Students in Dr. Nicholas Williamson’s international marketing class stretch their real-world experiences — a hallmark of Bryan School education — into an intellectual trek around the world during an intense 12-week project called Export Odyssey.

At the end of the unparalleled assignment, many of the undergraduate students will have helped North Carolina-based companies export their products to other countries. It is how Miss Jenny’s Pickles traveled from a production facility in Kernersville to U.K. retailers and how parachute cloth produced by Performance Textiles Inc. found a buyer in Poland.

“When it comes to the mission of the university and of the Bryan School, this course hits it all: economic development, community engagement, hands-on learning,” Williamson said.

A recent study found that the Export Odyssey (part of MKT 426 International Marketing) provides students a caliber of skills and experiences unmatched by other programs in the nation. “Students must commit themselves totally. The demands are unlike just about any other course,” said Williamson, who has taught a version of the course since joining UNCG 31 years ago. “But when they finish, they have tools that are highly sought by employers.” Indeed, they acquire sought-after tools — and very often jobs that are a direct result of Export Odyssey projects.

Hollis Newton ’10, ’13 MBA, who worked on finding a market for antimicrobial bed sheets, now is a brand manager for The Richards Group. “Hands-on projects like these served as irrefutable evidence of my competency and the credibility of my degrees,” Newton said.

Kevin Scott ’13, who helped the pickle producer enter the U.K. market, credits Export Odyssey with preparing him to succeed in his current role as a logistics coordinator for Dravco Inc. Sarah Bouchard ’13, a strategic account representative at Multiquip Inc., was hired by another company even before she graduated — in part because her real-world Export Odyssey experience impressed the recruiter who was interviewing her.

The high rankings keep coming, with the Master of Science in Information Technology and Management degree becoming the latest Bryan School program to earn top accolades. U.S. News & World Report ranked it 12th among 38 online graduate computer IT programs.

The rankings, released in January, consider student engagement, faculty credentials, student services and technology, peer reputation and admissions selectivity.

“The U.S. News & World Report ranking reflects the rigor and strength of the online MSITM program. Whether the learning takes place online or in a traditional classroom, we have created a high-caliber educational experience for our students in the fields of information technology and management,” said Dr. Lakshmi Iyer, associate professor of information systems and director of the Information Systems and Supply Chain Management graduate programs.

In addition, in its latest ranking, Fashion-Schools.org again has named the Bryan School’s Consumer, Apparel and Retail Studies (CARS) Department one of the elite fashion programs in the nation — No. 13 out of 75. CARS moved up 10 places from its spot on the 2013 list.
Greetings from the Bryan School!
I hope the last few months of 2014 and the first few months of 2015 have treated you well. They have been busy and impactful for us.

During fall 2014, we learned that our economics program was ranked in the top 10 in the United States in two important research areas. In innovation, which is one of our core elements of focus, we were ranked No. 7, and in program evaluation, we were ranked No. 6. We could not be more proud of our Economics Department for these outstanding rankings.

As we rang in 2015, we learned that U.S. News & World Report ranked our online Master of Science in Information Technology and Management program No. 12 in the United States. Dr. Lakshmi Iyer in the Department of Information Systems and Supply Chain Management is director of that program. She and her colleagues have done a terrific job building a high-quality program.

In late January, we were visited by the accreditation team in both Business and Accounting from AACSB as part of the every five-years campus review. It was extremely helpful to have objective, outside experts looking at what we do and how we deliver on our mission. I learned a great deal from them, and I hope they learned from us, as well. We have received official word that our accreditation has been continued, which recognizes our commitment to continuous improvement and high quality education.

We are well into our Alumni Challenge for the Annual Fund. You may recall that 25 of our alumni committed $150,000 to match new, additional or increased annual gifts to the Bryan School. If you have not yet made a gift to the Bryan School this year, please consider making one and reference the Alumni Challenge. You may designate your gift for a program or department, for our general scholarship fund or for the Bryan School Excellence Fund, which permits us to put your gifts to work wherever they are most urgently needed.

Finally, we want to thank you for helping us find student projects for our courses, participants for our Executive Education programs, and both internships and full-time jobs for our students. All of these are critical to the success of our students and the school. Your help is much appreciated. I look forward to connecting with you again later this year via another newsletter.

McRae C. Banks II
Margaret & Harrell Hill Distinguished Professor & Dean
Ripples of winning business plan flow widely through Bryan School

A student consulting project begun in 2013 and lauded in a national student project competition in 2014 continues to pay dividends to both the Bryan School and a leading North Carolina business.

A team of MBA students won the 2014 Small Business Institute’s Project of the Year award for their business plan to create a restaurant at Raffaldini Vineyards and Winery in Ronda, North Carolina.

The project is part of a capstone MBA course and exemplifies two hallmarks of Bryan School education — a focus on teaching the practice of business through hands-on, real-world experiences and an emphasis on interaction among faculty, students and the community to benefit all three.

The process begins in early fall, when students individually “bid” on the projects they want to tackle. Students then are put into teams advised by Bryan School faculty who have expertise and experience relevant to the project. The Raffaldini team included students Scott Jordan, Taylor Pittman and Gordon Trimble, who worked with faculty members Richard Browne, Bonnie Canziani and Sam Troy.

During an initial meeting with the client, the team gained a better understanding of Raffaldini’s goal — to determine the feasibility of opening an Italian restaurant — and established deliverables. Next, students began to dig deeply into the data, using accounting and financial information provided by Raffaldini, as well as statistics and other information about the overall restaurant and hospitality industry, said Bonnie Canziani, associate professor in the Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality & Tourism.

During the process, the MBA students also gathered and analyzed market data, including conducting a survey of existing Raffaldini visitors. Additional meetings and more data crunching followed. The team then created a financial model to determine a restaurant’s feasibility. Over the course of the project, the team met with top Raffaldini management, including owner Jay Raffaldini. “Jay Raffaldini had an open-door policy and made a good portion of his financials available to the team. More importantly, he would debate and challenge the students’ assumptions to lead them to better decisions,” Canziani said.

The business plan is complete and the award has been won, but the project continues to impact the school: Raffaldini has recruited job candidates from among Bryan School students and graduates, and, as is the case with every round of business plan projects, faculty members have used the experience to refine teaching methods and classroom activities.

“This was one of the most interesting and important projects I have worked on in a long time,” Canziani said. “It really shows what hands-on education can achieve if done right.”

Accolades Grow

continued from cover

The website ranks CARS as the third best program in the South for 2014 — up two spots from the prior year — and the top program in North Carolina.

“We could not be more pleased by our extraordinary jump in the rankings,” said Dr. Nancy J. Hodges, professor and department head. “Such rankings recognize CARS’ important achievements as a department over time, but we also measure our successes every day in the commitment of our faculty, dedication of our staff and, most of all, in the accomplishments of our students as they acquire the practical skills and specialized knowledge they need to thrive in the global apparel industry.”

The Bryan School consistently is recognized as being among the best business schools in the country. Among its other current rankings:

| #13 | PART-TIME MBA PROGRAM IN THE U.S. | #4 | PUBLIC UNIVERSITY PART-TIME MBA PROGRAM IN THE U.S. |
| #6 | ECONOMICS PROGRAM EVALUATION PROGRAM IN THE U.S. | #7 | ECONOMICS INNOVATION PROGRAM IN THE U.S. |

* Bloomberg Businessweek, 2013
* Bloomberg Businessweek, 2013
* RePEc, 2014
* RePEc, 2014

Global Markets

continued from cover

A fundamental aspect of the course can be traced to an interaction between Williamson and one of his ambitious students. One day, he overheard Olga Topping ’88, a student from Colombia, on the phone, negotiating to sell socks made in North Carolina to a retail chain back home. Williamson was impressed — and inspired. He created the pivotal requirement: Students must attempt to sell a product produced in the state to at least three buyers in the country that offers the best exporting potential.

Students work in teams and the course itself is a collaboration with Steven Cramer, the Coleman Fellow for Entrepreneurship Education and UNCG business librarian.

“Steve worked with me to make this course come alive,” Williamson said. “This project is not just leading edge; it is bleeding edge — absolutely at the embryonic tip of what is happening.”

PICTURED HERE: Raffaldini siblings Barbara and Jay.
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Spotlight on Professorships

Three Bryan School faculty members have been named to endowed professorships and a fourth has received a Fulbright Scholars Program award.

DEAN McRAE C. BANKS II has been named to the Margaret & Harrell Hill Distinguished Professorship, a new position created to honor the leader of the Bryan School. Banks has been dean since 2011.

DR. NANCY J. HODGES has been named to the Burlington Industries Distinguished Professorship. She joined the faculty in 1998 and is head of the Consumer, Apparel and Retail Studies Department.

DR. AL LINK has been named to the Virginia Batte Phillips Distinguished Professorship. Link joined the Bryan School faculty in 1982 and has held several administrative appointments.

DR. DIANNE H.B. WELSH has been named the Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair in Entrepreneurship for Central Europe. She is the Hayes Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Bryan School and director of UNCG’s Entrepreneurship Cross-Disciplinary Program.