Next Generation Technology Meets Next Generation Entrepreneurs
It is truly an honor and privilege to lead the flagship business school in the state of South Dakota, the Beacom School of Business. Since becoming its dean in August 2014, I have had the pleasure of working closely with an amazing team of faculty, staff, students and alumni and have experienced first-hand South Dakota’s culture of hard work, humility, integrity, collaboration and lean management. I have gained a deep understanding of and appreciation for the Beacom School of Business’ long tradition of achieving and enhancing student success.

Beacom faculty are world-class in their dedication to student learning. They not only provide cutting-edge knowledge and skills, they are sincerely engaged in mentoring students through academic and career advising, engaging in student-organizations and connecting with alumni and business/community leaders. Beacom staff collectively provides excellent support so our students start their world-class careers right after graduation. There is a transformational learning community evolving here, with entrepreneurial thinking, prudent investment and laser-sharp focus toward realizing our strategic vision of becoming “the school of choice” for high quality students and employers.

The Beacom School of Business is deeply committed to local and regional economic development as well. We continue to work toward creating a steady supply of next-generation entrepreneurs who will contribute to economic prosperity in South Dakota and the region. Our Entrepreneur-in-Residence program has now expanded to five successful real-world entrepreneurs. We established a state-of-the-art Innovation Lab with technologies and tools for students to experience rapid innovation. Thanks to several industry supporters, we have the latest CAD systems, 3-D printers and 3-D scanners that enable our students to experience and learn how to reduce the time-to-market to become successful entrepreneurs. At the Beacom School of Business, we develop success one entrepreneur at a time!

Innovation is occurring in our academic programs as well. Beacom faculty have been heavily engaged in new program development. New minors in Business Analytics and Innovation & Entrepreneurship have been approved and are ready to roll out in fall 2016. New majors in Operational Analytics and Innovation & Entrepreneurship are waiting for final approval from the Board of Regents before they are rolled out as well. Faculty are deeply involved in pedagogical innovations such as “flipped classrooms” and simulation modeling. Beacom faculty are also starting to develop program advisory councils for each major in order to strengthen connections with alumni and industry leaders.

One of the highlights of last year is the rapid enrollment growth we have witnessed in our online graduate programs despite intense regional/national competition. Our undergraduate programs also witnessed growth amidst a highly competitive marketplace. The new majors and minors as well as our continued dedication toward student success and mentoring is helping us sustain our growth, despite our limited resources dedicated for marketing and branding.

A key strategic priority is faculty excellence. Beacom faculty are engaged and demonstrate excellence in research and scholarship. The Beacom Scholar Series showcases our faculty’s research findings and offers a new platform for collaborative research. We are investing in faculty development efforts including professional development, summer research, and faculty-student collaborative learning opportunities.

We have made significant progress in developing new academic programs, growing our faculty resources, and investing in faculty development. We are confident that the innovative culture that is evolving at the Beacom School of Business will help us realize our ambitious plans that focus on enrollment growth and higher rankings.

We are proudly committed to our students and alumni success. World-class careers start at the Beacom School of Business!

Venky Venkatachalam, Ph.D.
Dean, Beacom School of Business
DIGITAL DUO

Helgerson and Rokkam’s business venture finds success
Miles Beacom

Miles Beacom, for whom the business school is named, is the president and CEO of PREMIER Bankcard in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He began working with First PREMIER Bank in 1989 and initiated its credit card program before accepting a position in the Chicago area; there for only a few years, he helped a struggling credit card company get back on its feet.

The Sioux Falls native then returned to PREMIER Bankcard in 1993 to oversee the company. His guidance has since helped turn the company into the 12th largest credit card issuer in the country – but he knows that hard work and dedication are at the root of any success.

“I am a firm believer that if you want to be successful, you have to be willing to make some sacrifices,” he said; with that in mind, he maintains a positive outlook on his field. “When I graduated from college, there were very few opportunities in South Dakota in the business sector. Today, we have a diverse business climate in which we compete with people and businesses around the world. It is a very exciting time.”

Dedicated to benefiting the community in which he grew up, Beacom serves on the board of directors for: First PREMIER Bank, PREMIER Bankcard, United National Corporation, Dakota State University Foundation, Catholic Diocese of Eastern South Dakota, EastBank Land Company LLC, ReliaMax and Lamb Radio. He and his wife, Lisa, have also established scholarship endowments at Dakota State University (DSU), the University of South Dakota (USD), and the Sioux Falls Catholic School System.

Beacom graduated from DSU in Madison, South Dakota, in 1981 with a B.S. in business and an economics minor; now, he and his wife have three daughters – Alyssa, Erin and Ashlee – and live in Sioux Falls. He is proud of the Beacom School’s reputation and confident in its Advisory Board’s ability to support Dean Venky and USD in achieving the strategic priorities set for 2020. Beacom’s primary goals as chair of the Advisory Board are to enhance student engagement by helping to increase the number of intern opportunities, and to champion the entrepreneurship, innovation and ethics that are critical in today’s environment.

J. Pat Costello

From private businesses to government offices, J. Pat Costello’s experience spans a wide range of the business field spectrum. He obtained a B.S. in accounting from Arizona State University in 1984 and began his career as a Certified Public Accountant with firms in both Arizona and South Dakota.

A desire to own a small business then led him to pursue opportunities in the food and beverage industry, such as operating restaurants in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Omaha, Nebraska. When he noticed the government’s negative effects on his businesses, however, Costello took on the responsibility of improving the situation – not just for himself, but for future businesses as well.

He was elected to the Sioux Falls City Council in 2006 and served until 2010; then, in 2011, Gov. Dennis Daugaard appointed Costello as South Dakota’s commissioner of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development. As commissioner, Costello has a unique vantage point from which he promotes economic development in South Dakota. Being part of the Dean’s Advisory Board allows him to share that knowledge with the state’s future entrepreneurs.

“USD’s business students are our state’s next business leaders, who will drive our economy for generations to come,” he said. “I hope the efforts we make today to engage students and help them understand our state’s business advantages will lead them to build their own businesses in our state,
become involved in government, and work to make our state’s economy even stronger in the future.”

Costello was born and raised in Sioux Falls and has played an integral role in its development for more than 20 years. In that time he has established multiple restaurants throughout the region, including the Sioux Falls Fuddruckers restaurant. He and his wife, Shawn, have three children and enjoy spending their time doing both family and community service activities.

David L. Knudson

After spending seven years on the East Coast, David Knudson had the education and experience he wanted to put to use in his home state of South Dakota. He graduated from Harvard University in 1972 and the New York University School of Law in 1975, then moved back to Sioux Falls. While starting out as a business lawyer with Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith, LLP, Knudson decided he could provide more effective counsel with a broader business knowledge; it was then he decided that the evening MBA program with the University of South Dakota School of Business should be his next move.

In 1981 he received his MBA and, having rounded out his business knowledge, continued his law practice in Sioux Falls. “My USD MBA enhanced my ability to analyze business situations and to provide innovative solutions to problems that came up in my course of representing business clients,” he said.

Knudson went on to serve in several state positions, including the chief of staff to Gov. Bill Janklow during the 1995 and 1999 legislative sessions. He was also a South Dakota State Senator from 2003–2010, a strategic advisor for Sanford Health and a partner with Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith, LLP. Today he is the senior vice president and chief legal counsel for United National Corporation.

As a member of the Dean’s Advisory Board, Knudson wants to help today’s business students understand the dynamics of the business world. “Today more than any other time in our past, it is important for employers to have a highly trained workforce,” he said. “The education, experience in teamwork, and team building that the Beacom School of Business provides its students can give them a great foundation to meet the demands for today’s and tomorrow’s managers.”

Knudson currently lives in Sioux Falls and enjoys spending his free time getting involved in his community, watching spectator sports and reading as often as possible.

JoAnn Kunkel

Since 2012, JoAnn Kunkel has been the chief financial officer at Sanford Health. There she directs the finance, accounting and revenue cycle for one of the country’s largest non-profit rural health care systems. Her experience is grounded in a sound education from the University of South Dakota business school, which not only provided the knowledge she needed for a future career – it took her business and accounting interests to the professional level.

While studying accounting at USD, Kunkel was given an internship opportunity through the business school; she credits the program with opening the door for employment in public accounting, which ultimately led to a career in health care. After obtaining her accounting undergraduate degree in 1990, Kunkel went on to complete her MBA and join the Sanford USD Medical Center in 1992. There she fulfilled roles as director of finance and CFO for health services.

Having seen USD from the eyes of both a student and professional, Kunkel knows that the university and its business program have changed – and she feels good about what they have become. She anticipates being part of the Dean’s Advisory Board and seeing what else is in store.

“I truly believe that it can provide a foundation leading to unlimited opportunities in business and health care,” she said, proud of the education and experiences offered by the business school. “It gives a great education and career path for students.”

In addition to her financial duties, Kunkel leads Sanford’s Corporate Services Division, a position that includes human resources, information technology, legal and marketing departments. She and her husband, Mike, have two children.
Craig Lloyd

Craig Lloyd, co-owner of Lloyd Companies, has been contributing to the growth of Sioux Falls since 1972. Though he stepped down as CEO in January 2016, he made a lasting impression on the community in his 44 years of service. Having developed more than 1.6 million feet of commercial space and 5,000 apartments, Lloyd knows that today’s business students will be responsible for the town’s – and state’s – continued thriving. Building foundations for their future careers is therefore one of his priorities.

“Keeping students in the state is so important to us,” he said. “South Dakota is a great place because it’s a state where people want to help people.”

Originally from Mankato, Minnesota, Lloyd received his business administration degree from Mankato State College in 1972. He and his wife, Pat, then moved to Sioux Falls and founded what would become a local legacy in real estate. Their belief that “people should be the foundation” translated into the company values of quality, integrity and relationships with their business that have helped make Lloyd Companies as strong and successful as it is today.

Now, as part of the Dean’s Advisory Board, Lloyd looks forward to his instrumental role in helping graduates find their futures right here in South Dakota.

“I am honored to share my thoughts with young people so they can help build a better community,” he said, “and I am excited about the opportunity to influence the future workforce of South Dakota and identify ways to keep them in the state after graduation.”

Lloyd is a licensed broker in South and North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota; he remains an active community leader by partnering with local nonprofit organizations and donating resources such as land, labor and financial assistance to those in the Sioux Falls area.

Scott Sletten

President, CEO and owner of JDS Industries, Scott Sletten heads the world’s leading supplier of awards and personalization products. The business is headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, but employs approximately 250 people in 14 warehouses throughout the U.S.; its consumer base extends to more than 80 countries. What started in 1973 as a small family business has evolved into a thriving aspect of the Sioux Falls community.

As an employer, Advisory Board member and alumnus of the University of South Dakota, Sletten looks forward to active involvement with the school’s business students. Training his new employees gives him an understanding of the knowledge and skills today’s students will need when making their way into the job market; and as someone who was once in their shoes, the businessman knows the kind of education students need to be prepared for what employers are looking for.

“My USD education formed a good business knowledge base to build from with experience,” he said. “The Beacom School of Business provides the top-notch business training that is needed in our area. As Sioux Falls continues to develop, there will be a need for well-trained, intelligent graduates.”

Sletten graduated from USD in 1987 with a bachelor’s degree in business. He then pursued an MBA at Arizona State University, which he completed in 1990. While in school, he worked for JDS Industries until he had enough to purchase a 25 percent ownership stake, intent on keeping the business in the family. He and his wife, Ronna, live in Sioux Falls and have two children, Nathan and Melissa – the former of whom followed in his father’s footsteps and now works with JDS Industries.
Stepping off the plane was like stepping back in time. Everything from cars to the hotel furniture looked like it had come straight from the 1950s, with one major exception: the most advanced and highly rated health care system in the world.

For nine days, a group of University of South Dakota business students would study Cuba’s health care from within, as part of the process. The nation’s use of preventative medicine produces consistently positive results, boasting one of the world’s longest life expectancies and lowest infant mortality rates, and has been noted as a model system for the rest of the world; it’s an ideal location for learning about the differences between health care in the U.S. versus other countries. Carole South–Winter, Ph.D., assistant professor of health services administration in the Beacom School of Business, was instrumental in making this opportunity possible for students.

“I started the day President Obama announced the sanctions were lifted,” said South–Winter, referring to the United States embargo against Cuba that was in effect from 1960 to 2015. “I created the course, recruited students and taught the course before we departed and while we were in Cuba.”

The course, entitled Health Services Administration Abroad, covers the formation and operation of public health policies. Having traveled internationally for past positions, South–Winter was brought to the business school to incorporate a more global aspect; she led a trip to Germany, Switzerland and France in May 2015 and is currently planning another trip to Ghana for May 2016.

From Jan. 2–11, though, 13 USD individuals experienced one of the first educational exchanges between the United States and its island neighbor in more than 50 years. The professor and 12 students, accompanied by a bus driver and tour guide/interpreter, explored Havana and the surrounding area. There they experienced the inner workings of hospital and clinical procedures such as polyclinics (community–based clinics that serve catchment areas of 30,000–60,000 people) and patient–centered care.

Elise Albers, who graduated with an MBA from the health services administration program in December 2015, went along to audit the trip.

“The trip was a once–in–a–lifetime experience to study a developing country with an industrialized health care system,” she said. “I was able to see firsthand that health does not equal wealth; Cuba created a world–class health care system even with the embargo in place.”

Albers and the rest of the group started each day at approximately 8:30 a.m. and began learning immediately; though they only observed the health care administration, the students knew that what they were seeing was unlike any classroom lecture.

“I learned more in one week than I previously learned in semester–long courses,” Albers said. “What I enjoyed most, though, was that the Cubans we interacted with were just as interested in learning from us as we were in learning from them. It convinced me that people–to–people education is the most beneficial way to learn about other cultures.”

The expedition included some of the most iconic aspects of Cuban culture ranging from street graffiti to a tour of Finca Vigia, Ernest Hemingway’s home–turned–museum. The group also visited Havana’s Taquechel Pharmacy Museum and other health care facilities requested by South–Winter, based on her experience and research.

“I always enjoy being part of student growth both academically and personally, and watching their perspectives widen,” said the professor. “The concept of universality and cultural acceptance transforms them daily and for many years to come.”

South–Winter will be using personal global health care experiences such as this for her curriculum and to organize future study abroad trips; so far, destinations include Italy, Australia, Ghana and a return trip to Cuba. Her previous work in health care includes positions as program director for one of the largest and highest ranked nuclear medicine technology programs in the U.S.; interim director of education for the Association of Healthcare Radiology Administrators; executive director for Reclaiming Youth International.
The Beacom School of Business at the University of South Dakota has added three successful entrepreneurs to its Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIR) program to accelerate the growth of entrepreneurial ventures in the state of South Dakota.

Rich Naser, Brian Gramm and Tom Stengrim have joined last year’s entrepreneurs-in-residence, Ben Hanten and Sue Lancaster, in providing one-on-one mentorship to student entrepreneurs.

“We are excited to expand our network of brilliant mentors and to leverage their experience and knowledge,” Venky Venkatachalam, Ph.D., dean of the Beacom School of Business, said of the EIR program started in 2014 to facilitate and foster student-based entrepreneurship in the state. “As we continue to build our team of experts, we believe their backgrounds in helping and connecting startups to resources within the state will be a tremendous asset to our students.”

These top entrepreneurs, and future EIRs, will be available for one-on-one mentoring and/or speaking engagements to classes and student organizations. They are available to provide insight and guidance to USD students and faculty as they develop products and services with an economic impact for Vermillion, the region and South Dakota.

“Innovation and Entrepreneurship is a strategic focus area for both the Beacom School of Business and USD,” Venky explained. “The EIR program’s goal is to connect the USD community of students and faculty across various disciplines with industry executives, serial entrepreneurs, and the investing community to provide experiential learning opportunities for students while enhancing the Vermillion and South Dakota economies.”

Venky added that the primary expected outcome is development of South Dakota’s “Next Generation Entrepreneurs.”

In addition to the new EIR program, a new Innovation Lab equipped with the latest 3D equipment helps students to quickly and inexpensively develop prototypes for their ideas.

The Innovation Lab equipment includes three Ultimaker 2 and MakerBot model 3D printers; a MakerBot Digitizer 3D scanner; computer; and computer-aided design (CAD) software by SolidWorks.

“The lab provides experiential learning opportunities to students in various aspects of entrepreneurship, including rapid prototyping, market research and new venture creation,” said Venky. That will allow them to do market feasibility studies and business planning in a shorter time frame, he said.

The University of South Dakota’s Beacom School of Business continuously receives recognition for its outstanding education, and two of its online programs have again been ranked among the best in both national and global ratings. U.S. News & World Report ranked the Beacom School of Business as tied at No. 41 of the 91 Best Online Graduate Business Programs, which excludes Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs—but the report also placed USD as tied for 52nd out of the 163 Best Online MBA Programs.

The MBA program is ranked No. 16 on the “Top 25 Online MBA Programs” by the Princeton Review, a leading test preparation, tutoring and college admission services company. Results are based on academics, selectivity, faculty, career outcomes, tech platforms and thousands of student and administrator ratings.
In fall 2014 the Beacom School of Business established a new strategic vision, which includes an emphasis on economic development with a focus towards innovation and entrepreneurship. The School is aggressively working towards realizing this vision through innovative academic programs, student and faculty engagement including experiential learning opportunities, and strong relationship with industry/business leaders including entrepreneur and investor communities in the state and the region. The EIR program will support this vision through the delivery of real–world experiences and combining external entrepreneurial expertise with student and faculty talent.

RICH NASER
- President, South Dakota Technology Business Center
- President, Research Park at USD Discovery District
- Director, Forward Sioux Falls Research, Technology and Entrepreneurship initiatives

BRIAN GRAMM ’96
- Founder and CEO, Peppermint Energy
- Business and Government–related Consultant

BEN HANTON
- Founder, Ben’s Bar
- Co–Founder, Rockin’ Ribfest
- Founder, Think 29

SUE LANCASTER ’10, ’12
- Director of Business Development, South Dakota Innovation Partners

TOM STENGRIM
- Vice President, South Dakota Technology Business Center

Recognition, Rocketing Enrollment

education at the Beacom School of Business.” For the faculty, the best part is watching the students’ success; MBA graduates have gone on to become hired at Avera, Daktronics, Goldman Sachs, the South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development and many more. The online Master of Professional Accountancy (MPA) program has garnered national respect as well. Ranked first on OnlineU’s list of the Top Online Accounting Degrees in 2015, the program was chosen for its affordability, 89.96 percent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam pass rate, and AACSB accreditation. The program was also chosen by U.S. News & World Report as No. 31 on the list of Best Online Graduate Business Programs, which compares 225 graduate business programs nationwide.

Kathryn Birkeland, Ph.D., became the MPA program coordinator in January 2015. Since then, she has been facilitating changes to the on–campus program and working to grow the online program. “From fall 2014 to fall 2015, we saw 100 percent growth in our online MPA program,” said Birkeland. “We deliver a high–quality, AACSB–accredited program at a low cost. We also offer connections to employers that are hard to match, and our students earn internships and employment at the top accounting firms in the region and country.” The Beacom School of Business, with its world–class faculty and education, continually garners prestigious honors that are further testament to its AACSB International accreditation.
By Ryan Angelo ’12

When you think of Vermillion, South Dakota, chances are, your imagination is not filled with self-driving cars, drones delivering packages or a Silicon Valley headquarters. In fact, Vermillion is home to none of those things. However, located in the bluff-side town just off I–29 are many opportunities waiting to be taken advantage of—and a couple USD entrepreneurs are out to do just that.

Michael Helgerson didn’t know what he wanted to do when he exited the Navy, he just knew he wanted to change the world. Working at a local gym as well as doing some modeling on the side, Helgerson was just finishing up his education at local Santa Monica College in Santa Monica, California (whose notable alumni include Arnold Schwarzenegger). It was at that gym in 2010, the place he spent much of his time, where he began to run ideas by of some of his clients, many of whom were very successful business entrepreneurs.

“I was like a sponge,” Helgerson said. “I started asking them all sorts of questions and that was where I knew the spark of entrepreneurship was ignited inside me.”

Not knowing exactly what the next steps were, the Yankton, South Dakota, native was out to create his own “thing.” After coming up with an idea, he met with a few venture capitalists who were patrons of the gym to vet his idea. However, without much business experience and with only a concept for a pitch, he was met with a harsh dose of reality.

“They said it wasn’t bad, but that I needed business plans, all these documents and requirements that I didn’t know anything about,” Helgerson explained.

Seemingly stuck, Helgerson was at a crossroads. The way he saw it, he had two choices: transfer to another local university and continue his studies, or come home. With his future on the line, Helgerson elected to return to Yankton. With the support of his parents, Helgerson enrolled in the USD Beacom School of Business, where he was determined to make his mark.

“That’s when things really started to take off,” Helgerson stated. “I enrolled in my entrepreneurship, finance and small business programs, and guess what? They taught me how to create a business plan, how to analyze a financial document, how to do all that stuff.”
With the knowledge of how to run a business well on its way, the next step was to nail down the big idea. After discussions with some business and programming friends, Helgerson felt he had a strong idea with practical application. The idea: a simple app to alert individuals of vacant seats in a movie theatre. Using near-field communication (NFC), the app would allow movie theatre patrons the ability to see which seats were taken based on a phone’s proximity to that seat. If there was an NFC capable phone in the seat, then the seat would be marked as taken on the app.

“So I began to think. What if we used NFC to distribute pertinent information to universities instead? And that’s when the light bulb went off,” said Helgerson.

With a sound idea and knowledge of the market, Helgerson felt he had the core of the application figured out. However, there was one key component missing from this dream, and that was a seasoned programmer to put it all together.

Enter Naveen Rokkam – a computer science graduate student at USD.

Placing in the 98th percentile on his international exams, Rokkam could have gone to any of the top 20 colleges in the United States. However, it seemed to be fate that brought Rokkam to the University of South Dakota.

Already successful in his homeland of India, Rokkam was responsible for a $5 million project and the head of an 18-person team working for technology company, SAP. But his heart was with his wife, who was completing her graduate degree in health administration at USD. Deciding it was time to come to the United States to be with her, Rokkam essentially created an algorithm for himself out of parameters he found to be particularly pertinent to his college search. Of these parameters were “most entrepreneurial friendly” and “most innovative from an entrepreneurial perspective.” South Dakota seemed to be the perfect fit.

“The Midwest was my target region,” Rokkam said. “I researched the most entrepreneur friendly states and states that are spearheading entrepreneurship. South Dakota topped that list.”

After speaking with a few USD professors, Rokkam was sold. He decided to forego his interviews from the likes of Duke and Penn State, and elected to continue his education at USD. It was spring break 2015 when Rokkam received an email from a man he had never heard of, somebody he would later find to be one of his closest associates.

“In sort of a last ditch effort, I sent out an email to a bunch of programmers, and out of all the responses, Naveen’s response piqued my interest the most,” Helgerson explained.

When the two met, Rokkam told Helgerson that not only what he was trying to do was possible, he also expressed enthusiasm for the project and offered many ways to make the idea more efficient.

With consultation from Venky Venkatachalam, Ph.D., dean of the Beacom School of Business, and assistance from
De Vee Dykstra, J.D., Beacom associate dean, as well as mentor Ben Hanten, the School of Business entrepreneur in residence, the duo’s dream was underway. “We really want the Beacom School of Business to serve as a hub for innovation on campus,” Venkatachalam explained. “No matter the discipline, we believe that our students have the passion and drive to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. Naveen and Michael are examples of that.”

Their idea was simple – get information to students without the students having to seek it out. “Imagine a lighthouse on the beach. Essentially all they are doing is sending the light signal out in all directions,” Rokkam said. “The ships see this light and they know ‘this is New York,’ or ‘this is Philadelphia.’ The ships then navigate that course and go to that shore.”

The concept for WeConnectU, the name the duo chose for their venture, is no different. Beacons (the lighthouses in Rokkam’s analogy) would be placed all over USD’s campus and constantly emit a Bluetooth signal. A smartphone (the ship) which is already capable of receiving the emission, would get the signal and convey whatever message is transcribed via the WeConnectU app in a push notification. The message then appears on the user’s home screen with the options to “like,” “ignore” or “close.”

For example, when there is a special event at the Beacom School of Business, beacon content administrators will program a message to promote it. Anyone with a capable phone, the WeConnectU app and who is within a selected proximity of that beacon would be alerted.

Eager to find out how business professionals and consumers would receive their concept, Helgerson and Rokkam brought WeConnectU into the public eye. They finished first in the 2015 Wire Me Awake competition, a conference for startups hosted by USD, and second in the Governor’s Giant Vision competition, a competition hosted by the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry. It was then they realized their hard work and Helgerson’s longtime vision was coming to fruition.

“You need perseverance and flexibility because you get told ‘no’ so much. But if you know it in your gut and you set out to do it, you owe it to yourself to see it through,” Helgerson explained.

With WeConnectU soon to be available, the dynamic duo can’t help but attribute their success to individuals in South Dakota. Helgerson explained that without the help of his USD mentors along the way, WeConnectU may not exist. Similarly, Rokkam says that USD was a major factor in the project’s success.

“If we had to do this outside USD, whether it’s the legal consulting or paperwork, it would have been very expensive. We are thankful we got it at the university for no cost,” said Rokkam.

Helgerson attributes much of their success to their team dynamic and knowing their respective roles. Helgerson is the dreamer and the philosopher. He shoots his ideas to the moon and back, willing to run with whatever sticks. Rokkam, however, is the practical one—the one who keeps them on track and can reel Helgerson back into reality. Independently, they are very different; together, they complement each other perfectly.

“Together, we are absolutely dynamic. Individually, we both would be very successful; however, when we get together, people just take different notice of us. We are much greater than the sum of our parts,” Helgerson stated.

This isn’t the duo’s final endeavor, as they have big plans for the future of the industry. After launching at USD in April 2016, they’ll take their product on the road to introduce it to other universities and publish it in all of the popular app stores, hoping WeConnectU becomes a household name in the world of personal content delivery.

This is when, after years of hard work, late nights and hopeless uncertainty, Michael Helgerson will see his dream finally come true.
BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

A finance major at USD’s Beacom School of Business has accepted a prestigious internship with the largest equity investment bank in the United States.

Bruce Biegler, a junior from Timber Lake, South Dakota, will spend summer 2016 in Salt Lake City, Utah with Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., in the credit risk department.

Beginning his 10-week internship in June, Biegler will learn valuable skills working with the credit risk department with teams of analysts and interns to examine Goldman Sachs clients’ accounts.

“The corporate environment and the competition Bruce will face at Goldman Sachs will spur him to further sharpen his analytical skills, teamwork and time management skills,” said Yewmun Yip, Ph.D., associate professor of finance.

Biegler, who is vice president of Coyote Capital Management, a member of Pi Sigma Epsilon, Phi Delta Theta, Colleges Against Cancer, Financial Management Association and the Beacom School of Business Dean’s Ambassadors, said he looks forward to working with those who come from different regions of the United States and other countries.

“I am excited to get to know Goldman Sachs employees, but mostly I look forward to comparing what I have learned at USD and what they learned at their respective colleges” said Biegler.

Upon graduation from USD in May 2017, Biegler hopes to get into investment banking with Goldman Sachs. He looks to work on Wall Street and then take to a permanent residence in Switzerland, Salt Lake City or Florida.

“The name recognition of Goldman Sachs will open a lot of doors for Bruce,” said Yip. “I am confident he will perform very well in his internship with Goldman Sachs.”

Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., founded in 1869, is a worldwide investment banking, securities and investment management firm based out of New York City and has more than 80 offices worldwide.

A senior accounting major at the University of South Dakota is headed overseas as an intern for KPMG, one of the world’s top international public accounting firms.

Carrie Wintle, from Iroquois, South Dakota, will spend the month of August 2016 in Dublin, Ireland for her internship in the auditing department at KPMG. She will collaborate with other interns from the U.S. and Ireland.

Wintle said she is excited to see where this new—and somewhat frightening—experience takes her.

“This is a little scary for me—it is a new adventure all alone,” said Wintle. “But I am excited to be taking advantage of everything life has to offer. Living in Dublin for four weeks will be unlike anything I have ever done before. I am confident it will push me to grow as a person and as a working professional.”

Wintle is co-captain of the USD Cheer Team, president of the Mortar Board Honor Society and a member of the Beacom School of Business Dean’s Ambassadors, a prestigious student group that showcases Beacom student achievements on and off campus. She is also involved in the Theta Upsilon chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, an honor society for financial information students and professionals.

Wintle said she is most excited about an international perspective of accounting. “Our world is so global and diverse, and being able to understand different economies and cultures will be a huge advantage for me as I enter a career in accounting,” she said. “I want this internship to challenge me intellectually so I learn how to adapt and solve problems better.”

John Aesoph, a 1994 graduate of the Beacom School of Business and now an audit partner with KPMG, said the firm values global experience and employees who are willing to work outside their comfort level.

“We need people who are multi-lingual, multi-cultural and have work experiences outside of their home markets to serve our global clients effectively,” Aesoph explained.
“In collaboration with our Irish colleagues, we were able to create this unique experience for Carrie. We are proud to be a firm that offers such opportunities to help students build long and rewarding careers.”

**Sarah Barthel**

Sioux Falls, South Dakota native and USD senior Sarah Barthel will soon graduate with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a major in marketing. But she didn’t always plan to be a marketing major.

At the end of her sophomore year, Barthel changed her major from health sciences. At first she was hesitant–marketing was intimidating to her, since “there wasn’t a set plan like pre-dentistry had.”

Barthel was encouraged by friends and family to find a major that was more creative and where she could be more personable. She has enjoyed each class taken in the Beacom School of Business and said she enjoys that marketing is always changing.

Now, she is the president of USD’s American Marketing Association (AMA) student organization and is a member of the Beacom School of Business Dean’s Ambassadors, a group hand–selected by the dean to represent the School of Business at events. She credits the business school with the many opportunities these organizations have brought her.

“There is so much knowledge I have gained from my marketing classes at Beacom, from who I am reaching out to and the specific ways to do it,” Barthel said. “All of the professors at Beacom care about your education and where you are going.”

Being a marketing major introduced Barthel to two successful internships and a wide range of involvement. Barthel first held an internship with the Heartland Humane Society in Yankton, South Dakota, running the organization’s promotions on all of forms of social media. In summer 2015, Barthel interned at the *Argus Leader* as a sales and advertising intern.

“At the *Argus Leader*, I got out of my comfort zone and gained a lot of new skills,” said Barthel. “I’m happy that I had that experience because it carves more of a direction of where I should go and made me more comfortable with the skills I have.”

**Scholar Series Promotes Faculty Success**

When Venky Venkatachalam, Ph.D., became dean of the Beacom School of Business, he knew of its world–class education and faculty. Being immersed in its culture prompted him to highlight the faculty’s wealth of research and to initiate the Beacom Scholar Series in fall 2014.

The Series has since taken place every semester, and serves three purposes: to provide a platform for collaborative research; to showcase the research being done by faculty; and to build and sustain a research community and culture within the Beacom School of Business.

“Research is knowledge creation,” Venky said, “and teaching is knowledge dissemination. The two feed each other, working together to help the school reach its goal.”

With the added research emphasis, the school can dip its business curriculum into the scientific community while providing students a more diverse and impactful educational experience.

Faculty within the business school can present a project in any phase, from beginning conceptual stages to final conclusions, and anyone is welcome to attend. The open forum brings together and encourages many different perspectives that can then spark new ideas within a project – or a new project altogether. With presentations that revolve around classroom innovations and teaching engagement, the Series provides not only updates on faculty accomplishments, but also further testament to the business school’s AACSB International accreditation.

After completion of the Ireland internship, Wintle will begin an internship in spring 2017 at the KPMG office in Omaha, Nebraska, in the tax division.
De Vee Dykstra
ASSOCIATE DEAN

In summer 2015, De Vee Dykstra, J.D. was appointed associate dean for the Beacom School of Business.

Dykstra holds an MBA and juris doctorate from the University of South Dakota. She is a professor of business law at the university and has been a recipient of the Belbas–Larson Award for Excellence in Teaching. Dykstra most recently served as the technology transfer officer in the Office of Research Sponsored Programs and prior to that, was the Beacom School of Business Employment Services Director. Dykstra spent 17 years as director of the State Data Center (SDC) located in USD’s Business Research Bureau. As director of the SDC, Dykstra conducted research on various aspects of the South Dakota population and economy for use in business planning, research and governmental planning. Additionally, Dykstra served as program manager for the South Dakota KIDS COUNT program and began the Training and Professional Development division of the BRB. She has conducted more than 100 presentations about demographics, real estate and legal topics. Dykstra’s research interests are in the area of pedagogy, real estate law and demographics. She has published papers in the Human Systems Management Journal, Real Estate Educators Association Journal, South Dakota Business Review, and the South Dakota Business Magazine and Data Supplement, and has provided book contributions.

Dykstra is a member of the Academy of Legal Studies in Business and South Dakota Bar Association. She is also a member of the First National Bank Board of Directors in Brookings, former chair of its Audit & Compliance Committee, and its Vermillion Branch Advisory Board. Dykstra is a member of the Prairie Family Business Association Advisory Board and serves as treasurer. She has been president of the South Dakota Career Planning and Placement Association, South Dakota 4–H Foundation, Vermillion Rotary Club and P.E.O.

Melissa Christianson

The accounting department in the Beacom School of Business gained instructor Melissa Christianson in fall 2015. She teaches Principles of Accounting I and II at the University Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as well as Accounting Systems on the University of South Dakota campus. Christianson uses lecture–based courses, complemented by Internet videos and work experience, that encourage student participation and discussion.

“I have always wanted to teach, and now I’m teaching at one of the best business schools in America,” said Christianson. “I’m thrilled to be able to share my working experiences with students, and am excited when students can relate with their own.”

Adding student perspectives to the material aligns with her current research into finding new teaching methods that reach all students; she is also interested in issues regarding budgeting, tax structuring, compensation and decision making.

Before teaching, however, Christianson felt that she could be a more effective and engaging instructor if she had a background in the business industry. She worked as an accountant in Madison, South Dakota for five years, until receiving her Certified Public Accountant license in 2010. After working for Williams & Company and then as the lead financial analyst for Avera Sacred Heart Hospital – both in Yankton, South Dakota – she came to USD.

Christianson holds a B.S. in biology from Mankato State University (1998) and a master’s degree in environmental science from Ohio University (2001), and she is currently working toward her Master of Professional Accountancy degree at USD.
The fall 2016 semester will bring a new focus for decision sciences at the Beacom School of Business, designed to meet emerging employment trends.

Two new minors, operations management and business analytics, as well as two new classes, Predictive Business Analytics and Prescriptive Business Analytics, will be available to students when the fall semester rolls out. A third new class, Operational Analytics, will be available in spring 2017.

The minor in business analytics will focus on the use of computational technology and data to improve business decision making and operational effectiveness. An operations management minor will emphasize lean management, project management, and supply chain management as they are applied to business and industry.

Beacom faculty members Thomas Tiahrt, Ph.D. and Daniel Tracy, Ph.D. were instrumental in developing the new programs.

“Data on many activities is captured and stored,” explained Tiahrt. “Analytics uses this data to pull information that predicts who the next buyer is, whether they are a credit risk and if they are in a demographic where your business should focus. Analytics can tell you the best place set up your next store, what promotions to offer, when, and whom to target. These decisions improve your competitive advantage and boost your bottom line—profits.”

Federal labor department projections through 2022 identify a 7 percent job growth for operations managers, while strong national job growth of 16 percent to 32 percent is estimated for business analysts.

“Analytics in business and especially operations is necessary to leverage data,” said Tracy. “These skills are sought by the marketplace and accrediting bodies. We want to be ahead of the curve and provide market–demanded skills.”

The new operations management minor is open to business majors; the business analytics minor is open to all students. To accommodate the new emphasis, two new faculty members will be hired.

According to Tracy, regional demand for the new classes and the skills they provide will be substantial. “It really is a unique offering and an area that is not filled at all in our region yet,” Tracy said. “We’ve already got broad industry support for this new emphasis. Corporations are anxious to interview our students who enter into these fields.”
**FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Economics and Decision Sciences**


Mandie Weinandt and Mike Allgrunn, Ph.D., “Is Shopping at Walmart an Inferior Good?” accepted for publication in the *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*.


Kathryn Birkeland, Ph.D., presented “Til Death: Student Loans and Taxes” at the Allied Social Sciences Association national meetings in San Francisco, California, January 2016.


Dave Moen, Ph.D., has been appointed to the W. H. Over Museum Board of Directors.

Brock Stoddard, Ph.D., received grant funding from the International Foundation for Research in Experimental Economics (IFREE) to support his research examining individual decision making in a group context.

Thomas Tiahrt, Ph.D., received a South Dakota EPSCOR Grant to support student tech fellow research in data analytics.

Tom Martin gave the keynote addresses at the U.S. Army ROTC Commissioning Ceremonies at both USD and SDSU, December 2015.

Dan Tracy, Ph.D., sat on a faculty panel for the Delta Sigma Pi North Central Provincial Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 2016.

Mike Allgrunn, Ph.D., gave the State of the Economy address at the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry’s 2015 Economic Outlook Seminar in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, November 2015.

**Entrepreneurship, Management and Marketing**

Damian Lonsdale, Ph.D., “The Effects of Leader–Member Exchange and the Feedback Environment on Organizational Citizenship and Withdrawal,” accepted for publication in *The Psychologist–Manager Journal*.

Billy Jones, Ph.D., and Akshaya Vijayalakshmi, Ph.D., “Instructing Students on the Use of Behavioral Assessment in Sales Hiring,” accepted for publication in the *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education*, Special Issue Teaching Innovations in Sales Education.

Greg Huckabee, J.D., had his paper, “The Ethics of NCAA DI Sports Team Scheduling: University Presidents Take the Field, Part II” accepted for publication in the *Sports and Entertainment Law Journal*, a publication of the University of Denver Sturm College of Law.

Mark Yockey, Ph.D., presented “Emotional Intelligence in a Family Business” at the Prairie Family Business Association.

Rand Wergin, Ph.D., was elected vice president of the Pi Sigma Epsilon National Council.

**Health Services**

Carole South–Winter, Ph.D., led a student abroad trip to Cuba during the Christmas break. Her group was one of the first in the country to be able to visit and study the Cuban health care system.

**Accounting / Finance**


Davies, Tom, “The Effect of Recent Internal Revenue Service Missteps on Taxpayer Perceptions,” with Angeline Lavin and David Moen, published in the *Journal of Business and Accounting*.

Ragothaman, Srinki and Cornelsen, Erin, “An Empirical Analysis of Audit Committee Member Resignations Due to Policy Disputes...


Stephenson, Teresa and Porter, Jason, “Improve students' writing — without adding to your grading time.”Extra Credit: The Newsletter for Accounting Educators, October 2015.


Ragothaman, Srin, Ph.D., received the Teaching Innovation Award from the American Accounting Association Forensic Accounting section at the Chicago national AAA meeting for his publication, “The Madoff Debacle: What are the Lessons?” August 2015.
ABOUT THE BEACOM SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

USD's Beacom School of Business was established in 1927 and has been accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) since 1949. The leading business school in the region, Beacom's programs are consistently ranked among the top business schools in the nation by Princeton Review, U.S. News & World Report and others for its high-quality learning experience, student success, affordability, and high-caliber of faculty and students. Whether a student chooses face-to-face or online courses, Beacom's programs emphasize real-world experience through professional organizations, quality internships and capstone projects.

BUSINESS PROGRAMS garner NATIONAL RANKINGS

MBA program ranked #16 on the Top 25 Online MBA Programs by Princeton Review

U.S. News & World Report ranked the Beacom School of Business #41 of the 91 Best Online Graduate Business Programs

MPA ranked #1 on OnlineU's List of the top Online Accounting degrees in 2015