UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
Robins School of Business™

DEAN'S REPORT
2025–26

Think Broadly. Act Boldly.

The Robins School develops technology-enabled, human-centered, and globally minded leaders who create value for society. Through rigorous academics, experiential learning, and professional development, we prepare students to think critically, lead with empathy, embrace global perspectives, and leverage technology responsibly. By fostering collaboration and strong connections with the business community, we empower graduates to be career ready and make a meaningful impact in the world.

Goals: Student learning and development; faculty and staff experience; external engagement and societal impact; culture and community.

CONTENTS

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Friends,

As we reflect on another remarkable year for the Robins School of Business, I am once again filled with gratitude for the people who make this community extraordinary, including our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partners. Together, we continue to advance a shared vision for business education that is innovative, deeply human, and grounded in the values of a liberal arts university.

This year also marks an important personal milestone for me, as it is my final year serving as dean of the Robins School. Over the past seven years, I have had the privilege of witnessing this school evolve in inspiring ways. From expanding experiential learning opportunities and strengthening industry partnerships to launching new academic initiatives and enhancing career readiness, the Robins School has continued to distinguish itself as one of the nation's leading business schools.

We are in a transformative period for higher education and the business world alike. Rapid advances in technology are reshaping industries, redefining leadership, and changing the skills students need to thrive. In this evolving landscape, the value of a business education grounded in the liberal arts has never been more important. We remain committed to preparing students not only to navigate change, but to lead through it with curiosity, adaptability, and ethical judgment.

Among the accomplishments I am most proud of are the initiatives that have strengthened the connection between business education and meaningful impact. Programs such as the Spider Business Hub and Endeavor RSB have created transformative opportunities for students to engage with real-world challenges from the very beginning of their academic journeys. The launch of our Master of Science in Management program further expanded pathways for students from diverse academic backgrounds to develop the business knowledge and leadership skills needed in today's evolving economy.

Woven throughout the report are highlights of the progress we've made guided by our 2025–30 strategic plan. More than a roadmap, this plan reflects who we aspire to be as a business school: human-centered, globally minded, and technology-enabled. It reinforces our commitment to preparing students not only for successful careers, but also for lives of purpose, ethical leadership, and societal impact. The plan charts an ambitious course focused on experiential learning, faculty and staff excellence, entrepreneurship, community engagement, and a culture rooted in collaboration and respect.

As I prepare to step away from this role and back into the classroom, I do so with tremendous optimism for the future of the Robins School. The foundation we have built together is strong, and the momentum is inspiring. I am confident that the Robins School will continue to innovate, lead, and shape the next generation of business leaders who are ready to think broadly and act boldly.

Mickey Quiñones
Dean

A Robins School of Business education extends well beyond the classroom — linking disciplines, institutions, and industries to address complex global challenges. Our faculty are advancing research and teaching through new technologies and our students are applying analytical and creative skills in real-world settings reflecting a shared commitment to expanding how business is understood and applied.

Blending Business and Creativity

Ryan Weigand, '27, often takes classes in Richmond's Visual and Media Arts Practice program, combining his interest in business with hands-on creative work. Through visual arts and woodworking, he applies both analytical and design skills to projects like custom keepsake boxes and wood-carved pieces that he sells online. His work reflects how combining business and the liberal arts can encourage creativity, practical problem-solving, and turning ideas into real products.

"I've made significant design changes to balance quality and cost, including sourcing certain laser-cut elements locally. It's rewarding to see how my business education directly supports something I love doing."

— Ryan Weigand, '27

ECONOMICS PROFESSOR SAIF MEHKARI RECEIVES STATEWIDE HONOR FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING

Saif Mehkari, professor of economics and inaugural John F. Benton Fellow, received the 2025 Harris Award for Excellence in Instructional Technology from the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges. Recognized for innovative teaching, he co-developed SpiderAI, providing campuswide access to leading AI tools. Mehkari also creates custom learning technologies, from economic simulations to advising systems, expanding access and engagement. His work reflects a sustained commitment to integrating emerging technologies into impactful undergraduate education.

"Professor Mehkari is an exemplary triple threat: he excels at teaching, research, and service," said University of Richmond President Kevin F. Hallock. "He's published scholarship in top academic journals, inspired a family to endow a scholarship, served on multiple important committees, greeted new students flying into the U.S. for the first time at the airport, and helped graduates walk across the stage at Commencement."

FACULTY RECEIVE PROMOTION AND TENURE

Five faculty were granted tenure and three were promoted to full professorship in recognition of their exceptional contributions to teaching, research, and service — **Marina Astakhova** and **Patricio Duran**, management; **Joe Farizo**, finance; **Alexander Persaud**, economics; and **Rob Pawlewicz**, accounting, received tenure. **Jeff Carlson**, marketing; **Chad Curtis**, economics; and **Daniel Paik**, accounting, were awarded full professorship.

Faculty Propel Global Research and Collaboration

From Richmond to Italy, Robins School faculty spent the year contributing to important global conversations through academic conferences focused on today's most pressing challenges.

Last summer, faculty traveled to Palermo, Italy, for the international conference "The Strategic Role of Business in Addressing Unsolved Grand Challenges: Firms, Platforms & Ecosystems" at LUMSA University. The event brought together 225 participants from 40 countries to explore issues including climate change, poverty alleviation, immigration, and artificial intelligence.

Professor Jeff Harrison served on the organizing committee, overseeing the paper review process and conference program, while several Robins School faculty presented research on topics ranging from startup growth and community impact to corporate social responsibility and poverty alleviation. Faculty also contributed as reviewers, track chairs, and session leaders.

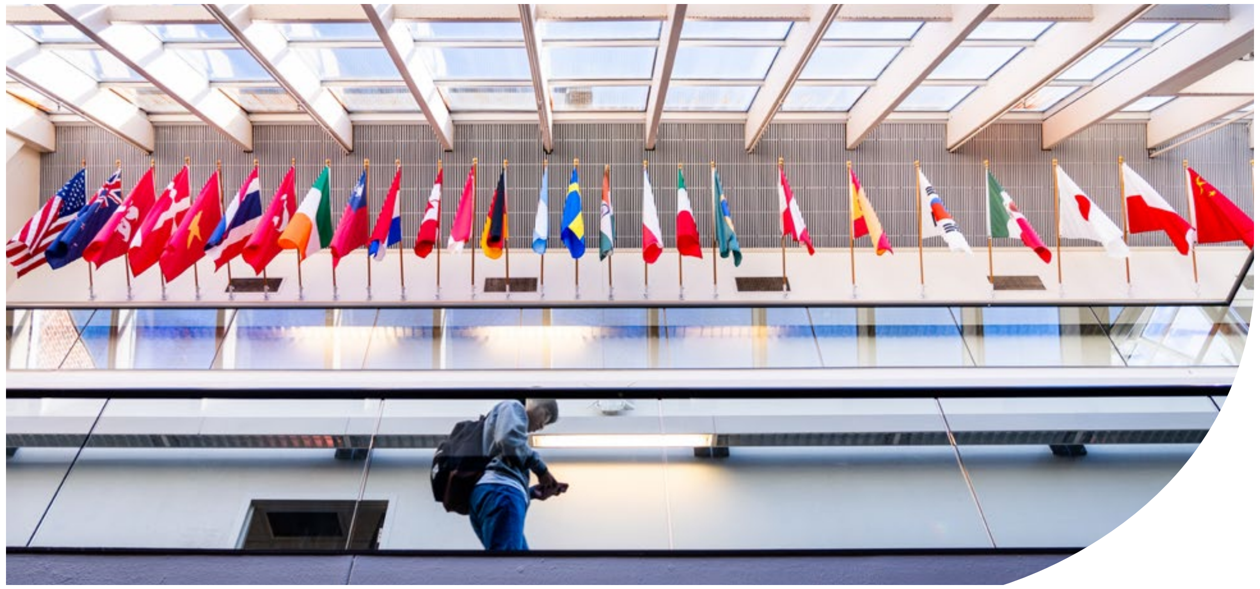
Later in the year, the University of Richmond hosted the 8th annual Central Bank Research Association's Workshop for Commodities & Macroeconomics (CEBRA 2025) in collaboration with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Organized in part by Professor Michel Robe, the conference brought together experts from central banks, international institutions, and academia to discuss commodities, inflation, supply chains, and global economic risk.

Together, the conferences highlighted Richmond's growing role in international research and collaboration.

> *"The workshop explored key areas of study in the commodity space that have critical real-world impact on the broader economy. It brought together global experts to share their latest scholarship and professional experience, and to receive feedback from each other and from University of Richmond faculty working in this field."*
>
> *— Michel Robe, finance professor & co-organizer of CEBRA 2025*

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP FROM THIS YEAR'S EXECUTIVE SPEAKER SERIES

This year's Robins School of Business speaker series featured an impressive lineup of executives, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders through both the Robins Executive Speaker Series and C-Suite Conversations. Speakers included CEOs, founders, and senior leaders from companies such as Moody's Ratings, Ariel Investments, Stuart Weitzman, and artificial intelligence pioneers, who shared insights on leadership, innovation, and strategy. Across both programs, students gained direct exposure to real-world business perspectives, from AI and finance to healthcare and entrepreneurship, strengthening the connection between classroom learning and today's evolving global business landscape.



Student Research Tackles Global Challenges

This year, two students demonstrated how undergraduate research can create meaningful real-world impact across disciplines.

Business and marketing student **Rocio Tenorio, '27**, presented research at the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) Annual Meeting, where she shared her team's work on strengthening food bank resilience during natural disasters. Working alongside analytics and operations professors Deniz Besik and Shital Thekdi, and Kyle Redican from the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability, Tenorio helped develop an optimization model to improve food distribution systems during times of crisis. Drawing on her experience as a Richmond Innovation Fellow with Feed More and Underground Kitchen, she connected research to real-world challenges in food access. Though one of the youngest presenters at the conference, Tenorio impressed attendees with her confidence and professionalism, an experience she described as both intimidating and empowering.

Duncan Hall, '27, also earned national recognition for research that began as a classroom assignment. Hall was named one of six finalists in the Journal for Global Business and Community's 2026 essay competition for his paper exploring how artificial intelligence could transform climate accountability in global sports. Inspired by his study abroad experience in Stockholm through Richmond's Green Spiders Abroad program, Hall proposed an AI-powered platform to track real-time carbon emissions across major sporting events. His work highlights how emerging technology can reshape sustainability practices on a global scale.

From Classroom Concept to Store Shelves

Students in the Robins School's Bench Top Innovations course gained hands-on startup experience by developing and pitching original beverage concepts to a panel of industry professionals. The winning product, Rali, is a salted vanilla latte featuring protein and electrolytes designed for on-the-go energy and hydration. After earning top honors, the student team shifted from concept development to production planning, branding, and sales preparation, with the drink launching and selling out in Richmond-area stores by the spring.

IMMERSIVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE ACROSS LEADING INSTITUTIONS

Yumna Hashmi, '28, who is studying mathematical economics, participated in the Expanding Discovery in Economics (EDE+) program, an immersive multi-city summer experience. She visited institutions including the World Bank, IMF, and Federal Reserve Bank, engaging with leading economists and policy discussions. Through hands-on research on the Child Tax Credit and advanced data tools, she strengthened her analytical skills while connecting theory to global economic policy and real-world impact.

NEW PARTNERSHIP ADVANCES LEADERSHIP IN ARCHITECTURE THROUGH EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

A partnership between the Robins School and the American Institute of Architects is helping close a critical leadership gap in the profession. Through the AIA Business Academy, senior firm leaders gain practical strategy, finance, and management tools to navigate increasing complexity. Developed through long-standing relationships and refined through its first cohort, the program is already driving more intentional leadership, improved profitability, and a broader shift toward resilient, business-savvy architectural practice.

A CHAMPION ON AND OFF THE COURT

As a standout student-athlete, **Maggie Doogan, '26**, has excelled both on the basketball court and in the classroom. A two-time Atlantic 10 Player of the Year and key leader for the Spiders women's basketball team, Doogan has paired her athletic success with academic achievement as a business student in the Robins School of Business. Her dedication, leadership, and drive embody the spirit of a true student-athlete.

Robins students, faculty, and alumni are translating classroom learning into meaningful impact across communities, industries, and global contexts. From award-winning teaching and nationally recognized programs to student-led consulting, service work, and international initiatives, the Robins School is fostering a strong culture of applied learning, collaboration, and hands-on experience.

Robins Earns Top 20 National Ranking

Poets&Quants for Undergrads ranked the Robins School No. 17 in the annual Best Undergraduate Business Schools list, marking five consecutive years in the top 20. The school also placed highly in career outcomes (No. 15), academic experience (No. 17), and admissions standards (No. 21).

> *"At Robins, we are preparing students to think broadly, act boldly, and graduate as human-centered, globally minded, and technology-enabled leaders ready to make a difference in the world."*
>
> *— Mickey Quiñones, dean*

Student-Led Project for Peace and Empowerment

University of Richmond students **Stevi Dugas, '26**, and **Minahil Mobeen, '28**, each received $10,000 Projects for Peace grants to lead community-based initiatives abroad. Dugas' Abusua Africa project in Ghana supports single mothers through entrepreneurship training and youth career development, while Mobeen's Women Weave Change improves conditions for women carpet weavers in Pakistan through workspace upgrades, financial training, and empowerment-focused workshops promoting sustainable economic development.

MBA INSIGHT MEETS STUDENT INNOVATION

Richmond MBA alumnus **Nick Baldaino, GB'17**, is using lessons from his graduate studies to grow the Richmond Floorball Club, a fast-rising community sports initiative. Blending business strategy, AI tools, and operations experience, he partnered with Spider Business Hub students to strengthen marketing and outreach. Undergraduate consultants researched participation trends and developing growth strategies, helping turn a niche sport into a sustainable community program through hands-on collaboration and applied MBA-driven leadership.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR EXCELLENCE IN ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Economics professor **KimMarie McGoldrick** received the 2025 American Economic Association Distinguished Economic Education Award for her excellence in teaching, curriculum development, mentorship, and service. A longtime faculty member at Richmond, she has led workshops, published extensively, and co-edited the *Journal of Economic Education*, earning recognition for her lasting impact on students and the field of economics education.

Workshop Connects Students and Entrepreneurs

The Spider Business Hub's Social Media Strategy Workshop connected student consultants with local business owners to address real-world marketing challenges through collaboration and applied learning. Working in small teams, participants analyzed current social media approaches, clarified goals, and developed practical strategies for content, messaging, and engagement. The experience offered students hands-on consulting practice while giving businesses fresh perspective and actionable ideas. Both groups emphasized the value of structured collaboration, creative problem-solving, and real-world learning.

"Working with a real business felt more dynamic and less structured than a typical class project. There was no 'right answer,' and the outcomes had real implications for the client's brand."

— Michelle Hollman, '27

In 2025–26,
307
STUDENTS
worked with
64
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
through individual and class-based projects.

Spider Road Trips to NYC and Boston

Students from A&S, Jepson, and Robins hit the road this year for the Spider Road Trips — to New York City for Creative, Communications, and Marketing and Boston for Entrepreneurship, Business, and BioTech. In NYC, students visited firms including NBCUniversal, Wieden+Kennedy, the NBA, and Amazon Ads, as well as banks and investment firms. In Boston, they explored organizations such as CVS Ventures, McKesson Ventures, Google, The Engine, Cambridge Innovation Center, and Deloitte. Along the way, students gained firsthand insight into diverse career paths, industry culture, and the value of exploratory academic and professional experiences.

"The highlight for me every year is watching students connect with alumni and practitioners in a way that drives curiosity, piques their interest, and creates excitement about what could be. It's different for each student, so every stop is exciting."

— Joel Mier, clinical professor

STUDENTS POWER COMMUNITY IMPACT THROUGH FREE TAX ASSISTANCE

Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program in the Robins School of Business, in partnership with the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, 72 students contributed 1,892 hours to support community members with free tax preparation. Together, they completed 592 tax returns, helping secure $631,305 in refunds for local families and individuals. The experience builds students' client engagement and interpersonal skills while offering essential, accessible support that makes a tangible difference across the Richmond community.

FUTURE-READY LEADERS

Robins students are building confidence, skills, and direction through early and sustained engagement. Across conferences, coursework, internships, and professional development experiences, students are exposed to real-world applications that connect academic study with career pathways. These opportunities underscore a consistent emphasis on experiential learning and preparation for meaningful, career-ready impact.

Career Preparation Journey in Practice

The Robins PRO Conference is a cornerstone of the Robins School's career development experience, bringing students together with alumni and employers for hands-on professional learning. Embedded in the Business Communication course and building off the foundation provided by Q-camp, the half-day event features networking, panels, and mock interviews that help students practice real-world skills in a supportive setting. By connecting classroom learning with industry engagement, the conference builds confidence, strengthens communication skills, and prepares students for early career success.

> ***"From an employer perspective, the conference allows organizations to connect with a wide range of students, helping employers to build meaningful relationships with students and identify talent earlier in their academic journeys."***
>
> *— Jonathan Adams, director, Center for Professional Skills and Development*

BLENDING ART AND BUSINESS AT CAPITAL ONE

Karine Nguyen, '26, a triple major in art history, business administration, and French/international business, discovered her passion for combining art and commerce during an internship with Capital One's Arts Program. She supported collection management, exhibitions, and licensing work while gaining experience in corporate art collecting. The internship deepened her understanding of art as an investment and strengthened her goal of pursuing a career in arts management. After graduation, Nguyen has plans to work at an art gallery in Richmond.

> ***"Before this internship, I had honestly never really considered corporate art collecting as a practice, even though it seems so obvious in hindsight. Learning about art as an alternative asset and investment was an unexpected lesson."***
>
> *— Karine Nguyen, '26*

ROBINS ACCOUNTING STUDENTS EXCEL ON CPA EXAM

Robins School of Business accounting graduates achieved a 74.1% pass rate on the 2024 CPA exam, well above the national average of 53.8%, and earned the No. 1 ranking in Virginia. The results reflect a rigorous curriculum, strong faculty mentorship, and experiential learning opportunities. Even with a new exam format, students demonstrated adaptability, preparation, and success, supported by a close-knit academic community focused on long-term career growth.

STUDENTS DISCOVER THE POWER AND POSSIBILITIES OF ECONOMICS

Each year, the Exploring Economics conference brings together undergraduates from across the region to explore diverse career paths in the field. Hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond with University partners, the event features panels, networking, and keynote speakers. Students gain exposure to real-world applications of economics in policy, research, and industry, helping them envision broader academic and professional futures.

CAREER-READY LEADERS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SELLING

The Robins School established the Professional Selling Program this year, which equips students with practical, transferable skills in communication, problem-solving, and customer engagement. Through experiential learning and industry partnerships, students gain real-world sales experience, preparing them for careers across business fields. The program emphasizes applied learning, career readiness, and early professional success and partners with organizations like Alpha Sights, CoStar Group, Paycom, NUCOR, Livewire, Unum, and Enterprise Mobility.

Behind every Robins School success story is a community of supporters who believe in students and invest in their potential. From scholarship assistance to transformative experiential learning opportunities, donor generosity opens doors that help students discover their path, develop confidence, and prepare to make an impact of their own.

Investing in Future Financial Leaders

For Richmond students pursuing careers in finance, hands-on experience provides a powerful bridge between classroom learning and professional success.

Natalie Null, '24, discovered her passion for equity research through the Student Managed Investment Fund (SMIF), where students oversee a portion of the University's endowment and gain real-world experience in securities analysis and portfolio management. The experience helped launch her career at KBW, a New York City investment firm, and connected her to a network of Spider alumni and industry mentors spanning more than three decades.

Similarly, **Edward Payan, '26**, gained firsthand exposure to the entrepreneurial side of finance through a donor-supported internship at FinHolo, a Richmond-based financial advisory startup founded by Spider alumna Linda Heath, W'75. Working directly with company leadership, he contributed to meaningful projects while exploring the challenges and opportunities of building a business.

Together, their experiences demonstrate how Richmond's commitment to experiential learning prepares students to thrive in professional careers.

> ***"Meeting people from diverse backgrounds, attending meaningful classes that shape my academic and professional perspectives, and applying what I learn to projects and clubs have all been invaluable experiences."***
>
> *— Otavio Nascimento Campos De Oliveira, '28*
> *Business Administration major; Finance concentration, Computer Science minor*

> ***"Students and alumni have a strong love for our campus and school, and they never forget that. I love Richmond, and I am proud to call this place my home."***
>
> *— Lia Adams, '28*
> *German Studies and Business Administration double major, International Business concentration*

> ***"My time at the University of Richmond has been nothing short of transformative. I'm proud to be a Spider because of the contagious spirit of ambition and community here — and I'm excited to carry that energy into the Robins/Jepson alumni network."***
>
> *— Caroline Kelley, '26*
> *Leadership Studies and Business Administration double major, Management Consulting and Entrepreneurship concentrations*

A Legacy of Leadership

Over the past seven years, Dean Miguel "Mickey" Quiñones has helped shape the Robins School of Business during a period of remarkable growth and momentum. As he concludes his tenure as dean and prepares to return to the classroom, his impact can be seen not only in new programs and opportunities, but also in the culture that continues to define the school.

Under his leadership, the Robins School expanded experiential learning opportunities, added academic programs, and broadened areas of study. Those who worked closely with Quiñones point to his optimism, vision, and commitment to people as hallmarks of his leadership.

"I greatly respect the optimism Mickey brought to his work and the welcoming way in which he approached everyone — students, faculty, staff, and parents," said Joyce van der Laan Smith, senior associate dean for Undergraduate Business Programs. "His vision and leadership inspired us all to think bigger."

Quiñones' impact extended across the University community.

"I'm grateful to Mickey for his leadership and the genuine care he's shown to not only the business school but our entire community," said Joan Saab, executive vice president and provost. "His commitment to collaboration and dedication to our faculty, staff, and students have strengthened the Robins School in lasting ways."

After a sabbatical, Quiñones will return to the classroom as a professor of management.

WELCOME, DEAN PETTER

The Robins School welcomed Stacie Petter as its new dean on August 1.

Petter joins the UR community from Wake Forest University where she served as acting dean of the School of Business and Peter C. Brockway Chair of Strategic Management and Professor of Management Information Systems. Prior to serving as acting dean, Petter served as Wake Forest's inaugural associate provost for faculty affairs. Before joining Wake Forest's faculty in 2022, she held faculty appointments at Baylor University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her scholarship focuses on how individuals and organizations use and manage technology. At Richmond, she holds a faculty appointment as professor of analytics and operations.

"I was especially drawn to the teacher-scholar model, the strength and momentum of the business school, and the genuine sense of community across campus. I'm thrilled to serve as a collaborator and thought partner of this tremendous energy," said Petter.

Robins School Faculty in the News

Robins School faculty are sought-after experts, who are frequently quoted in the media, including nationally, locally, and in major industry trade publications.

The New York Times

Research by management professor **Alexander Hamrick** is featured in "Hobbies Too Relaxing? Try 'Leisure Crafting.'"

"Leisure crafting can help you feel a sense of purpose, confidence and accomplishment that's unrelated to work," said Hamrick. "The idea of leisure crafting is not to radically shift your approach to free time — or even pick new pursuits — as much as it is to incorporate a few goals."

Forbes

Tom Arnold, finance professor and expert on consumer trends, is quoted in "Retailers Brace For An Uncertain Holiday Season As Consumers Pull Back."

"What I expect is the consumer is going to be tepid initially and the retailers are going to have to start handing out some deals if they want to get the volume to sell out on that inventory," said Arnold.

InvestigateTV+

Shital Thekdi, analytics and operations professor and an expert on risk management, is interviewed in the feature "AI in grocery stores: What shoppers need to know about pricing, privacy and data," which was syndicated in more than 60 outlets nationwide.

"The use of AI or just using data gives a competitive advantage to the stores, and it also gives a competitive advantage to the customers if a customer has the time and energy to put into it," said Thekdi.

AACSB Business Education. Connected.

Economics professor **Saif Mehkari**, who is involved in several AI initiatives on campus, is quoted in "How AI Is Evolving in Business Schools."

"For any school, a big decision-making point is: Do our students need it?" said Mehkari. "And if you hear that this is something that employers are looking for, it becomes imperative for us to teach it."

Washington Examiner

Finance professor **Art Durnev**, an expert on financial markets, is quoted in "The dollar has dropped steadily, defying Trump tariffs."

"The tariffs should work in the opposite way; they should strengthen the dollar because the demand for foreign goods like imports from Europe declines, the demand for American goods presumably increases," Durnev said. "[The drop in the dollar] means that the financial market story overweighs the trade story and one of the reasons is the uncertainty about tariffs."

CFO DIVE

Accounting professor **Robert Pawlewicz**, an expert on CPA licensure requirements, is quoted "Will 2026 be a decisive or disruptive year for CPA pathways?"

"I would expect that more than 40 states will have a CPA license pathway with 120 credit hours before the end of 2026," Pawlewicz said. "These new pathways are really just the old ones," he said in an interview. "It's a much easier sell than creating new ones that require more time and more expense to get licenses."

bon appétit

Alumni-founded **Absurd Snacks**, which originated in the University of Richmond's Bench Top Innovations program, was featured in "An Inside Look at the Best Snack Trends at the Summer Fancy Food Show." The writer notes: "Savory shakeups of common breakfast aisle items caught me pleasantly by surprise. I'll be keeping an eye out for Absurd Snacks's chickpea and granola crunch mix as they expand into grocery stores."

448 UNIQUE COURSE SECTIONS

40 MBA STUDENTS

9 MSM STUDENTS

~60% OF STUDENTS STUDIED ABROAD

73 EXCHANGE STUDENTS FROM 19 COUNTRIES STUDIED HERE

16 ORGANIZATIONS SERVED THROUGH EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

42 PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

165 SCHOOL EVENTS HOSTED

85 FACULTY CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

University of Richmond
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We look forward to welcoming you back on campus for Homecoming 2026 on October 23–25.

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