

## The New Krannert Currency

### *Student and alumni networks bring Wall Street to West Lafayette*

By Nicholas Žak, Class of 2015

One March night in 2014 at Del Frisco's in Manhattan, a group of Wall Street and finance professionals who once called Purdue home, along with another Krannert student and I, met to discuss our shared commitment to increasing Purdue's brand on Wall Street. After six months of hard work, the newly minted "Purdue Finance Workshop" was in the process of being launched.

As a rising sophomore interested in an investment banking career, I had reached out to several Krannert grads for a few informational interviews. Unfortunately, I continued to hear a common refrain, "Krannert produces great analytical professionals sought the world over, but Wall Street is looking elsewhere." Lack of bank interest at our career fairs and a disjointed alumni apparatus for those who had broken into the rarified halls of Wall Street and high finance made my dream a long shot.

Youthful hope springs eternal, though, and I decided to try to beat the odds.

In my conversations with alumni, a program called "Training the Street" kept getting mentioned. I learned that it was a premier training program for incoming analysts at banks and Fortune 500 companies and for university students preparing for internships. I researched the possibility of bringing the program to campus by the start of my sophomore year.

Carrying this initially underdeveloped idea, I reached out to one of the young alumni with whom I had forged a strong connection, Blake Saunders. He agreed with the need for more institutional support and sought to help me convince key decision makers within Krannert of the idea's merit.

Suddenly, the idea had evolved into an intensive, three-day workshop: one day of interactive sessions facilitated by four Krannert-educated finance professionals followed by two days of the Training the Street workshop. 40 of Purdue's top students participated in the opportunity in fall 2013 to hear about various paths from Krannert to Wall Street, as well as stories and advice from those who are there. Training the Street provided an excellent grounding in valuation techniques and Excel modeling, including two workbooks that allowed students to take detailed notes for future practice. The program was a great success, but I knew that without continued commitment, it could become a one-time event.

That's when I met Sam McCartney.

With the shared goal of breaking into investment banking among other similar interests, Sam and I became fast friends. Several of the alumni we'd spoken to had talked about taking advantage of our student status to attend some fantastic finance conferences around the country. Blake specifically had augmented his Krannert education by attending conferences in private equity, venture capital and investment strategy while at Purdue.

As Sam and I began marking these conferences on our calendars, we asked ourselves in one of those classic 2 a.m. "pizza-fueled" undergrad conversations, "Why not utilize Purdue's alumni network to set up our own conference?"

The Purdue Private Equity Conference was born. While I had spearheaded the fall 2013 workshop with Blake's guidance, Sam took over for the spring 2014 conference. With hard work and planning, three keynote alumni speakers taught a group of 40 Krannert students about the industry as well as the influence and impact of private equity on today's economy. A guest panel of three additional alumni led students through an interactive case study.

What started as one student's quest for an internship has now evolved into a program that provides a connected network of more than 50 Purdue alumni who are dedicated to training and mentoring Purdue's best and brightest students.

I am confident in saying that there has never been a better time to be a Purdue student interested in a career in finance.