



BANKING DEMANDS LEADERSHIP. GSB BUILDS LEADERS.



SPRING AND SUMMER 2026 SCHOOLS OPEN FOR ENROLLMENT

DIGITAL BANKING SCHOOL

March 3-26, 2026

Location: Offered virtually over a series of half-day sessions throughout the month of March.

Description: Uncertainty in the market, rising consumer expectations, new technological advances, and competition from fintechs and neobanks, have all made digital banking essential in 2026. These converging factors make it more challenging than ever for smaller institutions to compete. GSB's popular Digital Banking School—the only of its kind—offers more than 25 hours of timely and vital content to get you up to speed quickly. With eight in-depth classes held twice weekly for a month, this program brings in content experts from every banking function—technology, compliance, human resources, risk management, marketing and more. You'll gain insight into the latest trends in customer-facing technology including AI and chatbots, video banking, the metaverse, and where/whether these fit with your business strategy. A single, per-bank registration allows anyone in the organization to participate. We encourage community bank CEOs to attend, along with leadership teams from operations, retail strategy, lending, business development, marketing, technology, project management, cybersecurity and compliance for maximum organizational impact.



BANK TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

April 13-17, 2026

Location: Fluno Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

Description: Evolving threats, emerging technologies, and changing regulations require IT professionals to quickly adapt to meet shifting business goals. Don't miss this innovative school designed by, and for, IT professionals and information security officers in the financial industry. This state-of-the-art program will broaden your understanding of the business of banking, including key drivers of bank profitability, along with an in-depth and interactive study of information technology management. CEOs and other senior managers are also encouraged to attend to gain a better understanding of how the bank's IT function is a key element in bottom-line profitability.



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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

April 20-24, 2026

Location: Fluno Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

Description: Digital transformation, regulatory shifts, and competition for top talent are changing the landscape of Human Resources. This means, as banks recognize their significant role in profitability, more demands are being put on human resource professionals. New and veteran human resource professionals should attend to understand the important issues in human resource management that impact the business of banking, such as bank profitability analysis, A/L management, building company culture benefits and rewards, talent management compensation, employment law, and more. You'll learn from respected industry experts about today's key issues in human resource management and how they relate to the bank's bottom-line profits. This one-week school will provide you with crucial skills you can immediately implement at your bank.



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BANKING

July 26-August 6, 2026

Location: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

Description: Since 1945, more than 23,000 banking leaders have graduated from the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The world-renowned school is highly respected for arming banking industry leaders with the relevant, comprehensive, and advanced management education required to meet the changing needs of today's bank manager. GSB is the only graduate banking school in the nation that relies on its alumni, Banker Advisory Board, and Academic Committee to create an unparalleled learning and networking experience. Graduates of the 25-month program also receive the prestigious Certificate of Executive Leadership from the Wisconsin School of Business Center for Professional and Executive Development—the highest level certificate they offer. ■



WE RECENTLY CELEBRATED OUR 80TH ANNIVERSARY SESSION!

July 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the Graduate School of Banking. Staff welcomed more than 500 bankers and instructors to Madison, Wisconsin to celebrate eight decades of executive education excellence. Highlights included:

- Tracy Walder, former CIA officer, FBI special agent, educator, and author, was the keynote speaker for the 2025 Distinguished Speaker Series. The best-selling author and adjunct professor on criminal justice provided students with critical perspectives on leadership, integrity, and resilience, which are essential qualities for success in today's banking environment.
- GSB students took a well-deserved break from studying to enjoy the sunshine and camaraderie at a Madison Mallards baseball game.
- At the Senior Women's Luncheon, panelists Marcie Hoskins, Julie Redfern, and Vicki Kraai, along with moderator Nan Gesche, led a thoughtful conversation on mentorship and the importance of showing up for one another. ■



GSB 2025 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



GSB ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT PROFILE

BLAKE ABSHER: CHAMPIONING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY IMPACT IN BANKING



Blake Absher
Head of Commercial
Banking, CRE &
Regional Executive,
Broadway Bank
Austin, Texas

Journey Into Banking

Blake Absher, Head of Commercial Banking, CRE & Regional Executive, Broadway Bank, Austin, Texas, jokes that as a new college grad many years ago, exploring his career options, his father's desire to get the new graduate off his payroll led to a meeting that would shape his future.

He credits a pivotal meeting over coffee in his hometown of Odessa, Texas, with a friend of his father, who was president and CEO of a large credit union in the area. The conversation sparked Absher's interest as he realized that banking could be a good fit for his personality and skill set.

"This is an interesting industry that combines all the things that I enjoy: the business world, working with communities, being part of a team, and developing relationships with internal teammates and clients," he says. "And there are many different opportunities within banking: technology, leadership development, finance, commercial banking, mortgage, and compliance and risk; I thought I could have a bright future in banking."

Leading With Purpose

Almost 20 years later, Absher has indeed had a bright career that is only getting brighter as he was recently promoted to his current role. He continues to find his work rewarding, emphasizing the satisfaction he finds in building relationships with both teammates and clients. He explains how knowing them, their industry, family, and aspirations aid him in bettering their lives, whether helping clients grow their businesses, reducing credit card debt, buying a home, or navigating life events. Absher says these events can sometimes be unfortunate circumstances, such as a disease or a death, where bankers are relied upon to be a sounding board, stable voice, or advisor.

"Serving communities is at the core of Broadway Bank," he says. "We're a family-owned, privately held 84-year old bank, and the family that founded it had this huge core principle of serving the community and making it a better place to live. That really resonated with me, having grown up in a small town in West Texas and in a church-going family, where giving back, doing mission work, and serving the community were important."

Absher is equally as committed to his internal Broadway community.

"As a leader, I've invested in others by challenging them to raise the bar, create excellence on behalf of our clients, and to find opportunities for them to continue to advance their careers," he says. He adds that his leadership style is a balance of fostering relationships of mentoring,

creativity, flexibility, and common sense, overarchingly executed positively. "I challenge our team to be the best versions of themselves. That's something I aspire to and want for others as well." It is that ongoing quest for professional development and personal growth that led him to GSB.

The GSB Experience

The 2024 graduate says that Broadway Bank fully supports continuing education for its employees and encouraged him to pursue the program. The bank's CEO, a 2012 GSB graduate, was the first to attend, and they have been sending leaders ever since.

Absher started with Broadway in 2020 as executive vice president, Austin market executive. In 2022, he was presented with the opportunity to take his years of knowledge and hands-on experience to GSB to gain exposure to other areas of community banking.



Blake, pictured with his wife, Christine, and their son, Luke.

"GSB is really unique because it's hyper-focused on serving community banks," he says. "I was fortunate. I went through the program during an interesting time. The Federal Reserve had really started to increase interest rates in 2022, so we started to see interest rates go up, which had not really happened in quite some time. A year later, there were several bank failures, including Silicon Valley Bank. I think being at GSB during this time amplified my learning, because there was so much going on in the macro-economy, the Federal Reserve, community banks, liquidity, capital, stress testing—all those things that you talk about, but they were real-world experiences."

Absher adds that all those market conditions truly heightened his learning. He describes himself as having a continuous-improvement personality—and he relished the bank's challenge to him to continue his learning progression, sharpen his skill set, and broaden his perspectives.

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"My mom was a life long educator and she inspired me to always be learning," he says. "And, candidly, when I get stagnant, the fulfillment levels start to go down. GSB was a very challenging 25-month program, and I'm so honored that I had the opportunity to go through it. Broadway really believes in people continuing their education journey in all stages of their life, whether that's getting an associate's, a technical, or professional license in our field, or finishing a bachelor's or master's. It is something Broadway believes in."

Absher points out that the strengths of the program not only lie in the best practices, strategies, and current banking trends, but also that students were able to return to their banks and immediately implement what they were learning.

"Deposits have been a huge focal point for banks of all sizes the last few years, and there was some really great coursework we did around deposit strategies," he says. "My classmates and I were able to return to our banks and make recommendations about things that we could do to not only retain, but also attract, new deposits. I began to think about talent development and benchmarking ourselves around what we [Broadway] were doing to attract and retain the very best in talent, and how we provide educational and development opportunities internally. There were some great takeaways that we were able to bring back—things that we learned in real time. Then we were able to make recommendations to our leadership teams and adopt several of those."

Because many of Broadway's senior leaders have graduated from GSB, Absher says they know the value of the program and are always eager to hear insights and takeaways from the most recent graduates.

While Absher was impressed with the comprehensive education he received at GSB, he recalls two of the biggest benefits being the beautiful campus and weather in Madison, Wisconsin, and the friendships he has made.

"Our graduating class had 174 people in it, and the program really fostered what I anticipate will be lifelong friendships," he says. "Many of us have connected on social media or text chains. Through these friendships, we're sharing insights and learning from one another. We've also created an additional network outside of our employers and coworkers."

Absher notes that the GSB experience reinforced for him the power of community, relationships, and friendships in creating personal and professional success. Having grown an impressive following on LinkedIn, he enjoys engaging on the platform with other bankers, helping to problem solve, sharing insights or motivation, and learning about trends.

Hobbies, Passions, and Pastimes

In his free time, Absher continues to give back, having served on many nonprofit boards over the years, including the United Way for Greater Austin, on which he currently serves.

He also enjoys spending time with his wife, Christine, and five-year-old son, Luke.

"My number one hobby right now is my wife and I being bossed around by our five-year-old," he jokes. "We're having a lot of fun raising him and being on the go with him. We love traveling with him and experiencing new places. Seeing the world through the lens of a child is very special. We also love being outdoors, attending sporting events (football!), and cooking out with my brother, who is a chef." ■

CYBERSECURITY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DEADLINE IS FAST APPROACHING

BANK CYBERSECURITY SCHOOL

October 13–17, 2025

Location: Fluno Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

Tap into a blend of expert-led lectures, small group discussions, and hands-on simulation labs—where you'll dive into real-world cybersecurity challenges like penetration testing, breach detection, and vulnerability assessment alongside talented IT security professionals.

Don't miss out—enroll by **September 22, 2025** to secure your seat.

Enroll [Here](#)



BANKING TODAY IS AGILE.
**THANKFULLY,
SO ARE OUR
ONLINE
SEMINARS.**



FALL 2025 ONLINE SEMINARS

A Beginners Guide to Asset/
Liability Management

Antiwork: How a Savvy, Angry
Generation is Rebelling Against
YOUR Company and What to Do
About It

Business Financial Statements and
Tax Returns – Cash vs. Accrual
Accounting Refresher

Business Financial Statements and
Tax Returns – Developing and
Analyzing Key Financial Ratios

Business Financial Statements
and Tax Returns – Navigating and
Analyzing a Business Tax Return

Characteristics of Strong Risk
Assessments and Tools to Monitor
and Report Results

Commercial Lending – Five Keys
to Better Credit Memos and Loan
Packages

Commercial Lending – Global Cash
Flow Mechanics, Including Living
Expenses

Commercial Lending – Loan
Agreements and Covenants

Construction Lending –
Administering and Monitoring
Commercial Construction Loans

CRE Appraisals – Overview of
Appraisal Rules/Guidelines and the
Review Process

CRE Appraisals – Overview of
Evaluations and Other Valuation
Options

CRE Lending – Cap Rates and
Factors Beyond Debt Coverage and
Loan-to-Value

CRE Lending – Developing a Cash
Flow and Key Ratios

CRE Lending – Issues with Property
Types & Lease Structures

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

Employee Retention Strategies in a
Dynamic Labor Market

Five Social Media Tips to Advance
Your Bank's Brand

Fundamentals of Interest Rate
Swaps and Caps

Grow Deposits & Relationships
with Transformative Branch
Conversations

Interviewing Skills for Better Hires

Managing Liquidity and Interest
Rate Risk

Net Interest Margin Volatility

New Deposit Products Yielding
Durable Competitive Advantage

Optimizing Interest-Bearing
Deposit Strategies

Personal Tax Returns and Cash Flow
– Advanced Personal Cash Flow
Issues, Including Capital Gains

Public Finance and Banking

Responsibilities of the Information
Security Officer

SBA Lending – Common Issues in
SBA Loan Files

SBA Lending – SBA Loan Programs
and When to Use Each One

SBA Loan Programs – What's New?

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FALL 2025 ONLINE SEMINARS

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Securing Office 365 – A Roadmap

Six Keys to Effective Commercial Business Development

Sound Practices for Liquidity Risk Management

Strategic Planning foOr Your Community Bank – It's all About Your Strategy

Strategies and Planning for Closely Held and Family Banks

Three Key Risk Assessments in Your ERM Program: ERM, IT and Internal Controls

Understanding and Interpreting Interest Rate Expectations

Using Your BIA and Data Flow Diagrams to Understand Risk

Vendor Management 2025 – How to Make Better Vendor Management Decisions

About The GSB Online Seminar Series

The GSB Online Seminar Series offers a convenient, cost-effective way to access quality educational opportunities. GSB seminars are designed to meet the dynamic learning needs of today's busy financial professional and are delivered by some of today's top industry experts. All sessions are recorded, so if you're unable to attend one of the live presentations, it's no problem! When you register for a GSB Online Seminar, you'll have access to the live presentation as well as a recording of the live session in case you are unable to attend the entire program. There is no additional fee to view the recording, it's included in your registration fee. It's your choice to attend the live session, view the recording—or do both—based on your schedule.

For additional information, please visit gsb.org



NEARLY \$175,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE ANNUALLY

The Graduate School of Banking is pleased to offer a variety of scholarships to assist bankers in advancing their educations and careers. Some applications are available directly from GSB at [this page](#); other scholarship applications are through our association partners. Applications for Graduate School of Banking scholarships available on the GSB website must be submitted no later than March 1st; Human Resource Management School scholarship applications are due by February 1st and each state association sets their own scholarship criteria and deadlines. ■

