Bears of a Higher Degree
by Kristin Todd Stires

Baylor’s Hankamer School of Business offers a variety of graduate degrees. Whether it’s an MBA degree, joint or specialized degree, candidates are sure to find a degree program that incorporates a balance of theory and application, which will further their education and bolster them as business professionals. We caught up with these alumni to see how their graduate degrees have served them within their careers.
With an undergraduate degree in Marketing, Adrian Gorena had not planned on working in the tech industry; however, a new program offered at the business school quickly changed his mind.

“I remember seeing fliers around Hankamer for the new MSIS program reading, ‘No experience needed.’ I thought maybe I should look into that,” he laughed. “But on a serious note, at that time the information technology (IT) field was growing rapidly and so was its job market.”

With the IT industry expanding, before the imminent dot-com bust, Gorena took advantage of the opportunity and became a member of one of the first Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) classes at Baylor. The MSIS program was approved in May 1997 and offered that following fall semester.

“The School saw a trend and was reacting to demands of the business world,” he said. “It was a smart and important move for Baylor to begin offering the program.”

After earning his MSIS degree, Gorena was hired by Compaq, which then merged with Hewlett-Packard (HP). He has been with HP, headed by CEO and Baylor alumnus Mark Hurd, ever since and serves as manager of the company’s e-commerce operations in Latin America and Canada.

“My team consists of people in Brazil, Mexico, Canada and the U.S., and we oversee day-to-day operations of HP’s e-commerce transactions,” he said. “We make sure all web content, pricing, product information and promotions are correct, which also means collaborating with the sales teams.”

Gorena said his time at Baylor provided a platform for working in that team environment.

“At Baylor, I learned the importance of working in groups,” he said. “I may not have known it at the time, but in the real world you are never working alone. My success in corporate America depends on my ability to work efficiently with others.”

Gorena is a believer in the career diversity and many opportunities that the IT industry offers.

“You don’t have to be passionate about being technical, but you do have to be passionate about the industry,” he said. “This industry provides so many different career paths, whether it’s programming, marketing or sales. It is all about being adaptable.”

Gorena said companies expect a “higher quality of employee” when that employee holds a master’s degree. He also emphasized the importance for students to have a focus when pursuing that degree.

“When you pursue a master’s degree, you definitely have to be dedicated,” he said. “You commit time, funds, and then you later commit to a career with that degree training. For me, that career has been through my work at HP.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of computer and information systems managers is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2018.

“Corporate America is really competitive,” Gorena said. “Companies need individuals who are highly educated, well-versed and trained. This is a great industry to be in as we prepare for the next wave of technological advances—IT isn’t going away anytime soon.”

Adrian Gorena BBA ’98, MSIS ’99
Hewlett-Packard/Manager, Latin America/Canada e-commerce
Keith Hembre has a knack for predicting the future—economically, that is.

Hembre earned a bachelor’s degree in Economics and Political Science from the University of Minnesota. After working a few years, he enrolled in Baylor’s Master of Science in Economics (MSEco) program.

“The MSEco program at Baylor is unique,” he said. “The program helped build the foundation for the work I am doing now.”

Hembre chose the MSEco thesis track, where students complete 24 credit hours of coursework and write and defend a thesis, worth six credit hours.

“The MSEco thesis track was a valuable process for me,” he said. “Not only did the thesis serve as a completed project to show potential employers, but it also served as mock job training. In my job today, I continuously write and present economic forecasts to clients, investors and prospective clients.”

After earning his graduate degree, Hembre was involved with independent work before embarking on an international experience in the fall of 1994, when he taught an economics class at the University of St. Petersburg in Russia.

“I saw an article in the Baylor Business Review with Dr. Steve Gardner talking about a program in St. Petersburg,” he said. “I always had an interest in traveling to that part of the world, and it was an experience of a lifetime.”

After returning from Russia and working for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Hembre joined FAF Advisors, a subsidiary of U.S. Bank, in 1997. He serves as chief economist for U.S. Bank, and chief economist and chief investment strategist for FAF Advisors.

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“Numbers are a big component of my work, but we’re also looking at market psychology, policy and demographic issues, global interactions—a variety of factors,” he said.

Hembre said working with so many variables is just the “nature of the beast;” however, the power of economics can be understood even on the most simplistic level.

“I remember sitting in Dr. Steve Green’s class, and he was talking about micro supply and demand curves,” Hembre said. “And he said, ‘This is how the world works.’ That is really the appeal of the field of economics for me. It is a framework for how the world works now, five years from now, 10 years down the road and so on.”

Hembre advises current economics students to distinguish themselves from other job candidates by making the most of their academic resources.

“In this job market, anything that differentiates you is helpful,” he said. “A combination of skills is valuable, for example, picking up a foreign language. It becomes increasingly important as we shift toward the emphasis on global economic trends.”

And Hembre’s work revolves around understanding these trends. BusinessWeek named him the “most accurate economic forecaster” in 2007, and one of the “top five economic forecasters” in 2008 among national economists participating in BusinessWeek’s economic surveys. He has also been quoted by additional major publications and media outlets like The Wall Street Journal, CNBC and Reuters.

“You have to establish your own framework for analysis and forecasting and figure out what works,” he said. “And then you hope to be right more than you are wrong.”
In accounting, numerical accuracy is indispensable—especially when you work for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD).

Before launching her career, Carmelita Chadwick earned an undergraduate and graduate degree through Baylor’s five-year Master of Accountancy (MAcc) program, while simultaneously completing Baylor’s Air Force Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program.

“I had actually planned on attending the University of Alabama,” she said. “However, I decided to attend Baylor after visiting the campus and earning an ROTC scholarship.”

Through her time in the MAcc program, Chadwick said she realized the versatility of an accounting degree.

“Some people hold the misconception that accounting is boring work,” she said. “It was actually the program at Baylor that opened my eyes to the many careers (in government and the private sector) you can have through studying accounting.”

Chadwick also learned the importance of time management through her enrollment in the MAcc and ROTC programs.

“Balancing the demands of the MAcc program and ROTC proved challenging during my undergrad years,” she said. “I learned that it was important to plan and maintain a disciplined schedule. This lesson has remained with me.”

Chadwick became an active duty commissioned officer and served six years in the Air Force after graduation. With both her parents having also served in the Air Force, she was no stranger to military life. During her service, Chadwick was stationed in California, Kuwait, Iraq, and Kyrgyzstan (to name a few), with her final destination in Washington, D.C., at Bolling Air Force Base.

After her time in the Air Force and working a few years in the private sector, Chadwick now works in one of the world’s largest office buildings: the Pentagon. She serves as a senior budget analyst for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller, specifically on the Contingency Operations team. In this capacity, she functions as the senior analyst for the Cost of War reporting and Overseas Contingency Operations (formerly Global War on Terrorism – GWOT) budgeting.

“Since serving in Iraq and other contingencies, I wanted to get involved in making in accounting has become more important than ever as white-collar crimes and scandals continue to shake the business world. Chadwick stressed the importance of understanding business ethics and using them when making decisions.

“At Baylor, I feel like the emphasis on ethics helped prepare me for decision making throughout my career,” she said. “The business world is not always black and white—there is a lot of gray area. Especially in the accounting field, questions arise all the time and you want to respond

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Freeberg attended the University of Texas at Austin and earned a BBA in Marketing and Finance from the University of Texas at Brownsville. She was able to gain significant work experience before returning to graduate school. “I had the opportunity to work four years after college before graduate school,” she said. “I knew I would go back to school, and the timing worked out perfectly.”

She was contacted by Col. Scott Garner, coordinator of the Robbins MBA Healthcare Program, about the new program being offered at Baylor. Through the program, candidates earn an MBA degree with a focus in health care administration.

“When Col. Garner approached me about the program, a light bulb came on, and I knew this was the career path I wanted to pursue,” she said. “The program was the perfect blend of business and health care, and turned out to be one of the best decisions I’ve made.”

Freeberg joined the inaugural class for the program. As part of the curriculum, candidates complete a seven-month health care organization sponsored residency. “I completed my residency at Valley Baptist Health System in Harlingen, Texas,” she said. “One of my major projects was to establish an outpatient geriatric psych unit from start to finish. This included all aspects of program development, from Medicare approval and building out a physical space, to recruiting physicians and staff and seeing our first patients walk in the door.”

Freeberg’s success in her endeavors led to a job offer with Valley Baptist upon completion of her residency. She returned to Baylor, finished her MBA degree, and went right back to work as the organization’s director of corporate services, later becoming the director of planning.

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“Not many organizations have a joyful spirit like a children’s hospital does,” she said. “I encounter something daily at work that makes me smile. It really gives me perspective on life, and I know I am impacting the lives of our patients and their families.”

Freeberg joined Children’s Medical Center of Dallas as director of operations for surgical services. “I work with surgical leadership to establish the strategic direction of our surgical services through the discovery of clinical and market needs/trends and implementation and growth of programs,” she said. “To accommodate this growth, our goal is to strive for continuous improvement by driving efficiency and effectiveness in operations in order to make the surgical experience for our children and their families as easy and pleasant as possible.”

Through her role of supporting surgical leadership and acting as liaison between the surgical services and Children’s administration, Freeberg understands the big picture of contributing to a health care system.

Since attending South Texas High School for Health Professions, Lesley Freeberg has held an interest in the health care industry. Originally on a pre-med path, she eventually found her niche through pursuing business and health care administration.
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS)
Master of Accountancy (MAcc) • Master of Taxation (MTax) • Master of Science in Economics (MSEco) • Master of Science or Master of Arts in International Economics (MSIEco/MAIEco)

Specialized degrees
MBA Healthcare Administration Specialization
MBA Entrepreneurship Specialization

Joint degrees
Master of Business Administration/Juris Doctor (MBA/JD) • MBA/Master of Science in Information Systems (MBA/MSIS) • MBA/Master of Engineering (MBA/ME) • MBA/Master of Science in Computer Science (MBA/MSCS) • Juris Doctor/Master of Taxation (JD/MTax) • MBA/Master of Healthcare Administration (MBA/MHA)
at Fort Sam Houston (military personnel only)

Executive MBA programs
Austin – Evening program at Freescale campus
Dallas – Weekend program at Cooper Aerobics Center

Integrated degree programs
BBA/MTax (taxation)
BBA/MAcc (accountancy)

Doctoral degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Information Systems (PhD-IS)