News

FIVE ALUMNI TO BE INDUCTED INTO UCONN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS HALL OF FAME

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The University of Connecticut School of Business will induct five alumni into its Hall of Fame next month.

The Hall of Fame was established in 1983 to recognize business alumni with significant career success, industry involvement and community service. This year, Melissa Cummings, Robert Giglietti, Kevin Kulak, Edward Lange and Emeka Okafor will be inducted.

Cummings, who received her MBA in 1998, said her time at UConn laid the foundation for her future career.

"I served as the President of the Graduate Business Association, worked in the Admissions office at the then West Hartford campus, spent time with faculty and enjoyed UConn life," Cummings said.

She said UConn's MBA program was one of the few at the time that offered healthcare management, which fueled her 30-year career in the industry.

Today, she serves as the executive vice president and chief operations officer at Progyny Inc., a benefits-management company specializing in fertility, family building and women's health solutions. She previously served as the executive vice president at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island.

To current UConn students, she said take advantage of the alumni network.

"Don't be afraid to reach out to alums and seek to learn more about particular career paths that you might be considering."

Giglietti, a first-generation college student who graduated with an accounting degree in 1992, said UConn gave him the leadership opportunities and the ability to interact with individuals, get support and build camaraderie.

He said these are the soft skills that are sometimes taken for granted but are essential in the real world.

"It helped prepare me to be a stronger business leader in the long term," Giglietti said. "The technical skills will only take you so far and then it really turns into leadership skills that really accelerates your career."

Outside of his classes, he was a part of the accounting society and a fraternity, which also strengthened his leadership skills, he said.

Today, Giglietti is a leader in the business industry, serving as the chief accounting officer for GE Aerospace. He frequently returns to UConn, speaking at business classes and mentoring students, he said. He also funds a need-based business scholarship.

"If I didn't have this opportunity to go to such a great university, I wouldn't be what I am today," Giglietti said.

His college advice to students is this: get out of your comfort zone.

"Get involved in as much as you can," he said. "It will differentiate you as you go to look for a job in the workforce."

While both Cummings and Giglietti share their induction this year in common, they also have another similarity — both are huge UConn basketball fans and season ticket holders.

One of UConn men basketball's own will be inducted into the Business Hall of Fame this year too. Okafor, who was a member of the 2004 NCAA national championship team, graduated with his degree in finance in three years. He was the second overall pick in the NBA draft and the 2004 NBA Rookie of the Year.

UConn recognized Okafor this year by retiring his No. 50 jersey on Feb. 18 during halftime of the Creighton game at Gampel Pavilion.

Today, he works as a commentator and analyst in men's college basketball, appearing on ESPN, CBS and Fox Sports.

Lange is an MBA graduate and current adjunct professor at the School of Business. He works with students in the Hillside Ventures STEM Fund and serves on the School of Business Dean's Advisory Cabinet.

Before retirement, Lange held executive leadership roles in the multifamily and senior housing sectors. His final executive role was CEO of real estate firm MAXX Properties from 2016-2021, according to UConn Today.

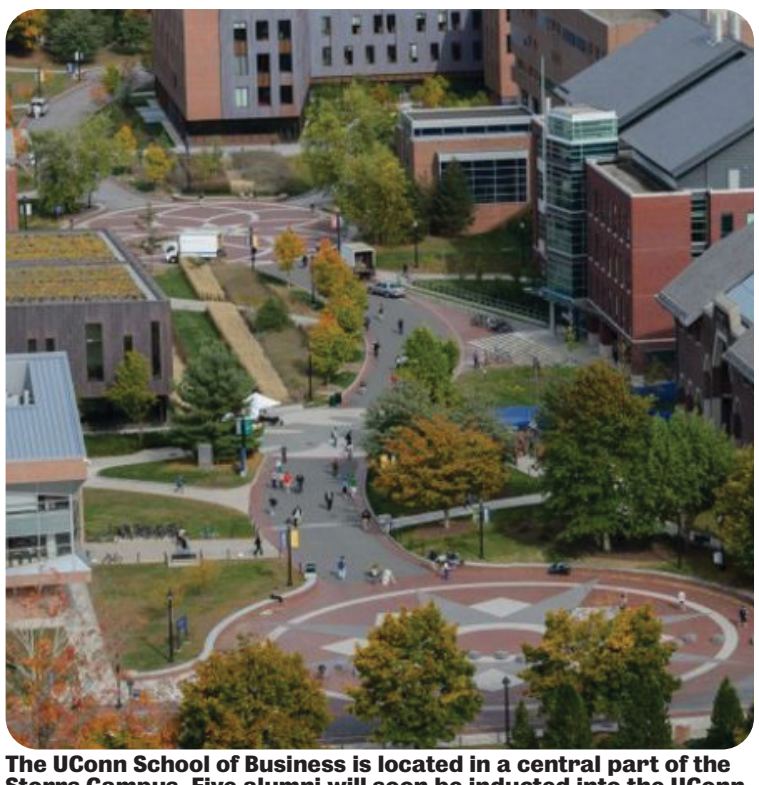
Similar to Lange, Kulak is also invested in his alma mater, currently serving on the Board of Directors at the UConn Foundation. He graduated from UConn in 1985 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Kulak is an executive vice president at Voyager Technologies. In his profile with UConn Today, he said he enjoys innovation and building new businesses. He founded Fizio Health, a Connecticut-based company serving orthopedic and physical therapy patients.

To date, 150 alumni have been inducted into the UConn Business Hall of Fame. This year's Hall of Fame Induction & Celebration will be at the Hartford Marriott Downtown on April 24.



Five very successful alumni of Uconn's school of business will be inducted into the UConn school of Business Hall of Fame. This event will occur on April 24, 2026 at the Hartford Marriott downtown. PHOTO BY @UCONNALUMNI ON INSTAGRAM.



The UConn School of Business is located in a central part of the Storrs Campus. Five alumni will soon be inducted into the UConn School of Business's Hall of Fame for their admirable careers following their graduation. PHOTO BY @EROSEMYERS11 ON PINTEREST.

STUDENTS PROPOSE DISABILITY CULTURAL CENTER ON CAMPUS

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Two students at the University of Connecticut are taking charge to start a disability cultural center at the Storrs campus with support from the Board of Trustees and the Undergraduate Student Government.

Mia Giancola, a sixth-semester social work and sociology student, and Gabriella DiSalvo, an eighth-semester student with an individualized major of disability studies in media and food culture, have proposed starting the new cultural center to help people like them connect with one another and have a safe space to be themselves on campus, something many Huskies feel is a long time coming.

"I think students are being really vulnerable and just saying, 'hey, no one's really sat down and let me talk about this before... I want a place where I can talk about these issues, because I don't know anyone else like me,'" Giancola said. "So I think what we need is a space where people can say, 'hey...you're like me. I just met you, and you're like me.'"

Giancola said that there are about 7,000 students registered with UConn's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at the main Storrs campus and regional campuses in Hartford, Waterbury, Stamford and Avery Point.

But she says this number is not representative of all students with disabilities at UConn.

Giancola said that some students might not want to seek support from CSD services, but they still deserve support on campus in other ways, like through a cultural center.

Giancola imagines the center having two separate rooms. One room would be "low stimuli, low noise" to give students a break from the loudness of the Student Union and the Homer Babbige Library, she said.

Students also suggested low lighting, puzzles, fidget toys and mats to let students lay comfortably on the floor, something she said can be particularly helpful for students with chronic pain or other invisible disabilities — or even someone who just needs a quiet place to cry.

The other room would be more of a communal space, allowing students to meet each other and providing a space for students to share their experiences.

At a USG Student Senate meeting on Feb. 11, DiSalvo, who serves as a diversability senator, proposed the cultural center to her fellow senators.

She said it would be a dedicated space for both disabled students and the allies of disabled students to gather and form mentorships, allyships, advocacy and connections with each other. The senators passed the resolution unanimously.

Giancola sent out a survey to students through the CSD to gauge interest in the cultural center. The survey got 904 responses, with 89% of respondents supporting the center. She and DiSalvo shared these findings with the Board of Trustees at their meeting on Feb. 26.

At the meeting, DiSalvo shared stories about struggling to find accessible transportation for her wheelchair to urgent care during a snowstorm because UConn's service shut down during a school cancellation.

She hopes that a disability cultural center would help connect students with more resources to avoid situations like that.

Giancola said that presenting at the Board of Trustees meeting was "a really impactful moment," and that the board seems very receptive and ready to move quickly on opening the center.

The biggest issue right now, Giancola said, is finding space. "The problem is there's no space, like, anywhere," she said. "I think we want it to be in the Union. We need a big space, because we have wheelchair users, and we also need a quiet space... not visually overstimulating."

In her proposal to USG, DiSalvo mentioned including accessible desks and "a layout designed with disability in mind."

Giancola and DiSalvo are hoping to run the space like a typical cultural center, offering paid student employment. Giancola said she's already had some students ask her if they could apply to work there, even though they aren't set up yet. She said she hopes the employment aspect will help students take the center more seriously.

"I don't think people see disability as a culture. And hey, we are a culture," Giancola said. "I feel seen in a way I never had before. I just think people are so proud to be recognized."

The Daily Campus

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