

SOBEY RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Welcome back to campus for Fall 2025! This fall brings many new opportunities for us. Along with welcoming new students, we are welcoming new faculty members, post-doctoral fellows, and staff members. People have been the key asset for us. Our productive and positive engagement continues to help us grow our school. In this issue, we are pleased to celebrate the success of our Executive Doctorate of Business Administration (EDBA) program in producing its first graduates. The EDBA program develops and supports senior executives in using evidence-based approaches to conduct practice-oriented research and facilitate their business decision making. The research works we report in this issue involve childcare quality, sustainability and sustainability reporting, product development, product portfolio and alliance, and leadership.

As you know, we are looking forward to our new Strategic Plan that will inform our Research Strategies for the coming years. Many thanks to engaged faculty, staff, students, alumni, advisors, donors, and friends for their engagement in the plan development process.

We wish everyone a successful new academic year!

Sincerely,

Research Advancement Committee



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Sobey School News

I. Innovative, rigorous, and ready to grow: Our EDBA program reaches another milestone moment (from Dr. Wendy Carroll, Coordinator, EDBA Program)

This November, the Sobey School of Business celebrates an important milestone: the first two graduates of our Executive Doctor of Business Administration (EDBA) program. Their achievement marks the completion of the program's inaugural cycle and demonstrates the strength of our innovative doctoral model.

The EDBA is designed to combine academic rigour with executive relevance, equipping senior leaders to generate actionable research that addresses real organizational challenges. With this first cohort's success, we are confident that our approach is both innovative and sound — and we are ready to grow.

We extend our gratitude to the many colleagues who helped design and deliver the program, and to the faculty advisors whose guidance was instrumental. Most of all, we celebrate our graduates, who have set a high standard for those who will follow.

II. Meeting with new university leadership: The Sobey Leadership Team had an opportunity to welcome the new SMU President, Dr. Michael Khan, and the Provost & VPAR, Dr. Shannon Dea, to the Sobey School of Business. They shared detail on the school, programs, students success, research activities, and strategic planning. The engagement was positive and productive. Dr. Khan and Dr. Dea are looking forward to engaging with our faculty members.

III. EQUIS team visit: The EQUIS reaccreditation team was very pleased with their visit during the summer. Many thanks to faculty members, students, staff members, advisors, and alumni for their kind engagement in the process. We are looking forward to hearing from the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) in Fall 2025 on the EQUIS reaccreditation.

IV. Advisory role of Dr. Michel Delorme at EFMD:

Dr. Michel Delorme has been appointed for a two year term as a member of the EFMD Global Americas Advisory Board.

Sobey School News

The role of the Board is to provide guidance to EFMD on the following issues:

- Insightful interdisciplinary collaborations in business education
- Fostering strategic connections between business and academia
- Examples from peers across the region of collaboration across academia and industry
- How this ongoing dialogue both responds to and actively shapes all those involved.

V. New appointments:

Dr. Hao Lu, BComm Coordinator

Dr. Firat K. Sayin, MBA Coordinator

Laura Becerril, Supervisor, Administrative Support Services

VI. Fall 2025 student orientation: Many thanks to faculty, students, and staff members for their generous engagement in welcoming new graduate and undergraduate students.

Faculty Corner



Dr. Maryam Dilmaghani joined Saint Mary's University as a tenure-track assistant professor of economics in 2011. Currently a full professor of economics, Maryam holds a PhD in economics from McGill University and other degrees from Université de Montréal and Université de Montpellier, France. Maryam's prolific research relates to economics of minorities, through sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion.

Her scholarly contributions have appeared in high caliber economics and interdisciplinary journals. Maryam is an active contributor to the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity.

Thus far, Maryam has received 4 research grants for her ongoing projects from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), to study the economic attainment of 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians. These awards include a 2022 SSHRC Partnership Grant, in which Maryam is the Co-Director, that focuses on Poverty and Wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians. Pathway towards entrepreneurship constitutes one the conjectures put forth, in order to alleviate poverty among this underserved population. Additionally, Maryam, as a Principal Applicant, has been awarded a 2023 SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant to study credit constraints of 2SLGBTQ+ people and how microcredit can be leveraged to allow them overcoming these constraints, towards an improved standard of living and greater opportunities of self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Faculty Corner



My name is Mahdi Tajeddin, and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Management. My research explores the frontiers of sustainability and entrepreneurship, with a focus on how enterprises and innovations contribute to inclusive and sustainable development. I work across three interconnected streams: entrepreneurship and sustainability, innovation and sustainability, and strategic growth and international entrepreneurship.

Current projects examine women's access to finance in developing contexts, the role of the informal economy in shaping entrepreneurial pathways, blockchain adoption in community-driven enterprises, green and frugal innovation, social innovation, and the internationalization of SMEs in emerging economies. Looking ahead, I aim to advance research on grassroots and circular economy models, deepen inquiry into social finance, and build stronger interdisciplinary collaborations.

Beyond research, I serve on the editorial board of a peer-reviewed journal, lead special issues on entrepreneurship in international journals, and review actively for leading outlets in entrepreneurship, innovation, and international business. I would be happy to support colleagues who are interested in these journals by providing feedback on manuscripts or exploring joint projects. I also welcome opportunities to assist colleagues preparing SSHRC Insight Development Grant applications, drawing on my experience serving on the SSHRC adjudication committee for two years. My broader objective is to mentor graduate students, support community-engaged research, and contribute to theory-building at the intersection of sustainability, entrepreneurship, and development. I would be pleased to connect with colleagues who share these interests and explore opportunities for collaboration.

PhD Students' Corner



Cindy O'Driscoll will graduate from the Executive Doctorate in Business Administration (EDBA) program at Saint Mary's University in November 2025, as a member of the inaugural cohort. Her academic background reflects a deep commitment to interdisciplinary learning, with degrees in business, science and arts.

She holds a Master of Science in Coastal Zone Management from Bournemouth University (U.K.), a Master of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Archaeology from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and an Executive Master of Business Administration from Saint Mary's University.

Cindy serves as Regional Manager with Procurement Assistance Canada in Halifax, where she leads a team of policy analysts. Her work focuses on improving access to federal procurement opportunities, fostering inclusive supply chains, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises through outreach and engagement.

In addition to her public sector leadership, Cindy has held governance roles as both a board member and board chair, contributing to strategic oversight and organizational development in the non-profit and public sectors.

See her research
description on the next page



PhD Students' Corner

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Dissertation title: Humour's Influence on Decision-Making: A Video-Based Study of Board Member Interactions in Meetings

Supervisor: Dr. Feng Liu

Cindy O'Driscoll's EDBA research investigates how humour shapes director interactions and decision-making in board meetings. Through a qualitative case study of a Canadian non-profit board, she examined two of their major strategic decisions. Through a multimodal analysis of the board's interactions over multiple meetings, which integrated video recordings, transcripts and meeting documents, she systematically identified episodes of affiliative and ironic humour and linked these to distinct manoeuvring and deliberative strategizing practices.

Her findings reveal that humour persists across meetings and actively shapes boardroom dynamics by releasing tension and influencing decision-making processes. Notably, the Executive Director's interventions, both inside and outside the formal board meetings, further demonstrate how the use of humour played a strategic role in guiding decision outcomes.

Cindy's research contributes a process model tracing humour's lingering effects on board strategizing over time and offers insights to advance the strategy-as-practice field and the growing literature on organizational humour. For practitioners, this work highlights the importance of humour as a tool for navigating complex group dynamics and enhancing decision-making effectiveness.



"It was a mutual learning experience, with Cindy leaning on my guidance while her commitment and perseverance carried the dissertation to successful completion".

- Dr. Feng Liu, Department of Management

PhD Students' Corner



Jonny Stevens is a business leader, researcher, and consultant with extensive experience at the intersection of industry and academia. He has successfully scaled organizations across diverse sectors, from an AI scale-up to a billion-dollar professional services firm, by combining evidence-based management, transformational leadership, and a hands-on approach to execution. His work centers on performance in B2B sales environments, translating theory into practice through actionable strategies that foster equity and drive organizational success.

Jonny's research has been published and presented at leading academic conferences, including the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC), the Atlantic Schools of Business Conference (ASB), and the American Marketing Association (AMA). He remains committed to closing the knowledge-practice gap, ensuring that academic insights deliver meaningful, lasting impact for industry.

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Dissertation title: Climate Change: Developing a Gender Inclusion Scale for Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales

Supervisor: Dr. Ramesh Venkat

The persistent underrepresentation of women in business-to-business (B2B) sales roles presents significant challenges for gender diversity and organizational performance, as gender diverse sales teams have been shown to perform better than homogeneous teams. This research investigates how gender inclusion is experienced and perceived within B2B sales environments, a domain historically characterized by masculine norms and high-performance pressures. The research introduces and validates a context-specific measurement of gender inclusion climate for business-to-business sales environments.

“It was a great pleasure working with Jonny, who was passionate about the topic and keen to learn new skills. Thanks to earlier course work, Jonny was well-prepared to tackle the challenges of completing the dissertation. He was a model doctoral student, in my opinion”

- Dr. Ramesh Venkat,
Department of Marketing

The study followed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, and unfolded in two phases. In Study One, qualitative interviews with 17 B2B sales professionals explored how inclusion is experienced on the ground. This thematic analysis surfaced three core dimensions: psychological safety, male-centricity, and perceptions of compensation, and guided the development of a context-specific measurement scale. In Study Two, a survey of 410 sales professionals was conducted to assess the factorial structure and validity of this scale. Using exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling, the study confirmed that gender inclusion climate is best represented as a second-order construct composed of the three interrelated dimensions.

The research further examined how gender inclusion climate relates to job satisfaction and self-reported performance. Results revealed that inclusive climates significantly enhance employee satisfaction, which in turn predicts stronger performance outcomes. Notably, the effect of inclusion on performance was found to be indirect, operating through job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism.



My Name is Rituraj Arora (Raj). I am an international student in the second year of the PhD Program in Business Administration (Finance stream). Prior to joining the program, I gained industrial experience through roles in investment banking, corporate finance, and NBFCs. I chose the Sobey School of Business because of its strong reputation, international accreditations, and the diverse research expertise of its faculty members in finance.

I have completed my coursework and am currently completing my comprehensive exams. One of the enriching aspects during the course phase of the program has been the flexibility to take electives in other departments of the university over and above the core courses taught by faculty members from finance, accounting, and management. I pursued an elective in the Department of Psychology alongside PhD students in that discipline, which provided me with initial insights into incorporating multidisciplinary perspective for my future research work. Besides, I benefited from the PhD research seminar series in the school and valuable guidance received from senior PhD students from time to time.

My research interests lie at the intersection of corporate finance and empirical asset pricing, where I seek to integrate insights from my professional background into my academic work. My journey in the PhD Program has so far been rewarding and I look forward to continuing this positive experience during the research phase of the PhD program under the guidance of my faculty mentors. Additionally, I look forward to the part-time teaching opportunity to teach undergraduate students in the third year of my PhD Program.

PhD Students' Corner



My name is Rihamna Kolivandi, and I am a third-year PhD student in Finance, currently serving as the PhD representative at Saint Mary's University. My research explores how artificial intelligence (AI) impacts corporate social responsibility (CSR), including a firm's environmental and social performance and overall outcomes. I am particularly interested in how AI can help companies adopt more sustainable practices. I am also about to begin research under the supervision of Prof. Ashraf Al Zaman and Prof. Xichen Zhang on the implications of AI in business analytics, focusing on online fake news detection and its impact on business decision-making.

Outside of academia, I enjoy practicing yoga, playing the hangdrum, and painting nature. Saint Mary's has given me a supportive community that feels like family and encourages both personal and academic growth. I am grateful for this environment, which allows me to pursue my research while staying creative and connected.

Student Success

Zac Konings & Jane Fraser: *"Stephane Levac: Foraging on a Dream"*, Ivey Publishing.

- This case explores the journey of Indigenous chef Stephane Levac. Students learn about traditional foraging practices as well as Indigenous cuisine and are asked to analyze the financial and qualitative viability of several potential business ventures. The case is well suited to introducing basic financial statement projection, as well as business risk and operational controls in either undergraduate or graduate classrooms.

Patrick Sweet

Mitacs Accelerate Internship with Engage NS to study well-being in Nova Scotia using asymmetric modelling.

Peer Reviewed Journals

- Chandler, V., & Dilmaghani, M. (2023). Competition and childcare quality: Evidence from Quebec. *Journal of Social Policy*, 54(3), 868 – 893.
- Shourkaei, M. M., & Dyck, B. (2025). Scaling sustainability in businesses with a post-growth orientation: An exploratory empirical study. *Organization*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084251350847>
- Simba, A., Tajeddin, M., & Urban, B. (Eds.). (n.d.). Special issue on informal entrepreneurship: A sub-Saharan African perspective [Special issue]. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*. <https://think.taylorandfrancis.com/special-issues/informal-entrepreneurship-a-sub-saharan-african-perspective/>
- Walsh, M. M., Prowse, D., Arnold, K. A., & Loughlin, C. (2025). Vision, gender, and context: examining visioning styles in men and women leaders across three contexts. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 46(4), 636-648.

Organization of Conference and Event

- **Planning committee:** Hlaing, P. (2025). Conference planning committee member, 2025 Atlantic Provinces Tax Conference. Canadian Tax Foundation. https://www.ctf.ca/EN/EN/Conferences_Events/2025/Programs/25APTC/25APTC.aspx
- **Panel Participation:** Chalwati, A. (2025, June 30–July 3). Navigating the sustainability landscape: Opportunities and challenges [Panelist]. 12th JIAR Conference, American Accounting Association, Morocco. <https://www.jiar-conference.org/conference-program>
- **Conference Discussant & Moderator:** Hlaing, P. (2025, July). Discussion of "Taxes and loan charge-off: Evidence from TCJA" by Travis Chow [Conference discussant & moderator]. 12th International Conference of the Journal of International Accounting Research (JIAR), American Accounting Association.
- **Conference Discussant:** Hlaing, P. (2025, July). Discussion of "In the spotlight: The effect of CSR ratings on tax avoidance and tax transparency" by Tobias Bornemann [Conference discussant]. 15th EAISM Conference on Current Research in Taxation.

Conference Paper Presentations

- Chalwati, A., Athanasakou, V., & Trabelsi, S. (2025, July 16–19). Rising demand for sustainability reporting and financial and management's withholding of bad news [Conference presentation]. Global Initiative for Governance & Sustainability, 4th Annual Conference, Tunisia.
- Eslami, H., Sadeh, F., & Eshghi, K. (2025, May 27–30). Antecedents of multi-partner NPD projects termination: The role of alliance portfolio characteristics [Conference presentation]. EMAC Spring Conference 2025, ESIC University, Pozuelo (Madrid), Spain.
- Eslami, H., Eshghi, K., & Sadeh, F. (2025, May 27–30). New product development announcements and shareholder value: A meta-analysis [Conference presentation]. EMAC Spring Conference 2025, ESIC University, Pozuelo (Madrid), Spain.
- Simba, A., Liguori, E., & Tajeddin, M. (2025). Embedding Entrepreneurship: An Education and Family Tie Nexus in American Entrepreneurship. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2025, No. 1, p. 17782). Valhalla, NY 10595: Academy of Management.
- Simba, A., & Tajeddin, M. (2025). Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: A Review and Future Research Opportunities. 8th Biennial AFAM Conference. ESCA School of Management in Casablanca, Morocco (Accepted).
- Al-Katib, S., Carleton, E., Walsh, M.M. (2025, June). Motivation to lead in time of crises: The mental and physical cost of leadership during sustained crises, presented at Canadian Psychological Association, St. John's NL.

Research-Related Awards and Honors

Hadi Eslami
SSHRC IG (Co-Investigator)
(\$81,715)

Miscellaneous

- **Hlaing, Phyo**: Reviewer: Accounting Perspectives July 2025
- **Hlaing, Phyo**. (2025). Thomas Schneider Community Impact Research Award Committee member. Canadian Academic Accounting Association (CAAA) | L'Association canadienne des professeurs de comptabilité. Mahdi Tajeddin