THE WIDE-OPEN WORLD OF RETAIL
Heinze began working for World Wide Apparel Resources in New York this past summer. The Center for Retailing Excellence has a host of “hands-on” student success stories. “One of our goals is to help students experience real-world scenarios that illustrate the many sides of retailing,” said Claudia Mobley, director of the Center. “We show them the opportunities for rewarding careers.”

**SHATTERING A MYTH**

The Center debunks the myth that all retail jobs consist of stocking shelves and ringing cash registers. A 2002 Chain Store Age article stated, “The retail sector often attracts talent in spite of, not because of, its merit as a career choice. The retail industry frequently suffers from an image of low pay and long hours that prompts students, even those who commit themselves to retail studies in school, to look elsewhere for a career.”

“We are delighted when one of our students, such as Dirk Heinze, discovers different careers in the industry — whether that is working for a retailer or a retail vendor,” Mobley said. “From planning, merchandising, trendsetting, e-commerce, logistics, personnel management, information systems, marketing research, and advertising — you name the discipline and the retail industry needs talent. Through a number of hands-on programs and partnerships, students see retailing as high-tech and innovative and much more complex, challenging and exciting than they thought. At the same time, we are able to provide a pool of experienced graduates for our sponsoring companies as well as for other retailers and vendors.”

**A PLACE TO GROW**

“The retail industry is growing, and needs developing leadership skills to support that growth,” added Mobley. With recently renewed consumer enthusiasm, retail is enjoying strong sales. For May 2004, J.C. Penney Company Inc. enjoyed a 9.1 percent increase in sales over May 2003. Wal-Mart reported a 14.2 percent increase in net sales for the first quarter, ending April 30, over the previous year. Even-end Neiman Marcus Group’s net income surged in a 67 percent increase in its fiscal third quarter with a 21 percent rise in revenue as of May 1, 2004.

**SEEING THE WORLD**

Daniel Hazman, BSBA ’04, business management associate with General Mills in Minneapolis, Minn., received several Center for Retailing Excellence scholarships. “They have helped me tremendously with my study abroad endeavors in Spain and Brazil — where I spent a
total of two years,” he said. “These experiences have broadened my horizons in terms of languages, cultures, and business practices.”

Hazman was an international economics major with minors in Latin American studies, Spanish, and math. “The Walton College has equipped me with the tools that I need to succeed in today’s business world,” he added. “As a result of my classroom learning and extracurricular involvement, I have learned the value of quick, precise thinking and generating creative, customized solutions to each obstacle.” His job now includes developing customized programs and managing these accounts of companies such as Wal-Mart and Target.

DEVELOPING MARKETING EXPERTISE

Sarah Barnett, BSBA ’03, who is now the in-store acquisition manager for General Electric Consumer Finance in Bentonville, Ark., benefited in several ways from the Center for Retailing Excellence. As a leader in the American Marketing Association, she persuaded the Center to sponsor five students to attend the national conference. She attended an advertising meeting at the Wal-Mart home office through the Center’s sponsorship. “Three undergraduate students were able to attend and meet with Bob Connolly and his team to review TV ads targeted at the African American population,” she said. “This was a wonderful experience and gave me insight to what it would be like to work or partner with Wal-Mart.”

Barnett is now on GE’s team that manages the Wal-Mart credit card account. “My job responsibilities consist of managing all collateral for the Wal-Mart credit card and the inventory of signage elements in the stores and gas stations,” she said. “I also work with Wal-Mart to create new signage elements and serve as liaison between the marketing team and the field sales team.”

IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

The Center sponsored three Walton College students in the Wal-Mart Pre-Internship Program during the 2004 spring break. The students received an overview of the merchandising division and were introduced to the Wal-Mart culture. They toured the distribution center, test labs, and layout room and were given an overview of Wal-Mart’s RetailLink system.

“I really was impressed with global procurement, merchandising logistics, new product development, and all the merchandising meetings,” student Dacia Boehmler commented. “I loved working in a store for a day. I really enjoyed visiting with buyer Melissa Phillips about her job as a buyer and making career decisions as a woman. It was life-changing and enlightening stuff; it was just a terrific opportunity.”

RECRUITING STUDENTS

Carlito Reyes, BSBA ’03, who is now a business management associate with the General Mills Bentonville office, has enjoyed returning to campus to recruit at the Center’s Retail Rush career fair. “I think that having recent grads helps put students at ease. I’ve realized that they are less intimidated by peers and feel more comfortable to interact with the recruiter,” Reyes explained. Of his time at the Walton College, he said, “I was fortunate to have great teachers. They helped prepare me for my position in many ways — most importantly, critical thinking and team work.”
AT A GLANCE

CENTER FOR RETAILING EXCELLENCE

The field of retailing is a large and dynamic industry, requiring a constant supply of talented graduates. The Walton College Center for Retailing Excellence focuses on relevant research, executive education and the development of students as future leaders in the retailing industry. The Center was established in 1998 as part of a $50 million endowment from the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation. Through strong partnerships with the retail and supplier industries, the Center seeks to become one of the foremost nationally acclaimed centers for retail studies. With these links to the retailing industry, the Center benefits students and faculty as well as retailers and their suppliers.

ACNielsen
BIC
Bridgestone/Firestone
Bristol-Myers Squibb
The Coca-Cola Company
Colgate-Palmolive Company
ConAgra Frozen Foods Group
Crossmark
Energizer Holdings, Inc.
Fortune Casuals, LLC
Frito-Lay, Inc.
E. & J. Gallo Winery
General Electric
General Mills, Inc.
Novartis Corporation
Idelle Labs, Ltd
Information Resources, Inc.
Nice-Pak Products Inc.
Pepsi-Cola North America
Pfizer Inc.
Procter & Gamble
Quaker
Saatchi & Saatchi X
The Scotts Company
Sunbeam Products Inc.
Sun Microsystems
Spectra Marketing Systems, Inc.
The J. M. Smucker Company
SVI
VF Jeanswear
Walgreen Co.
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

CLAUDIA MOBLEY
Director
PAMELA STYLES
Assistant Director

“From planning, merchandising, trendsetting, e-commerce, logistics, personnel management, information systems, marketing research, and advertising — you name the business discipline and the retail industry needs talent.”

COLLABORATION PAYS OFF

“I have to give credit to our partnerships with our sponsoring companies (See box on this page.),” Mobley said. “These relationships have created such a variety of ‘experiential learning’ opportunities for our students. For instance, Bridgestone/Firestone’s Vice President of Human Resources Ron Tepner was one of our first board members and biggest supporters. He recruited Will Helton, BSBA ‘02, at a career fair for an internship in one of its Little Rock stores — while Helton was in school. When Will graduated he went to work for Bridgestone/Firestone in Dallas where he became the top sales person, was promoted several times and is now manager of the Allen, Texas store,” Mobley said. Helton aspires to be an assistant district manager. He has returned to campus several times to talk to students in the classroom and to help recruit for the company at Retail Rush.

“I like to talk with the students about planning ahead for a career,” Helton said. “There is so much opportunity out there that they don’t realize.” He encourages them to get internships to explore the job market.

“Will is one of our many success stories. He is so passionate about helping students that the Bridgestone/Firestone president recently flew him to Chicago to talk to all of the company’s interns,” Mobley added.

Helton said, “I’m excited about a long-term career with Bridgestone/Firestone. Now I’d like to see more ‘Razorbacks’ working for the company.”

CARLITO REYES

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What was it like to have an executive from the world’s largest corporation teach your class? Ask senior Brandon Campbell, a marketing major from Farmington, Ark.

"Mr. Connolly has the most extensive collection of knowledge, intellect and experiences of anyone that I have ever known," Campbell said. "For any occasion, he had an example that made sense. It is obvious that he loves what he does and he loves having an impact on the lives of those around him."

Bob Connolly, executive vice president of marketing and consumer communications for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Bentonville, Ark., brought practical experience into the Walton College senior-level marketing honors colloquium. Connolly is responsible for overseeing Wal-Mart’s international marketing, advertising and consumer research programs. Tom Jensen, BA ’77, MA ’80 and PhD ’82, Wal-Mart Lecturer in Retailing and chair of the marketing and logistics department, co-taught the course last fall.

"Bob is chair of our executive advisory board, which originated the idea of having an executive-in-residence from the board teach a class," said Claudia Mobley, managing director of the Center for Retailing Excellence. "He took the lead in hopes that others would volunteer."

Jensen said, "Bob is noted for being a super mentor within Wal-Mart, so volunteering his time in the classroom was a natural progression."

Connolly said, "Watching these mature students has been very stimulating. It was a great two-way experience. As they developed an increasing comfort level with me, they did not hesitate to tell me what they thought."

Mobley and Jensen conceived the idea of "Post-its® from an Executive." They asked him to make notes at work about his current issues and bring them to discuss with the class.

Connolly said, "I got their input and actually used some of their comments. Their youth and intellect have been invaluable."

Connolly assigned the students a real branding project for Wal-Mart for a specific area of the store. They had access to Wal-Mart’s advertising agencies, buyers, vendors, and consultants to create their proposals. The class made a final presentation to a panel of Wal-Mart marketing managers.

"Mr. Connolly helped me see the importance of thinking outside of the box," said Marlena Sweeney, a senior from Monett, Mo. "Making decisions are an important part of everyday business, and they have to be consistent with the company’s desired image."

Amy Brewster, a senior from Fort Smith, Ark., said, "Dr. Jensen would also expound on ideas that Mr. Connolly presented." Adrienne Jung, a senior from Van Buren, added: "Dr. Jensen taught us the underlying themes while Mr. Connolly could show us how they're actually used. They helped us think like business people, not students."

Connolly reflected on his experience, "I was overwhelmed by the amount of work that Dr. Jensen puts in to teach the class. I appreciated the students’ level of participation. The Walton College has done a good job of preparing these students for the world of business."

Don Bland, vice president of the International Division, Wal-Mart, is teaching the fall 2004 marketing honors colloquium.