Oliver leaves banking to join business faculty

By Kelly Spillman

Augustana business students may have noticed a new face around campus and in the classroom. Rob Oliver, former southeastern district president for Wells Fargo, accepted a position as chair of the Augustana business department, beginning this fall.

A banker for 27 years, Oliver received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of South Dakota. Beginning as an installment loan officer in September of 1977, Oliver moved up to become president of the Sioux Falls branch of Northwestern National Bank, which bought Wells Fargo in 1998. In addition to his experience in banking, Oliver has served on various boards, including the Augustana Board of Regents, and boards at the United Way and Avera McKennan.

Oliver also worked for a short time at the University of South Dakota, teaching economics at the undergraduate level and finance at the graduate level. When Oliver learned of an opening in the business department at Augustana College, he inquired about it.

“I always thought it [teaching] would be a good second career,„ he said. “I’ve taught before and I enjoyed it, the students reacted positively, my position on the board [of Regents] was favorable, and I have always been drawn to the mission of higher education„.

Of the myriad business courses offered at the college, Oliver currently teaches gateway to business and principles of management. He’s interested and enthusiastic about both. He enjoys teaching the management course because he can go deeper into the subject, but at the same time enjoys teaching gateway to business because of the variety of subjects he gets to touch. “Depth versus breadth„, is how he described the difference between the two classes.

Oliver advises current Augustana students to get the most out of their time here. “Invest in it and get the most out of it you can„, Oliver said. “Make it a priority to build relationships between students and faculty„.

While excited about his new position, Oliver said he misses the people at Wells Fargo. It’s a very relationship driven environment, in which you develop close ties with the people you work with and with the customers, he said. However, while Oliver misses the people at Wells Fargo, he has enjoyed meeting new people here. “Everyone here at Augustana has been so friendly and welcoming, and it has been a real joy to meet these people and get to know them more thoroughly„, he said.
Marketing students win prestigious scholarships

Senior business administration major Micah Aberson and Junior Mara Sand were awarded two of four scholarships from the Sioux Falls chapter of Sales and Marketing Executives (SME). SME is a professional association dedicated to sales and marketing excellence. SME offers professional growth, education, certification and networking opportunities for members and supports youth education through scholarship programs to encourage students to pursue sales and marketing careers. SME members include CEOs, marketing managers, sales managers and other senior executives who contribute to the advancement of sales and marketing management. Micah and Mara each received a $1500 scholarship, based upon their academic performance, answers to marketing questions and sales presentations. Augustana students have historically performed well in the SME scholarship competition.

The world is their oyster, er, lutefisk

Jobs have drawn Augustana College business students throughout the Midwest and beyond. They say their degrees and experience are portable and translate into excellent professional credentials.

Here is a look at a few alumni who have parlayed their business administration or accounting degrees into compelling occupations and graduate schools:

Lisa (Johnson) Lentz, CPA, ’03 is working at Eide Bailly LLP as an associate accountant. She is assigned to the General Services Department, so works on both audit and tax. Lisa passed the CPA exam on her first try last November, resulting in a raise and bonus. She also joined the SD CPA Society. Lisa can be reached at llentz@eidebailly.com.

Sarah Hellstrom ’03 says her new job as production designer at Weber Shandwick in Minneapolis is going well. Her projects range from inhouse graphics for presentations, to RFP responses, to collateral and signage for clients. Weber Shandwick is the largest PR firm in the upper midwest and the Minneapolis office of Weber Shandwick is part of a world-wide network of firms. The parent company is IPG. Sarah is also doing some freelance design. Check out her website at sarahjohellstrom.com.

John Sutton ’93 is back in Sioux Falls after spending a few years as a financial advisor at First National Bank Omaha. John started his career with Federated Insurance, most recently as district marketing manager in Sioux Falls. Currently John works as regional director for the SilverStone Group of Omaha. He focuses on executive benefits, retirement and wealth transfer planning, holding Certified Financial Planner(TM) designation. John’s email address is Johnsutton3@yahoo.com.

Steve Watson ’04 is the newest member of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development’s team in Sioux Falls. As an economic development representative, Steve will be working with 13 counties along eastern South Dakota, encompassing the cities of Sioux Falls, Brookings and Watertown. He says, “My new job will likely prove to be challenging but manageable. I sincerely believe that my Augustana education has prepared me for this, the next phase in my life, and has given me an advantage unforeseen while completing my coursework. I sincerely owe all of the other great teachers I have been so fortunate to have had in life a big THANK YOU.,” Steve has recently suffered some health problems, so may appreciating hearing from some of his former classmates at steve.watson@state.sd.us.

Cathy (Hofer) Mendel ’91 worked on John Thune’s successful Senate campaign. Since graduation she has worked as an admissions representative for the University of Sioux Falls and later for Rep. Thune until he lost his Senate bid in 2002. You can email Cathy at bc8895@yahoo.com.

Kathy Enget ’03 is living it up in the great state of Texas, allegedly attending graduate school. “Hey y’all! As some of you know and many of you don’t, I moved to Austin, TX in August. I am here for a Masters degree in professional accounting because we all know that college life is just way more fun than work., Kathy says The Big 4 accounting firms started recruiting on her second day of orientation. She says her first Longhorn football game was a little weird. “I was in a section with a bunch of accountants from my program (who are all new to UT) and everyone around us already knew all of the words to the songs and chants and stuff and we’re all standing there with our "Hook ’em horns” in the air just trying to fit in., You can send her your regards at Kathryn.Enget@mpa05@mccombs.utexas.edu.
SIFE chapter reinstated at Augie

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is a non-profit organization active on more than 1600 college and university campuses in 40 countries. SIFE works in partnership with business and higher education to provide students the opportunity to make a difference and to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills through learning, practicing and teaching the principles of free enterprise.

The Augustana College Students in Free Enterprise Team was one of 180 SIFE Teams from across the nation competing at the 2004 SIFE USA National Exposition held in Kansas City, May 23-25.

Augustana College advanced to the national competition by winning their league in the regional competition hosted in Minneapolis on Tuesday, April 6th. At regional competition the team was judged best at teaching people of all ages the principles of free enterprise. Augustana SIFE not only taught free enterprise, but team members made a difference in Sioux Falls by developing projects to meet specific community needs such as our Spanish Banking Project, Freshman Finance, Senior Savvy, Foreign Currency Exchange for 7th Graders, Mock Interviews and Assisting Entrepreneurs.

Nonprofit programming introduced to community

In an effort to provide opportunities for our students and area nonprofit leaders through education, research and service, the Business Administration Department at Augustana College has created the Center for Nonprofit Management. Department faculty, with the assistance of a dedicated group of senior seminar students, researched programs throughout the nation and then asked this region's non-profit agencies as well as current students what they would like in a two-year, workshop-based program. Augustana accounting and business administration faculty then created the 12-credit hour, 15-month curriculum for this unique Post Bachelor’s Certificate in Non-Profit Management. The Center will serve as an educational facility and resource center to help managers better serve their constituents, making the most of their organizations’ often-limited resources.

Augustana College plans to offer both traditional classes and workshops that focus on nonprofit topics beginning this fall. The education and resources provided by this project will also have a marked impact on future nonprofit leaders. Many students at Augustana College have expressed enthusiasm for the nonprofit management courses being offered in the business department because they are receiving specified direction and education in their career goals of leading nonprofit organizations. Their education will further be enhanced through their involvement with the Center and current community leaders. In Sioux Falls alone, there are over 650 nonprofit organizations. Employees of these nonprofits total over 6,000, including two regional healthcare systems. These professionals in turn serve thousands of others. The Sioux Empire United Way system of nonprofits, which includes 37 agencies, estimated they served over 54,000 people last year alone.

Courses and workshops will range from board development to grant writing to legal & governmental issues to reading & analyzing financial statements. If you’d like to learn more about the Center or the Certificate program, please contact Shelly Gardner at gardner@wise.augie.edu.
Business department teaches entrepreneurs through distance learning

Thanks to a grant from the Qwest Foundation, Augustana has teamed up with the Center for Women Business Institute from USF to host a series of workshops over the Dakota Digital Network. The educational series, called the Business Success Workshops, began in January of 2004 and have reached participants from over 30 communities across the state of South Dakota to give them instruction on how to start a business or grow the business that they currently own. Topics include Accounting, Marketing, Safeguarding Intellectual Property, Risk Management, and Customer Service.

Bottom Line (Faculty Notes)

Dr. Anne Oppegard is on sabbatical, and she has a variety of activities planned. For one thing, she’s the World’s Oldest Intern. That’s a tongue-in-check description of the primary foci of Anne’s sabbatical. After Bob Thimjon resigned as the department’s adjunct audit faculty, Anne took over that class. Although she’d taught Auditing while on the faculty of Jamestown College, and of course studied the subject both in her undergraduate and graduate programs, Anne was anxious to experience auditing as a practitioner. To that end, she has arranged ‘internships’ with two local accounting firms, Henry Scholten & Co and EideBailly, LLP. She will be participating in the audit process from start to finish of a number of audits on a variety of client organizations. In October Anne attended the Lutheran Faculty Association annual conference, held this year in New York City. If auditing schedules permit she also hopes to attend the Midwest Regional meeting of the American Accounting Association and local SD State Society conferences. Spring will find Anne spending a month in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Former Augie English faculty member and Associate Dean Katherine Haley-Will is President of Gettysburg College and she and Anne have designed an opportunity for Anne to observe Kate in her presidential role and participate in a variety of college activities at the administrative level. Anne will also be undertaking two research projects this year.

Jaciel Keltgen-Pierson will deliver her paper, "Closing the Gap: Why Non-Profits Should Continue to ‘Date’ Stakeholders Even After the Wedding" at the 2004 Economics & International Business Research Conference in December. Her paper will also be published in the The Journal of American Business. Jaciel is a member of Sales & Marketing Executives and serves on the Women in Business Committee.

Dick English presented a paper at the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences in Las Vegas in February. His paper, “I Hid Behind My Credentials...” was based upon the discovery that a former colleague had hidden his murder conviction from college officials. This is the sixth paper Mr. English has presented at the annual national conference. He also spoke to the local Purchasing Managers group about business ethics.

Shelly Gardner says the SIFE team always keeps her busy. “What a blessing to be working with such an energetic group of students with so many fantastic ideas! This year we were honored to host the SIFE Regional Training event on top of our regular activities... Shelly is chair of the Co-Curriculum Council this year and still serves on the Career Center Board. In addition, the Nonprofit Center will offer the first series of workshops this fall so Shelly is staying on top of the details to ensure an outstanding experience for everyone. She is still involved in the Sioux Falls Chamber by serving on the Small Business Council.