

dividends

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Leadership, Marketing... and Bears

By Suzi Morales

Marketing Assistant Professor Myles Landers' office hours looked a little different this past summer.

For two weeks during the 2024 summer term, Landers, COB Recruiting & Events Coordinator Anna Henson and nine students – five undergraduate and four MBA – discussed leadership and life while kayaking alongside glaciers in Alaska's Prince William Sound. The trip was the culmination of a new four-week course on conscious marketing that combines an academic curriculum on sustainable business practices with wilderness leadership training.

According to Landers, "conscious marketing" is a relatively new term focusing on balancing people, the planet and profits. The two-week online classroom portion featured guest speakers from companies – including Patagonia Provisions – the sustainable food division of Patagonia – and olive oil producer CHO America. Leadership training nonprofit entity National Outdoor Leadership School, or NOLS, led the Alaska segment, which included kayaking four to 12 hours a day, along with a leadership course.

In Alaska, the group designated two leaders each day who selected the route, monitored the weather forecast and kept up the group's morale. MBA student Payne Sleeper volunteered to be one of the first leaders.



The Alaskan wilderness offered lessons in sustainability and leadership.



“As an MBA candidate, you’re expecting to be a leader of a team one day, to manage people in some sort of administrative role,” says Sleeper. “Learning your team, learning where they’re comfortable, where they can thrive or grow is not only important in the Alaskan wilderness but will also be important in the workplace when our group gets there in just a few months.”

Maggie Clifton, a senior majoring in business administration, says she took the class because it combined her interests in marketing and outdoor travel, though she hadn’t previously put much thought into conscious marketing or sustainability. During the classroom portion, she was inspired by reading *Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman* by Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard, which challenged Clifton to be more intentional about her role in how business runs.

“This class opened my eyes to the world around me, showing me there’s only so much of this planet that we can go through,” says Clifton. “It’s definitely made me more mindful of the way I am consuming things but also of who I will be working for when I graduate. What do they stand for? And how are they trying to change things?”

During the Alaska expedition, Landers ceded his role as university professor and became “Myles,” just another NOLS student on the trip.

“You’re rarely brought closer with a college professor than when you’re protecting each other from bears out in Alaska,” laughs Sleeper.

Landers is already planning for 2025, when the course will include backpacking for nearly three weeks in Tanzania.

“This course allows our students to see that a business can do good in the world, and it can make a profit,” he says. “How these students consume and the choices they make – that has an effect on what businesses do. It matters.”

Photos courtesy of Conscious Marketing Class Members