

On the Move

Rice Business Celebrates Partnership with the Forté Foundation

By Holly Beretto

Kendall Toarmina '17
Management Consultant,
PwC

As a Forté Fellow, Kendall Toarmina felt not only supported, but empowered. “The confidence and skills I gained through being a Forté Fellow, and the contacts I made in the program were so helpful,” she says. The combination of Forté and Rice’s MBA program has helped her find career success. “I feel I am exactly where I am supposed to be right now.”

Caitlin Crotty '17
Senior Consultant,
Deloitte

“At Rice, you get a strong business foundation,” Caitlin Crotty says. “And as a Forté Fellow, I felt I had a group of women around me encouraging me to be successful.” Today, she focuses on helping clients with supply chain optimization and inventory management. “I love it,” she says of her career. “It’s a great place with great people and I feel so supported and challenged.”

It’s been four years since Rice Business and the Forté Foundation joined forces. During that time, Rice Business has awarded 126 Forté Fellowships and solidified its commitment to supporting women and their journey through the MBA.

“I think it goes to the core of the culture at Rice,” says Sue Oldham, executive director for recruiting and admissions. “It’s always been very giving in its nature. It opens doors for people who didn’t even think there was a door to open. The Rice culture has respect for differences and opinions. It’s respect for the unique individual.”

That respectful environment, coupled with academic excellence, makes Rice a natural partner for Forté. The foundation is dedicated to attracting, recruiting, enrolling and graduating more women from MBA programs. Its comprehensive program of networking and mentoring events, conferences, webinars and extensive career development seeks to close the gap between the number of women and men earning MBAs (in 2016, according to the Graduate Management Admission Council, 37 percent of full-time, two-year MBA program applicants were women).

Forté partner schools are a select group of institutions — only about 50 — that foster a culture where women are present in the classroom, as students and faculty; take on leadership in student groups; and go on to complete the program and step into positions at leading firms.

Women who are selected as Forté Fellows receive scholarships and access to Forté’s conferences, events and wide-ranging alumni



network, all of which are vital to helping women succeed.

For Caitlin Crotty '17, being a Forté Fellow wasn't just a chance to meet fellow women MBAs, some of whom would go on to be classmates, it was a chance to see women in business leadership roles. “Forté has such great women speakers and role models at their events. It allowed me to see lots of different pictures of what success as a woman in business looks like,” she says.

“The best part of my job is finding potential in people that they may not see in themselves,” Oldham adds. “And then helping them to be aware of what programs are out there. That’s what I love about Forté, just making women aware that this is available to you. You can get this coaching. You can get this preparation. You can get an MBA.”

Kendall Toarmina '17 earned her undergraduate degree at Rice and was familiar with the business school. When she decided to pursue an MBA, Rice pointed her to the Forté Foundation, which helped her financially earn her MBA.

“It’s so important that we provide more people these kinds of opportunities, without barriers,” she says. “Forté helped me foster relationships and I see the foundation as a resource. It helps women determine what they need, and how to ask for it, which is so necessary in recruiting the next generation of MBAs.”

Oldham says that in addition to being excellent educational opportunities, MBAs are a transformative experience, and working with the Forté Foundation for the last four years to ensure that more women are taking part in MBA studies has been a source of pride for the school.

“We value this partnership. We spend every year working together, trying to get the message out there to students. We all have the same cause, making sure as many women as possible have the exposure to MBA programs through a great organization like Forté.” ♦

Laurie Stewart
Director of School
Relations
Forté Foundation

“We were thrilled when Rice University’s Jones Graduate School of Business joined Forté as a sponsoring business school in 2014. Since that time, they have been fully engaged as a partner in our mission to launch women into fulfilling, significant careers in business. Rice Business has awarded 126 MBA women Forté Fellowships and Rice MBAs have participated in many Forté programs over the past four years — including the MBA Women’s Leadership Conference and the Financial Services Fast Track. Forté’s corporate partners are excited to meet the talented students from Rice at these events.”

Men As Allies Initiative

The Forté Foundation’s Men as Allies Initiative provides a comprehensive tool kit that helps men at Forté sponsor schools understand the unique challenges women face in the MBA classroom and in the business world. It’s a program designed to show how men can support women, and partner with them to increase gender equality. This fall, the Jones School launches its own Men as Allies program.

“Our faculty were first to jump on board — no questions asked,” says Oldham. “Scott Sonenshein, Alan Crane and Kevin Crotty have committed to be part of this, even encouraged us to use their names in recruiting other members to the group. We’ll be adding five or six student leaders, and we’re excited to kick it off.”