

Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Kwamie Dunbar

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Students Savor 'Real-World' Guidance from Financial Experts

Kwamie Dunbar



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Sacred Heart University students and faculty have been treated to a series of informative lectures and presentations aimed at connecting the dots between the theoretical and “real” worlds that financial managers – and students pursuing degrees in economics, business or finance – traverse every day. Built around the University’s Derivative and Risk Management MBA class, students are exposed to professionals who “walk the talk,” learning about the challenges and opportunities of working in financial management and discovering, first hand, how the experts deal with real-life crises and compliance requirements.

Two recent guest speakers from GE Capital included Ryan Zanin, chief financial officer (CFO), and Tom Corsi, general counsel. Zanin – who prior to his assignment at GE Capital was the CFO of Wachovia Bank – discussed the 2008 credit crisis, its impact on corporate entities and issues linked to Enterprise Risk Management. He also examined current risk-management strategies and what he characterized as “corporate risk appetite in a post-2008/Europe debt crisis environment.” Corsi’s presentation focused on the implications of the Dodd-Frank financial regulations now in place for U.S. businesses, including a review of derivatives regulation and the implications of – and protections against – bank failures.

Both presentations were held on campus at the Pitt Center Board Room, and students and other guests were encouraged to ask questions and engage in related discussions.

Dr. Kwamie Dunbar, assistant professor of Finance at Sacred Heart University, coordinated the series to provide MBA students with exposure to practitioners closest to these issues on a day-to-day basis. He worked with a risk-management consulting firm, Transigma Partners (Kevin Hanrahan and Ryan Metz), to identify strong speakers who could offer insightful, first-person perspectives that would help students appreciate actual scenarios taking place in today’s international business world.

“I want students to be able to see the theoretic and historic lessons they explore in class against a practical, real-time, 21st-century backdrop,” Dunbar explains. “The opportunity to speak directly with experts in the field is invaluable. Through this forum, they can better understand how firms operate, see how the challenges they face have global implications and appreciate how these experts are managing and transferring risk.”

The guest series, Dunbar says, has been offered in the past, but this is the first year they’ve had such high-profile speakers. The presentations have been very popular, drawing standing-room-only crowds. He plans to continue this series and is already identifying future speakers. Additionally, students will produce papers before the end of the semester discussing what they’ve learned, including the local impact of the current debt crisis in Europe, risks facing the U.S. economy and recommendations on how they would manage and transfer risk.

Matthew Maleri, a student in Dunbar’s Derivative and Risk Management MBA class, attended the guest series and found the information very applicable to his daily work with an investment consulting company. “The presentations were very helpful, both from school and professional

perspectives,” Maleri says. “The material was real, not theoretical – these are guys who are doing it every day. They were using real-life examples and explaining how problems arose and were solved, rather than simply posing hypothetical situations. Many of our clients at work are using derivatives, so I was able to relate and benefit from this great learning opportunity.”