Leading through the pandemic and beyond, the school’s new dean, Lillian Mills, is eager to engage with alumni and the entire McCombs community.

Lillian Mills, the newest dean of the McCombs School of Business, is a “connector,” someone with a flair for building relationships and making introductions. Connection will be a theme of her leadership. After all, connection is what brought her to this job.

Mills was appointed interim dean in April 2020. Since that time she has led operations and implemented strategies to continue advancing the mission of the college and was not deterred by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout, Mills has made connecting with alumni a priority. Despite virtual visits, she finds meeting alums and hearing their stories to be one of the most enjoyable parts of the job. “Every minute I spend with an alumnus or alumna recharges me for work on the Forty Acres,” Mills says.

After 15 months as interim dean and 15 years at McCombs, she was elevated to the top job June 1, 2021, the first woman to hold the job in the school’s nearly 100-year history. Does she feel pressure being a pioneer?

“Being dean at a prestigious place like Texas McCombs requires being a scholar with gravitas, of course, but being an extrovert provides the energy to be the external face of the college in Austin’s ever-booming economy,” Mills says. “I don’t feel extra pressure being a woman in this role.”

She is a top-ranked researcher at the intersection of tax policy and financial reporting. Prior to her PhD program, she enjoyed a career in public accounting and has worked as a research consultant with the IRS for 20 years. The quantitative analysis and storytelling aspects of the profession initially drew her to accounting. “Distilling the numerous transactions of a global enterprise into financial statements that represent the health and operations of the firm, then interpreting those financial statement numbers to reveal the firm’s story always fascinated me,” Mills says.

UT Austin President Jay Hartzell, her immediate predecessor as McCombs dean, says he witnessed Mills’ strengths as a leader when they were department chairs at McCombs. “After a highly competitive national search, it was clear we already had the best candidate right here at UT,” Hartzell said in a university-wide statement about Mills. “Beyond her infectious energy and sense of optimism, she exemplifies the drive for excellence in teaching and research that we seek to instill across the Forty Acres.”

For her part, Mills calls it an honor to have the trust of her colleagues and the enthusiasm of alumni. Indeed, alumni connections made her realize she wanted the job.

When she meets alumni, she tries to think of the professors they need to meet. “If I can inspire 20% of my colleagues to adopt that approach with the alumni they meet and broker that next introduction, the leverage for our research and teaching will be huge,” she says.

As Richard Sansing (PhD ’90) puts it, “The best researchers strive to be exceptional teachers.”

Mills adds that she likes to hear students ask their research faculty what they are working on and see if they can participate in the process as undergraduate research assistants.

The nation’s most elite schools have historically cultivated alumni, not just to provide financial support, but to engage with faculty members on their research and with students as their mentors. Doing that better will help McCombs “compete among the elites for the strength of our networks,” Mills says. Gratefully, she adds, “Alumni are hungry for ways to meaningfully engage.”

She also wants to build stronger ties with the business community in Austin and in other major cities. One plan to accomplish that is by making a push for students and alumni to connect through UTHookedIn.com, a new online site aimed at helping Longhorns advance educationally and professionally. She intends to tie that push to the school’s 100th anniversary, coming in 2022. “I have a vision that every accounting student during an internship or

McCOMBS DEANS BY THE NUMBERS

2 Number of women who have been the dean of McCombs. Lil Mills was named permanent dean in 2021 and Laura Starks was interim dean from 2015 to 2016.

1922 Year Spurgeon Bell, the first dean of the business school, was hired. He was a 1903 UT graduate and taught courses in accounting and statistics.

24 Number of years of the longest dean appointment. Anderson Fitzgerald was dean from 1926 to 1950. He guided the school into its first permanent building in Waggener Hall in 1931 and chaired the University’s war bond drives during World War II.
FROM THE CHAIR  MICHAEL CLEMENT

DEAR FELLOW ACCOUNTING LONGHORNS:

As 2021 comes to a close, I’d like to use this space to reflect on what we have accomplished in the past year.

Given the challenges of the pandemic, we are grateful to have returned to some semblance of normal. In the spring 2021 semester, we were back on campus for an in-person Graduation Moment of Recognition, where MPA graduates got to walk across the stage, elbow-bump with Dean Mills, and create memories with classmates, faculty, and family. Even though we did not have a traditional commencement ceremony, it was wonderful that our students were able to be recognized in person for their hard work. The campus has been much more alive this fall, with 95% of our courses delivered in our classrooms.

In addition, 5 BBA accounting students and 16 MPA students graduated this December. We look forward to seeing what they will accomplish in their post-McCombs careers and lives.

This year several of our colleagues took on different positions of responsibility. Most of you now know that accounting professor Lil Mills was named permanent dean of Texas McCombs. To say we are proud and thankful to have Lil at the helm of our college is an understatement. She embodies the leader, mentor, and colleague we all strive to be. We should also acknowledge that in December, Eric Hirst stepped down as Senior Associate Dean and will return to his research and teaching roots in the spring.

Assistant Department Chair Kristina Zvinakis also took on increased responsibility in her new role as the MPA Program Director. Kristina is a graduate of our PhD program, and she cares deeply about the MPA Program and our students. We are fortunate to have her serving in both roles. She took over from Steve Smith, who served admirably in that role for the past five years. Thank you, Steve, for your service and your ongoing commitment to our students.

Our faculty continues to be recognized for their outstanding work. Brady Williams was recently promoted to Associate Professor, confirmation that his research and teaching accomplishments are valued not only by the Department, but by the College and the University. You can learn more about Brady and the outstanding achievements of Jaime Schmidt, Urooj Khan, and PhD student Anthony Welsch in this edition.

Not to be outdone by the faculty, our students and alums continue to make us proud with their achievements. Kelly Steckelberg (iMPA ’91), who is the CFO of Zoom, made headlines during the “Zoom Boom” and captivated students during her presentation (via Zoom) in the MPA Distinguished Speaker Lyceum in the fall semester. Jessica Lopez (iMPA ’20) was named a 2020 Rising Star at the McCombs Hall of Fame Ceremony. Arturo C. Olivarez (tMPA ’20) recently started the new McCombs Alumni Rio Grande Valley Chapter. And, David Cheuvront, a current MPA student, rode across the U.S. on his bicycle as part of the Texas 4000.

On a personal level, I’m grateful to those of you who reached out to Little Longhorn (the middle schooler from North Carolina we told you about in our last edition). Little Longhorn is grateful for the letters she received from readers of The Accounting Times.

In closing, I would like to thank our faculty, staff, students, and alums for everything you have done and continue to do to make our Department special. This past spring, the Department had an accreditation review. In summarizing their visit, the review team noted that “The Accounting Department and Programs are performing at a consistently excellent level in research, teaching, and service.” The report also said, “The level of and the professionalism of the staff and professional support team for the Department, and across McCombs, is enviable compared to many other state schools’ experiences.” None of this would be possible without your support.

We hope to see you on campus this spring and look forward to celebrating the 100th anniversary of the College of Business with you. Happy New Year! Hook’em!

THE BULLETIN

AWARDS

Michael Clement was one of ten professors chosen by UT alumni as a 2021 Texas Ten Award winner. Michael also received the American Accounting Association 2021 Distinguished Contributions to Accounting Literature Award for his research, “Inside the ‘Black Box’ of Sell-Side Financial Analysts.”

Urooj Khan won the 2021 Deloitte Foundation Wildman Medal Award for his paper, “The Expected Rate of Credit Losses on Banks’ Loan Portfolios,” published in The Accounting Review.

Jaime Schmidt received the 2021 Research Excellence Award for Associate Professors, selected by fellow McCombs faculty members.

Reflecting EY’s commitment to building a more diverse and inclusive workforce, Brady Williams received the 2020-21 EY McCombs Amplifier Award.

Anthony Welsch was one of five recipients of the AICPA Foundation’s William Ezzell Scholarship. He was awarded $10,000 to assist in the pursuit of his PhD.

Assistant Professor

UROOJ KHAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

JAIME SCHMIDT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

BRADY WILLIAMS

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

ANTHONY WELCH

PHD STUDENT

- 2 -
NEW MPA DIRECTOR
KRISTINA ZVINAKIS

On September 1, 2021, the Master in Professional Accounting program welcomed its new Program Director, Kristina Zvinakis! Read on to learn more about Kristina, her journey to Texas McCombs, and her goals for the MPA program.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR PATH TO UT, KRISTINA.

While it’s hard for me to believe, this is my 15th year at McCombs. I earned my PhD here and then taught at a couple of different universities after I graduated. I returned to UT when our then Department Chair, Ross Jennings, invited me to come back to teach tax classes. I count it as one of the better decisions I’ve made.

WHAT DREW YOU TO STUDY, AND ULTIMATELY TEACH, ACCOUNTING?

I grew up in a family that believed in the importance of education to securing a successful future. We (my two sisters and I) were steered toward business as a major, as that seemed to be a good foundation for many careers. When I started college (at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign) I didn’t know much about business. I was drawn to my accounting classes initially (and probably like many students) because of the problem-solving nature inherent in the class content. As I got further into coursework, I realized that I liked learning about, thinking about, and trying to sort out how regulation (i.e., the different accounting systems) affects the behavior of individuals and businesses. Reflecting on my education, I know that I didn’t appreciate how lucky I was to have such good professors. My undergrad and PhD program faculty cared deeply about their students, invested tremendously in their teaching, and were willing sounding boards and mentors. Those faculty were a big part of the reason that I chose an academic career path. I hope that through my teaching I am paying back some of what they did for me.

WHAT CLASSES DO YOU TEACH/HAVE YOU TAUGHT AT McCOMBS?

Tax Research and Corporate Tax are my primary classes; I’ve also been fortunate to teach in our summer study abroad programs. Tax Research is a challenging course to teach and, as a result, it’s a very rewarding class to teach. In class we first learn about the different sources of tax law. After that, I ask the students to apply what they have learned to determine and explain the tax consequences of a transaction.

My observation is that people who have interesting jobs often are working on solving difficult problems. As such, I try to assign challenging tax-research problems. I hope that by helping students develop a framework for problem solving and then giving them some practice applying that framework, they will develop skills that will be useful to them after they leave our program.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE MPA PROGRAM?

Keeping the program as well respected as it has historically been is high on my agenda. My vision for the program doesn’t encompass a radical overhaul, but includes two broad goals. First, I want to ensure that our curriculum is not only current on the dimension of accounting knowledge, but relevant in the context of the business environment today’s MPA students will enter. The Department recently added an ESG elective to the accounting curriculum and our faculty are working hard to incorporate more analytics into their classes. We have a responsibility to ensure that our students learn as much accounting as possible while in our programs. However, we also have a responsibility to ensure that our students appreciate the role of accounting in an evolving business environment.

Second, given the proliferation of non-accounting master’s degrees, I think we need to be careful to make sure that students are aware of the breadth of careers available to someone with an accounting background. Our graduates take jobs in a variety of industries and often use their accounting knowledge to distinguish themselves from their peers and leverage themselves into leadership roles. My job as a faculty member and as MPA Program Director is to ensure that students acquire the skills and the knowledge that allow them to find interesting and meaningful work. An accounting major can open doors to many different careers.

WHAT’S AN INTERESTING FACT ABOUT YOU PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW?

Many people know I am Lithuanian (or realize that I am, given my last name). That heritage is on both sides of my family. As World War II was ending, my mom and her family fled Lithuania and eventually immigrated to the U.S. We grew up speaking Lithuanian, attending Lithuanian school on Saturdays, and going to Lithuanian summer camp (in Michigan, about 80 miles west of Detroit). For one week of the summer every year, I volunteer at that same camp (my job involves working in the kitchen, which is not something that I know much about, so I learn something new every year). Our camp is located in a beautiful, somewhat rural area. Many of the people I grew up going to summer camp with also volunteer and some of my cousins are integral in organizing the particular week during which I volunteer, so I get to spend time with people I have known forever but don’t get to see very often. Austin doesn’t have as large a Lithuanian community that I grew up with in Chicago, so I enjoy reconnecting with my Lithuanian heritage every summer.

FACULTY PROMOTION
BRADY WILLIAMS

In fall 2021, Dean Mills announced the promotions of five McCombs faculty members; Brady Williams made that list. Read on to learn more about our newest Associate Professor.

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The world changed earlier for Kelly Steckelberg than it did for most of us. As CFO of Zoom, the Silicon Valley video communications giant, she and other company leaders had been watching the approaching coronavirus storm and anticipating the disturbance it might unleash. For Zoom, it would be a deluge. Steckelberg’s last day in the office was March 4, 2020. The office had closed to workers the day before, and Zoom’s leaders focused on making sure their employees felt safe and supported. Then they went home.

“We had the luxury that we all lived in the technology,” Steckelberg explains. “We had to adjust to being remote, but the technology itself obviously was something we were all using every day for every meeting. Really, we were watching very closely what was happening. Even watching, I don’t think we could have predicted how quickly it accelerated. On March 15 everything changed overnight for Zoom.”

As many Americans started to work from home, Zoom was on its way to becoming a household name. The company went from an average 10 million daily meeting participants in December 2019 to 300 million in April 2020.

Days blurred as everyone tried “to make sure that all of our customers and prospects who had a need for Zoom had access to it,” she says. It was an exhausting pace, and Steckelberg still had to juggle her many duties at Zoom. She is responsible for the chief accounting officer function, financial planning and analysis, budgeting and forecasting, procurement, investor relations, tax and treasury, corporate development, and Zoom’s real estate portfolio, including its offices.

Just as dramatic as the growth in their customer base was the expansion of their head count. Pre-pandemic Zoom had about 2,200 employees; that number has more than doubled to 5,000. “The brand awareness for Zoom and the flexibility of hiring has made it easy,” Steckelberg says. “Of course, it comes with very unique challenges to double your workforce in a completely remote environment, but we’ve done it.”

While she has been locked down like the rest of
A PEEK INTO
THE CLASSROOM

HOW DOES THIS COURSE DIFFER FROM OTHER ACCOUNTING CLASSES?
This course is unique in the fact that it includes topics related to financial and managerial accounting and finance in a single course. The purpose is to bring facets of the business side of healthcare to students with an interest in healthcare careers.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT HEALTHCARE ACCOUNTING?
As I tell my students, hospitals in the U.S. include a majority of not-for-profit entities. Therefore, this course covers accounting and business issues of both not-for-profit and investor-owned/for-profit entities. It is very rare, if at all, to find both aspects being addressed in a single course!

BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS FROM YOUR CLASS?
Students have the opportunity to:
- understand how financial statements reflect the performance of a healthcare entity;
- analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats based on financial statement analysis and make recommendations to address them;
- manage working capital using cash budgets and receivables aging;
- make decisions regarding pricing of products and services, make or buy, using breakeven analyses; and
- use net present value concepts to make investment decisions.

Continued from page 4

At the same time, she set a goal to become a public company CFO. “That started to help me target the types of roles I was going for,” she says. She landed at WebEx as the corporate controller, and although she thought one day she might have a shot at becoming CFO, the company was acquired by Cisco. New doors, however, opened.

From there she became CFO of the dating site Zoosk, her first experience working in a private company, a start-up, and a consumer web company. She moved into the COO role and learned the operations side of the business. A long sought-after goal of any CFO – taking a company public – ended with disappointment when Zoosk wasn’t able to adjust its business model quickly enough and called off its IPO. When the founders exited the company, the board asked Steckelberg to take over as CEO. “It was one of the hardest jobs I’ve ever done, but it was amazing and rewarding in the end. When you start to see your strategy come together, it’s really rewarding.”

After Zoosk, she expected to take a break, but within two days of updating her LinkedIn, she heard from a former colleague with a message that would change her life. A colleague from WebEx, Eric Yuan, the founder and CEO of Zoom, sent her a message. “I think he wrote something like, ‘It would be a dream if we could work together again.’”

Steckelberg was drawn by the opportunity to work with Yuan again and the chance to achieve her goal of helping take a company public. When Zoom went public in 2019, it was a career highlight, she says. Of course, no one knew Zoom would command the world stage by spring 2020.

Yuan is pleased he brought her on board. “Kelly is a brilliant leader and someone who makes Zoom a better place. She has an adept ability to make tough decisions and lead by example. We are so lucky to have her on our leadership team.”

Over the past year, she says, the company has stayed focused on two goals: making sure their platform was stable and available to their customers, and supporting a boom in employees. At the same time, they have strived to make decisions that would be sustainable post-pandemic. They had to continue adding sales reps to serve their customers and engineers to keep developing their platform. It was a difficult balance to strike.

Now as workers begin coming back to the office, how will that impact the company’s fortunes? Steckelberg says she doesn’t expect us to stop Zooming. “Zoom has become embedded in all aspects of our lives. It’s in our work life. It’s in our children’s learning. It’s in our social life now,” she says. “As we move toward the time where we can all move around the world again more safely, we’re going to want to leverage Zoom for the aspects that make our lives the most convenient. The future of work is not ever going to look the way it did before.”

Zoom is positioning itself for the post-pandemic world by building out some features that the company hopes will continue to showcase its value. One of them is the Smart Gallery, an innovation meant to improve the experience for a mixed environment where some employees are in a conference room and others are remote. Another new development is Zoom Apps: in-meeting applications by third-party developers to improve the meeting experience, such as integration with a service like Dropbox.

“Over time, what you’re going to see is Zoom continuing to evolve to be a platform where you spend your workday,” she says. “It’s not just where you come together to meet, but it’s also where you do your work and, especially, continue to collaborate with colleagues or with friends and family.”

After a year like no other, Steckelberg says she is proud of what the company has accomplished. “I can’t imagine not having been here with the amazing team and gone through this. It’s a lifelong experience that I’ll never forget.”

The original version of this article was written by Todd Savage and appeared in the summer 2021 edition of McCombs Magazine. His article is reproduced here, edited for length and clarity.
RISING STAR AWARD

JESSICA LOPEZ

Each year, the McCombs School of Business honors young alumni with the Rising Star Award. Honorees are acknowledged at the annual Hall of Fame ceremony. The award is presented to alumni who have been successful professionally and have helped strengthen the McCombs Alumni Network. Jessica Lopez (iMPA ’10) received the 2021 award, along with Michael Smith (MBA ’05). Congratulations, Jessica!

Since graduating from the MPA program, Jessica Lopez has grown from a staff accountant to a controller, receiving CPA and certified management accountant (CMA) designations, and now has the privilege of helping others progress in their careers.

She is currently the corporate controller for IDX (a digital privacy protection platform). Previously, she was the director of finance and controller for All Web Leads Inc. Her extensive participation with the Texas Society of CPAs (TXCPA) has included serving as treasurer-elect and serving on its Membership Committee and Leaders Emerging in Accounting Profession Committee. Her contributions to the community and the accounting profession have also been recognized by the TXCPA, being awarded the Young CPA of the Year (2018-19) award by the Austin Chapter and at the state level as a TXCPA Rising Star (2019).

IN MEMORIAM

ANNA FOWLER joined the faculty at Texas McCombs in 1977 as the first female tenure track professor hired by the Department. She remained at UT until she retired in 2004. Anna passed away peacefully on October 19, 2021.

KATHY SAQER began her career as an academic advisor at UT, eventually rising to the position of Assistant Director of Advising for the MPA program. She assisted students and faculty for more than 30 years. Kathy passed away on October 30, 2021 after a seven year battle with lung cancer.

RIDING FOR A CAUSE

TEXAS 4000

Helping the fight against cancer, the Texas 4000 cultivates student leaders and engages communities through a 70 day, 4,000-mile bike ride from Austin to Anchorage. At each stop along the way, riders share hope, knowledge, and charity.

David Cheuvront (iMPA ’23) rode the Smoky Mountains route this past summer.

WHY I RIDE – BY DAVID CHEUVRONT

There are three people I ride for:

The first is my Aunt Carol, affectionately called “Nana” from an early age. Nana was diagnosed with ovarian cancer when I was 11. After two rounds of chemotherapy, she went into remission. However, a few years ago the cancer came back. She is now continuing to battle against it. She has been in my life for as long as I can remember – ready to offer consolation for the lows and make the highs even higher. Nana is a huge inspiration to me. She has kept her sense of humor, faith, and bravery throughout everything she has been through.

The second is one of my best friends in high school, Ruben. On one cloudy Thursday, he drew me aside after class and told me he had testicular cancer and would have to miss most of the last semester of our senior year. After many days in the hospital and countless nights of playing card games, he beat it and is currently leading a healthy life studying computer science at The University of Texas – San Antonio.

I don’t know the name of the third person I ride for. After a long night of playing Magic: the Gathering with Ruben in the hospital, I had to head home and get some sleep. While I was waiting for the elevator, a girl no older than eight walked by with her teddy bear in one hand and an IV unit in the other. It’s hard to underestimate the impact this one child had on me. I haven’t stopped thinking about her since then. At that moment, I knew I had to do something about this disease that can take so much away.

A few weeks after getting to UT, I learned about Texas 4000 and applied immediately. It took a second try to get in, but I am so glad to ride. My goal is to bring as much happiness as I can to the people I meet along my ride. I want to bring us closer to a cure so that another family member doesn’t lose their strength during chemo, another best friend won’t miss the best year of high school, and to make sure a little princess doesn’t lose her hair.

Photo and story from texas4000.org.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Thank you alumni and friends!

Student scholarships, faculty development, and curricular innovations are made possible through the generosity of our alumni and friends. Join us in our commitment to excellence in accounting education at The University of Texas at Austin.

Thank you alumni and friends!

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For any questions, please call 512-471-3281.
On Saturday, October 16, 2021, accounting faculty, students, and friends of the Department participated in the Ragnar Trail Race at Flat Rock Ranch. The team, also known as the Depleting Assets, took 7th out of 200 teams and placed second in the corporate division, just behind the McCombs’ MBA student team.

The Depleting Assets finished around 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 17. Each member of the 8-person team ran three different legs: 3 miles, 5 miles, and 7.5 miles. It took them 20 hours, 12 minutes, and 18 seconds to run 124 miles!

WHAT’S YOUR STORY, ARTURO?
Howdy! I’m a proud second-generation Longhorn and have had the privilege of being born, raised, and educated in Texas. I currently serve as an Outreach Coordinator and Constituent Services Representative for U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar. I’m also the chapter leader for the McCombs Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Alumni Chapter. When I’m not at work, you can often find me hunting, playing the drums, or cheering for the Longhorns and the Dallas Cowboys.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO STUDY ACCOUNTING?
I’ve been fascinated by the intersection of business, government, and society as a result of growing up in one of the most impoverished regions of Texas. The purpose of my college experience was to answer one question: how can I improve the American financial system? I believe that accounting offers a comprehensive understanding of the processing, communication, and analysis of financial data for both public and private entities.

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MPA CLASS?
For the sake of giving credit where credit is due, there are three classes that have been especially impactful in my career and my life. Business and Policy in the Age of Inequality with Professor Cobb taught me the importance of corporate social responsibility. Financial Statement Analysis with Professor Zhao helped me connect the overarching theories of accounting and translate them into sound decision-making for investments. Lastly, the Legal and Ethical Environment of Accounting with Professor Jue honed my reasoning skills as I developed a rudimentary understanding of the legal system and how to navigate it as a working professional.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE GRADUATING FROM MPA?
I was very fortunate to have had a job waiting for me when I graduated. I was hired as a Legislative Aide for Texas State Senator Eddie Lucio after interning with his office in my final semester of the program. I stayed with the Senator through the 87th legislative session, and I midnighted as a contracted Legislative Policy Analyst for Stateside Associates, a boutique government consulting firm in Washington, D.C. I was hired by U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar in August, so I’ve called San Antonio home for the past few months. I also established the McCombs Rio Grande Valley Alumni chapter this past spring, and it’s been a fantastic way to strengthen the McCombs presence in South Texas.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RECRUIT FOR A JOB IN GOVERNMENT?
Simple: I want to rewrite the American tax code. As a legislative staffer in Congress with an MPA degree, I hope to craft innovative policy solutions for the ever-changing business world. I believe the U.S. could learn a thing or two from Texas, and I’m hoping to demonstrate that once I get to D.C.

TELL US ABOUT THE McCOMBS ALUMNI RIO GRANDE VALLEY CHAPTER.
I distinctly remember scouring the McCombs alumni website during my first semester as an MPA student to find resources available for residents of the Rio Grande Valley. I was discouraged to find that there was not an established alumni network in South Texas. After some correspondence with the McCombs Alumni Office, I established the official McCombs Rio Grande Valley Alumni chapter. I’ve been grateful for the support of the Alumni Office as well as other chapter leaders who have guided me through the creation of this organization.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AS THE RGV CHAPTER PRESIDENT?
I have two primary goals as chapter leader: 1) Unite McCombs alumni who are living and working in the RGV; and 2) provide resources for current McCombs students who hail from the RGV. Fundamentally, I want to create a reliable network for current students and alumni in South Texas. We are a young organization, and the pandemic has made events very difficult to organize, but there are close to 1,000 McCombs alumni in the Rio Grande Valley that are actively shaping the business landscape of South Texas, and I want to help organize our movement.

THE TAKEAWAY
ARTURO C. OLIVAREZ
From majoring in accounting and political science at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to earning his MPA at Texas McCombs, Arturo C. Olivarez (tMPA ’20) has always had his sights set on government and accounting. Not only has he worked at the Texas Senate and U.S. Congress, but he recently started a new alumni chapter in the RGV. Meet Arturo below!

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INCOMING tMPA CLASS PROFILE

Check out the profile of the traditional MPA Class of 2022! These students came to Texas McCombs from a variety of backgrounds and with an array of experiences and started classes in the fall of 2021.

83

ENROLLMENT

17% 43% 57%

URM GENDER

51% 49%

TEXAS RESIDENT NON-RESIDENT

13

AVERAGE WORK EXPERIENCE (MONTHS)

642

AVERAGE GMAT

ACCOUNTING UNDERGRAD

Continued from page 1

study abroad trip can connect with a mentor in that city via UTHookedIn.com,” Mills says. “Not only will this benefit our students’ professional development and network, but everyone reading this newsletter might have a chance to learn about their experiences and absorb their smart, eager perspectives.”

Mills came to McCombs in 2006 as an associate professor in accounting and was chair of the Department from 2011-2015. She was named the Beverly H. and William P. O’Hara Endowed Chair in Business in 2014. Mills earned a doctorate in accounting from the University of Michigan and master’s and undergraduate degrees in accounting from the University of Florida. She was on the University of Arizona accounting faculty before joining McCombs.

Mills listens carefully to corporate partners and individual donors to match their passions to McCombs’ strategic priorities, whether that be the new Mulva and Hildebrand Hall facilities, scholarships to recruit students and expand access, or support for faculty research and educational program needs.

In her free time, she enjoys visiting her grandchildren in Brooklyn, New York (Mills’ son, Robert Sabochick (tMPA ’10), currently leads Accounting Policy for Citi’s Latin American division and their Consumer Banking division), walking her silver labrador, Reacher, and cooking with Jim Mills, her husband of 32 years. “He’s a very calm retired physicist who is a perfect counterpoint to my energetic self,” she says.

Responding to congratulatory messages on the McCombs Facebook page, she wrote: “Thanks friends! This is the most rewarding job I have ever held, and if COVID was an energizing year, I am willing to lean in further” and “throw our doors open wider.”

As Texas McCombs 100th anniversary approaches, Dean Mills wants to capture and share your stories. Email accounting.times@mccombs.utexas.edu with memories of your time in the College of Business. We will use those memories to amplify alumni engagement during this major milestone.

The original version of this article was written by Mary Ann Roser and appeared in the summer 2021 edition of McCombs Magazine. Her article is reproduced here, edited for length and with additions from Dean Mills.