Distinguished speakers

Bringing nationally recognized personalities to the classroom helps students better understand the ingredients of success. This past year, Walton College students heard a dynamic group of outstanding speakers.

ON JULY 20, 1969, Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. On April 30, 2002, he walked into the Walton College Reynolds Center to deliver the Rockefeller Distinguished Lecture. Aldrin also held an informal discussion with business and engineering students while on campus. While Aldrin made history and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Gemini and Apollo astronaut is a futurist and advocate of privatization, space tourism and reusable rockets. President Bush recently appointed him to head the federal Commission on the Future of the U.S. Aerospace Industry. His nonprofit ShareSpace Foundation is developing a study on the impact of space tourism on long-range space exploration, and his think-tank, Starcraft Boosters, is working on rocket designs. Aldrin said, “Three decades after the landing, people still feel compelled to tell me where they were that day.”

THE WALTON COLLEGE CENTER for Retailing Excellence sponsored Ron Hutchinson’s presentation to a record crowd of students, faculty and members of the business community. His message revolved around the passion that Harley-Davidson has for its products and for relationships with its customers and the company’s desire to make the world better. He said, “Passion is the most important element of success in business.” Hutchinson has been there through the transformation of the company’s reputation. Hutchinson was instrumental in developing the structure, process and statistical methods that empowered Harley-Davidson’s operators and suppliers in the quality revolution of the 1980s and the customer loyalty evolution of the 1990s. Harley-Davidson is famous for its customer loyalty, which continually reinforces through personal relationships, cutting-edge retail shops and special events.

VETERAN MUSIC MANAGER JIM HALSEY spoke to UA business and music students about “How to Make It in The Music Business” in April. Halsey has spent the last 50 years serving as manager, agent and advisor to some of the biggest stars in the music business — Reba McEntire, Roy Clark, Oak Ridge Boys, Dwight Yoakam, Tammy Wynette, The Judds, Minnie Pearl, Hank Thompson, Wanda Jackson, Clint Black, Kentucky Headhunters, Waylon Jennings, James Brown, Merle Haggard, Ronnie Milsap, Michael Martin Murphy, Freddie Fender, Mel Tillis, and Roy Orbison. He said, “There are worlds of opportunities to get into the music business. The first thing you have to do is find out about the business and understand how it works. The heart and soul of the business is the artist, but it takes a team of people to make that artist a success.” Halsey now focuses his efforts on helping people be successful in the music industry with his book, How to Make it in the Music Business, co-authored with John Wooley.

Maria Johnson Rice, President and Chief Executive Officer Johnson Publishing Company, Inc.

“Now is the time to follow the words of Sam Walton: he said, ‘set high goals’ and ‘exceed expectations.’”

Maria Johnson Rice, president and chief executive officer of Johnson Publishing Company of Chicago, Ill., was the commencement speaker at the Walton College’s 75th anniversary commencement. She said, “I have special ties to Arkansas. Arkansans City is the birthplace of my father. Events he experienced there helped him become the man who founded one of the most successful publishing companies in America.” Rice’s father, John Johnson, publishes Ebony magazine, which is now celebrating its 60th year. In February 2001, he was inducted into the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame. Johnson received an honorary doctor of laws degree at the 2002 University of Arkansas commencement. Rice added, “A strong Arkansas connection that I have is the special relationship that the Johnson family and the Dillard family have had for several decades.” Dillard’s was one of the first department stores to carry Johnson Publishing’s Fashion Fair Cosmetics. Mentioning Etron and September 11, Rice said, “What’s the best you can do in what might seem like the worst of times? Should you panic about the outlook for your business future? NCP Now is the time to follow the words of Sam Walton: he said, ‘set high goals’ and ‘exceed expectations.’”

Bonnie St. John, President St. John Deane, Inc.

“Everyone needs a strong personal vision.”

BONNIE ST. JOHN, president of St. John Deane Inc., a communications consulting company, spoke to students and faculty in February. St. John is a national spokesperson for DisabledSports/USA and has been featured on NBC Nightly News as one of the five top inspirational women in the nation. Although she became an amputee at the age of five, she is an Olympic ski medalist, a Harvard honors graduate and a Rhodes Scholar. She said, “Everyone needs a strong personal vision. A personal vision means that you can see yourself in the vision. Surround yourself with people who see you achieving your vision. When you dream it, the dream will pull you forward.” She told the students that she was not extraordinary, but just an ordinary person who does extraordinary things. President Clinton appointed St. John as director for human capital issues on the National Economic Council in the White House. She is the author of Succeeding Sane: Making Room for Joy in a Crazy World.

John Tyson, Chairman, President and CEO Tyson Foods, Inc.

“This acquisition gave us the opportunity to redefine our company.”

OVER 300 WALTON COLLEGE STUDENTS had the opportunity to hear directly from the CEO about one of the most significant mergers in recent business history. John Tyson, chairman, president and CEO, explained the business reasons why Tyson Foods acquired the beef and pork processor IBP Inc. “We know that everyone doesn’t eat chicken seven days a week,” said Tyson. The IBP acquisition gave Tyson 27 percent of the country’s beef market, 23 percent of the chicken market and 19 percent of the pork market. Tyson added, “This acquisition gave us the opportunity to redefine our company. We have a responsibility to our shareholders to grow the business. This acquisition helps us organize around the customers and the retail channels. By bundling all of the proteins, we are in a position to meet their needs more effectively.” He explained how the company would take advantage of the synergies to get the costs out of the system so the customers, employees and shareholders benefit. While IBP had large shares in the beef and pork markets, Tyson brought strong expertise in product development to the merger. The company projects revenues of over $25 billion.

Ron Hutchinson, Vice President Parts and Accessories, Harley-Davidson Motor Company

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Jack Stack, president and CEO SRC Holdings Corporation

“All employees should think and act like an owner.”

WHEN JACK STACK worked for International Harvester in 1979, he began practicing open-book management — a style that has everyone “thinking and acting like an owner.” Stack discussed his experiences as a manager and owner with students and faculty in October. He believes employees should be empowered to make decisions, and companies should share their financial information with all employees. Inc. magazine has recognized Stack as one of the “Entrepreneurs of the Year.” He coauthored The Great Game of Business with Bo Burlingham, describing the system of management he invented at Springfield Remanufacturing Corporation (SRC). SRC started as a small, struggling division of International Harvester (IH). In 1983, a group of supervisors and managers purchased the factory from IH. SRC has grown from 116 employees to more than 1,000 employee-owners who have helped launch 20 subsidiary companies. Stack’s daughter, Megan, is a management senior in the Walton College.

Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin, Futurist ShareSpace Foundation/StarCraft Boosters

“Three decades after the landing, people still feel compelled to tell me where they were that day.”