

Sacramento MBA Students Pave the Way for Professional Success

Local Asian Chamber Awards Drexel Graduate a Scholarship for Leadership Program

At Drexel University's Sacramento campus, excellent business partnerships are just part of the curriculum for students in the MBA program.

This past summer was no exception for MBA candidates completing their Strategic Management capstone course. Taught by **Dr. Keisha Liggett-Nichols**, the class is a culmination of MBA students' two-year programming. It provides students with the opportunity to partner with local organizations and serve as business consultants to address a specific need or challenge.

"One of the goals of Drexel Sacramento is to immerse itself in the community and engage with small to mid-size businesses specifically to help students get experiential learning in the classroom," Dr. Liggett-Nichols said.

As part of their capstone project, four students partnered with the Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce (SACC). The team – **Gaosheng McCauley, Srikanth Rao, Meagan Harris** and **Justin Griffin** – was tasked with creating a program enhancement plan that SACC could use to rebrand two of its leadership programs, Catalyst and Jump 21. The chamber programs help local high school and college students looking to gain professional skills and experience.

From left to right: Justin Griffin, Gaosheng McCauley, Dr. Keisha Liggett-Nichols, Meagan Harris, Srikanth Rao

"As soon as we received our final MBA assignment, we realized what a huge difference we could make if we delivered an exceptional mentorship framework and marketing piece to the chamber for its leadership program," McCauley said.

McCauley and her Drexel teammates dug their heels in and grew passionate about their project. They conducted research, administered surveys to program alumni, and gathered as much data as possible so they could better understand the programs.

They were so absorbed in the work that they produced an impressive 160-page curriculum and framework for the chamber, as well as a facilitator guide and power point presentation for the program.

The group's final project deliverable

"Many organizations are surprised with the level of detail that students come up with," Dr. Liggett-Nichols said. "In addition to leveraging students' skills and the concepts they've learned, it allows me to provide strategic thought leadership to ensure they're focusing on the business case of the organization. This is such a valuable asset for the local community at large, because

businesses receive a valuable deliverable in a condensed amount of time that they'd otherwise spend a great deal of money for."

The success of the project for SACC resulted in a request from Chamber CEO **Patricia Fong** for a donation to the Drexel University Sacramento Consultation Research Institute.

It also helped McCauley discover the next step she wanted to take on her professional journey.

"As we worked to gather survey data and spoke to alumni of the Catalyst program, we just kept hearing about the professional and personal growth they've experienced and the admiration they have for the program," McCauley explained. "I became really interested in the program myself, and asked Pat what I could do to join the Catalyst program."

Fong, who was thrilled with the group's performance, was pleased with McCauley's interest and personally recommended her for a Catalyst program scholarship.

"It's a thrill to see such enthusiasm from Drexel students like Gaosheng," Fong said. "When she expressed interest in becoming a Catalyst member, I wanted to do what I could to help her participate in the program. She possesses the enthusiasm and intelligence we need in future leaders, and I can't think of a more deserving student."

McCauley has been awarded a full scholarship to join the Catalyst program this fall. She said that without the scholarship, she never could have dreamed of affording it. Coming from a single-income household with new student loan bills to pay, it would have been out of reach for McCauley.

"It is our hope and our goal that students will gain experiences and relationships during their time at Drexel that will present them with rewarding, professional opportunities once they graduate," said **Dr. Michael Marion**, Executive Director and Associate Vice Provost of Drexel University Sacramento. "To see Ms. McCauley's success, as well as the accomplishments of her cohort, inspires us and validates our mission and the great work our faculty is doing inside the classroom."

After completing her MBA in August, McCauley headed into the Catalyst program September 22. She looks back on her time at Drexel as a great learning experience.

McCauley receives her diploma at graduation

"Drexel lays a very strong foundation for any emerging leader, for anyone who wants to step up professionally," McCauley said. "It's more than an MBA – it's the cohort experience, that face-to-face group work and classroom discussion that refines, builds upon, and draws out the leader within you. It has definitely catapulted my professional experience and added to my leadership toolbox."