

# FULL IMMERSION

2024 Impact Report



SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL | BOSTON

Sawyer Business School students take part in service-learning projects with a wide range of nonprofit community partners. Here, Mabasa Masunungure, in our entrepreneurship course Green Sustainable Business, works in one of Eastie Farm’s community gardens in East Boston.



**The Sawyer Business School is the only business school in the United States that holds all three of these accreditations:**



ON THE COVER: A jubilant crowd cheered on the Boston Celtics, who celebrated their 18th World Championship with a duck boat parade through downtown Boston—and past Suffolk University’s massive “Celtics Pride” banner. Suffolk partnered with the Celtics in 2023. Photo by Michael J. Clarke

## Students Living Their Values

Financial security matters to today's young people, but so does societal impact. Generation Z wants to do good with their work—and to know their employers seek both profit and purpose.

These values align seamlessly with those of the Sawyer Business School, whose downtown Boston location places students at the center of countless service-learning opportunities.

When I became the Business School dean in 2020, service-learning was already integral to the student experience. Over the past four years, it has become a core part of our curricula. Now, service-learning is one of the three pillars of the Business School's immersive learning approach. It is a pedagogy that enables students to connect knowledge and theory to practice by working on a real, community-identified need, combined with reflection in a structured learning environment.

Through partnerships with some of the 34,000 nonprofit organizations based in Massachusetts, our students have participated in a variety of direct, indirect, research-based, and advocacy-based projects. Learners have discovered the viability of a career in the nonprofit field while helping some amazing organizations overcome challenges and drive lasting change.

I couldn't be more pleased about the impact our service-learning program has had to date. I look forward to seeing more students developing civic knowledge and community spirit through this inspiring initiative.



Dr. Amy Zeng, Dean of Sawyer Business School,  
Suffolk University



“Service-learning enables students to become active participants in their learning and develop civic knowledge and skills.”

**Dr. Amy Zeng,**  
Dean of Sawyer Business School,  
Suffolk University

# Through its multi-year partnership with the 18-time World Champion Boston Celtics, Suffolk University's Sawyer Business School is taking immersive learning to a new level.



“ The Boston Celtics organization truly values our partnership with Suffolk University's Sawyer Business School. Executives and other employees enjoy providing students with a behind-the-scenes look at our operations and giving those pursuing a career in professional sports a competitive edge.

**Jennifer Todd**, Senior Vice President of Partnership Development, Partner Strategy, Youth Basketball, and Events, Boston Celtics



Official Partner



Suffolk's partnership with the Boston Celtics anchors the Business School's new sports management program.

# IMMERSIVE LEARNING



**Associate Dean Bicen led a team that drove a comprehensive redesign of the Sawyer Business School's first-year experience to embed immersive learning throughout the curriculum.**

“Immersive learning isn’t just about gaining real-world experience. It also creates a structured environment where students can apply interdisciplinary knowledge, reflect deeply, and become both skilled professionals and conscientious global citizens.”

**Pelin Bicen, PhD**

Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs; Professor of Marketing



# The IMMERSE Blueprint

Immersive learning has long been foundational to a Sawyer Business School education. The Business School formalized this approach with the implementation of the IMMERSE Blueprint in 2023. The framework integrates immersive learning across all curricula—including coursework, consulting projects, practicums, clinics, capstones, and student internships.

In April 2024, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business published a white paper on the IMMERSE Blueprint authored by four Business School faculty and staff.



<b>Integrative</b>	Unifies interdisciplinary principles and themes throughout academic programs
<b>Multisensory</b>	Involves different sensory modalities to maximize learning and engagement
<b>Motivational</b>	Builds experiences that inspire students to learn and solve complex issues
<b>Emotional</b>	Connects with students emotionally by encouraging them to engage in personal reflection on what matters to them and why
<b>Relevant</b>	Extends learning beyond the theoretical, emphasizing the practical application of learned skills to the problems our key stakeholders experience
<b>Synergistic</b>	Creates interactive environments for team-based collaboration and ongoing engagement with important constituencies
<b>Experiential</b>	Implements the principles of experiential (hands-on, real-world) learning in multiple teaching contexts

# Transforming the First-Year Experience



“Immersive learning creates multiple touch points so that students can make use of these concepts in a real-world context.

**Russell Seidle, MBA, PhD**

Associate Professor of Strategy and International Business

Prior to the 2023–24 academic year, the Sawyer Business School overhauled the first-year experience for undergraduate students. Its goal was to give learners a strong business foundation and instill a sense of belonging to help them excel throughout their four years at Suffolk.

The revised first-year experience includes extracurricular activities as well as four foundational courses that:

- Build awareness of campus resources and services that aid in a successful college experience and embed in learners a sense of ownership of their academic path.
- Explore the life cycle, dynamic competition, stakeholders, the role of technology, and other foundational concepts in business with a real-time client project.
- Examine team dynamics—what makes teams succeed or fail and how to work effectively in a team environment.
- Foster the ability to incorporate data along with critical reading, editing, presentation, and other skills necessary for effective business communication.
- Challenge learners to solve business problems critically and creatively through real-time client projects.

“Developing an appreciation for academic concepts is only the beginning,” says Russell Seidle, MBA, PhD, associate professor of strategy and international business. “Immersive learning creates multiple touch points between theory and business practice so that students can make effective use of these concepts in a real-world context.”





## SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

**1,720**  
Undergraduates

**707**  
Graduates

**28%**  
International  
Students

**101**  
Countries  
Represented

**33%**  
of Undergraduate  
Students Are  
First-Generation  
College Students

**40%**  
Domestic  
Students of Color

**36,000+** Alumni from **128** Countries

*Note: Reflects most recent data available as of August 2024.*

## How Social Entrepreneurship Can Drive Both Profits and Meaningful Change

Along with the *Boston Business Journal*, the Sawyer Business School cohosted “Business With Purpose: Beyond the Balance Sheet,” at which panelists from for-profit and nonprofit organizations discussed how to advance business initiatives positively affecting society.

“We all have a shared responsibility to create the world we want to live in,” says Tracy Porter, deputy general counsel at the real estate investment trust Healthpeak Properties. “And the more we can have these conversations and make the connections across those partnerships, that’s the way forward.”



“The Center for Entrepreneurship operates the Suffolk Consulting Clinic, which provides consulting services to a wide range of businesses in the Boston area. Through the new Suffolk Entrepreneurship and Educational Development Collaborative, the clinic will be offering services at little or no charge to minority, female, and low-access entrepreneurs.

**Chaim Letwin, Esq, PhD**  
Carol Sawyer Parks Endowed Chair; Associate Chair of  
Entrepreneurship; Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship



## Cultivating Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs While Giving Back

The Center for Entrepreneurship brings together students, alums, and business professionals with a focus on innovation, value creation, and doing good for the Greater Boston community.

In 2022, as part of its effort to help local under-resourced communities, the center debuted Becoming Entrepreneurial. This free summer program introduces high school students to the world of entrepreneurship. Besides earning college credit, students learn from guest speakers who are successful entrepreneurs, tour local businesses, and craft elevator pitches for new product or service ideas.

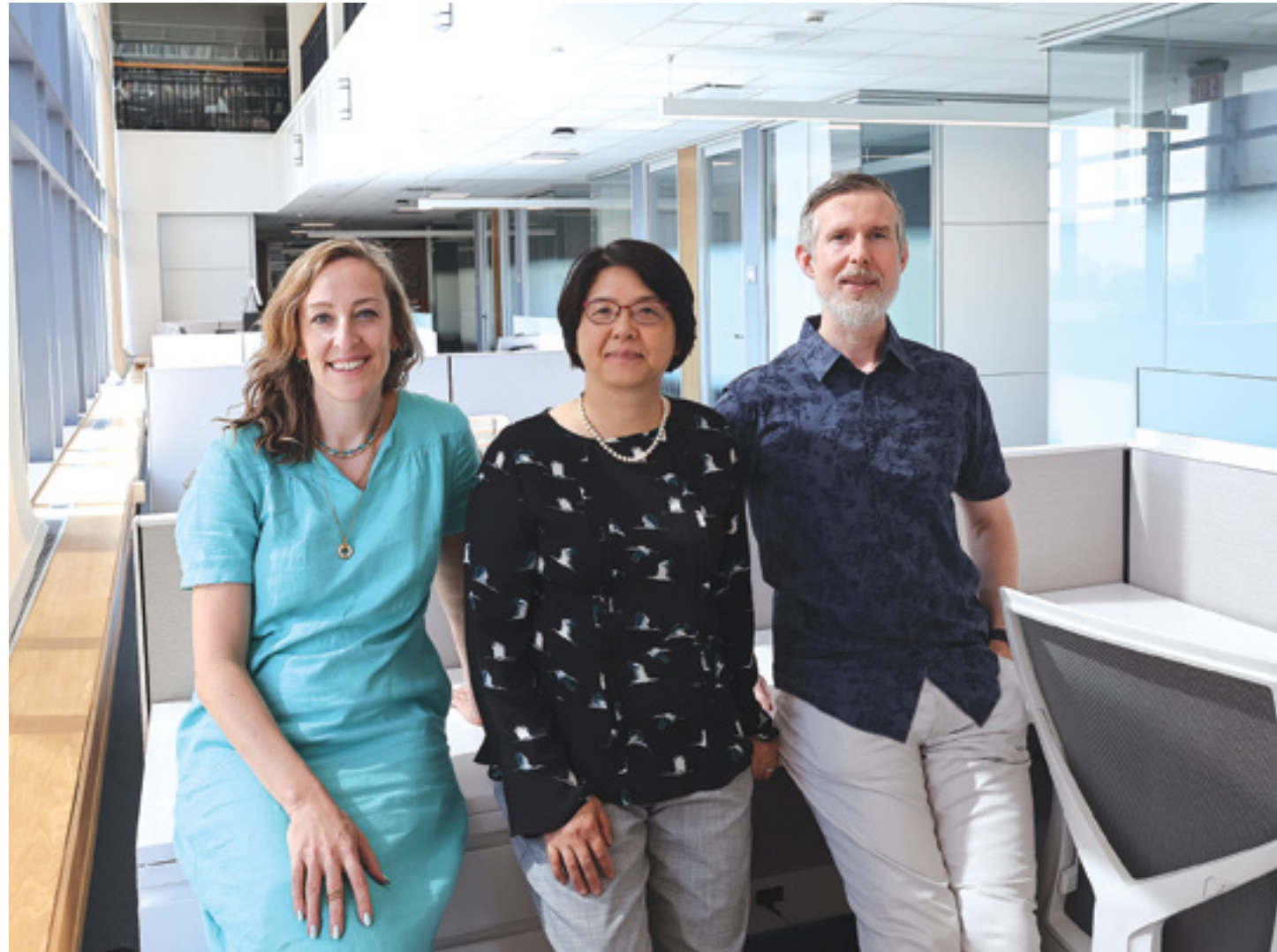
The Sawyer Business School and business sponsor Fetch collaborated to add new modules on artificial intelligence in 2024. “Learning AI is going to be crucial for the future, especially when it comes to incorporating ideas for business,” says one Becoming Entrepreneurial student.

The Center also hosts a number of competitions to help startup-minded Suffolk students refine their pitch skills and see the possibilities of entrepreneurship. The Fall Intellectual Property Pitch Competition introduces learners to the legal intricacies of protecting novel business ideas. Meanwhile, in the Spring \$10K Pitch Competition, learners pitch new products or services to a judging panel composed of Suffolk alums.

## Massachusetts Gaming Commission Bets on Suffolk

“It’s rare to have students involved in both the design and execution of business research projects, as opposed to being subjects of surveys. But we think engaging student community members will emphasize the social-impact dynamic of the study.

**Jane Zhu, PhD**  
Chair and Professor of  
Marketing; Director of  
International Engagement



Mujde Yuksel, Jane Zhu, and Andrew Smith are principal investigators of the study.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) regulates the casino, horse racing, and sports wagering industries while minimizing potential negative consequences of expanded gaming. In May 2024, the MGC awarded a \$138,000 grant to three Sawyer Business School faculty members to explore a pressing issue: the impact of sports betting advertising on college-aged students. Principal investigators include Marketing Department Chair Jane Zhu as well as Andrew Smith and Mujde Yuksel, both associate professors of marketing.

As part of this study, college students across Massachusetts, including several Suffolk students, will be recruited to conduct research this fall. Next year, they will interview their peers about their experiences with sports betting and related advertising.



“It’s rare to have students involved in both the design and execution of business research projects, as opposed to simply being subjects,” says lead researcher Zhu. “But we think engaging student community members will emphasize the social-impact dynamic of the study.”

### **Integrating the Professional and the Academic**

Before becoming a professor, Smith worked at an advertising research firm studying the design and impact of advertising on consumers. “With this project, I’m applying my expertise to understand how sports betting companies are targeting young people in their advertising and how these efforts are influencing social behavior,” he says. “There’s a clear integration of the professional and the academic.”

After completing the research, the Suffolk students will produce social media videos to help their peers make better decisions about sports gambling. The study’s findings could affect the MGC’s future policy decisions as well.

“We’ll develop recommendations to inform state policy on sports betting advertising regulations and assist college health and wellness centers in supporting students,” Yuksel says. “That’s exciting. It makes for meaningful work.”



The Sawyer Business School has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* for excellence in its undergraduate business, online MBA, public affairs, and healthcare management programs.

# The Next Generation of Change Agents

Every year, Suffolk celebrates alums who, within 10 years of graduating, are making major contributions in their field and in the community. These three Sawyer Business School alums were honorees at the University's 2024 10 Under 10 Recognition Night.



## **Xin Yi Yap, BSBA '21**

*Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Product Manager, Aperian / platform for  
cross-cultural training and learning content*

"It's my personal belief that I will never be self-made. I am community-made," says Yap, a first-generation graduate from Singapore. She thanks the leaders and staff of Suffolk's Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion, "who took in an unknowing international student and gave her a home and a chosen family. Without all of you, there wouldn't be a *me*."



## **Matheus Fonseca, BSBA '23**

*Cofounder and CEO, Moonsworth /  
game-development company*

"All of my classmates, all of my professors, the deans, the leadership of the Business School have truly shaped who I am today," says Fonseca, a Brazilian native who came to the United States at age 5 as an undocumented immigrant and later gained Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status. "And I was able to apply so many things that I learned here at Suffolk to my business."



## **Lidia Zayas, BSBA '15**

*Assistant Director of Programs,  
Red Sox Foundation / official charity  
of the Boston Red Sox*

"Throughout my journey at Suffolk, I realized that the community was not just something I wanted to do on the side," says Zayas, who interned with the Red Sox Foundation, the team's official charity, while at the Business School. "I really had to make sure that it was infused in my day-to-day life."

“Suffolk’s unwavering commitment to entrepreneurship education makes it the ideal partner for Startup Boston Week. The university provides a central gathering place for the event, and its investment of time and energy has been transformative for our team and attendees alike. We’re ecstatic to partner with Suffolk to foster a thriving startup community in Boston.

**Stephanie Roulic**  
Founder and CEO, Startup Boston

## The Hub of Boston’s Startup Scene

2024 marked the second straight year that Suffolk hosted Startup Boston Week (SBW). The nonprofit Startup Boston organizes this annual five-day event, which draws thousands of innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, and influencers to network with and learn from key players in New England’s startup community.

Besides taking in their choice of 109 sessions at Suffolk, SBW attendees enjoyed easy access to tours of local startups and experienced firsthand the vibrancy of downtown Boston. “When people think about entrepreneurship in Boston, we want Suffolk to be the first place that comes to mind,” says Professor Chaim Letwin.

### Connecting Students With Alums

Sawyer Business School students as well as alums thriving in a variety of industries and functional areas had a strong presence at SBW 2024. As co-lead of the Startup Boston organizing team’s student track, Courage Chakanza, MSF/MSBA ’25, helped develop engaging programming to support student entrepreneurs.

“It was rewarding to see our ideas come to life through meticulous planning and teamwork,” Chakanza says. “The role taught me the importance of persistence and adaptability, proving that with dedication, successful outcomes are within reach.”





Rwandan fishermen paddle their boats across Lake Kivu.

## Preparing Students To Thrive In a Global Marketplace

Global Travel Seminars enable Sawyer Business School students to acquire international skills and competencies essential for success in today's interconnected world. These seven- to 10-day courses have taken our students to countries in North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. In Rwanda, students had a one-of-a-kind experience investigating the economics of water.



Professor Jonathan Houghton served as faculty leader on the trip.

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE BY BENJAMIN K. HALL



# Tackling Wicked Global Problems

Some problems are so complex that no perfect solution exists. The best you can do is devise innovative, systems thinking–based approaches that address various stakeholders’ issues to drive some degree of improvement for all.

Such thorny challenges are the focus of Tackling Wicked Global Problems, a Sawyer Business School course that debuted in the 2023–24 academic year. Students worked on an urgent issue impacting Boston and other cities worldwide: transportation (including its associated challenges, such as traffic congestion, unequal access, and environmental effects).

“Students learn how to look at real-world problems holistically and with an eye toward long-term ramifications, not just the immediate payoff,” says Arkapravo Sarkar, PhD, an assistant professor of marketing who teaches Tackling Wicked Global Problems. “They also gain valuable experience collaborating in a group setting and incorporating everybody’s views into the solution. Skills like these set learners up for success no matter what they do after graduation.”

This course’s theme for the 2024–25 academic year is global food systems.



# Elevating Career-Readiness From Day One

The Center for Career Equity, Development & Success is deeply integrated into the Suffolk educational experience.

Career Center counselors team with faculty to enhance career-readiness by embedding center services into coursework and extracurricular activities. For example, a partnership with Skip Perham, director of the sports management program, brought Boston Celtics representatives to campus for a well-attended Employer Coffee Chat event in October 2023.

“Our team’s support is more than transactional—it’s developmental,” says Dave Merry, associate provost and executive director of the Career Center. “We want to engage every student early and often throughout their time at Suffolk with a career-focused partnership built to last.”



**Students connect with recruiters from the Boston Celtics organization about job and internship opportunities during one of the Career Center's weekly Employer Coffee Chats.**

CURRENT EMPLOYERS OF SUFFOLK GRADUATES INCLUDE:



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.



**97%**  
of Sawyer Business School  
Graduates Are Employed or  
Earning Another Degree  
Within 12 Months

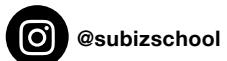
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VIDEO: SEE HOW  
WE DO BUSINESS

FOLLOW THE SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL



Produced by OMC084224

