



Department of
Management

Newsletter

Fall Edition - December 2025 ♦



Chandler Hall Opened Fall 2025

Learning, Growing, and Leading into a New Era

Seasons greetings to our alumni and friends of the Management Department!

We are successfully wrapping up another fall semester - our first in **Amy and David Chandler Hall**. If you weren't able to join us in mid-September for the ribbon cutting, you can read more about it here in the Fall Newsletter. If you haven't seen the new building, I encourage you to find a time to come in for a **tour**. We would love to host you and show you all the exciting things going on with our students, faculty, and staff here in our new home for the Gordon Ford College of Business!

This fall, we boast **enrollment** of almost 700 students in the Management Major. Across our majors and certificates, we serve more than 800 students. The GFCB as a whole is holding steady with almost 2,500 students enrolled. This is our first semester to offer our **Business Fundamentals and Business Law certificates**, which already boast healthy enrollments.

As many of you know, this is my final semester to serve as Chair of the Management Department. I look forward to continuing to serve the Department and College in my new role as Faculty Fellow for Accreditation and Societal Impact and Director of the Center for Strategic Management.

With that, I am pleased to share that **Dr. LeAnne Coder will be serving as**

the incoming Chair of the Management Department, effective January 1, 2026. Please join me in sincerely congratulating LeAnne on being named to this role.

Dr. Coder has taught a wide range of management and HR courses during her time at WKU. In recent years, she has focused on helping students grow as professionals by building confidence, strengthening their career skills, and preparing them for life after graduation.

In addition to her teaching, Dr. Coder has been deeply involved in curriculum and assessment efforts, helping strengthen programs and support student learning across the department.

As she steps into this new role, Dr. Coder looks forward to working alongside her colleagues to continue building a supportive, student-focused, and forward-thinking department where faculty and students can do their best work

It is truly an exciting time for the Management Department. We look forward to connecting, or reconnecting, with you as we strive to continue to foster growth, leadership, and lifelong learning.

Sincerely,

Whitney Oliver Peake

Whitney Oliver Peake,
Vitale Professor and Chair



Fall 2025 Highlights

Learn.Grow.Lead

US Bank Idea Jam

Alumni & Dept. Highlights

WKU Supply Chain & Tractor Supply

Student Spotlights

Chandler Hall Ribbon Cutting

Alumni Spotlight

Learn. Grow. Lead.



Grow. In alignment with the new building ribbon-cutting, the Management Department Advisory Council gathered for a meaningful and productive meeting. This one was made especially memorable by the leadership of four MGT 498 capstone students. Dillon Cox, Micah Marasigan, Madeline Slagel, and Lauren Shultz, who guided council members through a comprehensive SWOT assessment, demonstrated the knowledge, confidence, and professionalism we strive to develop in every graduate.

We extend our appreciation to these students for their outstanding work and to our dedicated Advisory Council members for their continued commitment. Their time, expertise, and insight play an essential role in shaping the department's direction and ensuring we are best positioned to support our students now and in the years ahead.

Lead. Students Shine at US Bank Idea Jam

The Management Department and GFCB was proud to host the U.S. Bank Idea Jam, an event that highlighted the power of collaboration between industry and academia while providing students with an unforgettable, hands-on learning experience. This year's challenge asked:

"How might we build the bank of the future to help new and startup businesses sustain their business?"

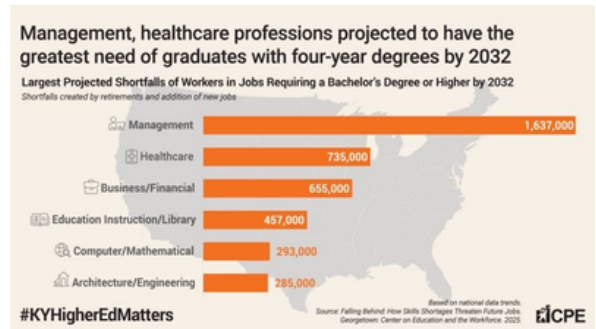
Throughout the afternoon, students worked in teams to identify customer needs, create personas, brainstorm solutions, and develop bold visions for the future of banking. Their creativity and ability to challenge assumptions underscored the innovative spirit we aim to cultivate in all of our programs.

The event concluded with dynamic team presentations to a panel of judges. Students showcased not only their ideas but also their confidence, communication skills, and teamwork. Their proposals demonstrated impressive ingenuity and practicality, offering fresh perspectives on how banks can better support entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Thanks to the generous support of U.S. Bank, scholarships totaling \$8750 were awarded to the top teams, alongside special recognitions for Best Presenter and Best Q&A Performance. Every participant received a certificate of participation in celebration of their hard work and contributions.

The U.S. Bank Idea Jam was more than just a competition—it was a testament to our shared commitment to preparing students with the skills and experiences they need to thrive in their careers.

Read more [HERE](#).



Learn. The Kentucky Council for Post-Secondary Education projects that 4-year Management degrees will have the greatest demand for graduates, based on the largest projected shortfalls of workers by 2032.

Our Department is working to help meet these needs with industry-relevant academic pathways. Students can choose from five concentrations: Business Administration, Entrepreneurship, Global Business, Human Resources, and Supply Chain Management, along with five skills-focused certificate programs designed to strengthen student career readiness.

Our alumni and industry partners also play an essential role, working closely with the department to ensure that our curriculum remains accessible, forward-looking, and aligned with the needs of today's employers. We ask that you please send prospective students our way and help us prepare our graduates through partnership.



Alumni & Department Highlights



Dr. Shane Spiller wins 2025 CITL Teaching Honors Award

We're proud to share that Dr. Shane Spiller, Professor of Management has been recognized as the 2025 CITL Teaching Honors Award recipient for the GFCB!

Each semester, students have the opportunity to nominate faculty who make a meaningful impact on their learning and success. Dr. Spiller's dedication, creativity, and engaging approach to teaching continue to inspire students and enrich the classroom experience.



WKU Management Department Faculty Participates in AI in Real Life Event Panel

In partnership with Gasper Investment Consulting Group, the GFCB hosted an AI in Real Life event at the National Corvette Museum.

Dr. Whitney Peake served as a panelist, focusing on implications for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Watch more in a brief news segment about the panel and an interview with Dr. Peake [HERE](#).



Dr. Mariah Yates brings Bowling Green AMA "Marketing Scaries" Address in October

Dr. Mariah Yates recently presented "Mastermind Leadership: What Taylor Swift Teaches Us About Leading with Story and Sparkle" to the local AMA chapter, highlighting how Swift's storytelling, reinvention, and fan engagement offer powerful lessons for modern leadership and marketing. Drawing on themes like authenticity, symbolism, and "vicarious joy," Dr. Yates showed how brands can deepen connection and influence by inviting audiences into their narrative and leading with both strategy and emotional intelligence.



WKU SHRM

WKU Alumni met with members of WKU SHRM in their November meeting to talk about their career journeys in HR and how students can stand out to employers. The chapter also served ice cream sundaes!

WKU Supply Chain Students Tour Tractor Supply Company Distribution Center



WKU Supply Chain students recently had an exceptional opportunity to tour the Tractor Supply Company Distribution Center in Franklin, Kentucky. This visit offered a firsthand look at world-class operations while giving students direct access to leaders shaping one of the region's most sophisticated logistics environments.

Experiences like this reinforce our commitment to bridging classroom learning with real-world practice. Students benefit from meaningful exposure to industry expectations, while employers engage directly with motivated Hilltoppers preparing to enter the workforce. These partnerships exemplify the experiential focus of the Gordon Ford College of Business.

A special thank-you goes to Drew Herndon, SPHR; Billy Ray Henderson; Katie Thompson; Chase Wisner; and the entire Tractor Supply team, along with WKU faculty Ismail Civelek, Rahul Nilakantan, and Gihan Edirisinghe, for making this a high-impact learning experience for our students.

Alumni working with organizations in Bowling Green or within commuting distance who are interested in hosting a visit from our soon-to-graduate supply chain majors are encouraged to reach out. Your support plays a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of supply chain talent.

Interested in engaging with our students?
Do you have an update or news to share?
We'd love to hear from you!

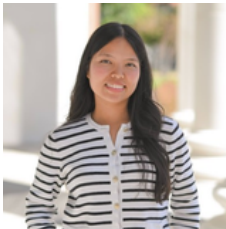
Please reach out to whitney.peake@wku.edu to discuss the ways in which you can support our efforts to create new and engaging learning opportunities for students. Any news, updates, and/or photos may be shared [HERE](#).

Student Spotlights



Callie Bauer, Business Administration (Dec '25)

Callie Bauer (Business Administration) combines outstanding academic achievement (3.88 GPA) with elite athletic performance and sustained leadership. As the Hilltoppers' starting setter, she has earned multiple Conference USA Setter of the Week honors and CUSA Setter of the Year ('24-'25). She has also been recognized for her academic excellence beyond WKU earning a spot on the CUSA All-Academic Team, the CUSA Scholar-Athlete of the Year ('24-'25) and been featured in the "Limitless" Scholar-Athlete spotlight by the conference. Callie has been a Captain of the Volleyball team since 2021 which she had been a part of 9 CUSA championships (and maybe counting!). Callie's ability to balance rigorous coursework, high-level competition, and serve as a team leader on a high performing team marks her as a standout student for the Gordon Ford College of Business.



Ciin Sang, Human Resources Management

Originally from Bowling Green, Management senior, Ciin has built a strong academic foundation through her HR major and Psychology minor, earning repeated honors including the Dean's List, President's List, and becoming the first-ever recipient of the Brian Sullivan SF Award in 2025. She is also an inaugural member of HRising. Outside the classroom, Ciin has demonstrated leadership and service as Treasurer of the Bowling Green Zomi SDA Church, an active member of SHRM and Women in Business, and Vice President of Marketing for Delta Sigma Phi.



Lauren Shultz, Entrepreneurship (Dec '25)

Lauren Shultz will graduate from WKU in Fall 2025 with a degree in Business Management, a concentration in Entrepreneurship, and an Applied Data Analytics certificate. She chose WKU because of her long-held aspiration to own her own business, the strong reputation of the Gordon Ford College of Business, and the influence of her sister, a proud WKU alumna.

Throughout her time at WKU, Lauren has found great value in the challenging courses that helped shape her both personally and professionally. After graduation, Lauren will begin her professional career as a Marketing and Administrative Coordinator at The Works in Springfield, TN. Looking ahead, she plans to build her own company—one rooted in service and committed to supporting the community.



Maryan Mohamed, Supply Chain Management

Maryan Mohamed is a first-generation college student graduating with a 4.0 GPA in Gordon Ford College of Business. She is earning her degree in Management with a concentration in Supply Chain and a minor in Global Business.

Maryan's interest in supply chain began while working in fulfillment, where she became fascinated by how logistics connects the world. After interning with Amazon, she received a full-time offer in logistics and operations.

Following graduation, Maryan will move to Columbus, Ohio to begin her career as an Area Manager, a supply chain operations leadership role focused on driving performance and leading distribution teams.

Chandler Hall Ribbon Cutting Event



The Management Department proudly joined WKU leadership, campus partners, and community supporters to celebrate the ribbon cutting of Amy and David Chandler Hall on September 19, 2025. Chandler Hall is the newest academic facility on WKU's campus and a transformative investment in the future of business education. This milestone represents far more than the opening of a building—it marks the beginning of a new chapter for how we prepare students to lead, innovate, and thrive in a rapidly changing business landscape.

For the Management Department, this facility represents a significant step forward. Chandler Hall will enable expanded project-based learning, deeper integration of analytics and emerging technologies, and increased space for strategic partnerships with regional employers. As our programs continue to grow—from human resources and entrepreneurship to leadership, business administration, and innovation—this new space ensures we can deliver cutting-edge instruction grounded in applied learning.

As we look ahead, Chandler Hall will serve as a hub for collaboration, creativity, and career preparation. From student consulting projects and advisory council meetings to applied research, leadership development, and corporate engagement, this facility provides the platform needed to expand our impact across the region.

Alumni Spotlight - Chet Yates



For Chet Yates, the journey to "The Hill" was unexpected. Growing up in a farm family, college was never something his family discussed or even considered. One evening after basketball practice, Chet came home to find an envelope waiting in his room. It was his acceptance letter to Western. That night at dinner, he announced to his

parents that he'd been accepted to college. His father, caught completely off guard, looked up from the table, surprised, and asked, "When did you decide to do that?" This was a defining moment- the start of a lifelong connection with Western Kentucky University.

With no family funds to fall back on, Chet knew he'd have to work his way through school. He took on any job he could find — fixing lawnmowers, selling shoes, cutting and stripping tobacco, cooking at the Western Grille, bussing tables at The Goalpost (previously known as "The Hub of the Hill"), and working the graveyard shift at a gas station from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. before heading straight to his 8 a.m. classes. The long nights, early mornings, and countless odd jobs paid off: Chet graduated in four years, debt-free, and with a work ethic that would define his life and career.

Chet often says it was "a great time to be at WKU." When he started, it was still Western Kentucky State College, and by the time he graduated, it had become Western Kentucky University. His fraternity, Pi Lambda Alpha, also went national as Lambda Chi Alpha, alongside all other campus fraternities. Among his favorite memories was lacing up on the brand-new Diddle Arena floor to play intramural basketball for the first time.

After graduation, Chet began a long and successful career in the corporate world — most notably in manufacturing and operations management. His first position was with Firestone in Akron, Ohio. He later returned to Louisville and held multiple leadership roles, eventually becoming President of a Chicago-based subsidiary of a local paint company. His next role as Vice President of Worldwide Purchasing for a London-based corporation took him across the globe. Yet throughout all of this, Chet never lost his dream of owning his own business.

In 1997, that dream finally came true. Chet and his wife, Sharon, his partner in life and business, discovered an opportunity through a conversation with a business contact in Miami. They struck a handshake deal that gave them exclusive rights to sell a new product in every mall in the United States. From that moment, Happy Feet — the now-famous line of oversized, ultra-comfortable house slippers — was born.

Together, Chet and Sharon built a comprehensive business plan rooted in the best practices from their years of corporate experience and in the lessons of hard work learned decades earlier at Western. Within their first year, Happy Feet broke national sales records for mall retail. They soon expanded into wholesale and franchising, training others to sell the product across the country. The brand took off, growing rapidly into a household name.

Chet's advice for new entrepreneurs is simple, hard-earned and timeless: "Have a clear and concise business plan. Be passionate about what you're doing, and persevere — because the hours are long and hard. Stay lean, manage your cash flow, make time for family, and always maintain your integrity."

In 2002, after years of hard work and growth, Chet and Sharon sold the business to their son, allowing Chet to retire at age 54. Happy Feet continued to thrive under family leadership, gaining national exposure through television, magazines, and online platforms. An appearance on ABC's Shark Tank, where a deal struck with Robert Herjavec, brought a new wave of growth.

Looking back, Chet often reflects on how Western Kentucky University shaped his life. "I owe so much to WKU," he says. "The education, the friendships, and the confidence I gained there changed everything for me."

To express that gratitude, Chet and Sharon have contributed to numerous campus projects — including Diddle Arena, the Martens Alumni Center, and the Gordon Ford College of Business. Yet their greatest pride lies in The Chet and Sharon Yates Scholarship, dedicated to students who are the first in their family to attend college and supporting aspiring entrepreneurs who embody the same perseverance, creativity and determination that guided Chet's journey.

"We hope this scholarship helps students who have the same fire we did — a belief that with hard work, integrity, and a plan, anything is possible."

Chet's story reminds us that success doesn't always begin with opportunity — it begins with determination. His journey to national entrepreneurship stands as a testament to the transformative power of education, grit, and gratitude.

Thank you for reading!



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