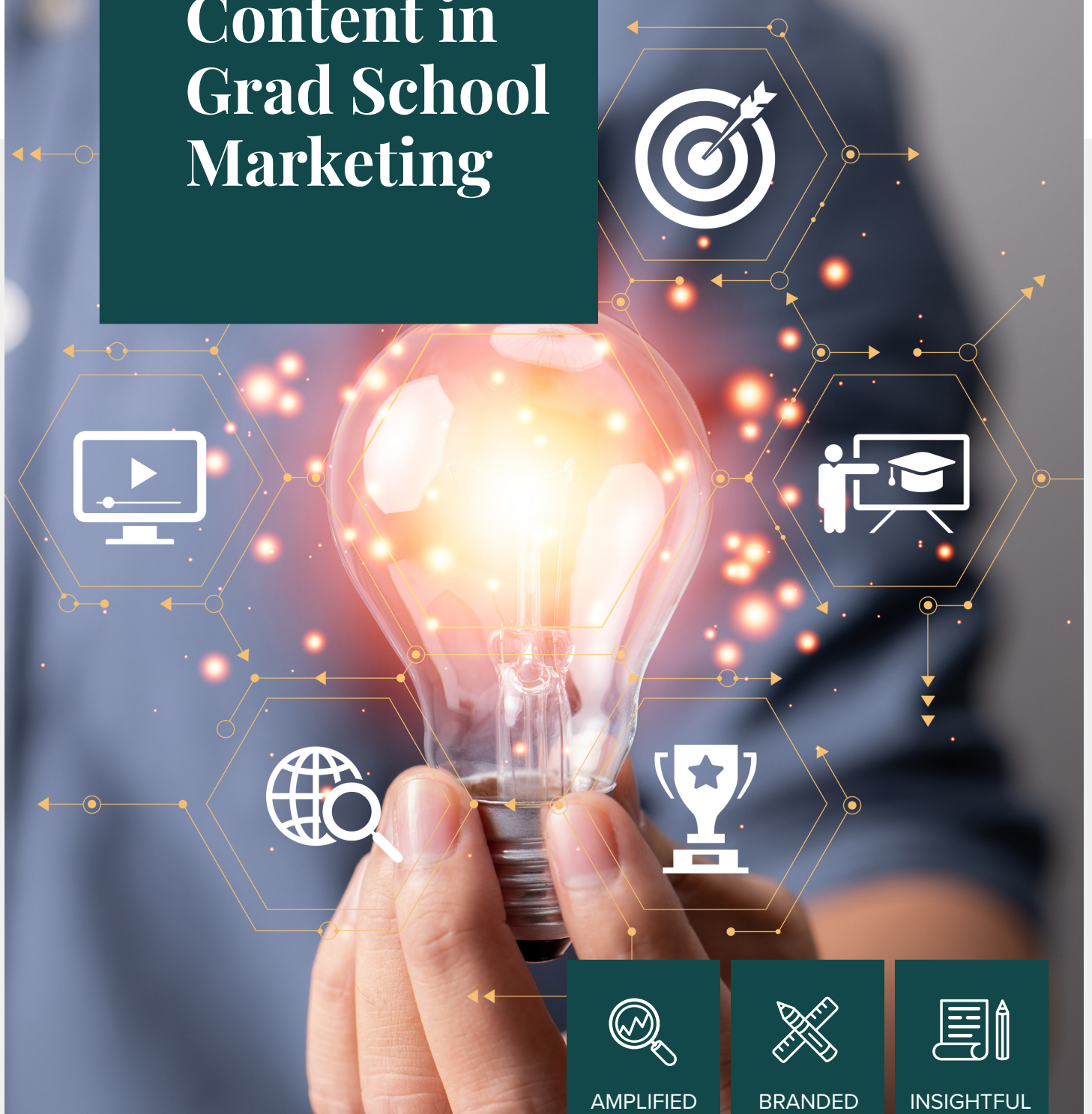


2023

The Role of Nimble Content in Grad School Marketing



AMPLIFIED
RESEARCH



BRANDED
DESIGNS



INSIGHTFUL
WRITING

2023

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01

Opening the Content Floodgates

Every graduate school has great stories to tell. As in-house communications teams build their marketing strategies, they have no shortage of topics to choose from. A scarcity of resources—especially in time and writing talent—often stops schools from getting the most value from modern content marketing tools.

Red Mallard partners with the communications teams at business schools, medical schools, and law schools to provide the writing and editorial talent they need to bring more of their stories to a wider audience.

Our higher education content services are focused on great writing and design. Most marketing agencies grow pale at the thought someone might actually read what they write. We run toward that kind of trouble.

Graduate programs want to reach a highly educated and highly literate audience. Their readers are the types who read every word of an article, from top to bottom.

To produce the kind of great writing this audience wants to read, Red Mallard brings together writers and editors with a rare mix of capabilities:



INSIGHTFUL INTERVIEWING

Alumni, faculty, donors, and administrators deserve to talk to interviewers who are curious, articulate, and well prepared.



SOPHISTICATED COPY

Our writers are experienced professionals who know how to tell a compelling story.



EXCEPTIONAL DESIGN

We have a talented in-house design team with deep experience in higher education.



PRECISION EDITING

Our extensive editorial process lets reviewers focus on substance.



COLLABORATION

We work with in-house marketing teams to support the entire production process.

02

Like You, We Build Institutions



John Welches

President and Founder

Red Mallard has been helping organizations build relationships since 2008. While our industry has let technical analysis lead so much of its strategy, we have stuck to an old-fashioned approach based in service and collaboration. Creating content people actually want to read puts aside the allure of short-term gains in favor of building the long-term, sustainable relationships.

We are a values-driven business. Centering collaboration, empathy, humility, and mutual support means we aren't the right content marketing partner for every organization out there. But we think it makes us

an ideal partner for the marketing departments at universities and professional schools, where our team's low-ego, good humored style feels right at home.

We share your time-honored perspective as institution builders, and we'd like to be part of your school's pathway to even greater things.

Thank you for considering Red Mallard as your next content partner.



Capturing the Full Dividend of Faculty Achievements

Research institutions compete for one of the most valuable currencies in the world: attention. Attracting new students is important, but potential applicants aren't the only people schools want to reach. Funding sources, alumni, corporate clients, academic peers, and prospective faculty members each are complex demographics requiring specialized approaches.

Mass marketing strategies are great for communicating general information to a general audience. But to build relationships, schools need targeted, tailored content solutions. Building strength on strength In this content-driven marketing era, research universities have an inherently strong starting position thanks to a captive source of great material: their faculty.

Leveraging faculty achievements for marketing purposes is a no-brainer proposition. With academic research, the more you look, the more you see. The challenge is to translate the

specialist's precise language into layperson's terms without sacrificing accuracy or nuance. A well-crafted summary article or infographic helps the reader understand not just what the research says, but also why it matters.

The value proposition

Giving faculty research a dedicated spotlight opens at least two important pathways to value for the institution. The most significant is the boost it provides to the institution's reputation among the people it cares about most. Raising the institution's profile among academics at other schools can lead to higher rankings. Especially at the graduate level, prospective students want to learn from the faculty doing work that interests them.

Just as in the business world, employee-focused content has important side benefits for the university. Academics need to share their work, especially with an engaged audience. By facilitating those conversations, the university



Alex Bennett, JD

Chief Content Strategist

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03 Capturing the Full Dividend of Faculty Achievements

gives appreciation to its faculty. Academics elsewhere will take notice and want to be part of it.

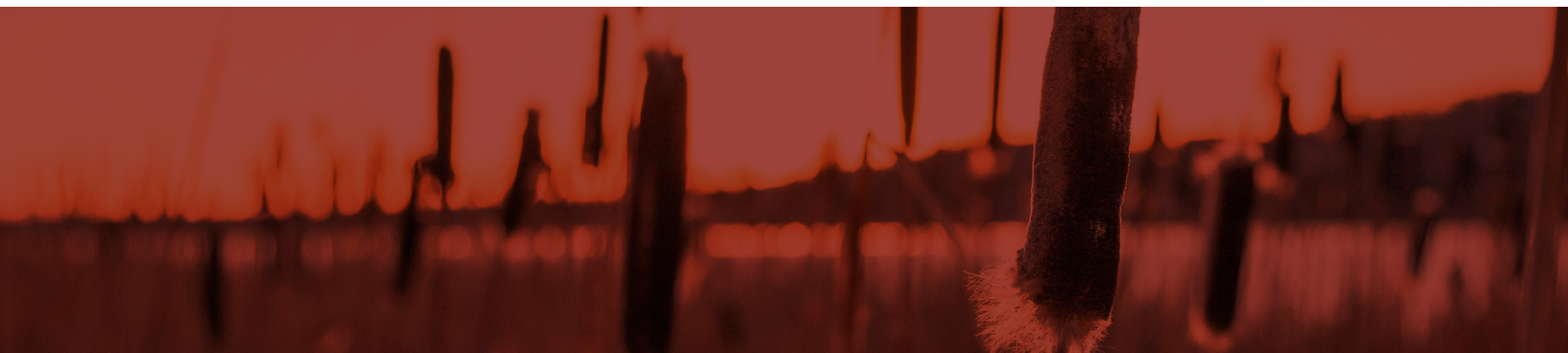
Solving for how

For university marketing departments, the problem isn't what or why, but how. There's never enough bandwidth to go around. The consistent production of high-quality content requires a big staff of writers, editors, and designers. While most universities can sustain a small number of flagship publications, those periodicals likely fail to capture the full marketing value of what's happening at the school. Building internal bandwidth takes resources that most university marketing departments would love to have. Budgets often aren't the main roadblock. Talent is. Great writers aren't easy to find. Professional editors and project managers who understand content strategy don't grow on trees.

Our approach

Red Mallard offers marketing directors a complete content package. We have long-standing relationships with great writers who have the smarts and skills to tackle technical topics. Our proven production process delivers polished work on time and on budget. And we know how to listen and how to follow the client's lead.

We are proud of the work we have done in support of the Marketing and Communications Department at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business. In the pages that follow we describe how UCI has leveraged Red Mallard's creative talent to fill the gaps in their internal capabilities. Thank you for reading.



Case Study: Broadening the Reach of The UCI Paul Merage School of Business

The UC Irvine Paul Merage School of Business is one of California's best business schools, with students and faculty from around the world. Its programs combine innovative research with innovative approaches to empowering future business leaders.

Red Mallard has supported the marketing and communications team at Merage since 2018. Our partnership began with a simple goal: celebrate and elevate the accomplishments of the school's faculty. Specifically, the team asked Red Mallard to provide well-crafted articles for publication in the school's Research in Action publication.

Designed to enhance UCI's reputation among academics at other institutions, business leaders, alumni, and potential students, Research in Action offers plain English explanations of the faculty's highly technical work. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with faculty, the articles shine a spotlight on recently published papers that might otherwise get little notice outside academia.

We talked with Levi Eastwood, Marketing and Communications Director for The UCI Paul Merage School of Business, to explore Red Mallard's impact on the Research in Action project and the evolution of the relationship between the university and Red Mallard.

About The UCI Paul Merage School of Business

UCI brings together the core academic strengths of a premium University of California campus and the entrepreneurial spirit of Orange County's innovative business community. The school enrolls around 1,200 undergraduate and graduate students yearly, offering a cutting-edge curriculum with a range of undergraduate, MBA, specialty masters, and Ph.D. programs. Boasting a highly personalized learning environment led by over 80 members of a world-class faculty, The Paul Merage School of Business equips students with everything they need to build thriving organizations.

The Research in Action Writing Challenge

In 2018, the Merage School came to Red Mallard with a problem confronted by many research-oriented universities: bandwidth. Although faculty routinely produce groundbreaking articles, the marketing team lacked the internal resources to efficiently translate the most interesting examples into content that is accessible and digestible by a broader audience.

[Continued >](#)

“We have go-to-market research at our fingertips,” Eastwood explains. “We needed an influx of writing talent to tap into its marketing potential.”

To get the UCI team to its objectives, Red Mallard put their best writers on the job. Along with literary skills, writers approaching Research in Action needed the intellect to understand the professors’ work and a probing interview style.

“Red Mallard’s writers have the gift of being a translator,” Eastwood says. A steady stream of articles from a trusted source has proved to be “not just insightful but actionable.” The impact of the engagement has quickly moved past its original objectives of a modest increase in article volume.

Before Red Mallard began its work, Research in Action was a glossy annual publication. With Red Mallard’s help, the publication has transformed into a twice-monthly digital publication with the potential to reach a far wider audience at a fraction of the cost.

A Synergistic Partnership

Red Mallard is a small team, while UCI is a mammoth institution. Those size and scale differences have proven to be valuable drivers of the engagement’s success.

Red Mallard offered UCI quick access to the professionals handling their work, along with the flexibility to meet with faculty members located across the country or around the world. The agency’s editorial rigor saved faculty and marketing department time by delivering polished first drafts for initial review. When schedules changed or topics became urgent, Red Mallard adjusted accordingly to deliver quality work on time.

“I’ve realized that when you have two big entities with red tape on both sides, it’s challenging to work together. And working with an agency like Red Mallard—where team members are human and flexible—is beneficial. Their agility is key because we (the university) often are not,” Eastman says.

Over time, Red Mallard’s work for UCI has grown to include a steady diet of Research in Action pieces along with profiles of major donors, alumni spotlights, press releases, and more. John Welches, president of Red Mallard, says that the relationship “has helped us enter the academic sector with a strong footing while showcasing one of our core concepts in taking very complex topics and turning them into digestible, relatable content. “We’re proud that the original engagement with The UCI Paul Merage School of Business has developed into a long-term partnership.”

Representative Examples of Red Mallard's Work for The UCI Paul Merage School of Business

Red Mallard has provided content for the external communications team at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business since 2018. Our work has encompassed a broad range of content styles, from quick press releases to in-depth explorations of faculty research. The examples that follow demonstrate some of what our writers can do.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Do Blue or Red Stocks Perform Better? How Political Polarization Impacts Your Stock Returns



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Changing the Future of Healthcare with Dr. Kurt Tamaru



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Executive MBA Graduate Soars into New Promotion



DONOR PROFILE

UCI Accounting Professor's New Scholarship for Middle Class Students



Research Highlight



This article was published in The UCI Paul Merage School of Business's recurring Research in Action series, which spotlights interesting and important work of faculty members. The article was originally published on October 26, 2021!

Do Blue or Red Stocks Perform Better? How Political Polarization Impacts Your Stock Returns

During the COVID-19 pandemic, investors have experienced wild fluctuations in the market, with some companies experiencing significant gains while others suffered. While investors may have their theories for why some organizations weathered the volatile market better than others, there is one significant factor that hasn't been seriously examined—political alignment.

Thanks to the diligent research of Jinfei Sheng, Zheng Sun, and Wanyi Wang of The UCI Paul Merage School of Business, this previously unconsidered element has been documented and verified. The team published their findings in the article titled Partisan Return Gap: *The Polarized Stock Market in the Time of a Pandemic*.

"In early 2020, from March to April, there was a lot of news about stock markets and some discussion about how political beliefs about COVID may impact the market," says Sheng. "We wanted to understand the impact of political polarization on stock performance and the pandemic provided the perfect environment for us to gather the data we needed."

Over the last few years, as partisanship and political tribalism have grown, the divide across party lines has cut through living rooms and board rooms alike. This widening gap between the red and the blue presumably has been a factor in the rise and fall of stock prices as well, but how, why, and in what ways? This was what Sheng, Sun and Wang set out to uncover.

Measuring the politics of a company's investor base

When it comes to determining whether a company is red or blue, the team had to make certain distinctions. "In our paper, we rely mainly on the location of the company headquarters," says Sheng. "Our research shows that the local geographic location is what matters most. Where you are in your industry makes a difference. Local people tend to invest more in local companies," he says. "We also incorporated new data that allowed us to measure political polarization of a company based on Facebook connections across counties, and other social connections."

¹The published article can be accessed at <https://merage.uci.edu/news/2021/10/Do-Blue-or-Red-Stocks-Perform-Better-How-Political-Polarization-Impact-Your-Stock>Returns.html>.

Taking stock of the gap

“First, we wanted to find out whether or not the returns of red and blue stocks behaved differently. Was there really a difference? What we found was very striking,” says Sheng. “They really were two different animals. In the face of COVID news, the red stocks had higher returns than those tied to blue stocks. It was a pretty amazing gap—as much as 20 basis points daily.”

Their data also provided insight into the risk attitude of different communities. “If people don’t feel safe, they are less likely to visit public places and vice versa. With our data we were able to measure local risk attitudes for both red and blue counties and found that people in red counties are less likely to exercise social distancing in response to COVID cases and lockdown orders,” says Sheng. “This was the main driver, we found. About 40% of the gap was driven by political beliefs about COVID.”

Accounting for the StockTwits gap

Another surprising result was uncovered when the team began looking at the partisan disagreement measure based on StockTwits data made available by researchers Cookson, Engelberg, and Mullins. StockTwits is a social network platform on which investors can tweet their opinions about different stocks. “On days with high disagreement between red and blue investors, we noticed the most pronounced gaps and a larger fluctuation in the market that corresponded directly to that,” says Sun.

Sun was also surprised at the magnitude of the returns gap and what it said about how students are traditionally taught to value companies. “What we teach in our classrooms about how to measure valuation—future cash flows, company risk, and so on—may need to change.”

“Our paper demonstrates that these old methods are not sufficient. For example, if you measured the future cash flows of red and blue companies during the pandemic, they would be very similar. The same can be said for the risk factors of those firms, and we incorporated those into our study, but those traditional methods did not reflect the results we found,” she says. “If we don’t adjust our valuation methods to include the political polarization factors, we’ll be missing a very large part of the data and our valuations will continue to be wrong.”

Thanks to this ground-breaking study, we now have a better idea of how investors should evaluate the companies they invest in. “If we could get better data about the political affiliation of the investors,” says Sun, “we might find even stronger connections to the performance of that company in the market.”

Building politics into our investing future

As the political divide in our nation continues to widen, it’s clear that partisanship is here to stay. Like it or not, investors need to seriously consider how this political polarization might impact their investments and respond accordingly.

“In the future, new disagreements along party lines are inevitably going to occur,” says Sun. “We need to learn to pay attention to how these may affect returns.” Sheng concurs, adding, “With COVID we can see how politics impact stock fluctuations dramatically, and we need to consider this, or we will suffer as a result.”

It’s not an exaggeration to say that politics now seriously impact stock performance. If so, shouldn’t political affiliation inform our investment decisions?

No matter how—or if—you vote, your financial future may depend on whether you invest in red or blue companies from this day forward.

Jinfei Sheng is an assistant professor of finance at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business. His primary research fields are empirical asset pricing, investments, and behavioral finance. His papers use big data, machine learning, and textual analysis to tackle fundamental questions in finance and economics. A central theme of his research is to understand the roles of information in financial markets. He received his PhD in finance from the University of British Columbia.

Zheng Sun is an associate professor of finance at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business. Her primary research interests are empirical investments, institutional investors, mutual funds, hedge funds, bonds, and loans. She received her PhD from the Stern School of Business at New York University.

Wanyi Wang is a doctoral candidate at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business. Her main research interests are behavioral finance, FinTech, and the application of textual analysis in finance. Her working papers explore the asset pricing implication of partisanship during the pandemic and investigate the role of technology in cryptocurrency pricing. She holds a Master of Economics from Peking University.

Leadership Profile



This profile of Dr. Kurt Tamaru, a member of the Dean's Leadership Circle at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business, was published on July 26, 2022.²

Changing the Future of Healthcare with Dr. Kurt Tamaru

Dr. Kurt Tamaru is using technology to transform the way virtual healthcare providers meet the needs of seniors. Using the power of data analytics, his company aims to dramatically improve outcomes for patients. Now he's bringing his expertise back to UCI as a member of the Dean's Leadership Circle.

Dr. Tamaru earned his undergraduate degree in pre-med biology at UCI before completing his education at Loyola in Chicago. "I took a scholarship with the Navy to pay for medical school and attended UC Davis for my internship in general surgery," says Tamaru. "After that, I was sent to the fleet to serve as a Navy flight surgeon." After paying back his four years to the Navy, Tamaru completed his residency training in family medicine at USC in Whittier, California. "Once I entered my practice, I was stunned," he says. "Back then, healthcare access was a nine-to-five thing. So, this was drastically different than my Navy experience where we provided around-the-clock care."

When business and medicine collide

As he worked in his medical group, Tamaru got more involved in the business side of medicine. "We had what's called an IPA, which meant doctors were taking risks on patient care with insurers. This got me thinking that I needed to know more about business in medicine, so I went back to The UCI Paul Merage School of Business for my MBA."

After graduating with his master's in 2006, Dr. Tamaru got recruited to work for a competing medical group, CareMore Health. "They had looked at some of the things I had put out there around mobile healthcare and providing home care services, and they wanted my help."

CareMore's mission involved a home visitation program for older adults and seniors. "Just like the old days when doctors used to make house calls," Tamaru says. "This was unique at the time, and we did very well in that space. Eventually, they were bought by a private equity firm, which was sold to Anthem a while later."

New innovations

Coming from CareMore led to an opportunity for Tamaru to serve as senior medical officer for the insurance company Blue Cross of California/Anthem. "That's where I truly learned the Insurance side of the healthcare

As the Affordable Care Act came into play, Tamaru decided to return to the healthcare services side. “I moved back into healthcare because I believe that’s where a lot of change will occur,” he says. “As a physician, I think I have a lot I can contribute to that innovation.”

That’s when United Health Group recruited him. They were interested in creating a new division called Optum. “They planned to own and operate medical groups across the country,” he remembers. “They needed someone to serve in an executive position who understood health insurance and provider groups. So, I had the perfect background they needed at the time to build what they now call Optum Care.”

After serving at Optum Health for five years, Tamaru left to pursue more entrepreneurial activities. “I have a strong interest in how we can improve healthcare outside of the brick-and-mortar model,” he says. “I started to envision the convergence of technology and healthcare services, which was extremely exciting.”

This eventually led him to work briefly with a new startup providing virtual care in oncology. But unfortunately, that venture folded after two years due to a lack of funding.

For some, it’s personal

When Tamaru’s virtual oncology tenure ended, he started his own company called Guardian Health, which emphasizes continuous virtual care.

“We’re a digital healthcare service company,” he explains. “We care for older adults with chronic illnesses who need additional support and assistance. These patients already have a network of doctors but need more interaction with a healthcare provider beyond the occasional office visit. Because, let’s face it, going to your doctor once every few months may not be enough, and access to consistent care is important.”

The real inspiration for this new company comes from Tamaru’s concerns for his mother. “She’s in her nineties, lives alone and wants to stay independent,” he says. “I’m a doctor but geographically distanced from her. So, at her age and with her medical issues, when she ends up in the ER, I can’t be there to care for her myself. The distance made me realize that if I had more visibility of her condition and had a team wrapped around her—analyzing her prescriptions, examining behavioral health issues, and engaging with her regularly—I could provide the quality of care she needs. Then, we could have avoided emergent issues that resulted in her being hospitalized on numerous occasions.”

² The published article can be accessed at <https://merage.uci.edu/news/2022/07/Changing-the-Future-of-Healthcare-with-Dr.-Kurt-Tamaru.html>.

Continuous care, no matter what

Guardiant Health uses technology to deploy what Tamaru calls a continuous interactive care model, which provides proactive engagement and remote care at home, referred to as PERCH. “I developed this model based on my years of experience in this space, using technology to support and facilitate health and care,” he says. “We use biometric sensors, accelerometers, blood pressure cuffs, digital scales, sleep trackers, tablets and other smart devices to monitor the patient and gather continuous data about their condition. We also employ clinical teams to analyze this data and engage with the patient, their families, and caregivers 24/7, 365 days a year.”

The average connection and touchpoint between Tamaru’s team and their patients are every 48 hours; whether that’s a data point, digital communication, zoom call or phone conversation. “Our model is based on the idea that our patients need frequent engagement and constant contact with healthcare professionals,” he says. “It also allows us to address the needs of seniors living in care deserts, rural areas where the quality of healthcare availab

Quality boost

And the Guardiant Health care model is working. Their services have been live for the last year, and so far, it’s advancing the quality of healthcare for seniors in significant ways. “This new model has allowed us to gather some fascinating data points that we’ve never looked at in medicine before,” says Tamaru. “I can see patients’ sleep patterns, how often they’re eating, and what their diet looks like. In addition, I can see how many days a week they feel well versus how many they don’t and track how often symptoms flare up. We have biometric data that includes weight, blood pressure, heart rate, EKG and other data points. We’re starting to analyze all the data, and we’re realizing that there’s a huge behavioral and social lifestyle component that impacts patient health. As a physician, I never had that level of information to help me care for my patients.”

It’s never too late to change

Historically, healthcare has been a reactive science, but Dr. Tamaru wants to change that. “Healthcare data is dynamic,” he says. “It changes over time—it’s not static. Patients may be healthy today, but when one variable changes, they could end up on a different trajectory. How can we learn from that data and develop the ability to predict that change in the future? That’s my goal, to understand how to become more predictive and proactive. Healthcare today is a very reactive system. I think what we’re doing at Guardiant Health allows us to become more proactive in the future, and that changes the game completely.”

The future of health

The shift towards proactivity is one reason Tamaru and Guardian collaborate with UCI’s new Institute for Future Health. This partnership explores improving outcomes for older patients with multiple chronic health issues like heart failure, lung problems, cancer recovery, kidney dialysis and other complex conditions that the healthcare system chooses to ignore.

The beautiful thing about Guardian's virtual approach is that they can practice in any state they're licensed in and provide care in any home with a cell signal, phone line or Wi-Fi. "Right now, we have contracts providing care for patients across California," he says, "with pending contracts for Pennsylvania and other states around the country."

Good things always come back around

Tamaru's journey began at UCI, and now it's coming full circle. "No matter what I do, I seem to keep returning to my roots at UCI," he says. "A lot of what I've been doing is directly influenced by my education and experience at UCI. That's why I want to give back to the University in any way I can because UCI has always given back to me. It's like a continuous loop of mutual advantage in so many ways."

Dr. Tamaru is ecstatic to join UCI's Dean's Leadership Circle. "This is a great way for me to give back to the University for all they've given to me," he says. "Whether it's in healthcare or business, I'm excited to help in any way I can."



This profile of a graduate of The UCI Paul Merage School of Business Executive MBA program was published on the UCI website on October 11, 2022.³

Executive MBA Graduate Soars into New Promotion

After 13 years in the land survey industry, Michael LaFontaine was ready for a change. “I was hitting the technical ceiling of my profession,” LaFontaine said. “So, I knew I needed to sharpen and gain new management skills if I wanted to reach the executive level, which was my goal.”

Once he had researched the various MBA programs in southern California, he found one that stood out above the rest. “UCI was at the top of my list,” he says. “A few reasons why I went with the Executive MBA program was the tech focus. Obviously, business analytics, machine learning, and A.I. integration is becoming more commonplace in my profession. So, that was a great application for me in addition to the great management skills that I’d be gaining. Plus, UCI is only 20 minutes from my house, so that was a huge bonus.”

Strong Connections

Another positive for LaFontaine was the cohort learning concept utilized by the Merage School. “Over the two years I really grew and learned from my cohort group,” says LaFontaine. “I didn’t realize how important that aspect would be until I experienced it.”

Smooth Sailing

Like many students, the pandemic threatened to sideline his education goals in 2020, but thankfully the Merage School responded quickly to ensure everything stayed on track. “UCI did a great job in response to COVID. We went straight online and hit the ground running,” he says. “We didn’t miss any semesters or teaching time whatsoever. Our program didn’t skip a beat and I really appreciated that.”

Program Perks

Throughout the program, LaFontaine took advantage of the executive coaching resource as often as possible. “I really appreciated that additional perk,” he says. “I utilized it pretty heavily starting in year one on a monthly basis and then continued consulting with my executive coach after graduation.”

³ The published article can be accessed at <https://merage.uci.edu/news/2022/10/Executive-MBA-Graduate-Soars-into-New-Promotion.html>.

New Perspectives

The biggest advantage LaFontaine gained through that executive coaching relationship was the shift it brought to his perspective. “My coach really helped me to think differently about what was going on in my workplace environment,” he says. “I’d say it gave me the ability to look at things with an outside lens. Most of us are inside our own little bubble. My coach helped me see things and think about things I had never thought about before.”

build insurance products, work with employer groups, health networks, benefit design, contracts, medical management, and everything else. Then, I took all of this new knowledge and tried to see how we could improve healthcare across larger populations.”

Wider Vision

LaFontaine also credits the professional framework his executive coach utilized in their sessions together. “I remember bringing in questions and problems I was strategizing on, and my coach would provide a great framework for me to filter my situation through that really helped me. I’m kind of a structured person who needs that sort of thing when I’m trying to organize my thoughts,” he says. “The framework provided so much clarity to whatever scenario I was struggling with at the time. It really forced me to think outside of the box; in ways I would have never considered before.”

New Horizons

Recently, LaFontaine was promoted by his employer from senior land surveyor to deputy county surveyor. “I oversee an entire business unit now,” he says. “I went from managing 8 people to 30 people.”

Without the professional advice LaFontaine received through executive coaching, he says his future wouldn’t feel so promising. “There’s no way I would have progressed to where I am today,” he says. “Because of my experiences at UCI, and the coaching expertise I had to support me, I was able to bring up other people around me in my company, as well.”

Team Spirit

Since the promotion, LaFontaine feels blown away by all the support he’s received from everyone. “Everyone has gone out of their way to encourage me,” he says. “I know that’s because of the way my coach taught me to approach the management process. They can feel it in the way I work with them, and I can feel it myself.”

“Before I entered the EMBA program, my field of vision was pretty narrow,” he says. “I was mainly concerned about my business unit and how we were performing. What my coach helped me to do was to spread my field of vision. She encouraged me to start talking to people outside of my usual circles and stop being so hyper-focused on production. It really opened my eyes to the importance of connectivity and the importance of leveraging relationships within the wider organization.”

One Family

Even once LaFontaine had widened his field of vision, the next step for him was building mutual support groups within the company. “Everything really starts with helping others,” he says. “Instead of looking for ways they can help you, try looking

for ways to help them succeed and meet their goals,” he says. “What I realized was that I genuinely did want to help my coworkers succeed. It wasn’t about going through the motions to get them on my side. My perspective shifted to see what was good for them was good for all of us because we’re all part of the same team.”

Smart Choice

Overall, the decision to join the Executive MBA program at the Merage School was a very good one for LaFontaine. “The faculty is top-notch. I can’t name one teacher I didn’t enjoy thoroughly, and the research they’re doing is fascinating,” he says. “But it’s also the connections – not only with your cohort – but also with the teachers, and UCI’s connections with various industries are exceptional. I never knew what a hub Irvine was until I was immersed in it through this program. The executive coaching, obviously, was a game-changer for me, and their leadership track is just priceless.”

The Executive MBA Program at The UCI Paul Merage School of Business is now the #1 EMBA program in Southern California, and #8 in the U.S. To learn more about the Executive MBA program at the Merage School visit: <https://merage.uci.edu/programs/mba/executive-mba/index.html>



This profile of a major donor to The UCI Paul Merage School of Business was published to the UCI website on August 18, 2022.⁴

UCI Accounting Professor's New Scholarship for Middle Class Students

Professor Steve Milner at The Paul Merage School of Business grew up in Orange County and remembers simpler times. “When I first attended UCI in the mid-70s, the options were pretty limited when it came to food,” he says. “We only had the Commons and a little Italian restaurant that was across the street in what’s now a shopping center. So, if we felt like celebrating, it was always over a plate of spaghetti.”

Though his wife, Ellen, and sister are UCI alumni, Milner only attended for about two years before transferring to UCLA. “Unlike most accountants, I didn’t major in accounting,” he says. “My major was in English, specializing in medieval and Elizabethan literature. But Chaucer was an accountant, so maybe it’s not that unusual if you think about it.”

Use your past to impact the future

Milner grew up in a middle-class family. His dad worked a union job, which provided for their family but didn’t qualify Milner or his sister for scholarships. “What we could do was work and put ourselves through school,” he says. “But you can’t do that anymore. Today, without a scholarship, it’s challenging for those in the middle class to get an education.”

His personal experience with the challenges of affording college propelled his desire to help others like his younger self. Financial support for low-income households and historically underserved communities remains of critical importance, but Milner understands the need to cast a wider net, encompassing more middle-class students and only increasing the range of support we can provide.

To help alleviate the rising costs of tuition, Steve and Ellen Milner decided to create a new scholarship through UCI. “This is our way of providing an opportunity for at least a few students to get a top-notch education without being saddled with onerous debt. Similarly, we can support students who otherwise might not even try to earn their degree,” says Steve.

⁴ The published article can be accessed at <https://merage.uci.edu/news/2022/08/UCI-Accounting-Professor-Launches-New-Scholarship-Opportunity.html>.

As first-generation college graduates, opening the doors for today's students is a meaningful endeavor. "Our parents didn't have an education, but we were both able to go all the way and get our doctorates," he says.

The ideal student is a passionate one

When asked about scholarship qualifications, Milner welcomingly responded, "I've never been hung up on GPA. It all comes down to their essay, to be honest. We want to see if students have a heart for accounting and if they have a passion for attending UCI. Finally—and I'm not sure if I want to tip anyone off or not—if they said they wanted to eventually give back to UCI, that would go a long way."

The Stephen and Ellen Milner Endowed Fund begins in the Fall 2022 quarter at UCI and is currently accepting candidates for consideration.

"Everybody deserves a chance," he says. "UCI gave us one and wants to give others the same."