

# SOBEY RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

The second issue of this newsletter features some new items reflecting the requests we have received from Sobey faculty members. To introduce faculty members and their research work, we have “Faculty Corner”. For our PhD students, we have “PhD Students’ Corner”. And to share some updates on our school’s activities, we have “Sobey News”. The enhancement was possible due to generous inputs received from our faculty members. Research works reported in this issue relate to immigration, financial and sustainability reporting, AI ethics and AI use for assessing mental health, supply chain, and virtual consultation for health, reflecting the breadth of expertise hosted at our school. Reported new grant funding worth over half a million dollars. While we are pleased to showcase one of our graduating PhD students, we are also pleased to share the success of our undergraduate students and entrepreneurs and much more. This issue truly reflects the richness of our community and its contributions.

Sincerely,

Research Advancement Committee



## Items Included in This Issue

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# Sobey News

## Faculty, administration and staff

1. Congratulations to Dr. Hao (Leo) Lu on his early tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Congratulations as well to Dr. Phyo Hlaing for her tenure.
2. We are looking forward to welcoming Jocelyn Grabke, a PhD candidate at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, who is joining our Marketing & Communication Department on July 1, 2025.
3. Many thanks to the nominating committee members serving in the committees for Associate Dean, Undergraduate and Professional Graduate Programs, Associate Dean, Strategy, Community Relations & Accreditation, and MFin and MBA Program Coordinators. The positions are expected to be filled prior to July 1, 2025.
4. Our Management Department is actively engaged in filling the Steele professorship in Entrepreneurship position. The Department is also engaged in filling an indigenous faculty position.
5. Thanks to all faculty members for their support in preparing the EQUIS self assessment report. It has been completed and forwarded. Thanks as well for active participation of our faculty members in our strategic planning.
6. Congratulations to Emma Wicks on her new appointment as Senior Academic Advisor, Bachelor of Commerce.

## Events at Sobey School of Business

1. Atlantic Canada AI Summit, May 1-3, 2025 (<https://www.smu.ca/ai-summit/>). AI and Data Analytics Case Competition (on May 3rd, 2025) for High School students in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.
2. Resetting Canada's Immigration Policy and the Impact on Smaller Provinces, a session on May 15, 2025 (<https://www.smu.ca/argeiad/events.html#d.en.453403>).
3. High school co-op on AI (Spring 2025)

## Student success

1. 2025 International Business Ethics and Sustainability Case Competition (IBESCC): Robert Nolan Francis, Lydia Hui-Qi Lee, Jonzel Isaiah Robichaud-Lorde and Ashish Ganapathy Venkatasubramanian won first place in all three categories at the highly competitive competition that took place at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles between April 7 to 11, 2025. Thanks to the coaches, Dr. Amna Chalwati and Jeff Mutton, for guiding the SSB winning team.
2. CPA Nova Scotia Education Accounting Case Competition: Ashish Ganapathy, Hazza Sujeer, Olivian Sanderson, and Asmita Ale won the competition. Thanks to Jeff Mutton for coaching the team. The competition took place at Acadia University on February 28, 2025.
3. Hult Prize National Competition: Our student-led startup was named Canadian Champion at the competition held in March 2025 at McGill University. The Alaagi team is comprised of SMU students Sheheryar Khan, Gabe Martin and Vaishali Sachdeva.

# Faculty Corner



**Dr. Vasiliki Athanasakou** is a Professor of Accounting at the Sobey School of Business. She completed her PhD at the University of Manchester and joined the school in 2018 after a decade of academic tenure at the London School of Economics (UK). Before academia, she trained in Audit Assurance (Deloitte and Touche, Athens) and became ACCA qualified (Association of Certified Chartered Accountants).

*‘The Accounting Language: Moving from the game of numbers to harnessing the power of words and the depths of the human mind’.*

Dr. Vasiliki’s research journey began by investigating various dimensions of the earnings game in capital markets and has progressively evolved to unravelling the power of words (narratives) in corporate reporting. Positioned at the intersection of accounting, governance, policymaking, and capital markets, her work is largely driven by questions central to financial reporting policy and practice.

Her research portfolio has provided academia, policymakers, and market participants with novel measures for capturing and evaluating firms’ financial reporting practices—including classificatory income smoothing, earnings games, disclosure quality, strategy disclosures, and bad news withholding. These measures build on the analytical foundations of accounting, disclosure, and governance theories to leverage financial numbers, asset prices, textual analysis, and machine learning in capturing managerial intent.

Currently, her work aims to push the boundaries of corporate reporting by uncovering the economic effects of disclosure advisory services, strategy, sustainability and risk reporting. Looking ahead, she aims to inspire the reimagining corporate reporting, by delving deeper into the neurological processes that shape how accounting information is processed and reacted upon. Ultimately, her work seeks to harness the power of accounting language to drive strategic vision and unlock lasting value for organizations and capital markets.



**Dr. Hao Lu** is an assistant professor at the Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary’s University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Calgary. Dr. Lu joined academia with almost 10 years of industry experience. He holds the Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP) designation and the Canadian Risk Management (CRM) designation. Dr. Lu’s research is interdisciplinary, focusing on creating a niche theoretical angle by integrating corporate risk management into strategic management. His research interests involve corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, social entrepreneurship, business ethics, enterprise risk management, and risk management practice.

His research has been published in various reputable journals including Strategic Organization, Business & Society, Journal of Business Research, and Review of Corporate Finance. Dr. Lu is the winner of the 2019 Southern Risk and Insurance Association (SRIA) Best Paper Award, the 2013 Peter Rogers Award and the Kendra Monck Memorial Award at The Insurance Institute of Alberta. He currently holds two SSHRC grants as the primary investigator and the co-investigator. He is also a visiting scholar at the Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary.

# Faculty Corner



**Dr. Annika Voltan** joined the Department of Management effective July 1, 2024. She completed her PhD in Business Administration at SMU in 2019 and her thesis focused on entrepreneurial behaviours in social enterprises in NS, and how they contribute to organizations' social impact. Annika has experience teaching social and sustainable entrepreneurship, strategic management, business ethics, and leadership. She came to academia following a decade working as a public policy advisor on issues pertaining to environmental sustainability, including at the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

She also spent about eight years as an Executive Director in the Nova Scotia nonprofit sector, leading Inspiring Communities and Impact Organizations of NS, or IONS. Dr. Voltan is interested in applied research projects supporting leaders and organizations working to affect positive environmental and social systems change. She is particularly passionate about how interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships can offer diverse perspectives and deeper change.

Going forward, Dr. Voltan plans to conduct research about tensions that arise in organizations seeking to implement more inclusive and equitable workplace cultures. She is also the principal investigator in a study aimed at informing the Halifax Regional Municipality's approach to community engagement and is exploring research partnerships to study factors that contribute to community-led change initiatives, as well as the benefits gained by businesses incorporating sustainability efforts into their models.

# PhD Students' Corner



## **Research Highlight | Katelynn Carter-Rogers (Red River Métis) PhD Candidate in Business Administration (Management), Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's University**

**Dissertation Title: The Inclusion-Then-Diversity Concept:  
Addressing Hiring Bias, Inclusive Business Schools, and  
Sustaining Inclusion in Organizations**

Katelynn Carter-Rogers (she/her), a Red River Métis (Michif) scholar raised in Mi'kma'ki, brings lived experience, intergenerational knowledge, and a deep commitment to justice into the heart of her research. With Métis family roots in Northern Saskatchewan—including Buffalo Narrows, Ile-à-la-Crosse, La Loche, and Green Lake (Family Names: Morin, Merasty, Laliberte, & Dejarlais) —her work is grounded in both personal and community histories shaped by colonial systems, including the criminal justice system, the child welfare system, and systemic poverty. As someone who navigated educational spaces where she was often made to feel like she didn't belong, Carter-Rogers now champions inclusion as a core pillar of organizational and educational transformation.

Her dissertation, *The Inclusion-Then-Diversity Concept*, challenges the prevailing order in which diversity efforts are prioritized without first creating inclusive systems. She introduces a powerful framework for embedding inclusion as a precondition for meaningful and sustainable change across sectors. Through a manuscript-based format, the dissertation spans three interrelated studies: hiring discrimination against Indigenous men with criminal records; inclusive learning environments in business schools; and a model for sustaining inclusion in organizations. Across these chapters, Carter-Rogers argues that without deliberate, foundational work on inclusion, diversity efforts risk being performative and unsustainable.

Katelynn now serves as the educator and mentor she needed—walking beside students who are navigating systems never built for them. Her scholarship is not only intellectually rigorous; it is deeply personal, embodied, and committed to transformative change.

Her work provides both empirical evidence and conceptual tools for policymakers, educators, and organizational leaders seeking to build workplaces and learning spaces where equity is more than a checkbox. It is a call to rethink how we define and measure success in institutions by centering belonging, cultural safety, and relational accountability.

As a scholar who bridges lived experience and academic rigor, Katelynn is changing the landscape of business education. She is building space for Indigenous students and students with complex lived realities to not just enter these institutions, but to thrive, lead, and transform them from within. Katelynn has successfully defended her thesis, and will graduate May 2025.

# Peer Reviewed Journals

- Afzali, M., V. Athanasakou, and S. Terjesen. (2024). Lead Independent Directors and Internal Information Environment. *Corporate Governance: An International Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/corg.12582>
- Akbari, A.H. and H. Xiao. (2025). “Human Capital Valuation of Vulnerable Visible Minority Immigrants in Atlantic Canada during a COVID-19 Year: Evidence from a Sample of the CERB Recipients.” *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* (forthcoming).
- Athanasakou, V., & Boshanna, A. (2025). Linkage between strategy and financial performance disclosure in annual reports: A new reporting path for organizational learning. *The British Accounting Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bar.2025.101643>
- Choi, E., Carleton, E., Walsh, M., & Hancock, A. (2024). Mindfulness buffers the negative effects of social media overuse on work effort through state self-control during crisis: a daily diary study. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2024.2433031>
- Drira, M., Ben Hassine, S., Zhang, M., & Smith, S. (2024). Machine Learning Methods in Student Mental Health Research: An Ethics-Centered Systematic Literature Review. *Applied Sciences*, 14(24), 11738. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app142411738>
- Fourati, Y.M., ElAyeB, M. & Drira, M. (2025). Integrated reporting quality and corporate tax avoidance: the moderating role of board gender diversity. *Int J Discl Gov*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41310-024-00284-x>
- Golmohammadi, A., Taghavi, M., Farivar, S., & Vaezi, A. (2025). Improving a supplier’s social responsibility: the effect of competition and incomplete visibility. *International Journal of Production Research*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2025.2456597>
- Maisonnave, M., Rajabi, E., Taghavi, M., & VanBerkel, P. (2024). Alternate Level of Care Patients in Canada: A Scoping Review. *Canadian Geriatrics Journal*, 27(4), 519. <https://doi.org/10.5770/cgj.27.755>
- Münkkel, F., Pehlivan, L., Williams, K. S. (2025). Explicit Values of Bernoulli Polynomials at Rational Numbers. *Journal of Mathematical Analysis and Applications*, 548(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmaa.2025.129381>
- Pahlevani, M., Rajabi, E., Taghavi, & VanBerkel, P. (2025). Developing a decision support tool to predict delayed discharge from hospitals using machine learning. *BMC Health Services Research*, 25(56). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-024-12195-2>
- Shi YV, Komiak S. (2025). Unveiling patient-centric interactions in virtual consultation: A comprehensive text mining approach. *Health Informatics Journal*, 31(1). [10.1177/14604582251327093](https://doi.org/10.1177/14604582251327093)
- Simba, A., Tajeddin, M., Jones, P., & Rambe, P. (2025). A disaggregated view of soft skills: Entrepreneurship education systems of Africa. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 63(2), 786-818. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2024.2356596>.
- Tajeddin, M., & Carney, M. (2025). Analysis of Solidarity Mechanisms Affecting the Performance of Ethnic Minority Business Groups in Africa. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 18(4), 183. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm18040183>.

# Peer Reviewed Journals

- Walsh, M.M., Carleton, E.L., Ziemer, J. and Ortynsky, M. (2024), ""The salience of remote leadership: implications for follower self-control and work-life balance"", International Journal of Manpower, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 237-254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-12-2022-0652>
  - Walsh, M. M., Lyubych, Z., & Arnold, K. A. (2024). Leader mindfulness, passive leadership, and the mediating role of leader anxiety. Journal of Personnel Psychology, 23(4), 213–219. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1866-5888/a000344>
  - Walsh, M.M., Carleton, E., Ortynsky, M., Choi, E., Hancock, A.J. and Arnold, K.A. (2025), ""The role of daily mindfulness on work-home conflict: a daily study of women leaders"", Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-02-2024-0075>
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# Organization of Conference and Event

- Akbari, Ather H. (2025, March). "Social networks, employer diversity and some best practices in shaping immigrants' employment potential and firm's performance in Atlantic Canada." Organized under the auspices of 27th National Metropolis conference, Toronto, Ontario.
- Akbari, Ather H. (2024, March). "The Future of skilled labour force in Canada and Atlantic Canada: The role of employers and international students.", Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- Akbari, Ather H. (2024, October). "Long-term care for seniors: Some best practices and public policy." Session held under the auspices of Atlantic Canada Economics Association, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

# Conference Paper Presentations

- Akbari, A. H. (2025, March). Immigration in Nova Scotia: Who comes, who stays, who leaves and why?. Presentation at 27th National Metropolis Conference, Toronto, ON (Panel organized by Conference Board of Canada)
- Akbari, A. H. (2024, June). Research Matters Event: International Students in Atlantic Canada. Organized by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
- Akbari, A. H. and Nicholas, M. (2025, March). Do social networks help international students find a job in their field of study (Presentation at 27th National Metropolis Conference, Toronto ([Workshop C9](#)) Original version presented at the Atlantic Canada Economics Association conference held in October 2024 on SMU campus.
- Athanasakou, V., & Boshanna, B (2025, January). Linkage between strategy and financial performance disclosure in annual reports: A new reporting path for organizational learning. Paper presented at the AAA International Accounting Section 2025 Midyear Meeting, Miami, FL, United States.
- Athanasakou, V., Chalwati, A., & Trabelsi, S. (2025, March). Rising demand for sustainability reporting and management withholding of bad news. Paper presented at the AAA Current Issues in Sustainability 2025 Conference, Arlington, VA, United States.
- Kelley, S., & Bheekhee, D. (2025, April). Developing a checklist to reduce unethical applications of artificial intelligence in the legal community. The Politics of AI Workshop (PAW) 2025, Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, United States.
- Mazumdar, B., Gilbert, S., & Walsh, M. M. (2024, June) Navigating Leadership Aspirations Amidst Crisis: A Gendered Perspective in the Post-Pandemic Era. Gender, Work and Organization conference. Cape Breton, NS.
- Ortynsky, M., Walsh, M. M., & Carleton, E. (2024, June) Leader self-efficacy, impostorism, and burnout: The enhancing role of remote work. Presented at the Canadian Psychological Association. Ottawa, ON.
- Tajeddin, M., Simba, A., Krammer, S. (June- 2025). Non-Market Options: A Strategic Use of Philanthropy and Informal Payments by African Firms 66th Academy of International Business, USA, Louisville.
- Schiff, D., Kelley, S., Schiff, K., McCrain, J., & Adams, I. (2025, April). Vetting the AI that vets us: Ethical trade-offs in HR professionals' AI procurement decisions. The Politics of AI Workshop (PAW) 2025, Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, United States.
- Simba, A, & Tajeddin , M., & Liguori, E (July- 2025). Embedding entrepreneurship: An education and family tie nexus in American entrepreneurship. In 85th Academy of Management Proceedings, Denmark, Copenhagen.

# Research-Related Awards and Honors

## **Vasiliki Athanasakou**

AAA International Accounting Section 2025 Midyear Meeting.  
Best Midyear Meeting Paper Award. <https://aaahq.org/IA/IAS-Meeting/>

## **Mojtaba M. Shourkaei**

Awarded as top 10% of most-viewed (17000+ full reads) papers published in Business Strategy and The Environment in 2023: Shourkaei, M. M., Taylor, K. M., & Dyck, B. (2024). Examining sustainable supply chain management via a social-symbolic work lens: Lessons from Patagonia. Business Strategy and the Environment, 33(2), 1477-1496.

## **Vurain Tabvuma**

SSHRC Partnership Development Grant (2025 – 2028, CI, \$193,720)

Project: Including Students in Success: Using First Year Experience Programming to Create Belonging and Success Through Inclusion.

Future Skills Centre (FSC) (2025, CI, \$257,508)

Project: Advancing Fair Chance Opportunities for Justice-Involved Individuals: A Strategic Intervention with Employers.

SSHRC Engage Partnership Grant (2024 – 2025, CI, \$24,960)

Project: Understanding Mental Health and Accessibility Support Standards in Canadian Colleges and Universities.

## **Annika Voltan**

Research Nova Scotia grant (\$30,000) for a research study to inform the Halifax Regional Municipality's approach to community-embedded implementation practices. Dr. Voltan is the PI and Dr. Chantal Hervieux is an advisor, along with faculty members from Dalhousie and Cape Breton University.

# Books and Book Chapters

- Carter-Rogers, K., Smith, S. M., Chigumba, C., & Tabvuma, V. (2024). The Future of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education. In Norris, M., & Smith, S. M. (Eds.). *Leading the Way: Envisioning the Future of Higher Education*. Queen's University. OER Pressbooks. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/futureofhighereducation/>
- Carter-Rogers, K., Smith, S.M., Tabvuma, V., Brophy, T., & MacDonald, T. (Accepted). A year with COVID: Empirical evidence assessing an institutional led intervention while coping with the challenges and successes of the virtual transition to online learning. A Chapter in *Online Learning, Open Education and Equity in the Age of COVID-19*
- Kay, W., Smith, S. M., Carter-Rogers, K., Tabvuma, V. & Sylvester, E. (in press). The Role of Pedagogy in the Evolution of First Year Experience Programming. In Smith, S. M., Brophy, T., Daniels, A., & McEvoy, A. (Eds.). *The Evolving Landscape of Post-secondary Student Transitions in Canada: Striving for Best Practices*. Atlantic OER Pressbooks. <https://caul-cbua.pressbooks.pub/student-success-programming/> Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
- Ortynsky, M., Walsh, M. M., & Carleton, E. L. (2025) Stereotype threat. In J. Helms Mills, A.J. Mills, K.S. Williams, & R. Bendl. (Eds.). *SAGE Encyclopedia of Gender in Management*, Cheltenham: Elgar.
- Wang, L., Walsh, M. M., & Holmvall, C. M. (2025). Gender and Incivility. In J. Helms Mills, A.J. Mills, K.S. Williams, & R. Bendl. (Eds.). *SAGE Encyclopedia of Gender in Management*, Cheltenham: Elgar."

# Community Engagement

## Ather Akbari

In 2024-25: Radio Calgary; [CTV New](#); [CityNews](#); [CBC Halifax](#); [University Affairs](#); Atlantic Business News; [Financial Post](#); All Nova Scotia

## Vasiliki Athanasakou

Opponent of the Doctoral Defense of Timmy Thor "Essays on the Role of Corporate Culture in Accounting and Finance". Hanken School of Economics, February 2025. <https://www.hanken.fi/en/calendar/doctoral-defence-timmy-thor>

Seminar Presentations at:

1. The University of Manchester Alliance Manchester Business School, February 202
2. Athens University of Economics and Business, October 2024
3. The University of Vaasa October 2024
4. Hanken School of Economics, October 2024

- Discussant at Accounting Perspectives 2025 Symposium, Online, February, 2025. Discussion of: 'Integrated Reporting Readability and the Cost of Debt: A Cross-Country Study' by Ajanthan Alagathurai
- Discussant at the AAA Current Issues in Sustainability 2025 Conference 2025. Discussion of 'Biodiversity Risk Disclosure' by Sijia Fan Miao Liu, Yao Lu, David Ng
- CAAA Lazaridis Award Committee Member 2025 (Award for best CAAA Annual Conference paper on Accounting Issues Relevant to Technology Firms). [Lazaridis Award | The Canadian Academic Accounting Association | L'Association canadienne des professeurs de comptabilité](#)

# Miscellaneous

## Ather Akbari

- Recently completed a research project on Academic and Socioeconomic Experiences of International Students in Atlantic Canada through support from Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (<chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcajpcgicfindmkaj/https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/AcademicandSocioeconomicExperiencesofInternationalStudents.pdf>)
- Awarded research grants from Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the four Atlantic Provinces to study Socioeconomic and Demographic Profiles of Immigrants in Atlantic Provinces. This is a one-year project
- Forthcoming event: Organizing a public outreach event entitled "Resetting Canada's Immigration Policy and Impact on Smaller Provinces." This pan-Atlantic event will be held on SMU campus with participation from academics, policymakers and settlement sectors in all four provinces. Event date: May 15 2025.

## Vasiliki Athanasakou

- Guest Editor of Special Issue on Corporate Governance: An International Review Corporate Governance and Evolving Corporate Disclosures: Global Challenges and Opportunities for Research (Forthcoming)
- Editorial Board Member of the Journal of Business Finance and Accounting
- Editorial Board Member of Accounting and Business Research
- Liaison with the UK Financial Reporting Council Financial Reporting Lab

## Mahdi Tajeddin

[Special Issue Informal entrepreneurship: A sub-Saharan African perspective](#), Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship.