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GSB Connection

The Official Newsletter of the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Message from the CEO

Leading with Gratitude, Building with Purpose

Paul Katz, President & CEO

A little over two years ago, I took a call with Brooke Hintze, the talented recruiter leading GSB's CEO search. Having worked in executive leadership roles at banking associations and a fintech, I thought I could be a resource and suggest a few people from my network.

About 30 seconds into the conversation, I wasn't building a referral list. I was raising my hand.

I was immediately energized by the opportunity, the mission and the chance to help take an already exceptional organization to even greater heights. The search process was thoughtful, thorough and rigorous — as is the case with anything Rose Oswald Poels leads — and it was a privilege to even be considered among more than 300 candidates. I don't say that as a humble brag. I say it because it reflects the strength, reputation and pull of GSB.

People still tell me with some regularity that this must be a "dream job." I understand the sentiment, and I take it as a compliment to the institution. But I also hear it as a reminder. There are many talented people who would be honored to serve in this role. Not that I need more motivation, but that makes me work even harder.

Two years in, I remain profoundly grateful for the opportunity to help lead GSB and shape the next generation of banking leaders. We are building on a proud legacy with new energy — advancing learning innovation, expanding our work in AI and becoming more agile in preparing bankers to lead with purpose and help their communities thrive.

But the heart of the work has not changed: preserve what makes GSB special while ensuring it remains relevant, practical and indispensable. Our future will be shaped by the same thing that built its legacy: the shared commitment of our Board, faculty, UW partners, and our GSB team.

And, most importantly, it will be carried forward by you—our alumni—whose leadership, pride and continued engagement remain the strongest expression of GSB's impact.

Beginning with this issue, Message from the CEO will be a regular feature of GSB Connection. In each edition, Paul Katz, President & CEO, will share updates from GSB, highlight the people and programs that strengthen our community, and offer his perspective on the challenges and opportunities shaping the banking industry.

GSB Alumni Spotlight Profile
Justin Proctor

SVP & Chief Operating Officer, GBC Bank | Greenfield, Indiana | GSB Class of 2024
GSB Faculty | GSB Alumni Council Member

For Justin Proctor, banking wasn't the plan. It was the discovery.

An accountant by training, Justin began his career in public accounting assurance services before moving into public accounting bank consulting, where he worked alongside community banks across the Midwest. Immersed in the day-to-day operations of those institutions, he discovered the purpose that ultimately shaped his career.

"I really started to appreciate the community banking model," Justin says of those consulting years. That appreciation ultimately led him from the advisory side of banking into the industry itself.

Today, as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of GBC Bank in Greenfield, Indiana, Justin oversees deposit operations, information technology, marketing, and internal training. The impact community banking has on customers and communities continues to drive his work.

"Community banks are a cornerstone of any community when it comes to banking services, involvement, contributions, and volunteering with local nonprofits and schools," he says. Helping families and businesses achieve their financial goals remains one of the most rewarding parts of his career.

"I met many great professionals during my career that attended the program," he says, "and wanted to elevate my career with the same experience."

Investing in Leadership

Justin had heard about the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for years through banking professionals he respected.

"I met many great professionals during my career that attended the program," he says, "and wanted to elevate my career with the same experience."

When Justin decided to invest in his leadership development, GSB stood out. The Indiana Bankers Association selected him to receive a Graduate School of Banking scholarship funded by the Herbert V. Prochnow Educational Foundation. He graduated from GSB in August 2024 with High Honors, ranking third overall in his class.

Three professional mentors wrote letters of recommendation in support of Justin's scholarship application—a vote of confidence that made the recognition especially meaningful.

"It was very humbling to be selected," he recalls. "The scholarship helped reduce the cost of the program, but it also motivated me to put forth as much effort as possible to gain as much knowledge as possible with the backing of my mentors."

Giving Back to GSB

Justin's connection to GSB has continued well beyond graduation.

Justin joined the GSB faculty in 2025 and will return to the classroom again this summer, continuing to invest in the next generation of banking leaders.

Photo Caption: Justin returned to GSB as an instructor in 2025 and will teach again this summer, helping prepare the next generation of community banking leaders.

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...continued from page 2, "GSB Alumni Spotlight: Justin Proctor"

Teaching had long been one of Justin's professional goals. After years of giving classroom presentations at his alma mater, Ball State University, he accepted the opportunity when GSB faculty member Nan Gesche invited him to join the faculty.

"It's been a great experience, personally and professionally."

Teaching with Clarity

Teaching has given Justin a new appreciation for the GSB experience.

"It's created a deeper appreciation for the professionals involved with the program and the time it takes to prepare for classes and the materials required to make the class successful, especially when you have the demands of your career at the same time," he says.

Justin hopes every student leaves GSB with practical ideas they can bring back to their bank and a professional network they can rely on throughout their career.

"Networking as part of the program is world-class, and it creates an opportunity to connect with professionals across the country. I also want students to take real-world examples back to their bank to help make their institutions and communities more successful for the future."

Leading with Perspective

One lesson from GSB continues to shape Justin's leadership philosophy.

"Diverse perspectives lead to better decisions," he says. "Some of the most valuable conversations at GSB came from bankers with different backgrounds, markets, and experiences. The same principle applies within our organization."

Justin carries that perspective into every leadership decision he makes.

"Leadership is about creating clarity, not having all the answers," Justin says. "Teams perform best when they understand the vision, priorities, and how their work contributes to the bigger picture. I love seeing our internal teams achieve success and seeing their individual growth. It's one of the most rewarding parts of my career, and I believe GSB taught me this mindset as a leader."

Beyond the Bank

Outside of work, Justin enjoys spending time with his wife, Allison, and their three sons, Porter, Brooks, and Dean. The family enjoys college football, college basketball, and golf, and stays busy with three golden retrievers.

In His Own Words

Asked to describe GSB in one sentence, Justin doesn't hesitate.

"A special and career-changing experience that I'll value for a lifetime."

His advice to future students reflects the same appreciation.

"Embrace your time in Madison with the GSB program, professionals, and staff. The 25-month program will fly by, but you'll meet some of the most talented people during your time in the program. Embrace every minute, as it'll bring a lifetime of memories and connections that can't be matched by any program in the country."

Photo Caption (Top left): Justin credits GSB's network of banking professionals as one of the program's greatest strengths, calling it a "world-class" opportunity to build lifelong connections. (Bottom left): Justin believes community banks strengthen the communities they serve—a philosophy that continues to shape both his leadership and his commitment to giving back. (Right): Outside of work, Justin enjoys spending time with his wife, Allison, and their three sons, Porter, Brooks, and Dean.

Class Officer Q&A

Ashley Vaughn

GSB Class Officer Treasurer | Senior Operations Officer, Commercial & Savings Bank
Millersburg, Ohio

As the Class of 2026 prepares to return to Madison for its final summer session, we caught up with Class Officer Treasurer Ashley Vaughn, Senior Operations Officer at The Commercial & Savings Bank in Millersburg, Ohio. From the lessons she's brought back to her bank to the friendships she's built along the way, Ashley reflects on the experiences that have defined her GSB journey.

What inspired you to enroll in the Graduate School of Banking at UW–Madison?

My mentor, a GSB alum, encouraged me to enroll. He shared how much the program expanded his knowledge base and how the projects pushed him to do a deep analysis of our own bank. I wanted to broaden my understanding of the whole bank, learn from peers, and challenge my thinking. CSB is the only banking experience I've had, and I want to be prepared to meaningfully contribute to the long-term success of CSB.

What course, faculty member, or learning experience has been particularly meaningful to you, and why?

It's hard to single out one course or faculty member, because for me the meaning has come from the totality of the experience. Each session builds on the last, and the coursework, intersession projects, and conversations with peers and faculty all connect in ways you don't fully appreciate until you're deep into the program. I've learned as much from comparing notes with classmates as I have in the classroom. It's the combination of all of it that has shaped how I think about banking.

What has been your favorite GSB memory over the past 25 months?

Working with my fellow class officers has been my favorite part of the program. The hours spent on Teams calls between sessions, coordinating activities and getting to know each other, have been incredible. I'll never forget our first official class officer meeting over brats on State Street. We had no idea what we were doing, but we were excited to bring new ideas and fresh energy to GSB, and to make the most of the time we had remaining with our class.

How have you applied what you've learned at GSB in your role or at your bank?

The intersession projects were the most direct application, since each one required a deep analysis of my bank. But the clearest example is our trust and investment team, where I've spent the past couple of years helping rebuild our operational capabilities. GSB gave me a framework to assess the situation and craft a plan. It also stretched me as a leader. I had to learn new skills and a vernacular I was unfamiliar with, and while I've always been willing to step in where needed, I approached this challenge with a holistic, long-term sustainability view. I knew the importance of connecting day-to-day work back to the bank's bigger picture long before GSB, but the program has made that perspective feel like second nature.

What are you looking forward to most as you complete your third and final summer session?

I'm very much looking forward to FiSim and the chance to bring everything together. I can't wait to test our strategic plan and work together as a team executing realistic decisions, and I'm interested to see how the plan holds up as we're challenged in the simulation. I'm also looking forward to the class events we've been planning and spending time with my peers. The friendships I've built here are one of the best parts of the program, and I know they'll last long after graduation.

As a Class Officer, what has it meant to represent your classmates throughout the program?

For me, it's been about service to the class. GSB is a significant commitment, and it's important to me that everyone walks away feeling like it was worthwhile. That means serving as a communicator between the GSB staff and my peers, and making sure all of our classmates feel included and are connecting with others during our two weeks in Madison. The GSB staff has been incredible to work with; they genuinely want the program to add value to bankers, and it shows. Being an officer has also connected me to far more of my class than I ever would have met otherwise, and that has been one of the unexpected rewards of the role.

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Program Highlight:

The Evolution of Digital Strategy: Updated Program Moves Beyond the Basics

The banking landscape looks vastly different than it did even five years ago. When we first launched the Digital Banking School back in 2020, the goal was simple: help community banks understand the baseline fundamentals of digital innovation. Today, that knowledge gap is largely gone. Most bankers know exactly what digital tools are out there, and the real challenge in 2026 is figuring out how to connect those investments directly to the balance sheet.

To meet this evolving need in the banking industry, we have reimagined the curriculum in the newly updated Digital Banking Executive Program, which will be offered online this November. Moving away from functional basics, we have shifted the focus entirely to strategy, economics, and executive decision-making.

Over seven concise, 90-minute sessions, we will focus on high-impact choices that can be implemented by your bank immediately. The sessions will dive directly into how digital strategy shapes deposit mix, funding stability, operating leverage, and third-party risk. We will also explore the critical human element of transformation—specifically, how leadership can overcome internal resistance and build lasting cultural alignment.

Because strategic alignment requires a team effort, a single registration covers unlimited participants from your bank for both the live sessions and recordings. We are excited to offer a program that moves past the digital hype, giving bank leaders the practical economic frameworks needed to confidently guide you institution forward. Learn more and register your team at gsb.org/schools-programs/digital-banking-executive-program.

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What's one thing you plan to bring back to your bank once you complete the program?

The network, without question. I now have trusted peers I can call when CSB faces something new, and that doesn't expire at graduation. But the bigger commitment I'm bringing back is to developing others. A mentor encouraged me to attend GSB, and I want to be that person for someone else at CSB. The program has given me so much, and the best way to honor that is to pass it along.

What advice would you give someone who is considering GSB or preparing to begin their first year?

Don't let your specialty hold you back. I came to GSB from an operations background, and the whole-bank exposure was exactly what I needed. Whether you sit in lending, IT, retail, or operations, this program will push you to understand the whole bank, and that's the point. For those starting their first year: take the projects seriously, because that's where the learning becomes real, and spend time getting to know your classmates. The relationships you build here matter just as much as the coursework.

Professional Growth

Strategic Perspectives

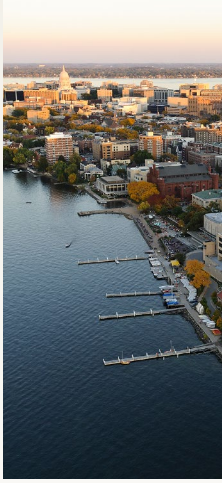
Moments Made at GSB 2025

As we prepare to welcome another class to Madison, take a look back at the moments that defined last year's GSB Session—from engaging classrooms and meaningful conversations to new friendships and lasting traditions.

Industry Insights

Summer in Madison

Meaningful Connections



World-Class Education

Lifelong Friendships

Networking