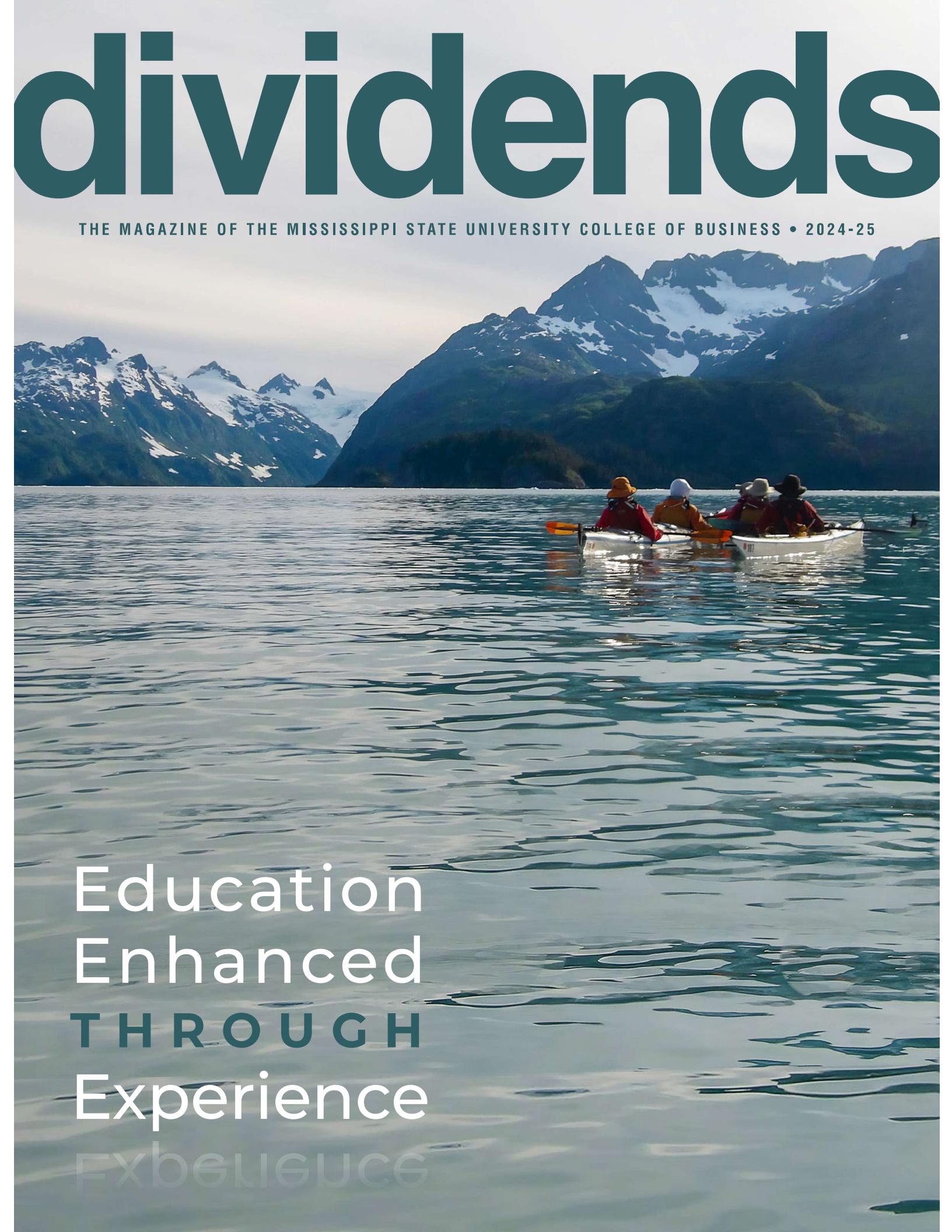


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A Case for Learning

By Suzi Morales

"Show us where we can improve."

According to 2024 graduate Jonathan Mason, this was the mandate for the first-ever live case class at Mississippi State University's College of Business. In this class, Mason and his supply chain logistics classmates partnered with Louisville, MS-based Taylor Logistics, LLC, for a unique learning experience over the course of the spring 2024 semester.

A live case class is an educational experience, whether in a classroom or in the field, where students collaborate to address and solve a real business problem posed by a corporate leader or team.

The class, led by Dr. Chris Boone, Associate Professor of Supply Chain Logistics, and Dr. Robert Moore, Professor of Marketing, was offered for the first time during the 2023-2024 academic year. It paired students with Taylor Logistics, the supply chain and transportation arm of the Taylor Group of Companies, which manufacture industrial equipment, including lift trucks.

The Taylor Group has longstanding ties to MSU and the College of Business. Lex Taylor, a 1977 COB graduate, is the third generation of his family to run the Taylor Group of Companies, and son Alex is a 2023 MSU supply chain graduate who also works in the business. As an MSU student in the 1970s, Lex came to understand the value of learning through experience as part of a team advising a new western boot shop. Taylor was happy to provide a similar learning opportunity to today's students through his company.

Those students took the opportunity and ran with it. They met at Taylor's headquarters in Louisville, MS, monthly and discussed the company's challenges and potential solutions. Ultimately, the class proposed a supplier report card as a tool with which the company may neutrally evaluate suppliers and improve relationships with them.

Members of the College's first live case class
Photos by Elena Palomino and Lane Spradling



“It was a great growing opportunity,” says Mason, now a front-line manager for Anheuser-Busch in Jacksonville, FL. “It challenged us to keep going back to the drawing board and not give up and to come up with a solution that best fit Taylor and what they were looking for.”

Taylor’s Supply Chain Manager, Scott Hollenhead, says the students delivered. Currently, Taylor Logistics is confirming and inputting its data on the various criteria for the scorecard, with Boone continuing to assist the company in implementing the system.

“Any organization that tells you they don’t need help doesn’t know their business,” states Hollenhead, who says the students provided a fresh perspective.

Boone emphasizes, “What really made the class successful was that it was real. Taylor was open and willing to work with us, willing to share data with students and eager to listen to their questions and redirect their efforts.”

The value for all involved is reflected in Taylor Logistics’ having signed on for a second round. This past fall, students who took the live case course were tasked with examining the company’s international supply chain, which even included touring the Port of Savannah.

Encouraged by the quality of the MSU students he has seen over the two semesters, Lex Taylor anticipates good things as they enter their careers.

“They will be successful,” he predicts with confidence.

Classmates toured Taylor Logistics’ headquarters and met there monthly.