AN MBA TRIPLE THREAT THAT’S TOUGH TO BEAT

THE THREE DISTINCT MBA PROGRAMS FROM THE SCHELLER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS PROVIDE A WINNING COMBINATION OF TECH EXPERTISE AND BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS TO GIVE PROFESSIONALS THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO EXCEL IN TODAY’S GLOBAL MARKETPLACE.

BY ERIN PETERSON

IT WAS 2007, and Joe Urban could see that business was undergoing a sea change. From his vantage point as a sales and marketing professional at the medical tech company Boston Scientific, it was clear that business was getting more technology-focused and globally aware. Urban was ready to get his MBA to turbocharge his career, and he was eager to attend a school that was attuned to the shift.

When he looked into Georgia Tech’s Scheller College of Business, he found a school with an approach that didn’t just align with what he had already seen in his career—it doubled down on it. “I wanted to be part of what they were building,” says Urban, MBA 08, of Scheller’s global, tech-oriented education. “They were right at the forefront of technology and global business.”

Urban’s time at the school, which included residencies in Buenos Aires and Dubai, paid significant dividends. He’s now the CEO of Potrero, a Silicon Valley–based medical AI company. To date, it’s raised more than $50 million to develop technology to detect and predict acute kidney injury, a condition that kills 300,000 people each year.

The integrated technology and business focus of Scheller’s three unique MBA programs may have felt a bit unusual a dozen years ago. But today, they reside squarely at the heart of almost all meaningful business, says Assistant Dean of MBA Programs Katie Lloyd. “Almost all of the exciting things happening in the world and in business right now—supply chain, business analytics, innovation, digital disruption—are happening at the intersection of business and technology,” she says. “This isn’t just about IT. It’s about marketing and finance, and...
“It’s about nearly every industry.”

If Scheller’s tech strengths are deeply embedded in its DNA, its business bona fides have been strengthened with the innovation ecosystem that’s developed in Scheller College’s home in the Midtown Atlanta’s Tech Square. Innovation Centers—partnerships with more than a dozen high-profile companies ranging from The Home Depot to Panasonic—are where students, faculty, researchers and companies work together to explore how business and technology can work together seamlessly.

One recent beneficiary of these collaborative efforts was Lindsey Waters, a current full-time student who landed at Georgia Tech after graduating from Harvard and working in marketing at Coca-Cola. While visiting The Home Depot’s innovation studio during orientation, she learned about the HoloLens, an augmented-reality product developed by Microsoft that was being used to train Home Depot employees. “That demonstration made me realize how technology could be used across business functions,” she says.

A month later, while at the National Black MBA Conference in Detroit, she talked to Microsoft recruiters about the HoloLens—a conversation that later led to her summer internship with the company. “The program does such a good job of connecting us with these companies and helping us get in front of them,” says Waters. “Then we’re able to use experiences from

Christian White, MBA 16, and Christian Hyatt, MBA 16, got an entrepreneurial boost from their time at the Scheller College.
the program and turn them into opportunities for ourselves.”

It’s not just the students who are noticing the benefits. Scheller’s MBA programs have earned an armful of accolades and top rankings. Among them: a top 10 ranking from U.S. News & World Report for full-time and evening programs, a top 5 MBA Career Services ranking from Financial Times, a top 10 MBA for return on investment by QS World University Rankings, top 20 Executive MBA program in the U.S. from Financial Times, and a No. 1 in Career Progress for EMBA Alumni from Financial Times.

For current evening student Sawyer Williamson, the rankings are notable—but numbers he’s been most impressed with are the ones he’s seen with his own business. Williamson, a vice president at Williamson Bros. Bar-B-Q, currently balances his role at the company with evening classes in the MBA program.

He wanted more than theory. “Anything I was going to devote myself to had to have some kind of payback—and not on a three- to five-year scale, but immediately,” he says.

His MBA program has delivered, and his improved decision making is having a real impact on his company—a multimillion-dollar business with more than 200 employees. “I’ve gone into a class and learned new techniques in cost accounting that I’ve been able to take into work the next morning to change our accounting system,” he says. “I’ve seen a huge upside.”

Even those who aren’t balancing a job and school are getting plenty of chances to do real-world work with practicums and other types of experiential learning. Waters, for example, took a strategy course that paired her with employees at Delta Air Lines. Her project focused on improving Delta’s engagement with corporate travelers. “In practicum courses, you learn about facing conflict in a team setting and dealing effectively with clients—all the real-life experiences you’ll need in your career and for responses to interview questions,” Waters says.

For entrepreneurs, Tech’s location and support can help bring great ideas to life. Christian Hyatt, MBA 16, and Christian White, MBA 16, were able to stress test a business idea they had about information security and compliance through an array of opportunities at Tech. “We iterated through product/service-market fit in a sandbox environment,” White says. “We were encouraged to reach out to entrepreneurs, we were introduced to growing technology startups, and we were provided an ecosystem to prepare, develop and ultimately launch a successful business venture.” The information risk management firm—called risk3sixty—that they launched as a result of this work is thriving.

Declan Nishiyama, MBA 18, a chemical engineer who had been working at Exxon before arriving at
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Tech Square: Where Innovation Happens

As the world becomes ever more focused on technology—from augmented reality to autonomous vehicles to cybersecurity—business must keep pace. At Georgia Tech, this technology focus is second nature, and the Institute has worked to make it even stronger in Tech Square. More than 1.4 million square feet of space are devoted to ambitious innovation initiatives in business and technology. Here’s what you’ll find:

- 100-plus startups
- 22 corporate innovation centers, including AT&T, Boeing and Honeywell
- The Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), a startup incubator that helps technology entrepreneurs launch and build companies
- VentureLab, which works with students to create startups based on research
- CODA, a 755,000-square-foot facility designed to encourage collaboration between university researchers, students and industry

And that’s just the start. Tech Square keeps growing, and the Phase III expansion of Atlanta’s premier innovation hub will include the Scheller Tower (pictured), which will house Tech’s MBA and executive education programs. It’s slated to open in 2022.

Georgia Tech’s program, was drawn to the Scheller’s College strength in entrepreneurship. He did a project as a part of the TiiGER (Technology Innovation: Generating Economic Results) program, which teams up MBA, engineering and computing students with industry mentors and corporate innovation centers. He was one of a trio of students who focused on commercializing autonomous vehicle research. Among his tasks were to learn exactly how they could position their efforts to attract companies including Uber and Google.

While the tools and techniques are valuable to students, perhaps the most important benefit of an MBA from Scheller is the alumni network—a community of people who are excited to support fellow Yellow Jackets as they seek their next job and solve the next problem. There are more than 165,000 alumni, and they can be found in in every state and more than 130 countries. That includes 4,000 C-suite executives ready to help.

Among those standing at the ready to help Scheller students is alumnus Joe Urban. After earning his degree in 2008, he’s stayed connected to Scheller. He happily invites Scheller students who go on annual Silicon Valley tours to visit Potrero to learn about the ethos of their work—and the benefits they might expect to see from Georgia Tech even beyond their graduation. “We love to show them the way that we operate—failing fast and failing often, learning and moving forward,” he says. “Our team presents to them, gives them a tour and has lunch. We’ll crack a beer at a happy hour. I’m happy to open up my arms and welcome Georgia Tech, because they gave me such a great opportunity to be part of their program.”