Education is “driving force” for Brian DeSantis

By Meg Wickman

One of the decisions a new college graduate must make is whether he or she wants to immediately enter the workforce, or instead pursue further education. Sometimes, as in the case of accounting major Brian DeSantis, the decision to pursue an additional degree comes after significant work experience, much soul-searching, and a clear understanding of what it will take to reach a new career goal.

Nearly twenty years ago, in 1997, Brian earned an associate’s degree in international business from Berkeley College in White Plains, New York. After that, he launched a career in finance that eventually led him from New York to Virginia. When the company that transferred him was bought out by another company, and inevitable corporate restructuring followed, Brian decided to move back to New York.

Unfortunately, financial jobs in New York were harder to find. Since Brian and his wife Anne had a growing family to support, he began working in the business end of the health care field, with (Continued on page 2)
Students explore mobile application idea

By William DeForest

Syracuse and Liverpool Campus students met recently to discuss a new / revised mobile application idea that would benefit Bryant & Stratton College students. The sketches and ideas were researched and presented by: Jill Port, Samantha Isabell, and Faith Ross, COM104 students taught by Bill DeForest, Liverpool Campus PD and Graphic Design Instructor.

The three pitched their idea to Brandon Irving, Wanderly Gonzales-Serrano, Chavaughn Cox, and Josh Smith, technology students at the Syracuse campus, as well as Matt Orman, Liverpool Campus Tech Coordinator, and Marie Radley, Syracuse Market IT Manager, who offered their thoughts and expertise on how this project could actually be developed and put into action.

As the meeting went on, the group discussed options and possibilities while reviewing the sketches made by the Liverpool students and came to the conclusion that this could actually culminate in a real project. The group as a whole is taking a few weeks to consider the commitment and feasibility of a project such as this, but no matter what the outcome, all parties felt the collaboration was definitely worthwhile, and résumé building.

Earns associate’s degree in three semesters

(Continued from page 1)

His previous job experience helped him articulate what he was looking for. He wanted to work with numbers. He wanted to work in a setting with clear checks and balances. All signs were pointing to accounting.

“I knew I would need more education to get into accounting,” Brian says, so the search for the best school to gain that education began. Having already experienced online education, he knew he preferred to learn in a traditional classroom.

When he discovered Bryant & Stratton, he was impressed by the “one-on-one contact with instructors” as well as the college’s strong reputation with businesses in the community. He enrolled and began classes in the Winter 2016 semester. “I was fully on board,” he says.

Given the fact that his previous degree provided him with transfer credits, Brian has been able to complete his new associate’s degree in only three semesters. However, he is quick to point out that the process of going back to school is not easy, especially for someone with a family. “It was a lot of hard work and dedication,” he says.

Nevertheless, he consistently made Dean’s List as he learned from “amazing and supportive teachers” including Annette Lombard, Mike DeLorm, and Bert Jerred. According to Brian DeSantis, the teachers he encountered deserve kudos for their ability to “bring our skills to our highest level.”

Brian completed his internship in the accounting department at Syracuse Community Health, an experience he describes as “mind-blowing.”

At this point, he is eager to finally begin his accounting career, and he credits his Bryant & Stratton education for making that possible. “My BSC degree will be the driving force behind it.”

responsibilities such as completing HIPAA reports. Meanwhile, his wife was reaching her own goal of earning a bachelor’s degree, and graduated with honors from SUNY Oswego in December 2013.

At this point, Brian felt that it was time for Anne to focus on her career, so the family agreed that he would look after the couple’s four children while she job-hunted and ultimately secured a position.

“I had a lot of time to reflect,” Brian says of this time in his life. He began to contemplate more education, and took a few online classes. He went on some job interviews, but sensed that they would result in a job rather than a career. “I was heading down the same path,” he says. “I would just be earning a paycheck.”
By Meg Wickman
When Matt Orman describes himself as “fully submerged” into Bryant & Stratton, it’s easy to understand why: for the last two years he’s been both a student and an employee. Now, on the verge of earning his bachelor’s degree in general management, he says that it feels “surreal” to know that very soon he’ll be able to go home after work without having to immediately begin studying.

As the son of Leslie Orman, who provides administrative support for Academics and Student Services (and is a Bryant & Stratton graduate herself), Matt has been familiar with the college for a long time. He even worked in Syracuse North’s maintenance department from 2001 and 2002, but eventually shifted his focus to construction jobs.

An accident in 2008 kept him from work for eight months and led to a period of reflection. He came to the conclusion that he didn’t want to stay in construction for decades to come, and began to ask himself what he’d like to do instead. “Tech seemed to fit my personality,” he recalls. “I like to tinker with stuff.”

He enrolled at Bryant & Stratton, and completed associate’s degrees in information technology (2010) and network technology (2011). Looking back on those classes now, he says they taught him that “diagnosing the issue often takes longer than fixing the problem” and that he enjoyed the process of finding the right solution. When he wasn’t in class, he was a part-time employee in the tech department and also did some tutoring for the Learning Center.

However, after he graduated, “life happened” and he found himself once again working in construction. Other than occasionally helping out friends, he wasn’t using all the skills he’d gained through his tech classes.

In 2013, he got a new job in the Bryant & Stratton maintenance department, and by 2014 he applied for a position in the IT department. At this point, he decided to pursue his bachelor’s degree. “I wanted to make myself more versatile in the job market,” he says, noting that the combination of IT and business degrees will give him “multiple skills to offer a company.”

He says that his business classes have given him a greater understanding of how and why decisions are made in the business world: “I can make sense of a situation.” In a similar vein, his macroeconomics course, taught by Regina Drumm, helped him to put world economic news into perspective. He also appreciated Regina’s approach to teaching, with emphasizes projects that are authentic to the business world rather than “just going over material and regurgitating it.”

In the classroom, Matt has noticed that “some students don’t see me as an employee.” However, he hopes that, when they discover that fact, “it might inspire them to see that employees are still learning and growing as well.” Matt offers this advice to fellow students: “Just take one semester at a time. Your program is designed so you’re not overwhelmed with too much at once.”

When asked about his future plans, Matt says that “I plan on staying here for a while,” adding that working in a college setting offers constant reminders of the importance of knowledge: “Being in this environment inspires me to use my skills instead of putting them off to the side.”
Business grad seeks to open her own café

By John S. Adams

Rebecca VanCott came to Bryant & Stratton College in 2011, graduated with her associate’s in business in 2013, and then earned an associate’s in accounting a year later, while pursuing her bachelor’s in business. This semester she will complete her bachelor’s degree after having gone mostly full-time, with one semester off and some part-time semesters in between.

While managing a couple of Super Cuts right out of high school, in Camillus and Fairmount, Rebecca developed a shoulder injury from repetitive movements involved in cutting hair. She was working 60 plus hours a week and making good money, but the injury brought all of that to a halt.

“It was the best job—I loved that job—the money was wonderful,” Rebecca said. But her doctor told her she needed to do something else with the rest of her life.

“So I decided to take my hobby and switch careers,” she said. She had always loved cooking and baking so she got a job at a café and soon became assistant manager and events coordinator. The job fell into her lap just as the Super Cuts job had earlier. This time it was because she knew the owner and the manager personally from having babysat their children.

Working in a restaurant helped Rebecca clarify her vision of one day opening her own café. So she used every course she took at BSC to prepare her to realize that dream.

Her dream is to feature “all of the local coffees, wines, beers, baked goods and foods” and appeal to a wide cross section of Central New Yorkers.

“It’s going to be a place where no matter your age, race, or social group—it’s a place everybody can call home,” Rebecca said. “We’re all American so it’s going to be everybody’s home. It’s unique and will stand out for everybody. Basically what I’m doing is to bring all the local hotspots to one spot.”

And she’ll call it America’s Home.

Thanks to all of her business and accounting classes Rebecca feels she is finally prepared to take on the challenge. “Now that I’m ready to graduate I have every piece of the puzzle: a business plan, marketing plan, and a sales plan,” she said.

Rebecca attributes a lot of her success so far to Regina Drumm. “Regina had been a big part of a lot of it,” she said. I’ve learned more from the 5-10-minute talks before and after class than in class sometimes.” Every project Rebecca has worked on has revolved around that dream of opening her own café. She asked Regina to grade her business plan as if she were presenting it to her as a potential investor, not just a teacher.

In addition to thorough preparation for opening that café soon, Rebecca learned some life lessons along the way as well: “Life is hard, but with the right network of people around you, it is not as hard as it looks,” Rebecca said. But “the more people I met, the more I realized that I had what it takes, and that hard work pays off in the end.”

Her advice to new students? “Reach out to your instructors whether you’re doing well or not. Communication is key to success.”

Reach out to your instructors whether you’re doing well or not. Communication is key to success.

Rebecca VanCott
Several Fall 2016 graduates attended the Graduation Breakfast Friday, Dec. 9. These include: front row from left, Erin Whitcomb, Laura Croteau, and Dicsia Dortas-Seijas, and standing: Matt Orman, Jesus Vasquez, Rebecca VanCott, Anne-Marie Lee, Brenda Cudmore, and Chelsie Tolosky. The actual graduation ceremony will be held April 22, 2017.

Don’t forget!
Next semester begins
January 11, 2017