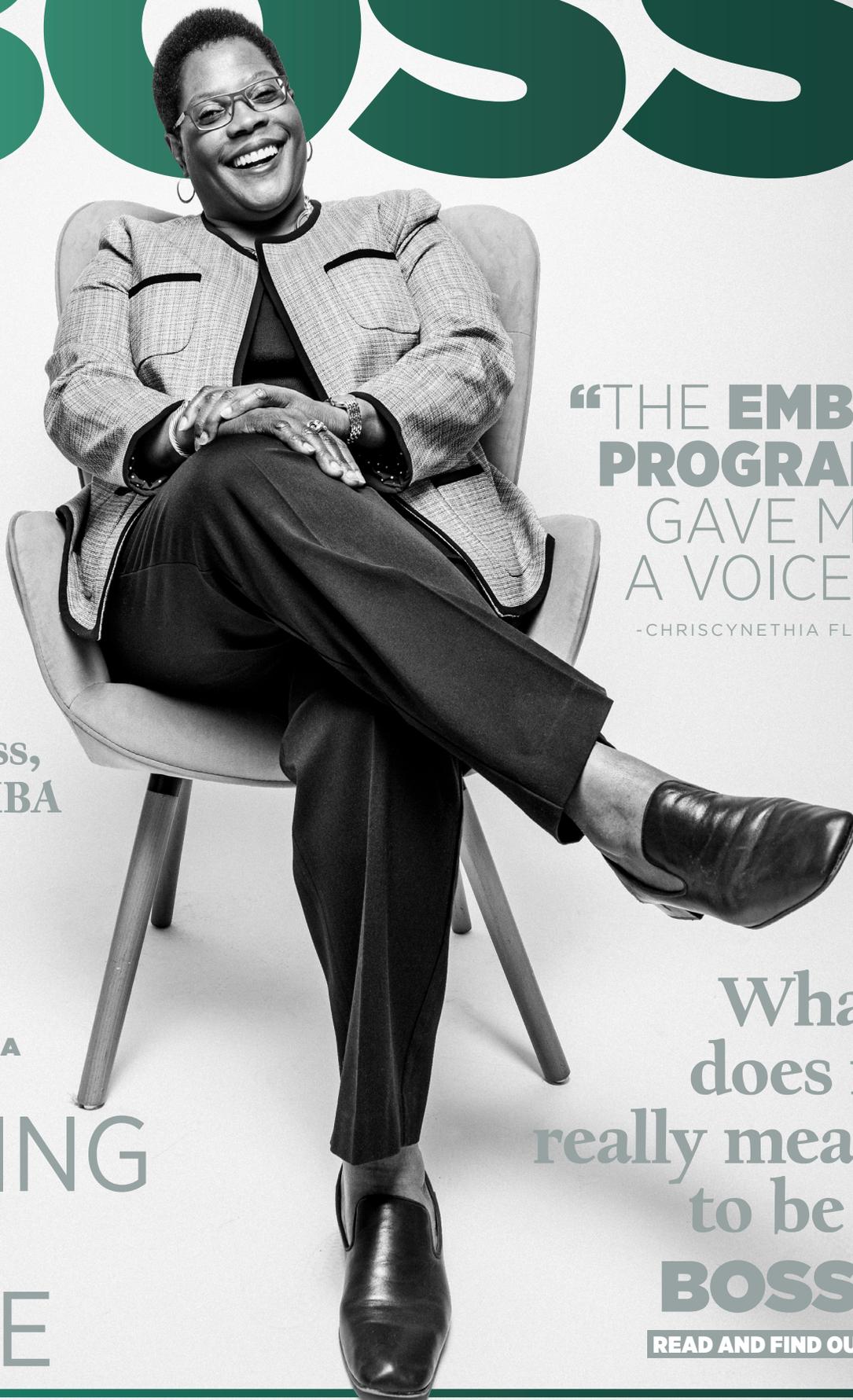




# BOSS



# 6

Broad alumnae share their stories on life, business, and the EMBA experience

“THE **EMBA PROGRAM** GAVE ME A VOICE.”

-CHRISCYNETHIA FLOYD

**FEATURING:**

**CHRISCYNETHIA FLOYD**

EMBA CLASS OF 2011

# FINDING HER VOICE

What does it really mean to be a **BOSS?**

**READ AND FIND OUT ►**

**I**t's time to redefine what a Boss looks like. To strip off the traditional ideas of just 8-to-5, striped suit, and the bottom line. Today's Boss sets their own course, starting with purpose, vibrance, and confidence that "they've got this."

The world needs more Bosses like this, and as women, we owe it to the world to step up and step in to make that difference.

This Boss publication features some of my favorite Boss women who've done just that. They're not cookie-cutter leaders. They're not trying to be someone else. They're authentic, inspiring, and powerful in the ways they've defined for themselves. And they're making a tremendous impact on their world.

Are you a Boss? I challenge you to read on and then to dig deep to discover the Boss in you. She's in there, and ready to help you take on your world with confidence, empathy, and grit — the best version of you.



## -Cheri DeClercq

ASSISTANT DEAN  
FOR MBA PROGRAMS



Executive MBA  
Broad College of Business  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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# IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Elizabeth  
Krear

EMBA CLASS OF 2013

Elizabeth Krear is a driven leader, responsible for some of Stellantis' most important and profitable vehicles, including the Ram 1500, Jeep Wrangler, and Jeep Gladiator. Recently starting a new role as Program Planning Director for the Wagoneer, Grand Wagoneer and Electrified Truck Architecture, Krear had her foot on the ambition pedal even before she started her professional career.

"When I was in high school, my dad asked me what I wanted to do after college," Krear smiles. "I said, 'Dad, I want to be a businesswoman.' I was very firm...I wanted to be a businesswoman. And so, he said, 'Great, then go get your engineering degree.' He's an engineer, and my brother's an engineer, so I went and got two engineering degrees — undergraduate and master's in mechanical engineering. Upon joining the company, Chrysler at the time, I quickly realized I did not want to just do engineering on a part or a system. I wanted to be a part of the bigger picture."

That bigger picture, as Krear puts it, meant running a vehicle program from start to finish.

"I wanted to work with the team, not only from an engineering perspective, but also from the industrialization aspect of bringing a vehicle to market," she explains. "I wanted to be involved in the entire process. I made sure that



“My feeling is when an opportunity comes your way, you take it, and when you do, never look back. If you want it, do it and don’t overthink it. Make the most of the surprises that life throws your way.”

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throughout my career, I took on assignments so that I was learning and growing. I checked all the technical and vehicle development boxes, as well as global roles in quality and program management, working towards the ultimate goal of Chief Engineer of a vehicle line.”

Krear reached her goal of Chief Engineer of the Ram 1500 in 2013, and then again in 2017 as the Chief Engineer of the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Gladiator. Non-coincidentally, 2013 was also the year she graduated from Broad’s Executive MBA program.

“I observed other leaders in the company and a lot of them had gone through the Michigan State MBA program. I said to myself at the time, and eventually to my boss, that I wanted to do that program someday. A few years later, it was offered to me, and I jumped at the chance.”

More than just reaching her professional goals, Krear says she also took away a bigger perspective of business from the EMBA program.

“What I really took away from the program was a global perspective of business,” she says. “Engineering is one element, and you can make a career of it, but it’s just one part of the competitive automotive industry. The MBA helped me to really understand all the elements it takes for a company to be successful. You can have the best engineers and the best technologies, but you also need financial controls, marketing and business planning, quality, and an organizational structure that is efficient. The MBA gives you a whole set of tools to make business decisions to not only delight our customers with innovations and technology, but also deliver margin and profitability in a very competitive market.”

Although getting her MBA was something Krear was excited for, she admits it was a very challenging time in her life and carving out the time could be difficult.

“At the time I started the program, my children were in middle school, my husband had his own business, and I had taken on a senior manager role,” she says. “I had to figure out how I was going to make it work with all of the competing objectives that I had between family life and professional life. I had to integrate business, being a mom, being a wife, and getting my EMBA into one. Sometimes, there were school projects that I integrated into my work and vice versa. Some nights, family time meant sitting at the kitchen table studying with the kids.”

Krear mentions she used that kitchen table as a vehicle of integration during those busy times.

“I ordered like 800 jawbreakers, and I put them in a big bowl in the center of the kitchen table — it was a way to entice my kids to come study with me,” Krear explains. “Throughout those 18 months with the MBA program, my kids saw me at that table, and joined me to study or chat about school. I was a consistent example for good study habits at a time in their life when they were just getting ready to start high school. I truly believe those study habits and that discipline carried them through high school and college and contributed to the responsible young adults they are today — who are also both MSU business grads by the way. Go Green!”

Krear’s ability to rise to the occasion and integrate her responsibilities has helped her adopt a “let’s do it” mentality that she’s used time and time again, even before getting her EMBA.

“Years ago, a mentor of mine came to me and said, ‘Elizabeth, there’s this position but it means you have to relocate to Austria, and you’ll be there for two years, and I need to know by tomorrow.’ So, I went home and talked it over with my husband, we looked at each other, smiled and said, ‘let’s just do it.’ Similarly, this happened again with the MBA program. One day my boss came to me and said the company had one more spot to fill in the EMBA program, it was mine if I wanted it, but I needed to commit by the next day. My feeling is when an opportunity comes your way, you take it, and when you do, never look back. If you want it, do it and don’t overthink it. Make the most of the surprises that life throws your way.”

In addition to her experience working in Austria, Krear also has global experience working in Mexico, and has gained a respect and appreciation for diversity and knowledge of international regulatory requirements. She is an active board member on Stellantis Women’s Alliance Business Resource Group and Chair of the Community Committee; in 2020 she received the “100 Leading Women in North American Automotive Industry” recognition by *Automotive News*.

**“I feel like a business-woman,” she says. “I’m an engineer, but I’m also a businesswoman.”**

My entire career is sort of a metaphor for being in the driver’s seat and taking control of the next big thing. Now, more than ever, I’m going to be using that MBA. I’m very excited about steering into that business planning role.”

# LEADING WITH

Ciciley  
Moore

EMBA CLASS OF 2019

# INTENTION

Ciciley “CC” Moore has spent much of her personal life and professional career in the nonprofit industry, working to advance racial justice and prioritize opportunities to amplify and build power in Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. Currently serving as the Program Officer in the Office of the President at W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Moore has helped lead the development and launch of the foundation’s \$90M global challenge, Racial Equity 2030, to build and scale ideas for transformative change in the social, economic, and political systems — the first initiative of its kind in the foundation’s 90-year history.

“It’s my responsibility at the Kellogg Foundation to build, lead, and nurture a portfolio of national and international partnerships and initiatives focused on racial equity,” Moore says. “What we really focus on is shifting the balance of power and resources to families and communities that have been historically excluded. I also represent our CEO in effectively sharing the foundation’s knowledge and investment priorities of racial equity and healing, early childhood education, and employment and health equity to internal and external stakeholders.”

Moore believes part of the reason she earned her current position as Program Officer is because of her education opportunities and her Executive MBA at Broad.

“Getting my EMBA helped me get the position that I have now,” Moore says. “I started out at the Kellogg Foundation based in Grand Rapids, focused on the west side of Michigan doing great relationship work, and I had the opportunity to move into the Office of the President. However, one of those optional but much needed skills was somebody who had a higher degree. I was able to lever-



age what I was learning in class at the time and bring that into the interview process which, ultimately, landed me the current position that I’m in now.”

More than just getting the degree, Moore believes the program gave her

foundational skills that help her to identify and work through complex business and society problems.

“I think more than just having the degree, they were looking for someone who had critical analysis, which comes with this kind of learning opportunity,” Moore says. “The EMBA at Broad gave me the foundational skills to be able to address complex problems that go beyond just the balance sheet, because in my work, it’s not about profit. It’s about relationships. And I think more and more we’re seeing businesses of all kinds grappling with racial equity, climate change, and immigration because they impact policy, communities, and society. And that is both in the boardroom and in the classroom. So, this sort of education helps to really define the kind of leader that you want to be and address more complex bounds.”

Part of these complex bounds Moore mentions also includes taking a deeper dive into her company’s internal policies and workforce. Moore, who identifies as a Black Latina woman, recognizes the priority her company places on diversity and acknowledges her role in impacting intentional change.

“The Kellogg Foundation prioritizes creating diverse teams within the workforce,” Moore says. “We focus on racial equity, and so you’ll see that we have a lot of people that are leading from lived experience. I work directly with our CEO, who is a Black woman, and my

nearest leader is an Afro-Latina woman. We have men and women as part of my direct division, and we come from all ethnic backgrounds because that's a priority for our organization and so that gets reflected in who they hire."

Before joining the Kellogg Foundation, Moore held a position that focused on creating workplace and community cultures of belonging for historically excluded communities. She explains the importance of this work and that it's not enough to simply "check the box" of diversity and inclusion by hiring people of color. If an employee doesn't feel supported by their workplace culture, they won't stay long in the organization.

"Diversity is not something that you just say — it's something that you do," Moore says. "You have to really think about what policies and practices within your organization are barriers and that includes things like language when you're advertising for positions and creating a culture within your organization that is supportive of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ workforce."

Moore also believes there are other societal, systemic changes that can create change outside of the workforce, such as access to educational opportunities and more.

"Of all the things that have helped me be successful, obtaining my education was really a systemic factor that many women don't have access to and need," Moore says.

**"I think that it's really important for women to be in these programs and to be leaders. Whether it's getting their Executive MBA or becoming leaders in other ways, I think we have the ability to influence systemic issues."**

Moore goes on to cite the pay gap for women and particularly women of color.

"It still exists, and it's systemic issues like the lack of parental leave, costs of quality childcare, and the absence of flexible working conditions that we have the ability to change. When women are influencing and creating policies and practices that are for us, we have the opportunity to create change and address these issues. And so, gaining these fundamental skills in our education is important and we need support to do it."

Even outside her career at the Kellogg Foundation, Moore is deeply committed to advancing racial justice and prioritizing opportunities to amplify and build power in BIPOC communities.

"One of the things that brings me joy, and one of the things that I was really intentional about, is building and creating space for BIPOC communities," Moore explains. "I'm proud to be the co-founder of Black Women Connect GR and a board member for the Latina Network of West

Michigan. We allow opportunities for women to build relationships within our communities, find professional development, advocate for and take action for racial justice, and connect and reclaim our heritage. Being part of these groups has been transformational for me. It gives me a space to connect to my culture, but also gives me a space for my children to stay connected to our Black and Latinx roots. These networks give me the kind of courage I need to lead in my everyday life and work."

Moore's dedication and leadership, within her career and beyond, is a testament to cultivating meaningful change by way of intentionality, patience, and hard work.



# FINDING **HER** VOICE

Chriscynethia  
Floyd

EMBA CLASS OF 2011



“I always say that someone discovered my singing voice when I was fourteen. But I felt like I discovered my leadership voice by going through the program. In many ways, the Executive MBA program at Broad gave me a voice.”

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**M**ulti-talented is an understatement when talking about Chriscynethia Floyd. With over twenty years of business-to-business and business-to-consumer experience in editorial, sales, merchandising, publishing, and marketing, Floyd can do it all.

Floyd currently serves as the Vice President of Publishing for US Operations at Our Daily Bread Ministries, a publication that reaches millions of viewers a year in books, booklets, and online articles, where she’s responsible for its content creation.

“What’s interesting about this new role for me is that I have spent a better part of maybe twelve to fifteen years moving between Christian publishing and mainstream New York publishing,” Floyd says. “Two very different worlds.”

To balance these two very different worlds, Floyd explains, she’s had to be extremely adaptable, hardworking, and open to learning — qualities she believes her parents instilled in her and her siblings at a very young age.

“I have a heart for learning and a heart for always wanting to do better,” Floyd says. “My parents instilled in all of us a work ethic that I believe at times, as Floyd kids, we have even taken too far. My mother worked almost fifteen years on the floor of a textile mill in North Carolina. My father worked up to fifteen hours a day as a chef at various restaurants. Both my parents wanted us to find colleges and careers away from home for better opportunities.”

Taking to heart what her parents taught her, Floyd worked hard to seize opportunities all over the country. From Michigan to Colorado to New York, Floyd has worked for many companies, including HarperCollins Publishing, Zondervan, and Simon and Schuster Publishing.



“One thing that I’ve learned, just through this whole process of my career, is simply that failure is an opportunity,” she says. “And I’ve had plenty of failures. But I’m a person of faith and failure for me is simply an opportunity to reinvent yourself. And I’ve never been afraid of that or the opportunity to learn something different.”

In fact, before diving into the world of publishing, Floyd was interested in doing something completely different.

“My undergrad was actually in Music Education with a concentration in Voice,” Floyd says. “And then I moved to New York to go to theater school. I went to the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City, and for over twenty years, I was performing professionally. And then one day, shortly after my dad died, I wanted to take a break, since I had been on the road for so long. And I got this job at a Barnes and Noble Jr., which at the time was a freestanding children’s bookstore. I still performed here and there, but, my goodness, it was so much fun working in literature. Within a year, I was asked to help manage the place.”

Floyd reminisces that before Harriette, her eighth-grade chorus teacher, discovered her singing voice, her first love has always been literature.

“When I was a kid, I thought I was going to be a librarian,” Floyd smiles. “I had grown up around my aunt who was a librarian and

who was just a wonderful storyteller and got kids excited about books. I just thought, ‘Gosh, I love books.’ Then, Harriette discovered I had this voice, and it completely sent me on another path, but a path that actually helped me with confidence. Because, you know, there’s a bit of bravery that you need to have to get in front of people.”

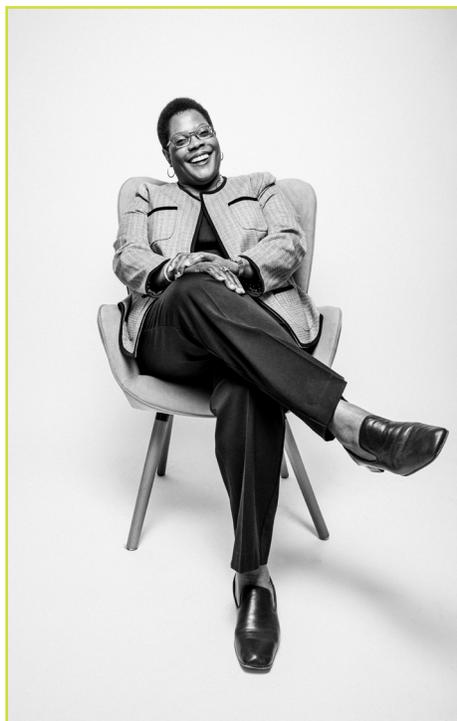
This same bravery that pushed Floyd to the center stage spotlight also pushed her to pursue something more out of her education.

“I had come through this publishing world because I knew books and I had a gut instinct about what could sell and how to create things,” Floyd says. “But I wanted a business foundation. I felt I had some gaps in my learning...and it wasn’t about getting another job or moving up in the ranks or anything, it was truly about wanting to learn more.”

One of the biggest takeaways from Broad’s EMBA, Floyd says, was her gain in confidence and ability to lead.

“I wanted to learn more about leadership and what it meant to be a true leader,” she explains. “I knew I had the skills, because I had managed people before, but I wanted to be better. I wanted to up my game, basically. And I did. I got this great degree that allows me to have confidence in anything I set out to do. No one can tell me that I can’t adapt or that I don’t have the confidence. That I don’t have the perseverance or that I can’t do the job. Because I have been well-equipped. And I’ve been well-trained through the program.”

Floyd now manages a team of six at Our Daily Bread Ministries, but the department itself is composed of nearly twenty people.



**“I love leading my team,” she says. “I understand what a good leader is now and can be, because I was led by several very good leaders and mentors in the program and in my life.”**

When asked who those leaders and mentors were, Floyd gave thanks to her brother and sister, her family, family community, and her first publishing mentor, Liz. She also spoke highly of her Aunt Dorothy and elementary school librarian, Rhonda.

“I grew up with a librarian who gave me books,” she recalls. “My Aunt Dorothy and my school librarian, Rhonda, introduced and instilled this love of books in me. But some folks don’t have this advantage because books are expensive. So, I’ve been very fortunate in my life where I could provide resources to my home community in North Carolina and I have now built numerous libraries with the help of my aunt, providing the books and the resources to certain communities. I’ve also given back to Westchester County, New York, helping Family Center services be able

to allow kids to have their first library, which is so important.”

Floyd even recognizes the importance of being able to access literature in her own career.

“What’s funny is that I work for an organization who actually gives away a lot of content,” Floyd says. “I love that the goal is to just get content into people’s hands. And that is really thrilling to me.”

From singer and performer to literary advocate and Vice President, Floyd has found many passions, talents, and voices throughout her life.

“I always say that someone discovered my singing voice when I was fourteen. But I felt like I discovered my leadership voice by going through the program. In many ways, the Executive MBA program at Broad gave me a voice.”



“I’ve had plenty of failures. But I’m a person of faith and failure for me is simply an opportunity to reinvent yourself. And I’ve never been afraid of that or the opportunity to learn something different.”

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# REMOVING THE HURDLES

Lori Hillman

EMBA CLASS OF 2016



Lori Hillman started her professional career as a Product Engineer after earning her Bachelor of Science in Engineering at Michigan State University. After many obstacles faced and hurdles removed, Hillman is currently the Vice President of Quality at Eaton and is responsible for 15 different plants in the North American region. With a little over 100 different individuals on her team, it's her job to set the regional quality strategy and ensure the strategy gets executed, working alongside her team to solve any issues that arise. In addition, Hillman ensures compliance and customer requirements are met, and oversees training and development of the regional team.

"My Bachelor's degree is in engineering," Hillman explains. "So, my background was primarily technical, but I knew I wanted to move up in the organization and had the thirst to do more in my career. Ultimately, I wanted to achieve a business manager role and I wanted to run one of the business units. I really wanted to impact the customer and add value to the company."

In 2014, Hillman decided to pursue her MBA through Broad's Executive MBA program in order to gain more insight and experience in the financial arm of business and, ultimately, chase after her dream of running a business unit.

"I worked for fifteen years in my career before I got to this point where I knew that in order to move up within the organization, I needed that financial and business background in addition to my education in math and physics," Hillman says. "I felt I had the ability to be more strategic in my position, but I wasn't perceived as having these skills since my background was technical in nature. I knew the MBA would provide the additional skillset that I needed to reach my professional goals."

Hillman graduated from Broad's Executive MBA program in 2016 and

“I have to be one of those advocates that’s out front leading that change.”

eventually became Senior Launch Manager before she moved into her current role as Vice President of Quality.

“The MBA program made a very quick impact on my career,” Hillman says. “Even while going through the program, I could immediately see the benefits of what had been taught. For example, I would be sitting in class on a weekend and learning something new, and then on Monday morning I would go back into the office and encounter the same thing I was just talking about and learning in the program. I was able to apply what I was learning in parallel and that alone contributed to a tremendous amount of personal and professional growth.”

Learning how to effectively manage her time and create a healthy work-life balance also added to Hillman’s personal growth during this time.

“I would say that time management was a big piece of the personal growth for me,” Hillman says. “There were times when family weddings or family birthday parties occurred on a Saturday, and I was in class. My family and extended family supported me one hundred percent knowing that some of those commitments I wasn’t going to be able to make. It really became about balance. And I don’t think that’s necessarily specific to the program — I think that work-life balance is something that we all struggle with every day regardless of getting an MBA. You just need to know where your limits are and what you really need to do for yourself in order to be successful. Sometimes that means putting in the extra time instead of going to a family party, and sometimes that means giving yourself some personal time to get a recharge.”

Outside of her family support system, Hillman mentions she also had a great relationship and mentorship with her manager at the time.

“My boss had a tremendous amount of confidence in me and saw something that, I think at the time, I didn’t even see,” Hillman says. “He gave me an opportunity to really learn the insight and leadership that he had, and he is still someone that I look up to today. I think between the program and learning from

him, I experienced the most amount of growth and confidence building.”

Hillman admits that an initial lack of confidence was due, in part, to her humble upbringing and the disproportionate number of women in the STEM field.

“I grew up in a really small town in Vassar, Michigan,” Hillman says. “When I started my first job, I was one of three women in engineering trying to learn what to do in my career. For me, it wasn’t about standing out at that point. It was about trying to figure out how to fit in. It was hard enough being the new and young addition to the team. But then I was oftentimes the only woman in the room, too.”



Unfortunately, Hillman says that even after 20 years in her career, being the only woman in the room has become a constant in her industry.

“I started my career being one of the only women in the room, and I’m still one of the few women in the room,” she says. “I’ve seen a change over the years, but there are still a lot of societal norms and pressures. People say things like, ‘You can’t have a family and a career.’ Trust me, you can have a family and a career. It’s about making those choices, understanding your boundaries, and knowing what you’re willing to sacrifice and what you’re not.”

One reason Hillman believes the industry faces such disproportionate numbers of female to male executives is the lack of women in leadership roles.

“We need to give more women leadership opportunities, because our younger women need to see that representation and see strong women leaders to know they can be successful,” she says. “We must be telling the younger generation that this is possible so that they believe, and I mean truly believe, that they will have every opportunity in front of them. For me, that representation means being visible within my organization and mentoring other women. I participate in a lot of women’s resource groups and speak at events about career challenges. These events are huge reminders for me of how far we’ve come and how far we still have to go.”

Hillman also believes those in executive positions have the responsibility to help eliminate some of the career challenges women face.

“I’ve seen women before me that have made it to executive levels and have this mindset that because they had to clear some of those hurdles on their own, it’s like a rite of passage for the next generation of women to do the same,” Hillman explains.

**“But I believe, as women, we should be removing those hurdles and making it easier for the next group that’s coming through in their careers. We should be empowering women.”**

Hillman has made it a priority to remove some of those hurdles for future generations and has pushed herself to be more extroverted in her personal life and professional career.

“I’m an introvert at heart,” Hillman says. “But I believe in growth through being uncomfortable, and I figured out how to be an extrovert when I need to be. I don’t want to be in the spotlight, but when it comes to this platform, I have to be. I have to be one of those advocates that’s out front leading that change.”

# KNOWING HER **WHY**



## Tammy Hannah

EMBA CLASS OF 2020

Tammy Hannah started her professional career as an intern in occupational therapy at Origami Rehabilitation, a non-profit organization which offers a range of care for individuals with neurological disorders. Not sure where her advocacy for disability and passion for rehabilitation would take her, she didn't know if she would stay at her internship past the agreed-upon 16 weeks. Twenty-one years later, Hannah is now the President and Chief Executive Officer of Origami Rehabilitation with over 130 employees and a team of five direct reports.

"Clearly, I fell in love with the place," Hannah says. "In my current role, I have the honor of being able to work with the director team on really helping to strategically plan Origami's future growth. I also work with Human Resources to aid a culture that meets the needs of our mission and helps to ensure employees are feeling loved and supported, so that they can continue to grow in a fairly challenging environment."

The challenging environment Hannah refers to is the critical, substantial, and sometimes emotional industry of health care and patient care. Dedicated to more than just medical care, her organization aims to meet the physical, social, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional needs of its patients.

"Sometimes when people come to us, they're not able to talk, eat, or get out of bed," Hannah says. "And it can be really draining because there's such a long road to recovery for some of the individuals we serve. So, our goal is to make sure we're constantly paying attention to and celebrating those baby steps of progress because if we can step back and take time to reflect, there is a rejuvenation that comes from that process."

Despite the demanding industry, Hannah says her passion is and always has been rehabilitation. She refers to it as her hobby, even outside of her 40-hour plus work week. So, it's no

surprise that Hannah was recognized for her commitment at Origami and moved up the corporate ladder.

In 2004, Hannah was promoted to Co-Executive Director. By 2014, she was Executive Director. And in June 2018, she became President and CEO.

However, Hannah's growth in the company did not happen overnight or without challenges. As she was promoted into more executive level positions throughout the years, she started to ask herself some important questions that would impact her confidence, personal growth, and future career.

"I felt like there was this constant internal dialogue of questioning myself...and I just never felt refined. I felt so homegrown. And there was value in being homegrown as an administrator, but as I grew into these executive positions, my confidence wavered and I started to question myself. Could I make these decisions faster? Could I be more decisive? Could I be more strategic? I probably could if I had more tools in my toolbox. And I knew that my organization deserved to have a President and CEO with those tools."

Debating how and where to get those tools, Hannah referred to friends and other alumni for advice and eventually went to one of Michigan State University's Executive MBA program orientations. She began to envision what her future toolbox could look like.

"I wanted to expand my network. I wanted to gain confidence. And I wanted to refine my leadership abilities," Hannah said. "I come from a background in rehabilitation, which is all about a team approach, and so everything I've done in my life has been team focused. When I went to one of MSU's orientations and learned about their integrated management approach, it just sort of spoke to me."

Despite her interest in MSU's management approach, Hannah admits the time commitment became a big deciding factor in her decision. She had young children at the time, was working a 40-hour plus work week, and had an obligation to her team at Origami to give her best, full self.

"It's a 20-month commitment. I was scared. I was nervous. I knew that this kind of lifelong learning would be a sacrifice for the family, and I was in my

own head with this 'mom guilt.' I didn't want to miss a soccer game, but I knew I would. And it was my daughter, who was nine or ten at the time, who was like, 'You know mom, this is temporary.' She used the word temporary. And I just piled onto that. I was like, you're right. You know, there's going to be so many more soccer and basketball games. It's okay. And it felt like I could forgive myself because she wasn't nearly as bothered as I had worked myself up about missing some of those activities."

With the confidence and affirmation she needed, Hannah applied to MSU's Broad Executive MBA program in the summer of 2018 and got in.

Going through the program, Hannah slowly started to realize that her previous fears about time commitments became all about balance.

"I often use the example of a juggling act. There are rubber balls and there are glass balls, and I had to ignore the rubber balls because I knew if dropped, they'd bounce back up and I could pick them up in my juggling act later on. But, the glass balls I really tried not to miss. I will never get a second-grade Valentine's Day party again. So, I made time for that. I carved out an hour and a half or so to be able to do those things. And I don't have any regrets in that regard. I still feel like I accomplished what I needed to accomplish — those glass balls."

Since graduating in March of 2020, Hannah says she's been able to pick up some of those rubber balls she dropped along the way and has learned a great deal about herself, her inner confidence, and her own resilience.

"It's still surprising to me, despite having lived through it, that I've done it," Hannah laughed. "It built my confidence and showed me I'm not as weak as I sometimes feel. I'm strong. I'm equipped. And I can pursue whatever challenges are thrown at me. But, most importantly, I feel like my questions are of greater value moving forward. I feel like they are more strategic kind of questions. I wasn't so afraid to ask 'why?' because the why is very natural. Whereas before the MBA, I was timid to ask 'why?' because I felt like maybe I should already know this."

Hannah also mentioned the program gave her a newfound understand-

ing and appreciation for her colleagues and counterparts.

"I didn't have an expectation of coming out [of the program] feeling like I was going to be able to do everybody's job. What I came out with was understanding it enough to be able to learn their language a little bit more and have a renewed appreciation for what they do. I've always appreciated my colleagues, but now even more so having worked in their wheelhouse."

When asked what advice she would give to others questioning whether or not to pursue their Executive MBA, Hannah recommended leaning into your "why."

### **“Remember your ‘why.’ Know why you want to pursue something like this.**

Ask yourself if it aligns [with your career], and what you are trying to get out of it. Is it to build confidence? Is it to go towards a C-suite position? Are you trying to get a pay raise? And does that fit your 'why?' because if you do it [pursue your EMBA] for the wrong reason, it's not going to be as impactful as it could be."

Hannah's final comment on the matter?

"Getting my MBA was never part of the plan," Hannah laughed. "I still laugh thinking about pursuing Business Administration because that just was never my thing. I went to undergrad for Occupational Therapy and my background is clinical. But, if I can do it, anybody can do it."



# “JUST WATCH ME”

Sandra Bouckley

EMBA CLASS OF 1992



“If anybody had said, ‘You’ll never get that job’ or ‘You’ll never get into that program,’ I would respond with, ‘Just watch me.’”

“I was a self-starter before that was even a term,” Sandra Bouckley says. “I always had this ‘watch me’ attitude. If anybody had said, ‘You’ll never get that job’ or ‘You’ll never get into that program,’ I would respond with, ‘Just watch me.’ I was a ‘just watch me’ kind of gal back when I was a little girl and a teenager in terms of things I wanted to do.”

That same “just watch me” attitude stuck with Bouckley throughout her educational career and even into her professional career, ultimately serving as a catalyst for why she wanted to pursue and get her master’s degree in Business Administration.

“I had a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Science in Manufacturing,” Bouckley says, “But I wanted to balance those two degrees with a business degree. People saw me as more involved in the math and science side of business, but I wanted to have more credibility with people in purely business roles. An MBA was going to give me another language to speak in, and I figured it could maximize my options for upward mobility.”

While working at Chrysler’s Jefferson North Assembly Plant as an Engineer and Center Manager, Bouckley learned from her colleagues that the company sponsored an Executive MBA program.

“Opportunity, luck, and preparation all collided to my benefit, and I was able to be one of the six Chrysler nominees for the 1992 EMBA graduating class,” Bouckley says. “I was very excited that they took a chance on me and that I got into the program.”

One of Bouckley’s favorite takeaways from the program occurred when she went on the program’s international trip, where she grew an immense appreciation for world culture and diversity.

“Our class went to Asia, which was an incredible opportunity to visit companies and see how they operated,” Bouckley says. “I truly believe that the more people you interact with, the more cultures you interact with, and the more places you travel to, you just broaden your mind and it never goes back to its original size. It became really clear to me that culture is really important.”

Bouckley says, looking back, this sort of eye-opening exposure and the EMBA program as a whole helped her to be a stronger leader.

“As I expressed earlier, your mind will never go back to what it was before. That sort of [international] exposure is going to expand your mind and the way you think. It’s going to help you be a better citizen of the world and a better leader in your profession. If I’m being honest, I truly do not know how people can work in higher levels of business without having that kind of broader understanding. It just continued and excelled my growth.”

In addition to the cultural exposure and blends of business culture, Bouckley mentions the program allowed her to grow and build new relationships with her classmates, many of whom she still considers friends.

“I am still friends and keep in touch with at least 20 people from my graduating class. For me, I enjoy building networks and not in terms of what can they do for me, but I enjoy building real relationships. Every place that I’ve ever been, I have built relationships with people that I get energy from and, hopefully, I can give energy to.”

Some of those relationships Bouckley holds close to her are with other women from the program.



“It’s important to know about the women that were in the program,” she says. “As you can imagine, we started in the fall of 1990, and to be a woman in that program, you had to be a strong person. You had to have a strong academic background and the company you worked for had to figure you had some serious career trajectory because they’re investing money into you.”

When asked how many women were in her graduating class, Bouckley had to take a minute to think.

“Let me think back,” she recalls. “I think most of the study groups had one woman in their group. We had two women in our group, which was a problem at first because they wanted to get at least one woman in each group. I would say there were maybe 12 or so women in the program at the time, and we were fiercely defensive of each other and fiercely supportive of each other.” Bouckley also points out that being a woman in the program and automotive industry, especially during the 1990s, took a lot of resilience.

“The automotive industry was — and still is — a very male-dominated industry. Most of the women in the program had ‘Type A’ personalities, and they spoke up and spoke their minds. You can’t tell by looking at me, but my nose flattened down from running into brick walls from time to time, and my head is pretty flat from that glass ceiling. But I’m resilient. You learn to keep going.” This resilience and Bouckley’s continued “just watch me” mentality is a quality she’s passed on to her daughters and granddaughter.

**“I raised two daughters and now a granddaughter to believe that there’s nothing that is insurmountable,” she says.**

While Bouckley is retired from SME, it doesn’t look like she’ll be slowing down anytime soon. Bouckley is a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers, the Society of Women Engineers, SME, and an active independent director and advisor on the board of an automotive supplier.

As Sandra Bouckley continues to tackle new obstacles and add more credentials to her resume, the world is just going to have to sit back and watch her.



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