

Outstanding Grads

Imagine these four outstanding graduates from the class of 2012 together in a single photograph. They encapsulate today's Golden Gate University — ranging in age from young Nora McIntosh to grandfather of 21 (and counting) Matthew Haws. Their stories are diverse, from Black Law Students Association President Crystal Cole Matson to Murat Wahab, a 40-year-old Malaysian immigrant.

One of them even managed to be an outstanding student without setting foot in a classroom. Haws completed his MS in Project and Systems Management remotely, from his home in Houston.

Congratulations to our four new Outstanding Alumni.

Murat Wahab BA 12

What a year for Murat Wahab, outstanding undergraduate. In 2000, he landed at SFO with two suitcases, \$500 and no one to call. In 2012, he plans to revisit his native Malaysia for the first time, bearing the title of vice president for a major bank and his degree in Administration/Management.

“Most of my family is illiterate, and they don't know how much I have accomplished,” said Murat, who turned 40 this year. “I really want to show my nieces and nephews that if I can accomplish this, it shows that you can accomplish anything if you put your mind to it.”

Murat had a good job but longed for a college degree. He enrolled at GGU in 2010 and made the Dean's List while not only continuing to work full time, but ranking in the top 3 percent of performers in his company.

GGU's Executive MBA program is on his calendar for spring 2013, but first, he has more of his memorable 2012 to look forward to: the flight to his homeland.



photo courtesy Murat Wahab



photo by Elizabeth Tichenor

Nora McIntosh MAc 12

Asked the secret to landing an accounting job at BDO-San Francisco with a start date months after graduation, Nora McIntosh ticks off a long list of rejections.

“Every time I got rejected, I asked why,” said the Orinda native and Scripps College grad. “It was hard. But I came to GGU to get more polished, and all of this helped me to be more confident.”

Nora got off to a late start in accounting. She once thought she wanted to be a commentator on the History Channel, among other dreams. She was already a junior when she took her first accounting class at Claremont McKenna, and, she said, “I fell in love with it.”

She hustled through her bachelor’s degree in economics/ accounting and then applied to GGU, where she scored high grades and the Accounting Association presidency. Retired PwC partner Richard Carson coached her, and by fall of 2011, she had her job.

“I think everyone could benefit by having someone like that on their side,” Nora said.

She is prepping for CPA exams this summer, but hopes to help develop a GGU mentorship program to aid future grads.

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photo by Elizabeth Tichenor

Matthew Haws MS 12

Matthew Haws graduated from his hometown San Jose State University with a BS in business management/accounting in 1980. By 1985, he was well into MBA work at GGU's Los Altos campus — then twins arrived.

“We already had three kids, and it was more important for me to be home,” he said.

With a 3.85 GPA, the outstanding graduate did it all via GGU's online program.

Fast forward, well, not so fast: Twenty-seven years later, Matthew received his Master of Science in Project and Systems Management degree from the Edward S. Ageno School of Business. With a 3.85 GPA, the outstanding graduate did it all via GGU's online program.

In between GGU stints, Matthew got divorced and married Debora, mother of six. He's now father of 11 and grandfather of 21, at press time. (“We count on another one or two every year,” he said.)

Matthew completed work on the degree online, at night, after working fulltime-plus as a financial systems manager for a Houston insurance company.

“My kids have been really supportive and proud of me, and hopefully this will stir some of them,” he said. “Only two have graduated. Now they know it's never too late to go back to school.”

Crystal Cole Matson JD 12

Wells Fargo Bank hired Crystal Cole right out of Atlanta's Spelman College and brought her to the Bay Area in 2006. Six years later, she has her law degree and a hefty stack of awards — including the Rose Elizabeth Bird and Paul S. Jordan awards, and the Law Review's Outstanding Associate Editor Award.

She also has a husband, George Matson, a fellow Texan whom she met with the same gift of gab that led her from the working world into law school: She simply started talking to him at the BART station they had frequented for months.

One thing led to another, pretty much the way her ease at conversation led to a law degree.

“When I was growing up, people told me I talked a lot,” Crystal said. “They said I talked so much, I should become a lawyer. That’s how it all started.”

Crystal quickly became well known around GGU halls for her energetic campaigning for SBA 1L representative; her buttons and flyers were everywhere. She won, but is most proud of her leadership role in the “Lifting as We Climb” Black History Symposium, in February.

Now, pending July's bar exams, she's hoping to talk her way into her next job. [GGU](#)



photo by Charlotte Fiorioto

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THE GGU ADVANTAGE

While at Equitec, McQuillan quickly noticed that most of his colleagues had business degrees, so he looked around for a school that would enable him to earn a degree while working full time. “I wanted to get my working career going,” he says. “I didn’t want to take another year or two off to go to school — I wanted to start making money in a real job. Golden Gate allowed me to do that.” He also sought a school that would transfer some of the credits

from his law degree, which Golden Gate offered to do.

GGU’s practical orientation proved a perfect fit. “One thing I liked about law school and business school is that they taught by example,” McQuillan explains. “They had case studies. They talked about real issues, what people were dealing with. And that’s what business life is all about — issues. How you are going to solve them, are there other ways to solve them, what the norm is, and what are the risks and returns associated with each decision you make.

“Most kids, they’re impatient. They want to know what reality is instead of reading some book that some theory guy wrote about 75 years ago. It’s just human nature. So I liked the practicality.” He earned his MBA in 1985.

Meanwhile, McQuillan and his cohorts at Equitec were becoming very quick learners: Within two years they left to launch their own firm, Dominion Ventures, using a similar business model but employing institutional money instead of money from individual investors. Formed in 1986, the firm got off the ground with

How To Score As An Entrepreneur

By Susan Fornoff

Success in business can occur as a result of good luck, good timing or good advice — and often it’s a combination the three. While you can’t buy good luck or good timing, you can get good advice for free. One source of such advice is the Small Business Administration’s SCORE program.

SCORE’s website features scores of resources for budding business founders. One of them, a roadmap called “35 Best Practice Tips for Planning Your Business” (by Dick Benner of SCORE’s Kansas City chapter), includes many of the practices and strategies that Kevin McQuillan seems to have intuitively followed.

Among the 35, here are 5 that clearly resonate with McQuillan:

1 **Examine your motives.** Do you really have a passion for having your own business and this particular business? McQuillan

identified his passion from the experience his father shared about working for one of the world’s biggest car makers. Early on, he gravitated toward entrepreneurship and small business, which he now funds.

2 **Understand that your primary responsibility** is the proper use of capital and that you are in business to make a profit. This seems to come naturally and intuitively to McQuillan, whose company currently has \$830 million under management.

3 **Clearly define your business idea** — be able to succinctly articulate it. What is your vision? What is your mission? McQuillan’s early work for others in venture capital helped him develop his own strategy. Today Focus Ventures spells out its investment criteria on its website: proprietary technology (communications or software categories preferred), rapidly growing market, strong management team, market

leadership, demonstrated market acceptance and previous backing from top-tier venture capitalists.

4 **Study your business.** Stay abreast of what’s going on in your industry. Read newspapers, periodicals and trade journals. McQuillan has always been an information seeker and a reader of business publications. A pivotal career moment for him came when he read a magazine cover story featuring a famed venture capitalist, Arthur Rock.

5 **Get involved in your community:** Chamber of Commerce, business organizations, service clubs, charities. Network yourself. Keep your antennae up. In addition to serving on the boards of various companies where he’s invested, McQuillan is a member of Western Michigan University’s investment committee and an adviser to the Silicon Valley Executive Network.