



# FALL 2020

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## NEWSLETTER

## A Note from Giorgio Gotti

On behalf of the UTEP Department of Accounting and Information Systems, I'd like to share with you our Fall 2020 Newsletter.



Our latest edition highlights stories of success achieved in recent months along with updates from our faculty and students. Our student body is strong, with 72 Master of Accountancy students and 6 Certificate of Accountancy students enrolled. The semester began with 9 students in the Ph.D. Program with an Accounting concentration. At the undergraduate level, the Fall 2020 semester sees 422 Accounting Major students and 72 Information Systems Major students enrolled. I am happy to share that AIS students have received more than \$33,000 in scholarships this semester.

As a Department, our successes and achievements are worthy of a note and celebration.

I encourage you to connect with us through social media and keep up-to-date on our latest news!

## BY THE NUMBERS: FALL 2020

**442**  
ACCOUNTING  
(UNDERGRADUATE)

**72**  
INFORMATION SYSTEMS  
(UNDERGRADUATE)

**72**  
MASTER OF  
ACCOUNTANCY

**6**  
CERTIFICATE OF  
ACCOUNTANCY

**9**  
PH. D. PROGRAM  
(ACCOUNTING CONCENTRATION)

## State Code Change Adds IS Programs to STEM Classification

A recent code change from the State of Texas now includes Information System (IS) programs under the STEM classification, creating new opportunities for business students and faculty.

Benefits of this change under the STEM designation include additional scholarship and grant funding pathways for business students and faculty, and a longer period of Optional Practical Training (OPT) Visas for international students, once they graduate from the program.

The importance of combining business knowledge with STEM skills helps strengthen broaden industry engagement. The integration also helps the creation of programs to better prepare students.

"The digital economy requires more people who combine excellent soft



Treviño

skills, such as design, communication, and creativity, with business intelligence," said Laura Treviño, Associate Professor of Information Systems at the UTEP College of Business Administration. "Individuals with these skills are greater assets to businesses and the demand for these types of hires is only growing."

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that demand for STEM jobs will grow by 13% by 2027, with higher wages than non-STEM jobs: The national average for STEM salaries is \$87,570, while non-STEM jobs earn roughly half as much, with an annual average of \$45,700.

STEM fields offer the fastest-growing professional career opportunities.

A career in STEM offers future job security, flexibility, job satisfaction and outstanding earning potential. Organizations need new hires with the business skills to work across disciplines to tackle difficult problems.

# Virtual Panel Highlights Careers, Opportunities with AIS Alumni

The Department of Accounting and Information Systems at UTEP hosted a virtual Accounting Careers Panel on September 8, 2020, giving students the opportunity to interact with successful accounting professionals and UTEP faculty members.

Moderated by Department Chair Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D., students asked questions connected to the different fields in accounting: audit, tax, and internal auditing. Gotti was joined on the panel by Sarah Robertson, Assistant Professor of Instruction at UTEP; Julie Dahlberg, Director of Internal Audit at Helen of Troy, and Tax Accounting Lecturer at UTEP; Tello Cabrera, Audit Manager at SBNG CPAs; and Carlos Arevalo, Tax Director at PwC.

Gotti hosted the panel from the UTEP Graduate Business Center in Downtown El Paso. More than 125 UTEP students attended the discussion.

Before the panel began, students were asked to watch the documentary film "Making It Balance," an accounting industry film produced by Roadtrip Nation. The film explores the ups and downs of three young graduates embarking on their first jobs in the accounting industry.

The film served as a starting point for a 75-minute discussion that ranged from topics such as CPA exam preparation, developing a healthy work/life balance, and the realities of starting in a new internship or position fresh out of college.

"We understand that you're brand new, that many of the things you'll encounter you'll be looking at for the first time," said Tello Cabrera of SBNG. "Students may be aware of concepts, but some may not have actually encountered these concepts in real life."

Cabrera said the reality for many accounting students entering the industry the first few years is about "learning the ropes."

"It's more about developing communication skills, organizational skills, learning how to comfortably talk to clients," he said. "There's opportunity for you to grow and to fail. We build these students into professional auditors, but it doesn't happen from one day to another. It's a process."

The open discussion allowed students to listen on professionals' reflections on what a career in accounting looks like and how to prepare to pursue a CPA license.

Students learned from personal stories what it takes to become a CPA in



**"You can get a job with a bachelor's and have many opportunities open up for you, but as you move towards the manager level or plan the next steps, that master's degree is really going to come in handy for you."**

Sarah Robertson  
Assistant Professor of Instruction

**ONLINE: Check out a video with highlights from the panel at [utep.edu/business](https://utep.edu/business)**

Texas, while balancing their academic, professional and personal lives.

Sarah Robertson advised students on the importance of completing a master's degree in accounting before sitting for the CPA exam.

"You can get a job with a bachelor's and have many opportunities open up for you, but as you move towards the manager level or plan the next steps, that master's degree is really going to come in handy for you," said Robertson. "If you're planning on taking the CPA exam, I would highly recommend that at that same time you think about that exam, to consider a MAcc degree as well."

Robertson noted that completion of UTEP's MAcc Program meets the educational requirements to sit for the CPA exam in Texas.

Julie Dahlberg echoed Robertson's sentiments, calling the successful completion of the CPA exam a "gold star" on a resume.

"After you get done with school, take that CPA exam and get that done. As you develop in your career, begin to target specific certifications that will grow your skills in that area," Dahlberg said. "[Those elements] will definitely enhance your resume. In the end, it makes you more employable as you move into bigger positions."

# AIS Welcomes Nelson as Assistant Professor

A first-generation college graduate, Aaron Nelson, Ph.D., understands the profound impact earning a college education can have on a life.

“UTEP’s core mission of access and excellence is one that I resonate with and I truly feel the degrees these students earn will impact their lives in many ways,” Nelson said. “I believe in these students and as an instructor, it’s great to guide them on this journey.”

Nelson joins the College of Business Administration’s Department of Accounting and Information Systems as an assistant professor after previously serving as a visiting professor in 2019.

A passionate instructor, Nelson describes his teaching style as a mix between theory and concepts and blending those lessons with tangible examples for students. Of the topics and theories related to accounting that he covers in his classes, Nelson is most excited to share career possibilities in accounting with his students.

“An important aspect of the courses I teach covers an understanding of the accounting profession itself,” he said. “I take the time to share a little bit about different careers in accounting to show the true elasticity of the degree.”

While enrolled in the doctoral program at the Ohio State University, Nelson earned a number of fellowships, including the AIGC Graduate Fellowship, KPMG Minority Accounting Doctoral Scholarship and the Michael Cooke Doctoral Fellow.

“Earning fellowships while enrolled in a doctoral program provide essential financial support and networking opportunities within your specialty,” he said. “This enhances your overall educational experience and helps you connect with emerging and established scholars in the field.”

Nelson’s research interests stem from a belief that accounting is a vital part of understanding – and keeping – an economy functional. His research specialties include capital markets, accounting information in decision-making, and information in supply chains. His recent research has focused on firm suppliers as an interested party that relies on information from a firm.

“By providing necessary information about companies to stakeholders, accounting is the key that facilitates nearly all economic transactions,” he said. “If you remove accounting and the function it serves, economies would seize up.”



*Aaron Nelson, Ph.D., joins the AIS Department after previously serving as a visiting professor.*

**ONLINE: Read past profiles on AIS faculty at [utep.edu/cobanews](https://utep.edu/cobanews)**

“An important aspect of the courses I teach covers an understanding of the accounting profession itself.”

Aaron Nelson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor



# AN OPPORTUNITY ABROAD

*SOFIA ARCINIEGA IS ONE OF SEVEN UTEP STUDENTS TO EARN A **BENJAMIN A. GILMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP**, ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS*

The College of Business Administration and the Department of Accounting and Information Systems is honored to announce that Sofia Arciniega was recognized a 2020 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship recipient.

The Gilman Scholarship creates funding and educational opportunities for students looking to travel abroad. Gilman scholars are eligible for 12 months of noncompetitive hiring status within the federal government. In 2020, seven UTEP students were honored with a total of \$24,000 in scholarships.

Arciniega is currently majoring in Accounting, with a minor in Finance and French. She chose these degree plans as part of her desire to better understand how businesses work in an international setting. She hopes to one day be fluent in French, allowing her to focus on European markets.

Arciniega learned about the Gilman Scholarship through her brother and UTEP's Study Abroad Office. Arciniega pulled in resources from her UTEP networks, including Dania Brandford-Calvo, Ph.D., Executive Director of the UTEP Study Abroad Office and Assistant Director Judith Moore. Currently employed as an undergraduate assistant in the Department of Civil Engineering, Arciniega also turned to Jeffrey Weidner, Ph.D. for assistance in the application process.

"Being a Gilman recipient means so much to my family and for me. First of all, it is a fantastic opportunity for me to accomplish some of my goals:

study abroad, learn a new language, and meet different cultures," Arciniega said. "I think the most rewarding part that I will have is to learn more about how to work with people from different backgrounds and at the same time to try to understand their cultures."

Heavily engaged in student organizations, Arciniega serves as the Professional Development Officer for the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA). She hopes to use this position to bolster her leadership skills to one day host a workshop sharing her experiences with the Gilman scholarship — and the opportunities securing it brings.

While the covid-19 pandemic has delayed Arciniega's program by a few months, she is not letting this upend her ultimate goal of expanding her worldview to one day become a global citizen, "creating bridges" between her and other cultures. She has her sights set high for graduate school, aiming to enroll in a Master of Accountancy program. Eventually, she hopes to earn a Ph.D. in Economics.

"Due to the pandemic, I had to defer my program to start in the 2021 year. However, everything happens for a reason, and I am positive that I will have the opportunity to go and to enjoy my experience abroad." Arciniega expressed.



**Angelica Castro**  
*Ph.D. STUDENT*

**What inspires your research interests?**

International Accounting and insight of business valuations are some of my areas of interest. Meaningful research and its dissemination benefit communication between an economic entity and the effect it has on individuals and their communities.

**What drew you to UTEP?**

UTEP's constant advocacy for providing a high-quality education in a multicultural environment was what inspired me enroll into its Ph.D. program.

**What's your favorite part in the teaching and learning process?**

Teaching is a reciprocal experience, both to the student and to the professor. In an atmosphere that promotes sharing knowledge, experience, and ideas, student and professor roles are often interchangeable.



**Toufiq Nazrul**  
*Ph.D. STUDENT*

**What inspires your research interests?**

What inspires me the most in terms of research interests is the theoretical side of Accounting and how such theoretical aspects vary/do not vary in practice.

My industry experience in audit has shaped how I approach research particularly on the behavioral side of things; my masters level case-based classes in Financial Accounting, Managerial Accounting and Ethics had an impact on my interests in financial reporting, earnings management and accounting information quality.

**What drew you to UTEP?**

The diverse research interests of the professors is one aspect that drew me to UTEP. The range and types of elective courses for doctoral students is another thing that I found to be quite attractive.

**What's your favorite part in the teaching and learning process?**

When my explanations give students the "aha!" moment. The ability of the teaching profession to make a difference in society.



**Shensi Wang**  
*Ph.D. STUDENT*

**What inspires your research interests?**

I am a tax person who has an interest in taxation deeply in my heart. However, based on my professional experience, I found there are some issues – such as tax accounting – that need to be solved with knowledge from other business areas, such as accounting and finance. In order to develop solutions to these for tax issues, I am excited to conduct research experiments.

**What drew you to UTEP?**

I have a friend who enrolled in UTEP's Ph.D. program and he highly recommended it. While researching the University, I was interested in the class structure of the Ph.D. Program, which ultimately drew me to UTEP.

**What's your favorite part of the teaching and learning process?**

I have been a personal tutor for years and I really love the feeling when my students finally figure out their questions. Each time I answer a question of my student, I ask myself, "If I were a student, would I understand this answer?" Crafting the questions that engage the student to think critically is a challenging and fun process.



**Nim Yan Wong**  
*Ph.D. STUDENT*

**What inspires your research interests?**

Conducting research satisfies my enormous curiosity across a variety of things, which allows me to generate original ideas. Knowing my research and my expertise can benefit the accounting industry and nurture the next generation motivates me to be a productive contributor to academia.

**What drew you to UTEP?**

I came to UTEP to learn and get my PhD degree in Accounting. I applied to various graduate schools and UTEP gave me an offer. Among all the other schools giving me an offer, UTEP provides the best platform for PhD students to learn and do research.

**What's your favorite part in the teaching and learning process?**

Challenging myself to deal with many tasks in a limited amount of time is a great experience. The research and learning process in the doctoral program will be an unforgettable experience for me.



**Xue Yang**  
*Ph.D. STUDENT*

**What inspires your research interests?**

I am interested in international accounting and financial reporting. I have always been interested in reading about those topics. I look forward to the research process that builds strong connections to my own research projects.

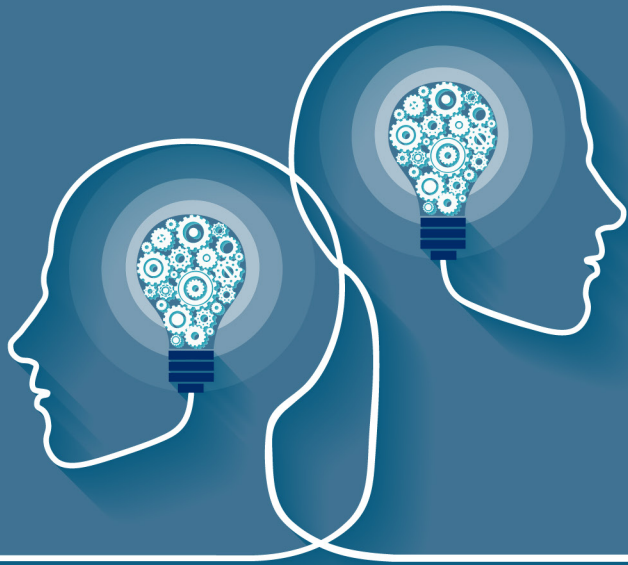
**What drew you to UTEP?**

UTEP's AACSB accreditation, it's recent R1 designation in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education were great factors. I had also heard great things specifically about the doctoral program in Business Administration. I believe my UTEP experience will enable me to have a rewarding career.

**What are you looking forward to at UTEP?**

I've received a lot of great advice since I arriving at UTEP. During orientation, students were encouraged to be engaged and develop relationships with fellow classmates and faculty. I will definitely follow this advice and actively seek opportunities for my professional development.

# ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS



The Accounting and Information Systems Department would like to recognize professors Kallol Bagchi and Waymond Rodgers for their recent journal contributions.

Dr. Bagchi's interest and publications revolve around topics such as global ICT, adoption and diffusion of ICT and its value.

Dr. Rodgers research areas include auditing, biometrics, commercial lending decisions, decision modeling, and knowledge management.

## 3 AIS UNDERGRADUATES EARN SCHOLARSHIPS

The Department of Accounting and Information Systems is pleased to announce that three undergraduate students —Jaqueline Muratalla, Gabriela Rodriguez, and Destiny Rodriguez — earned three different Fall 2020 scholarships.

With big dreams of becoming an expert in her fields of interest, Jacqueline Muratalla, an accounting major, was named recipient of the Dr. Sidney "Sid" P. Glandon Endowed Scholarship in Accounting Recipient in Fall 2020.

An engaged student, Muratalla has taken full advantage of the opportunities made available to her at the College of Business Administration, including professional development workshops and networking events.

"The UTEP community is one that will always offer you a helping hand, it is made up of some of the more caring and encouraging students and professors that wish to see you succeed," said Jaqueline Muratalla. "I am thankful to UTEP and the college of business for giving me the essential skills to grow academically, professionally, and personally."



Muratalla also participated in a corporate tour to New York City hosted by the College. She credits her time spent in the workshops and the trip as key factors in allowing her to step outside her comfort zone and grow as a professional.

Gabriela Rodriguez works as an undergraduate assistant in the Accounting and Information Systems Department. When she learned of different scholarship opportunities available to department students, she began to research what was out there. She has earned the Lauterbach, Borschow & Company Scholarship to help her finish her undergraduate degree before enrolling in the MAcc Program.

"This scholarship was of great assistance to me

since it allowed me to successfully finish my undergraduate studies," Rodriguez said. "I'm grateful that there are generous donors such as Lauterbach, Borschow & Company who are willing to help UTEP students achieve their educational dreams." Rodriguez is set to graduate in May 2021.

An active member of the Beta Alpha Psi and the Accounting Society, Destiny Rodriguez is another accounting student who has taken full advantage of the opportunities available to her at UTEP.

Rodriguez is enrolled in the University Honors Program, serves as a tutor in the College of Education and has participated in a study abroad program to France as part of the Gilman Scholarship. She has also expanded her professional development opportunities by securing an accounting internship at Commonwealth Fusion Systems.

This semester, Rodriguez adds yet another academic achievement to her record as the recipient of the Carol Ann Conklin Gordon Endowed Scholarship.



## Erick Aguilar-Arroyo

SANDY TYLER  
ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP  
IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

### What accounting topics interest you the most?

I am very interested in learning more about Forensic Accounting. I have not been exposed to this in my job, but I would really like to learn more about this career and hopefully become a Certified Fraud Examiner.

### How do you see the next few steps in your career?

I've been working for the past four years in a local CPA firm, so I believe I would just like to keep moving up on this firm. If I had to choose, I might want to experience working for an aerospace company such as Boeing or Airbus.

### Who or what inspires you to succeed?

One of the things that inspires me to succeed is finding out what my "limits" are. I really want to uncover my full potential and hopefully have a positive impact in people's lives.



## Miguel Agustin Carrillo Jr.

SANDY TYLER  
ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP  
IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

### How would you describe your experience in the MAcc program so far?

The MAcc program has enabled me to grow my knowledge base, network, and skills. The MAcc program is a great capstone to the bachelor's in accounting degree; it has allowed me to engage in great learning experiences different from my undergrad. I have had the ability to study abroad, engage in more project/case-based learning, and learn from professors with different backgrounds.

### What accounting topics interest you the most?

The area of accounting that interests me the most is tax. I enjoy the subject and I'm excited to pursue a career in this field because of the client-facing aspect. It also requires a commitment to lifelong learning. Sarah Robertson, UTEP Alumnus John Romero, and Sean Ihorn have been some of the greatest mentors. They provided me with the foundation, tools, and opportunities to explore the field of tax.

### What inspires you?

I am a first-generation student from a modest background. My family and my parent's sacrifices are my greatest inspiration. I strive to set the best example for my siblings and work hard to create a career for myself and my family.



## Kay Gamboa

CARDWELL FAMILY GRADUATE  
FELLOWS PROGRAM IN BUSINESS

### Do you have a sense of pride to give back to UTEP?

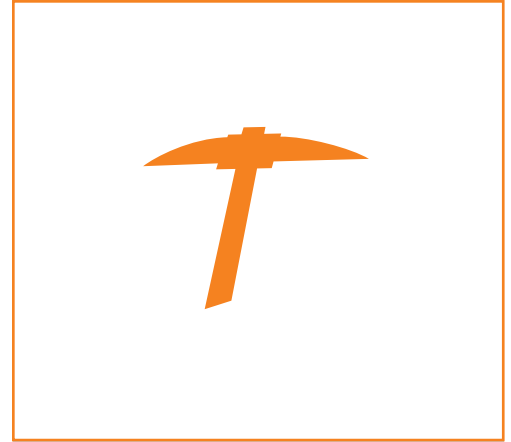
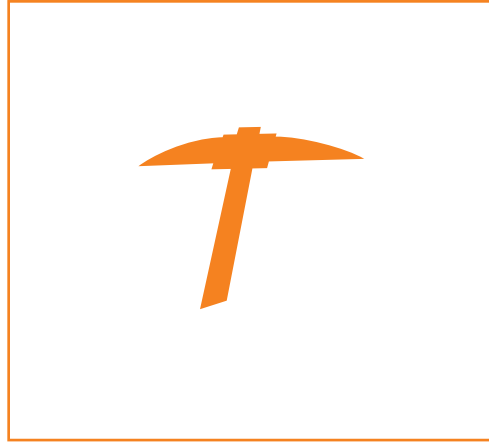
Being a scholarship recipient for both my undergraduate and graduate degree, I definitely feel a big responsibility to give back. As a proud UTEP alumni, it is my plan to give back to the community and one day provide support to a scholarship recipient like myself.

### How would you describe your experience in the MAcc program so far?

My experience in the MAcc program has been great. The curriculum and professors have all contributed to what I believe has been a very thorough and complete program. The MAcc program has not only made me more prepared for the accounting profession, but has helped me get closer to my career goals.

### What accounting business topics interest you the most?

Out of all the branches in tax, tax accounting interests me most. Although tax accounting can be demanding, it's ever-changing nature challenges me to continuously improve and apply my motto of "kaizen" ["change for the better"]. Professors Robertson, Ehrlich, and Ihorn all cultivated my interest in tax accounting. Their teachings and lessons opened my mind to advanced concepts and inspired me to continue growing as a young accounting professional.



## **Alondra Murillo**

**SANDY TYLER  
ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP  
IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

### **What drew you to the MAcc program?**

I've wanted to enroll in a MAcc program for long time because I sitting for the CPA exam has long been a career goal. Completing the program meets requirements allowing me to take the exam. That certification will open many doors for me to continue growing in the accounting field.

### **How would you describe your experience in the MAcc program so far?**

I was able to take only two "normal" classes before the COVID pandemic arrived and now I am following the online classes. So far, it's been a good experience; I am very proud to belong to an institution that rapidly responded and adapted to new situations.

### **What inspires you to succeed?**

My family is my biggest inspiration to succeed; my mother taught me to be strong and never give up. I also want to show my three kids that if you work hard, your dreams become reality.

## **Myrthala Ramirez**

**CARDWELL FAMILY GRADUATE  
FELLOWS PROGRAM IN BUSINESS**

### **How would you describe your educational and professional career?**

My college career has been great. I got my bachelor's here at UTEP, which opened the door for me to work for El Paso Electric for 3 years; which has been a great professional experience. Now I am on my last semester of the MAcc and I know this will open more doors. It also puts me on track to take the CPA exam.

### **What inspires you to succeed?**

First, I am a single mother of two beautiful children, and they inspire me to do better every day. Second, I was born in Mexico City and moved to the U.S. when I was 7 years old. I still have relatives in Mexico, seeing and it drives me to succeed so I can be an inspiration to them.

### **How does this scholarship help motivate you to complete the program?**

This scholarship is a deep motivator for me to complete the program and find success, so I can be able to give back to the community that nurtured my success. If I'm able to bless others in the future like I have been blessed with this scholarship now, I will be very proud.

## **Andrea Saenz**

**SANDY TYLER ENDOWED  
FELLOWSHIP IN BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION**

### **Why do you feel it's important for individuals or businesses to contribute to scholarship opportunities for students?**

I believe it is always better to give than to receive. I am a testament to the power of a scholarship in the life of a student and the way that these funds help to alleviate some of the cost of higher education. I would encourage every individual and business with the available resources to give back when they can since it empowers their workforce and communities in the end.

### **What undergraduate professional development workshops were beneficial to you?**

I attended as many workshops that were connected to public speaking and communication, like the elevator pitch. Those were my favorite workshops, since that's an area I needed to develop personally. The practical tips that I learned there continue to help me to this day.

### **How does this scholarship help motivate you to complete the program?**

In some way, this scholarship has validated all of my efforts and hard work that I have put into my graduate school career. I'm entering the last stretch of classes, and those always seem to be the most difficult ones. Receiving this scholarship is a powerful motivator to finish strong.



# MAcc TEACHING AWARD WINNERS

SUMMER 2020

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**Mr. Sean Ihorn**  
*Teaching Excellence Award*

FALL 2020

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**Ms. Sarah Robertson**  
*Teaching Excellence Award*



**Dr. Rebeca Perez**  
*Teaching Excellence Award*

I N M E M O R I A M

**PEETER KIRS, Ph.D.**  
PROFESSOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS



OCTOBER 7, 1950 – DECEMBER 3, 2020

"Professor Kirs was a good colleague and department faculty, trusted mentor of members of the Association of Information Technology Professionals. He was able to smile even in difficult situations, and his humble and quiet demeanor will be sincerely missed."

*Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D.*  
*Department Chair*

"Professor Kirs was a great friend and colleague of several of the faculty members at the University. He was a pleasant and humorous person who always had good and positive things to say about people. He had a passion for teaching and research. His students were his top priority. One of his hobbies was reading about international issues and events, which made him very knowledgeable and current on practically every nation. He was simple, unassuming, and easy to relate with. He was highly respected and admired by experts in his field because of the quality and impact of his publications. He is survived by his wife, Andrea; elder brother, Jury; and nieces and nephews."

*Godwin Udo, Ph.D.*  
*Professor of Information Systems*

"I used to go with Peeter almost every Friday to Mesa Street Grill. Peeter used to call this place as his 'second office.' There we used to sit and chat about almost everything. I will miss him for these discussions. Peeter was very polite and friendly."

*Kallol Bagchi, Ph.D.*  
*Professor of Information Systems*

"I had the privilege to assist Professor Kirs during the Fall 2020 semester with his courses. During this past semester, Dr. Kirs and I were able to establish an amicable relationship since we would talk almost every day regarding updates and daily rundowns for his courses. Despite the challenges Dr. Kirs faced this semester, he never stopped caring about his students' learning. He will be dearly missed at the department."

*Frank Espino*  
*Teaching Assistant at the Accounting and Information Systems Department*