service to the region.

Through their research, our faculty are exploring questions that matter right now, from how humans and AI systems can work together to how data reveals patterns that shape behavior and decision-making.

In the classroom, innovation means rethinking how we teach, not just what we teach. It also means recognizing that thoughtful people may disagree about how emerging technologies should be used. Some faculty are early adopters of AI, while others continue to ask important questions about where it belongs. Both perspectives matter.

In 2026, approximately 30 faculty and staff in the School requested access to tools such as Microsoft Copilot, building on training led by Cassandra Collier, PhD, in 2025. This grassroots interest, not a mandate from the top, is the model we want to encourage. I have seen the same dynamic while co-chairing the SIU System's AI initiative, where a central question continues to guide our work: How do we move forward with AI without moving recklessly?

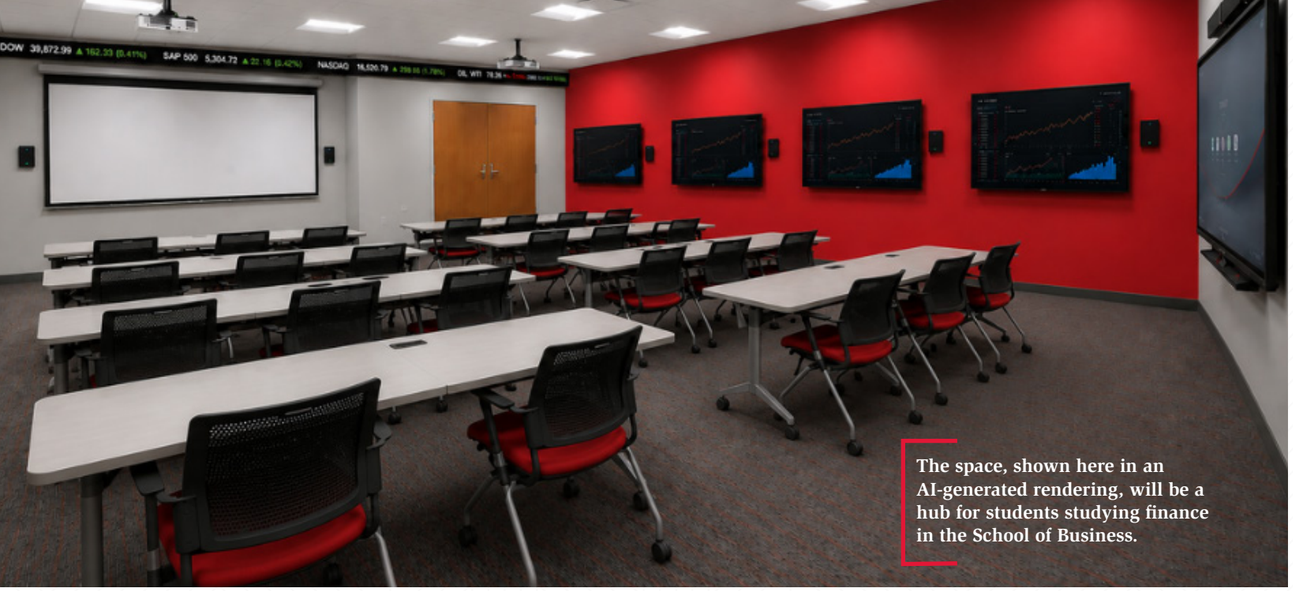
Our faculty also extend the School's reach well beyond campus through executive education programs such as the Construction Leadership Institute, now in its third decade. At the same time, we are exploring new online pathways for international students and dual-degree partnerships that broaden access to an SIUE education while maintaining the rigor and quality associated with our AACSB accreditation.

Our Advisory Board has embraced this same spirit of progress. Members made it clear they did not want to simply receive reports twice a year; they wanted to help shape what comes next. In response, we reorganized the board into focused committees charged with advancing key priorities while bringing student leaders and representatives from other advisory groups into the broader conversation.

That same mindset was on display at Commencement, when Jessica Schillinger, graduating co-president of our American Marketing Association student chapter, reminded her classmates that resilience is not about having a perfect plan. It is about continuing forward when the plan no longer works. That may be one of the best descriptions of innovation I have heard.

None of this happens without faculty, staff, alumni, board members, and students working together to shape the School's future. As you read this year's issue, I hope you see more than individual achievements. I hope you see a community committed to asking difficult questions, embracing new opportunities, and creating meaningful impact in a rapidly changing world.

Mario Hayek, PhD
Dean



The space, shown here in an AI-generated rendering, will be a hub for students studying finance in the School of Business.

Finance Students Lay Building Blocks for New Space

From managing real investment portfolios to connecting its members to industry leaders, the student chapter of the Financial Management Association (FMA) spent the last year expanding opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in the financial industry. Now, the organization is helping shape the future of finance education at SIUE through plans for a dedicated space for finance students.

Designed to support coursework and FMA's student-managed investment portfolio, the space will serve as a hub for experiential learning, professional development, and industry engagement. The space will feature real-time market data displays, industry-standard financial software, Smartboards, and collaborative learning environments that mirror professional financial environments.

The idea emerged from conversations among students, faculty, and administrators about how to better equip finance students with the tools and experiences needed when they enter the workforce. Inspired by similar facilities at peer institutions, FMA leaders started researching what this could look like at SIUE and how the space could be used to enhance classroom learning and extracurricular activities.

> **"The goal was never just to build a room. It was to create a space where students can learn, work together, and get experience with the things they'll actually see in the industry."**
>
> — **NICHOLAS WITASCHEK**
> *FMA President, BS Business Administration '26*

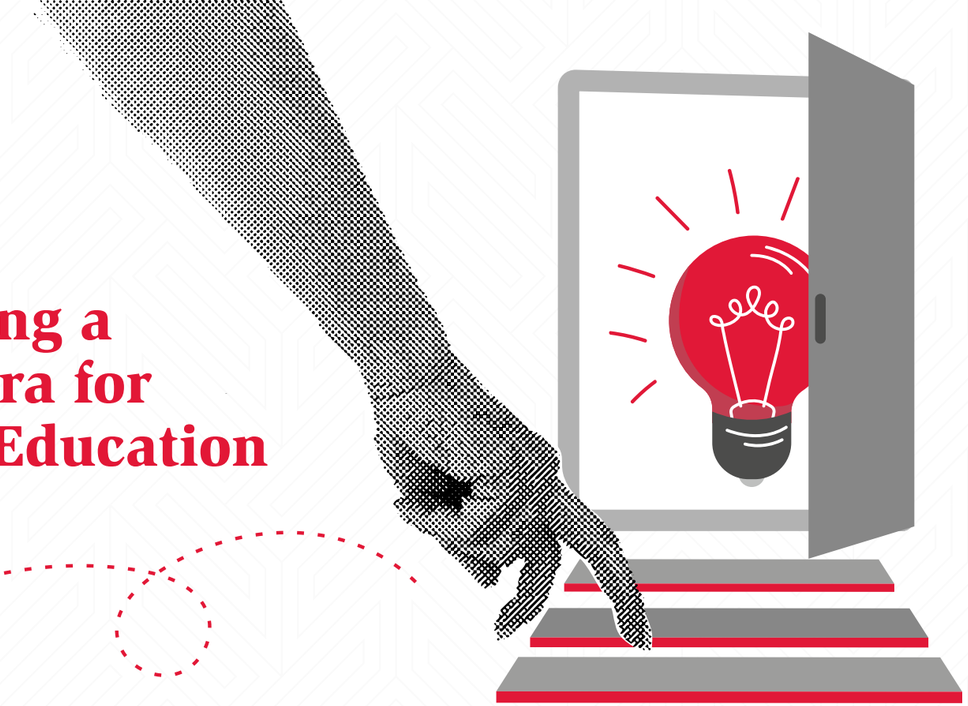
From fundraising to layout and design, Witaschek and other FMA members have played a central role in the finance lab's development, touring peer institutions to view firsthand what successful finance labs look like and working with faculty members and administrators to identify equipment priorities and other wish-list items for the space.

FMA has already generated significant momentum in its efforts. Through fundraising and outreach with alumni and corporate partners, supporters have committed more than $50,000 toward the initiative. School of Business Advisory Board Member Scott Thoma, BS business administration '98, MS economics and finance '00, was instrumental in getting FMA's fundraiser for the space off the ground. An active supporter of the School and mentor to business students, Thoma, an associate financial advisor at Edward Jones, has served as an instructor of finance, banking, and risk management.

"We are incredibly grateful to Scott Thoma and Edward Jones for jumpstarting the fundraising efforts with generous donations," said Ariel Belasen, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Economics and Finance.

Additional conversations are underway to secure more funding for the lab and the technology that will bring their vision to life.

"This is a space designed for students, by students," said Witaschek. "The most exciting part of this is knowing future students will benefit from something we helped build. The impact of this project will continue long after we graduate."



Entering a New Era for CMIS Education

As technological advancements continue to reshape the business environment, the Department of Computer Management and Information Systems (CMIS) is planning to reimagine its classrooms and learning spaces to better prepare students for modern careers.

Building on the foundation established in the Ralph and Donna Korte Cybersecurity-Analytics Classroom, CMIS faculty and School of Business leaders are exploring ways to enhance the student experience through greater collaboration, hands-on learning, and flexible instruction while ensuring students have access to the tools and technologies shaping today's workplace.

"The technology changes so quickly that something considered cutting-edge five years ago can feel like a dinosaur today," said Clay Williams, PhD, professor and chair of CMIS. "Our learning environments and tools must evolve to reflect what students will use in industry."

Rather than focusing solely on replacing aging hardware, faculty are rethinking how technology can support learning. Planned enhancements include expanded access to cloud-based software environments, virtual cybersecurity labs, collaborative learning technologies, and artificial intelligence tools that reflect the realities of today's technology workforce.

One of the most significant additions under consideration is the integration of hybrid flexible (HyFlex) instructional technology, which would allow students to participate in courses in person, remotely in real time, or through recorded instruction when scheduling conflicts arise. Enhanced classroom technology would help students remain engaged with classmates and instructors regardless of location, while supporting the team-based projects central to many CMIS courses.

The vision for the space also includes expanded access to virtual learning environments through partnerships with providers such as Amazon Web Services (AWS). These platforms allow students to participate in cybersecurity exercises, software development projects, and real-world simulations without relying on costly on-site infrastructure. AI-powered tools such as Microsoft Copilot will further support coursework while helping students learn to use emerging technologies effectively and responsibly.

> **"Once we've taught a student to learn one tool, they can adapt that knowledge and learn the next one. The key is making sure they have access to those tools and experiences."**
>
> — **CLAY WILLIAMS, PHD**
> *Professor and Chair*
> *Department of Computer Management and Information Systems*



As the department continues to plan the future of the classroom, its focus remains on creating learning environments that equip students with the technical expertise, adaptability, and experiential foundation needed to thrive in an evolving digital workforce.

Innovation often occurs at the intersection of passion and opportunity. For SIUE students, internships provide opportunities to explore careers that align with their interests while applying classroom knowledge, building confidence, and fostering professional connections that help launch successful careers.



Nick Fiorino

Building the Fan Experience at St. Louis CITY SC

Professional sports organizations are powered by more than what fans see on the field. Behind every match at Energizer Park, home of St. Louis CITY SC, data, technology, and dedicated professionals work together to create a seamless fan experience.

Nick Fiorino, a junior business administration major specializing in data analytics, is getting an inside look at those operations through an innovative internship with the Major League Soccer team. Growing up, he loved playing and watching sports and became fascinated by the statistics shared during games. Until watching the film "Moneyball," he didn't realize a career combining those interests existed.

> **"I'm the kind of person who can't watch a game without thinking about the numbers behind it. Once I saw how data could shape decisions in sports, I knew it was what I wanted to do for my career."**
>
> **— NICK FIORINO**
> *Junior Business Administration Major*
> *Ticket Operations and Customer Relationship Management Intern, St. Louis CITY SC*

Fiorino secured the internship after meeting members of the CITY SC human resources team at an external career fair in fall 2025. The placement marks the first time an SIUE student has interned with the organization since its founding in 2019.

Using tools like Salesforce, he transforms data into dashboards and reports that help sales representatives better understand fan behavior, identify partnership opportunities, and make informed, data-driven decisions. He also assists with ticket operations by managing season ticket accounts, creating game and parking events, and supporting customer service requests. Through this work, he is learning how data and technology help the club strengthen fan relationships and deliver a seamless match-day experience.

"As a fan, you don't realize how much work goes into creating the match-day experience," he said. "Being behind the scenes has shown me how many people and systems have to work together to make everything happen."

While his role is not centered on match-performance analytics, Fiorino is building the skills, experience, confidence, and professional network to pursue a career in sports analytics after he graduates in May 2027.

Exploring Paths in Cybersecurity at Stifel Financial Corp.

Peyton Petit, a business administration major specializing in cybersecurity, is gaining an inside look at the technology operations behind the St. Louis-based Stifel Financial Corp. The innovative internship with the financial services giant is helping her turn her broad interest in cybersecurity into a clearer vision for her career.

Throughout her internship, Petit has shadowed more than 20 information technology teams, including six focused primarily on security. She has learned how Stifel's applications, tools, and processes work to support the firm, and has gained hands-on experience developing phishing training and completing basic firewall configurations.

"I've always been drawn to cybersecurity, but I wasn't sure which area I wanted to specialize in," Petit said. "Shadowing six different security-focused teams has helped me understand the landscape much more clearly and identify the direction I want to take after graduation."

Preparation for her internship at Stifel began in the School of Business, where its coursework gave her the foundational knowledge to enter her role confidently. Meanwhile, an instructor, Jeff Laughlin, associate director of information technology services and chief information security officer, helped Petit build connections within the field. Laughlin introduced her to a student who had previously completed Stifel's internship program and joined the firm full-time after graduation. Laughlin invited her to assist in the development of a digital forensic lab project that has the potential to be incorporated into an SIUE course.

"This hands-on experience has been extremely valuable, and it's something I've been able to discuss confidently during my internship," she said.

Petit has discovered that her professional success often depends on more than her technical ability. During a panel with Stifel's IT leaders, she was reminded of the value of maintaining a positive outlook.

"You can't control everything that happens, but you can control how you respond," she said. "This perspective has already shaped how I approach challenges."

As Petit considers her future leading up to her graduation in December 2026, she hopes to continue developing her technical skills while contributing to meaningful security improvements.


Peyton Petit

> **"My internship with Stifel has shown me the type of environment where I thrive and has made me more excited to start my career."**
>
> **— PEYTON PETIT**
> *Senior Business Administration Major*

Student Innovation in Action

Through professional development, industry connections, and hands-on learning, School of Business student organizations help students explore emerging technologies, build in-demand skills, and apply their knowledge beyond the classroom.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Financial Management Association (FMA) connects students with industry professionals, career-ready skills, and hands-on experience beyond the classroom. During one of its most active years, FMA hosted company visits, alumni networking events, career fairs, and guest speakers from leading financial firms.

One highlight came when FMA members traveled to New York City to compete in the Quinnipiac GAME Forum's global portfolio competition. Students toured Wells Fargo and the NASDAQ MarketSite, met with industry professionals, and explored careers in finance. The experience complemented FMA's student-managed investment portfolio, where members apply financial concepts to real-world market conditions.

"We've focused on creating opportunities for students to connect with industry partners, gain real-world experience, and explore career paths," said outgoing FMA president Nicholas Witaschek, BS business administration, finance and computer information systems specializations '26. "We're helping students develop skills, build confidence, and prepare for what comes next."



AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Building professional connections, crafting real-world marketing strategies, and engaging in service throughout the community were at the center of a busy year for the student chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA).

Led by co-presidents Jessica Schillinger, BS business administration '26, and Noah Kull, BS mass communications '26, AMA organized company tours and met with leaders from 1st Phorm and Nestlé Purina. The group also hosted Google Ads, Canva, and resume-building workshops to develop practical marketing skills.

"AMA is so valuable because we're putting students directly in front of employers and helping them build real relationships," said Schillinger. "The students who are involved in AMA have a step ahead, and those connections make a big difference."

The chapter also earned its strongest finish in the AMA International Collegiate Conference Case Competition, advancing to the semifinals with a marketing strategy for Major League Baseball (MLB) focused on connecting with Gen Z audiences and improving access to game broadcasts.



ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) helps students bridge business and technology through professional development and hands-on experiences. As lead organizer of The Other 40 Business Fair and Pitch Competition, AIS brought together nearly 200 attendees and 36 student teams to showcase startup ideas and collaborate across disciplines.

AIS also hosted an Amazon Web Services (AWS) workshop that introduced students to one of the world's leading cloud computing platforms free of charge, saving participants nearly $500 in training costs.

"Bringing AWS professionals to campus gave our students direct experience with the tools they may use in their future careers," said Allie Gross, BS business administration '26, former AIS president. "Being able to provide that level of training to students at no cost was incredible."

Building Global Pathways for a Business Education

For decades, international education has largely depended on students crossing borders to study abroad. The School of Business is exploring whether the SIUE experience can be brought directly to those students through new international partnerships, dual-degree opportunities, and online learning models. While many of these initiatives remain in development, they represent a strategic effort to create more flexible pathways for students regardless of location.

One area of exploration is the development of a 1+1 Master of Business Administration program. Under this model, students would complete approximately half of their graduate coursework at their home institution and the remaining half at SIUE, earning degrees from both universities. The School has established its first agreement with the Universidad Central del Ecuador and is exploring similar opportunities with institutions in India and China.

"We're looking closely at how to extend the School of Business experience beyond our campus through new online pathways for international students and dual-degree partnerships," said Dean Hayek. "These are the kinds of forward-looking investments that help keep our programs strong and relevant for the long term while maintaining the rigor and quality associated with our AACSB accreditation."

School leaders believe these partnerships can enrich the educational experience for all students.

> **"When a student collaborates with students from another country, it exposes them to different ways of thinking and doing business."**
>
> — **JAMES MONAHAN, EdD**
> *Director of International Admissions*

"It gives students the global perspective that they are unable to get by simply reading a book or watching a movie," said James Monahan, EdD, Director of International Admissions.

The School is also exploring whether portions of these programs could be delivered online, creating opportunities for students who face barriers related to travel costs, visa availability, or geographic distance while still allowing them to engage with SIUE faculty and classmates.

Before these initiatives can move forward, significant work remains. Faculty and staff are evaluating whether students abroad can reliably access course materials and digital learning platforms. The University must also consider privacy regulations, internet restrictions, student support services, and academic policies.

Despite those challenges, School leaders see significant potential. Whether students connect in Edwardsville or through virtual classrooms, these partnerships can broaden perspectives, strengthen communication skills, and prepare students for careers that increasingly require global collaboration.

Together, these efforts reflect a broader vision of creating innovative pathways that connect students, institutions, and perspectives across borders.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR AN AI-DRIVEN FUTURE

As artificial intelligence reshapes the modern workplace, the School of Business is proactively updating its curriculum to ensure graduates are prepared to navigate this evolving landscape.

"The School of Business is undertaking one of the most significant curricular transformations in its history," said Edmund Hershberger, PhD, MBA, Associate Dean of the School of Business. "By embedding digital agility, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies into our undergraduate programs, we are preparing students to navigate change, leverage innovation, and create value in organizations that will increasingly depend on human and artificial intelligence working together."

This curricular transformation aims to build the technical fluency, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making skills students need through:

- Embedding "Digital Agility and Technology Application" as a core learning goal within the redesigned business core curriculum.
- Integrating AI tools and emerging technologies across departments.
- Providing hands-on learning experiences that teach students to evaluate AI outputs, recognize limitations, and use technology ethically and responsibly.
- Expanding coursework in artificial intelligence and machine learning, including CMIS 330: Machine Learning for Business.
- Partnering with the School of Engineering on interdisciplinary AI and machine learning projects.
- Encouraging faculty innovation through course redesign and thoughtful adoption of emerging technologies.
- Advancing research using AI in areas such as machine learning, experimental design, image analysis, and professional decision-making.
- Strengthening student engagement and problem-solving through applied, real-world AI experiences.

Innovative Gifts and Funds

ACCOUNTING EDUCATORS LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

The School of Business is establishing the Accounting Educators Legacy Scholarship to honor the retired and emeritus accounting faculty whose teaching, mentorship, and dedication have shaped generations of SIUE graduates.

The scholarship will support undergraduate accounting majors who have demonstrated academic achievement, with preference given to students with financial need. By investing in future accountants, the fund celebrates the lasting impact of the faculty members who helped launch countless careers and reinforces the School's commitment to preparing the next generation of business leaders.

> **"This scholarship is an investment in generations we may never meet but whose value we believe in. By giving back, we express our support for the University, the School of Business, the Department of Accounting, and the faculty and staff who will carry on the tradition to deliver strong educational value."**
>
> — **STEVE BRANT**
> *Instructor, Department of Accounting*

Support the Accounting Educators Legacy Scholarship
Contact Megan Carbello, Senior Director of Development
mcarbel@siue.edu | 618-650-2317

BUSINESS TRANSITIONS PROGRAM

The Business Transitions Program prepares students for the transition from college to career through a required two-course sequence. Students participate in networking events, etiquette dinners, resume and interview preparation, career planning, and professional development workshops.

"Along with their academic preparation, students' experiences in our Business Transitions courses give them confidence, practical skills, and real-world perspectives resulting in meaningful career preparation," said Norris Manning, EdD, director of Academic Services.

Donor support helps sustain these experiences, ensuring every business student develops professionally before entering the workforce.

Support the Business Transitions Program
connect.siue.edu/g/siue-business-transitions



Executive Education

The School of Business's Executive Education programs help professionals strengthen leadership abilities, build technical expertise, and navigate emerging workplace challenges through hands-on, industry-informed training.

"Our Executive Education program is designed to meet organizations where they are. We partner with employers to create customized training experiences that address their specific workforce needs, helping professionals develop the skills and confidence to drive success within their organization," said Kristine Jarden, director of Executive Education.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Workshops, the annual Project Management Symposium, and How to Manage Projects equip current and aspiring leaders with planning, communication, execution, and team leadership skills. The School also offers a project management concentration within its MBA and MS Management Information Systems graduate programs.

CONSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Developed with the SIUE School of Engineering, the nine-week Construction Leadership Institute prepares emerging architecture, engineering, and construction professionals through leadership development, strategic planning, communication, and team building.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The School of Business also delivers customized training programs tailored to specific workforce needs. Topics include leadership, management, communication, team development, and other business-critical skills. Programs can be delivered on campus or at client locations.

Together, SIUE's Executive Education programs extend the School's impact beyond the classroom, supporting workforce development and lifelong learning throughout the region and beyond.

siue.edu/business/executive-education



School of Business Dean Mario Hayek, PhD, connects with industry leaders and School of Business Advisory Board members, strengthening relationships that help inform the School's programs and student opportunities.

Advisory Boards: Reimagined

The School of Business has reimagined its advisory boards through the development of focused committees that unite alumni, business leaders, and faculty around today's business education challenges. Their collaboration strengthens student success, deepens industry partnerships, and helps position the School for the future.



INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Industry Engagement Committee helps shape curriculum, expand experiential learning, and identify the skills employers seek.

Co-chaired by Faizan Mustafa, MBA '01, and Ann Gorman, the committee strengthens connections between the School and the business community.

"I wanted to give back to SIUE like I had seen other industry leaders come back and give lectures and share their experience," Mustafa said. "These conversations enriched my time at SIUE."

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Student Engagement Committee strengthens how students connect with the School throughout their academic journey.

Chaired by Drew Foster, BS economics and finance '12, the committee explores experiential learning, student feedback, industry partnerships, and emerging technologies shaping student success.

"We are rethinking what student engagement looks like and working to understand how to properly support students from their first year at SIUE through graduation and beyond," Foster said. "We know engagement takes many forms, and when we get engagement right, it will fuel so many of the outcomes we want for our students and the School of Business."

Sergio Darabcsek, a senior business administration (computer information systems) student and president of the Association for Information Systems student organization, is among the many School of Business students gaining hands-on experience by connecting with peers at SIUE and industry leaders through the School's advisory boards.



Amanda Russell, Internship Coordinator, School of Business

Improving Advising Through Innovation

While conversations about artificial intelligence often focus on future possibilities, Caleb Pecue, an undergraduate academic advisor in the School of Business, is using AI technology to solve advising challenges today.

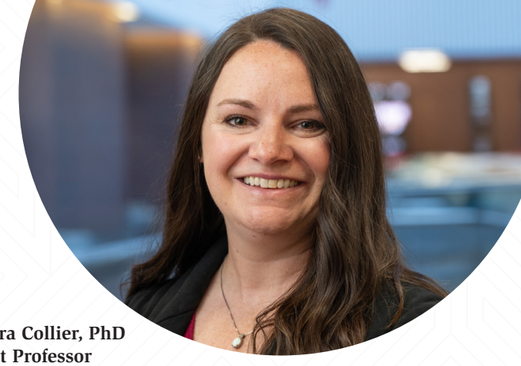
Leveraging AI-assisted coding tools, ChatGPT, Microsoft Power Apps, and other workflow automation resources, Pecue has streamlined operations to help enhance student experiences. His innovations include developing tools that automate advising workflows, generate reports, track course recommendations, and support long-term course planning, reducing time spent on repetitive administrative tasks.

"The real opportunity with AI is the reduction of repetitive administrative support so we can spend more time on the human side of student support," said Pecue.

> **"The most meaningful part of advising isn't telling students which classes to take. It's helping them navigate their goals, challenges, and next steps."**
>
> — **CALEB PECUE**
> *Undergraduate Academic Advisor, School of Business*

While Pecue does not support AI-generated creative work, he sees value in using the technology responsibly to build operational tools that improve efficiency and create more opportunities for meaningful student engagement across the School of Business.

Reimagining Classroom Learning with AI



Cassandra Collier, PhD
Assistant Professor
Computer Management and Information Systems

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape industries and the world at large, faculty in the School of Business are exploring innovative ways to help students develop the skills needed in AI-enabled workspaces.

Helping lead that charge is Cassandra Collier, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Computer Management and Information Systems, whose work focuses on integrating AI into classroom learning while ensuring that her students and colleagues carefully navigate its opportunities and challenges.

Collier's interest in AI, along with support from School of Business Dean Mario Hayek, PhD, led her to Harvard Business School's Teaching with AI program, an intensive professional development seminar focused on helping educators integrate AI into their courses. Her experience reinforced a perspective she now brings into her classroom: AI should not replace learning opportunities but should enhance them.

"There are valid concerns about AI, but there are also incredible opportunities," said Collier. "If we can take away some of the busy work that we have found isn't impactful for learning, it can help open the door for our students to go farther and engage with course concepts in more meaningful ways."

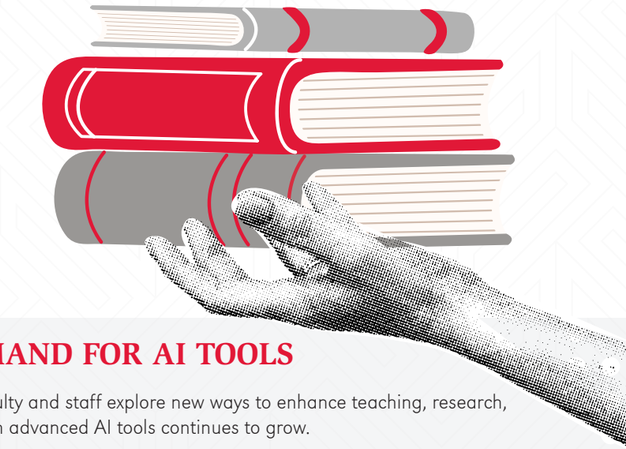
In her data analytics and data visualization courses, Collier has used AI to create immersive learning experiences that would have been difficult or impossible to develop otherwise. One recent exercise used synthetic, AI-generated datasets to simulate how predictive models change over time, allowing her students to experience complex analytical concepts through a hands-on decision-making game rather than simply reading about them. The result was a more engaged classroom experience that encouraged her students to apply theory, analyze outcomes, and adapt strategies in real time.

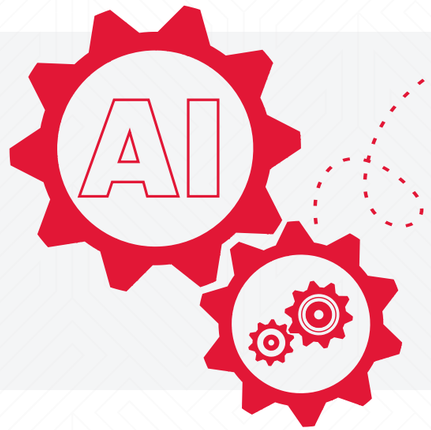
Beyond her own courses, Collier has become a resource for faculty across campus, helping to lead workshops through the Center for Faculty Development and Innovation on topics ranging from AI literacy and prompt engineering to designing assignments that remain effective in the age of generative AI. She recently accepted an opportunity to lead and facilitate discussions among faculty as the center's AI Teaching Collaborative Fellow. Her additional research on AI, particularly on how it impacts the field of data analytics, was recently published in MIS Quarterly Executive.

Rather than teaching AI as something to avoid at all costs, Collier believes students must learn how to use it responsibly, ethically, and critically.

"It would be irresponsible for me to graduate students who do not have an AI skill set," said Collier. "Industries are using these tools, and our students need to understand not only how to use them, but how to evaluate the results and know when human judgment is still essential."

As AI continues to evolve, Collier sees it not as a replacement for education but as a catalyst for reimagining how students will learn, solve problems, and prepare for the future of business.





A RISING DEMAND FOR AI TOOLS

As School of Business faculty and staff explore new ways to enhance teaching, research, and operations, interest in advanced AI tools continues to grow.

As a Microsoft campus, SIUE provides access to the standard version of Copilot, but demand for expanded capabilities is increasing. This year, approximately 30 business faculty and staff members requested access to Copilot's paid tier, prompting School leaders to explore expanding subscriptions.

"Our faculty isn't waiting to be told that AI matters. They're asking for better tools so they can use it well," said Mario Hayek, PhD, dean of the School of Business. "This kind of grassroots interest is exactly what should be driving technology decisions in a business school."

Faculty Research

Understanding Human-AI Partnerships

Each day, consumers ask AI to answer questions, recommend products, organize schedules, and more. Ripinka Patil, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Management and Marketing, is examining how relationships between consumers and AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and other large language models are evolving.

In an article recently published in the Journal of Consumer Psychology, Patil and colleagues from Louisiana State University and the University of Florida explored a rapidly developing area at the intersection of marketing and psychology: the partnerships forming between humans and AI.

> **"We are witnessing a perceptual shift where people are no longer viewing AI as simply a tool. They are beginning to view it as a partner."**
>
> — **RIPINKA PATIL, PHD**
> *Assistant Professor, Department of Management and Marketing*

Patil and her collaborators developed a framework that categorizes human-AI partnerships into three distinct types:

- AI assistants that help complete everyday tasks
- AI agents that collaborate with users to perform complex, specialized work
- AI companions that provide emotional and social support

This shift is driven by more than technological advancement. Patil's research suggests that humans are naturally inclined to seek validation, trust, and social connection, making AI systems especially influential when they mimic conversational behavior.

Repeated interactions can strengthen those relationships in ways that resemble human connections.

"Just like human relationships, the more you lean into it, the stronger the relationship becomes," Patil said.

As those bonds deepen, consumers may rely on AI not only for information but also for reassurance and emotional support. In some cases, that dependence could create unintended consequences, particularly for vulnerable populations or individuals seeking social validation.

Patil's work suggests people are more likely to trust AI systems that exhibit humanlike characteristics, even when they understand the technology can make mistakes.

"I'm fascinated by human behavior," Patil said. "I want to understand why people make the decisions they do and how those decisions are changing."

As consumers increasingly turn to AI for decision-making, businesses may eventually market not only to people but also to the AI systems acting on their behalf. At the same time, policymakers grapple with questions surrounding transparency, privacy, and consumer protection.

Rather than focusing solely on what AI can do, Patil's research asks what humans will allow AI to become. As these relationships evolve, understanding the psychology behind them may prove just as important as technology itself.



Ripinka Patil, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Management and Marketing



Shivendu Singh, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Management and Information Systems



Finding Hidden Patterns in Data and Reshaping Human Behavior with AI

Shivendu Singh, PhD, is exploring how AI can accelerate the research process and reveal insights into human interactions with AI-powered technology.

"AI can be used for both automation and augmentation," said Singh, assistant professor in the Department of Computer Management and Information Systems. "Automation can improve efficiency, while augmentation helps humans uncover unique insights and make better decisions."

One of Singh's studies, recently accepted to the Journal of Business Venturing Insights, demonstrates how large language models can efficiently analyze hundreds of thousands of data points and uncover insights that may otherwise remain hidden. The project examined more than 386,000 entrepreneurial loan narratives from Kiva, a global microlending platform, to determine whether the stories that attract lenders could predict whether borrowers will successfully repay their loans.

Using AI and SIUE's high-performance computing resources, Singh analyzed the psychological motivations embedded within the loan narratives. The analysis revealed a nuanced pattern that would have been difficult to detect through traditional research methods: the stories most persuasive to lenders were not always the strongest indicators of repayment, with borrowers emphasizing adaptability and openness to change proving more likely to repay their loans than those focused on stability and tradition.

"AI can help us identify patterns or anomalies in data that were not visible or identifiable in the earlier world," said Singh.

In another study, Singh explored how AI may be reshaping human behavior by examining online reviews of products such as smart speakers and voice assistants. He found that consumers often personify these devices, describing them in human terms and forming emotional attachments to them.

> **"People often form connections with objects, but I am seeing it happen more with AI-powered technologies. People get angry or shower them with affection, and they begin to treat these devices as if they were people rather than tools."**
>
> — **SHIVENDU SINGH, PHD**
> *Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Management and Information Systems*

Surprisingly, these humanized reviews were often viewed as less helpful by other consumers. While people may feel a stronger connection to AI-powered products, Singh's research suggests emotional language can reduce a review's perceived objectivity and credibility, highlighting a growing tension as AI becomes more integrated into everyday life.

By studying AI from both perspectives, Singh is helping researchers understand not only how AI can expand the boundaries of discovery, but also how it is reshaping the relationship between humans and technology.

FAIZAN MUSTAFA

Embracing What's Next



Faizan Mustafa

Over the past 25 years, Faizan Mustafa, MBA '01, has built a career at the intersection of business, technology, and innovation. From leading digital transformation initiatives around the world to launching AI-focused ventures, Mustafa has helped organizations adapt to what's next. Today, he's bringing those experiences back to SIUE to help prepare future business leaders.

Originally from Pakistan, Mustafa arrived at SIUE in 1999 after hearing about the University's business programs and diverse learning environment. He found an educational experience that mirrored the realities of the global workplace.

> **"Working in a diverse environment at SIUE helped me prepare for what is expected in the corporate environment. You will encounter people from all walks of life, and you will need to work together as a team."**
>
> — **FAIZAN MUSTAFA**
> Master of Business Administration '01

Those lessons launched a career that would eventually span more than 27 countries and several industries, including telecommunications, consulting, manufacturing, financial services, and emerging technologies. Mustafa has held leadership roles at AT&T, KPMG (BearingPoint), Toyota Motors, and Aviatrix.

He recently accepted a position as director of technical product management for IT enterprise architecture and generative AI engineering at Sandisk in California.

Outside of his corporate work, Mustafa founded Akure.io, an AI advisory and consulting firm, and developed the AI Leadership Academy to help business leaders better understand and implement AI strategies.

His passion for innovation also extends back to SIUE through his service on the School of Business Advisory Board and as co-chair of the School's Industry Engagement Committee. Through those efforts, he is strengthening partnerships between students, faculty, and industry while advocating AI literacy across business disciplines.

These partnerships, Mustafa notes, are essential to preparing students for careers that may not even exist yet. By connecting students with real-world projects and industry leaders, the committee hopes to create hands-on learning opportunities while helping faculty identify emerging workforce needs.

"AI is there to improve your capabilities. It's not there to replace you," Mustafa said. "But it will replace somebody who's not willing to embrace it."

His work today reflects many of the same principles he first encountered at SIUE: solving real-world problems, embracing diverse perspectives, and equipping others with the tools they need to succeed in an ever-changing business landscape.



Nicholas Witaschek

NICHOLAS WITASCHEK

The Power of Strong Connections

Every time someone flips on a light switch, charges an electric vehicle, or asks an AI tool a question, a complex network of regulatory, infrastructure, and financial decisions helps make it possible.

Nicholas Witaschek, BS business administration '26, gained a firsthand look at how those decisions are made through an internship with Brubaker and Associates, Inc. (BAI), a St. Louis-area energy consulting firm specializing in regulated and competitive energy markets.

Witaschek, who specialized in finance and computer information systems, was introduced to the firm through one of his mentors, Riza Demirer, PhD, Distinguished Research Professor of Finance. After SIUE alumnus and BAI partner Chris Walters '08 reached out to Demirer seeking potential interns, Witaschek was connected to the opportunity.

Witaschek quickly became involved in meaningful project work. He analyzed financial data, developed models and visualizations, and supported projects related to utility regulation and energy markets, while contributing to studies and testimony used to evaluate major infrastructure investments and energy demand forecasts.

"They trusted me with real projects right away, and it was rewarding to contribute instead of just observing," Witaschek said.

The experience allowed Witaschek to apply classroom concepts to real-world challenges. From financial modeling and valuation to data analysis and forecasting, he discovered that his coursework translates into decisions that affect utilities, businesses, and consumers.

"You may not be doing the same thing you did in a course, but you realize you already have the tools to solve problems and contribute," he said.

As demand for electricity continues to rise — driven in part by AI, data centers, and emerging technologies — the energy industry is facing new challenges and opportunities. At his internship, Witaschek gained insight into the financial analysis that helps organizations navigate those changes while balancing reliability, affordability, and long-term growth.

After graduating, Witaschek joined BAI as a full-time analyst. Looking back, he credits much of his success to taking advantage of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

"It's not enough to just do well in class," Witaschek said. "If you combine strong academic performance with building relationships and talking to your professors, you are going to be the first person they think of when opportunities like this come up."

School of Business Advisory Boards

Fiscal Year 2026-27

The School of Business works closely with industry leaders to strengthen academic programs, expand opportunities for students, and ensure graduates are prepared to lead. Through their insight, experience, and advocacy, members of the School of Business Advisory Board help connect SIUE with the evolving needs of the business community.

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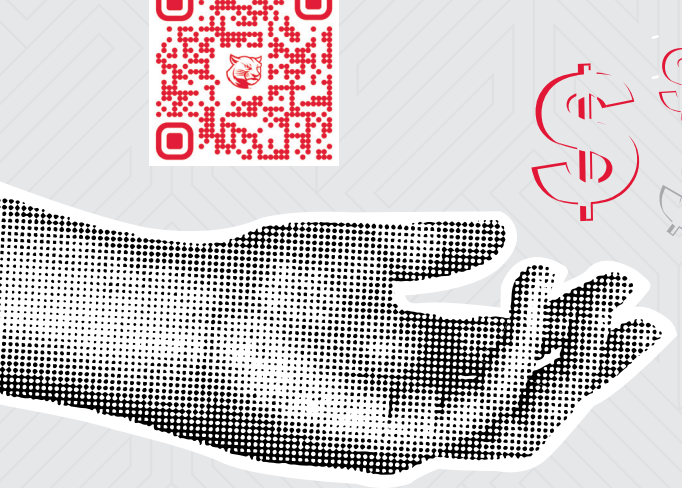
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Dean's Circle member Nola Williams connected with Dean Mario Hayek, PhD, at Legacy Night in April 2026. This reimagined event combined the Dean's Circle Dinner and Scholarship Award Ceremony to create a meaningful opportunity for donors and the students they support to connect and network.

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