

Fogelman College of Business at U of M implementing a winning business model

By James Dowd – Saturday, April 20, 2013



Photos by Brandon Dill/Special to The Commercial Appeal University of Memphis student Daniel Spencer (right) laughs with Aarica Clark Words as they compete in a hula-hoop competition during the annual Fogelman Promise Day. The event is run by the Fogelman College of Business and Economics, which has built a strong reputation under Dean Dr. Rajiv Grover.



PHOTO BY BRANDON DILL

U of M student George Johnson signs the "Fogelman Promise" banner, a code of professional conduct, during Fogelman Promise Day at the school. The FCBE is building a more modern curriculum to keep pace.

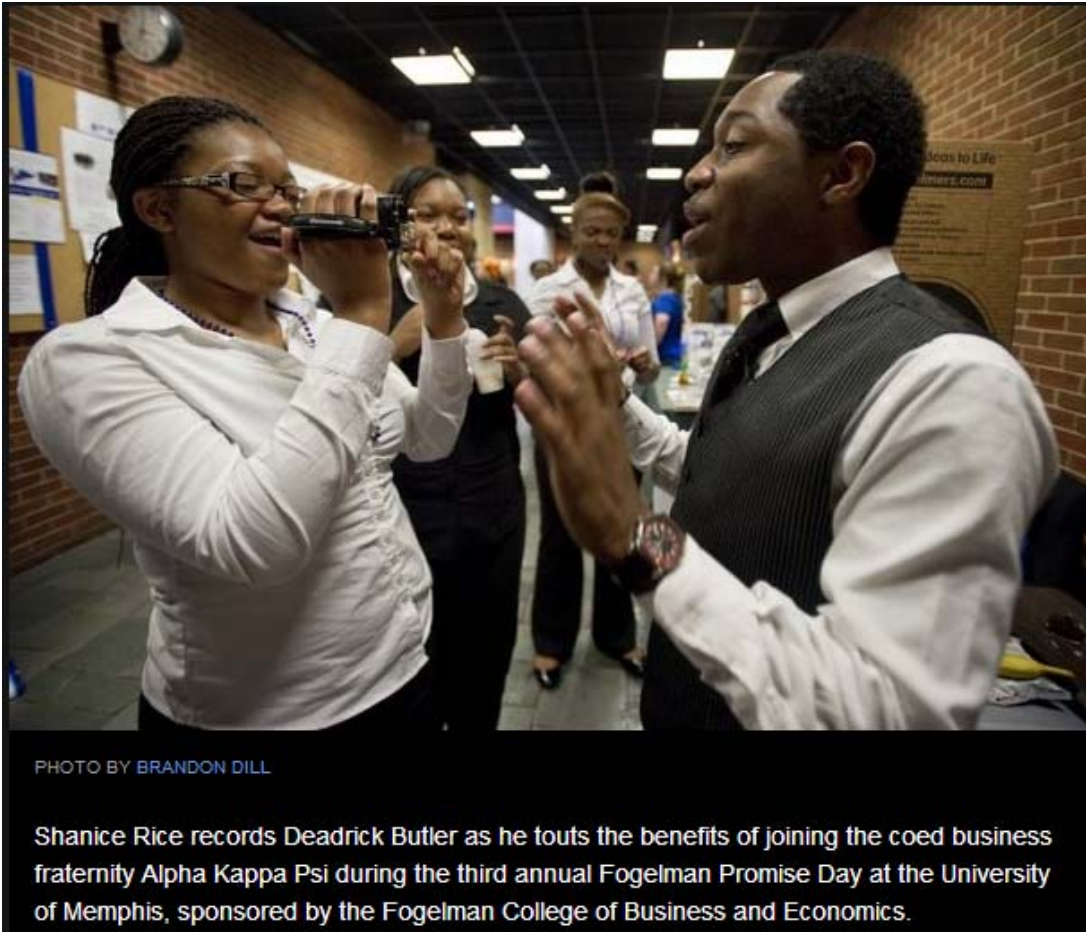


PHOTO BY BRANDON DILL

Shanice Rice records Deadrick Butler as he touts the benefits of joining the coed business fraternity Alpha Kappa Psi during the third annual Fogelman Promise Day at the University of Memphis, sponsored by the Fogelman College of Business and Economics.

Surveying the shifting sea of faces celebrating the recent Fogelman Promise Day at the University of Memphis — more than 2,000 students participated in the third annual event — Dr. Rajiv Grover reflected on the evolving model of higher education to address 21st-century needs with 21st-century methods.

“Before, there was this mindset that every student who wanted to get a business degree had to take a lot of prerequisite courses and follow a path that was largely academic training when in fact very few of the students were preparing for academic careers,” said Grover, dean of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics.

“We had all these requirements in areas such as economics, say, that would have been appropriate for a student who wanted to earn a Ph.D. in economics but had little relevance for someone who wanted to earn an MBA and go to work in a corporate setting. We’re changing all that.”

In fact, Grover has changed a lot at FCBE since he became dean on Aug. 1, 2007. As head of the school that offers the largest business program in the Memphis metro area, with a combined enrollment that has grown to about 3,200

undergraduate and graduate students, Grover has worked to boost community and corporate support and build the school's reputation.

One way he's done that is by eliminating some barriers — such as those pesky course requirements — for students interested in MBA programs.

“We've revamped the curriculum and eliminated the cookie-cutter model that made our MBA program look like every other program offered by every other school in the country and didn't offer anything distinctive,” Grover said. “We embrace diversity. If you're an English major or studied math or medicine, you can earn a business degree without wasting time on some courses that, in all honesty, you probably will not put to use. Our degrees are functional.”

Toward that end, Grover has implemented specialized MBA degrees in areas such as entrepreneurship and pharmacy management, and launched an online program offering a professional MBA degree. The online MBA was recently ranked No. 16 on the list of top 25 such programs in the country by BusinessMBA.org and it earned a No. 24 ranking on the GetEducated.com “Best Buy” list.

The school's honor program, all but defunct four years ago, has soared from zero students to more than 200. And Grover plans to continue that upward trajectory.

Alumni, community and corporate giving is also on the rise, with the school receiving more than \$7 million in donations over the last few years. And that's happened despite the presence of only one dedicated development officer and a single marketing staffer.

Recently, Grover stepped aside amid the Fogelman Promise Day for an interview in which he described the progress made by the school. Promise Day, an annual celebration of the business school's programs, allows students to mingle with faculty and learn about the business college's offerings.

“We're doing a lot with a little, steadily increasing our presence and promoting our brand,” Grover said. “The key is to do it in a way that resonates and is truthful. We're not just saying how great we are, we're delivering on promises and people see that and that makes them more excited about supporting our mission.”

One big promise Grover helped the school fulfill was receiving its reaccreditation.

In 2001, FCBE received notice that its accreditation was in jeopardy, in part for practices such as offering dozens of classes taught by adjunct faculty at off-campus locations. Only about one-third of its undergraduate courses were taught by faculty holding doctorates in their fields and there were concerns about outdated curriculum content and low admission standards.

The school was put on notice and former Dean John Pepin and FCBE leaders updated the school's mission, revised its programs and increased faculty. Before 18 months had passed, the college had been reaccredited, a full year ahead of schedule.

Grover has continued that emphasis on increasing quality educational offerings, securing FCBE accreditation in 2011, and feels confident that the next accreditation decision in 2016 will be equally successful.

"The last few years have been exciting and we're on a positive path," Grover said. "There is still much we have to do, but we're definitely in better shape than we were."

Bill Watkins, of CPA firm Watkins Uiberall, agreed.

"There was a time when things were in disarray, but the school has moved beyond that," Watkins said. "Fogelman is at a better place than it's been in decades. People are really taking notice."

The school's undergraduate business program was ranked among the top 100 in the nation by U.S. World and Report in 2011 and an increased commitment to recruiting top faculty and promoting research will help FCBE improve its reputation, Grover said.

Dr. Jasbir Dhaliwal, associate dean for academic programs at FCBE, appreciates the concentrated effort.

"Looking ahead, we need to engage in higher levels of research to gain greater national prominence," Dhaliwal said. "We're rewarding faculty more and placing a premium on creating the best quality educational opportunities possible."

Assisting in that effort is George Johnson, president of BJB Administrative Services and a 1970 graduate of then-Memphis State University, who recently pledged

\$875,000 to the school that will be used in part to offer financial incentives to faculty members who publish in top-tier research journals.

“The better faculty we have, the better students we’ll produce and the better standing the school will have locally, regionally and nationally,” Johnson said.

“The school is growing and succeeding and proving to be a wonderful resource for this community. It’s something that we should support and be proud of.”