

The Road Ahead: An Interview with James Fogal, Interim Dean, School of Business and Management

Q: What distinguishes NDNU's School of Business and Management (SBM) from other schools offering graduate business degrees? What's coming down the road?

Our vision is “to provide an education which affords our graduates abilities and values to make contributions in their profession and their community” and how we do that is by executing on the mission of “providing applied learning and foundational knowledge to prepare graduates for professional advancement.” This is why SBM faculty strive to push our students out of their comfort zones by exposing them to difficult scenarios and letting them dive right in to develop different strategies to overcome the problem. This often entails working in teams and doing a lot of writing and presentation work, areas that initially are uncomfortable for many students. The end result is that students not only master the situation at hand, but also build confidence by seeing their contributions in real time.

In addition to our MBA and MPA degrees, we're on the cusp of launching two additional programs, both highly technical – a Master's in Business Administration – STEM and a Master's in Technology Management (MST). The MBA-STEM program was designed from the ground up for a data rich world. The program bridges the gap by providing the tech-commercialization knowledge for how to make things work.

The MST is designed for high tech professionals to develop the skills to work closely with deeply technical people to devise a roadmap and manage non-technical stakeholders to ensure they keep teams on track. Once we get it up and running, it's going to be our fastest growing program.

Both are game changers and we're pretty excited about them. Having received approval from our accreditor for these degree programs, we're on track to clear the last few hurdles remaining for NDNU to be able to admit international students. Stay tuned!

Q: Tell us a little bit about your background – how did a career professional with over 25+ years in industrial engineering and supply chain distribution expertise make the leap to academia?

Many years ago, I was invited to teach a class as “an industry expert” and can share it was one of the most humbling experiences I had ever had in having to answer questions because these students were there to learn and get something out of the class. It wasn't until many years later (2006) that I made the transition from industry to join NDNU fulltime and pursue my passion in helping others achieve competency and the confidence for them to make their own mark in their careers. So, it was fortuitous after having retired from academia in 2020 and returning to industry to be called back in 2021 to the dean role leading the rebuilding of SBM for the next generation of leaders. While no shortage of projects these days, it truly has been a dream working again with so many talented faculty and impressive students.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?

For starters, I really enjoy teaching – it keeps me fresh. It's so meaningful to help prepare our graduates to go out and make a difference by giving them the skills and confidence they need to make that difference. There's great deal of satisfaction in hearing a student say that they received a job offer or

promotion because of a particular class or skill they learned here, but all we really did is show them that they can do it.

Q: Which of the Notre Dame Hallmarks resonates the most for you?

That would have to be “We commit ourselves to community service.” It literally starts with a promise, one that our students, faculty and staff fully understand and support. Our work at the university is to empower people to make the world a better place no matter what discipline or profession they are in.

What do you do for fun?

I have a seven-year-old son who keeps me grounded and on my toes! He’s a very active boy, and we enjoy doing many activities together including camping and fishing.