Proven value, expertise, attracts CEOs, foreign leaders to Benedictine’s OD program

Imagine traveling more than 8,700 miles to speak to and learn from icons.

That’s what a dozen citizens from Southeast Asia did this summer. But they didn’t go to Hollywood, they came to a small suburb in Chicago to see two professors.

That’s the type of star power Benedictine University’s Peter Sorensen, Ph.D., and Therese Yaeger, Ph.D., command at home and abroad due to their global expertise and longevity in the field of Organization Development (OD).

The visitors from overseas, who included CEOs of multinational corporations and foreign dignitaries, attended a workshop to garner insights from Sorensen and Yaeger about OD trends and best practices.

The workshop was a precursor to the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, which is the premier conference for academics, scholars, professionals and students in the field of management. The Academy has more than 18,000 members in more than 100 countries.

“The students all heard about Peter and Therese and Benedictine University’s OD program,” said LeeHsing Lu, Ph.D., who organized the visit. “They were excited to meet them because of their reputation in the field of OD.”

Lu is the associate dean of the Graduate School of Business and program director for the Ph.D. in Organization Development Program at Assumption University of Thailand. Lu founded the Asia OD Network in 2006 after earning a Ph.D. in Organization Development at Benedictine in 2005.

Benedictine’s OD program is recognized locally, nationally and internationally in providing education toward managing the human side of enterprise, which includes global interdependence, workforce diversity and the management of change — the hallmarks of excellent managers and leading-edge companies.

The OD program prepares individuals for high-level careers including human resources, health care, consulting, research, business, higher education and public administration. The value of OD in the world today cannot be overstated.

According to the Academy of Management, successful organizations must continually redesign their interfaces connecting their organizations to new opportunities that can have dramatic impacts on shaping their communities and ultimately the national and global economy.

In advance of their dissertations, students are required to submit papers and panel discussions for presentations at international conferences that are overseen by some of the most influential thinkers in the OD field. This has been a key component of the program for years.

“We find that this really gives students the opportunity to make a significant and lasting contribution to the ever-growing scope of research on the kinds of strategies and characteristics that are indicative of better managers and organizations,” said Sorensen, professor and department chair of the OD program.

Graduates of the program have become successful CEOs or managers and change agents at global organizations such as CNN Worldwide, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., Abbott Laboratories, Kraft Foods Group, Inc., Motorola Solutions, Inc., McDonald’s Corp., and other Fortune 500 organizations such as Boeing Co., General Electric Co. and General Motors Co.
Diverse talents of Benedictine alumni converge at Naperville-based professional services firm

Running into old friends at events like Homecoming is a pleasant experience for many Benedictine alumni, but for Mike Suglich, C82, Accounting; James Sullivan, C81, Sociology; Bob Shields, C81, Mathematics; and Dan Berg, C83, Accounting, it’s just an average day at work.

After making their mark in the professional world, the career path of these alumni eventually led them to Sikich LLP, a professional services firm specializing in accounting, technology, advisory and managerial services. The firm’s corporate headquarters is located in Naperville.

Suglich launched MAS Consulting in 1989, a small business which implemented accounting software for small, medium and enterprise companies including Arthur Andersen and Oprah Winfrey’s Harpo Studios. In 2010, the company merged with Sikich and today Suglich is a partner in the firm’s technology practice, providing leadership and direction for other partners, managers and staff in finance, project management, customer service and business development.

Suglich came to Benedictine after hearing great reviews and meeting with former baseball coach John Ostrowski.

“My goals were simple: play baseball and keep that dream alive, get an accounting degree in four years, a job and then pay back my loans,” Suglich said.

Some of his greatest experiences at Benedictine included a summer internship that allowed him to travel to Los Angeles, Calif., and New York, N.Y., to work on audits for Consolidated Foods (now Sara Lee), and the opportunity to play in the 1980 National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament hosted by the University.

“I remember former major leaguers Chet Lemon, Eric Soderholm and Jimmy Piersall working out with us and helping in practice too,” he said. “That was cool. My fondest memory though was meeting my beautiful wife, Colleen (Collins) Suglich, C82, Health Science. Thirty-three years and three beautiful children later, we remain Benedictine sweethearts.”

After graduation, he took a job automating the Inter-American Insurance Company of Illinois manual general ledgers with Solomon III accounting software and saw an opportunity to start his own business providing a similar service as computer automation began to reshape the industry.

Today, Suglich enjoys helping to position Sikich as a top professional services firm while working alongside some of his old classmates. Both he and his wife also stay in touch with their alma mater by attending different Benedictine events and by making contributions in support of Athletics.

“I stay connected at Benedictine alumni gatherings including Homecoming football games and baseball alumni events,” he said. “I recently attended coach Ostrowski’s retirement dinner and the Athletics Golf Outing. We continue to have many friends and family who are Benedictine alumni.”

Sullivan enrolled at Benedictine after being impressed by the University’s strong faith-based community and commitment to academics.

“I had a great experience, both academically and socially,” Sullivan said. “The strength of the University was providing a great education and training people for life as productive adults.”

Outside of class, Sullivan successfully ran for senior class president and organized other social activities throughout the year, such as the Friday Afternoon Club, providing relief to students and faculty alike after a stressful school week.

He joined Sikich after serving for 12 years as inspector general for the Chicago Board of Education where he investigated allegations of waste, fraud, financial mismanagement and employee misconduct. Today, he does similar work as director of Forensic and Valuation Services at Sikich performing risk assessments for clients that help reduce the risk of fraud or the misappropriation of funds.

“What I most enjoy at Sikich is the team of professionals and our vast array of experiences that we utilize to provide best-in-class services,” Sullivan said. “Much like Benedictine, I am surrounded by good people trying to achieve a variety of goals while remaining friendly and collegial, and building off each other’s experiences and talents.”
Shields decided to enroll at Benedictine after visiting the University and learning more about the advantages the small, liberal arts University could provide him.

“To my benefit, I had several outstanding instructors,” Shields said. “All of them made the subject matter and attending class enjoyable, were approachable and encouraged me to work hard. My instructors, courses and computer science internship prepared me well for my career.”

After retiring from the FBI in 2016, he reached out to Suglich for advice on working in the private sector. After completing a round of interviews, he was hired at Sikich in January.

“Working alongside James and being able to talk to Mike has made the transition very smooth,” Shields said. “We also get to reminisce about our time at Benedictine.”

In April, Shields attended the University’s College of Science reunion.

“It was a great experience to go back to campus and see all of the changes,” he said. “I had the chance to meet with one of my professors and thank her for everything she did to help me as a student. I also sat with two math professors, and it was nice to see their excitement and commitment to the program and the University.”

Berg decided to major in Accounting at Benedictine after taking a class at Benet Academy that ignited his interest in the discipline.

“I found that accounting simply made sense and I had an aptitude for it,” Berg said.

“The program also included a professor who had been a practicing accountant and I felt it brought a lot to the classroom.

“I really liked the size and the accessibility of the faculty,” he added. “Living on campus also allowed me to participate in a great deal of activities. I still get together with many of my classmates from my years at Benedictine.”

After working for a mid-sized accounting firm for one year, Berg took a full-time position with the same smaller firm he interned with while he was a student at BenU. After several mergers, the firm was acquired by Sikich, providing Berg with an opportunity to grow its governmental and audit accounting practice.

“We do more than 480 audits annually in Illinois and we also do a significant amount of accounting service work as well,” Berg said. “In addition, we have consulting engagements that include internal controls and processes, evaluating various aspects of operations. My role is to supervise these engagements or bring in other divisions and partners within Sikich to utilize their specialized talents.”

While he doesn’t get to work with his fellow Benedictine alumni as often as he would like, they occasionally share leads and updates on potential new projects.

“Having the shared history definitely helped break the ice as we all met up again,” Berg said.

In addition to Suglich, Sullivan, Shields and Berg, Sikich also employs several other Benedictine alumni.
Benedictine has long been a leader for transfer programs and a school of choice for transfer students seeking an undergraduate, values-based education.

Now, Benedictine is striving to be even more “transfer friendly.”

According to *Inside Higher Education*, the United States is only 16th in the world in the percentage of young adults with college degrees, and the percentage of U.S. jobs needing college degrees is growing faster than the supply. Colleges and universities need to make sure that each college student can complete their degree work as expeditiously as possible.

Through the collaborative efforts of academic and administrative areas, Benedictine is implementing more “transfer student-friendly” processes and procedures. These initiatives focus on making it even easier for students to transfer to Benedictine and earn their degree while maintaining the University’s academic integrity and value.

“At Benedictine University, we strive to meet students where they are and validate the experience and credits they bring,” said Karen Campana, director of advising at Benedictine.

Among the initiatives are guaranteed four-semester, 60-hour completion programs for select majors; pairing students with a faculty advisor earlier in their college experience; the creation of summer transfer bridge programs; competitive pricing and financial aid; expedited transfer credit evaluation turnaround; and utilizing “Transferology” to see how credits transfer.

According to the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, more than 80 percent of community college students intend to earn at least a bachelor’s degree. However, only about a quarter end up transferring and about 62 percent of those complete a bachelor’s degree, but it takes many students six years to earn a degree after transferring.

Benedictine makes it easier for transfer students majoring in business, biology and health science who earn an associate degree at a community college to earn a Benedictine degree within four semesters of enrolling through new degree pathways. Four-semester, 60-hour completion programs are also under review in all academic colleges beginning with the majors that are most popular with transfer students.

Benedictine transfer advisors will work directly with academic departments to assist with the transition for all incoming students. This is a new, collaborative process between the Advising Center and the academic colleges. The goal is to promote a strong, positive transition for each student’s academic, career and personal development.
The implementation of summer transfer bridge programs began this past summer. The program allows transfer students to complete courses required of all Benedictine students tuition-free and is being offered to a select group of new transfer students who are expected to complete their degree within four semesters at Benedictine.

Benedictine will continue to offer expedited transfer credit evaluation. This is critical to provide potential students with accurate course articulations. Further collaboration with faculty to streamline the review process and engaging in a collaborative process for reviewing major coursework will make it easier for transfer students to complete their degree in a timely manner.

“We are exploring ways to incorporate various community college engaged learning experiences and match them to our co-curricular requirements,” Campana said.

Transfer students have experience with education expenses in higher education because they have attended community college or another four-year institution. Benedictine is creating a standardized and easily understood financial award and competitive pricing system to benefit transfer students.

Benedictine also utilizes “Transferology,” a dynamic, integrated technology platform that allows students to see how their college coursework will translate to university degree credit.

“Transferology is a web-based resource through CollegeSource Inc.,” Campana said. “The Illinois Articulation Initiative utilizes this system to assist in a seamless transition from our state community colleges. This system is becoming more widespread across the country as the primary source for articulation information.

“Through Transferology, we are laying the groundwork for Benedictine’s transfer program to be prominent and accessible for potential transfer students as well as the community college advisors,” she added.

Improving the transfer process and ensuring that students can transfer credits efficiently has the potential to substantially improve college attainment and help meet labor market needs for bachelor’s-educated workers, according to the Community College Research Center.

For more information about transferring to Benedictine University, contact (630) 829-6300 or admissions@ben.edu.
We remember Most Rev. Daniel W. Kucera, O.S.B.

A note from Abbot Austin Murphy, O.S.B., Ph.D., and St. Procopius Abbey

The Most Rev. Daniel W. Kucera, O.S.B., retired archbishop of Dubuque and fifth abbot of St. Procopius Abbey, died in Dubuque while his confreres were singing Vespers on Tuesday, May 30, 2017, the 40th anniversary of being nominated titular bishop of Natchez (Mississippi) and auxiliary to the bishop of Joliet.

William Kucera was born in Chicago on May 7, 1923, second of the four sons of Joseph and Lillian Kucera. A member of Blessed Agnes Parish, he learned at an early age of the Benedictines of St. Procopius, and in 1937 he followed his older brother, the future Fr. Mathias Kucera, O.S.B., to the schools in Lisle.

The young man’s sense of responsibility and managerial talent were recognized very early, and from the time he was a sophomore in high school, he assisted the rector, Fr. John Cherf, O.S.B. Every night after supper, William would be in the office balancing the books. He also worked on the school paper, the Procopian News.

Following his sophomore year in college, William entered the monastic novitiate. After professing vows on June 16, 1944, he continued his studies toward the priesthood. In 1945, he was appointed registrar for the schools, a position he held until his ordination by Bishop Martin McNamara on May 26, 1949, at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet.

Over the next few years, Fr. Daniel taught at the Academy, but his major assignment was obtaining a master’s degree and doctorate in education at The Catholic University of America. He earned a doctorate in 1954 after completing his dissertation on “Church-State Relationships in Education in Illinois.”

Fr. Daniel was then placed in charge of the Education Department at St. Procopius College. Two years later, after the Academy moved to the campus of the former St. Joseph’s Orphanage and Fr. Adolph Hrdlicka, O.S.B., was appointed president of the College, Fr. Daniel became dean of studies. The two monks cooperated closely in obtaining formal accreditation for St. Procopius College.

In 1959, at the age of 36, Fr. Daniel was named president. Over the next five years, a second residence hall and a library were built for the growing student population. With the help of Fr. Francis Clougherty, O.S.B., Fr. Daniel developed the College’s lay board in ways that permitted greater use of the expertise of friends of the school.

The monks of St. Procopius on July 8, 1964, elected Fr. Daniel, then 41, as the fifth abbot of the community. His blessing at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus on August 19 included the country’s first use of the newly approved practice of concelebration—a fit foreshadowing Abbot Daniel’s role in carrying into effect the reforms mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

In addition to changes in the liturgy, incorporation of the lay brothers into the full life of the community and renewal of formation, Abbot Daniel led his confreres in a re-examination of their apostolic works. The seminary was closed, and both the Academy and College became coeducational institutions. At the same time, the Chinese missionary effort the monastery had begun in the 1930s was revived with the establishment of a priory in Taiwan.

Only three months after his election, Abbot Daniel announced his determination to move ahead with the building of a new church and monastery. This idea had been discussed for a quarter of a century, but now the new abbot’s energy and management brought the plans to fruition. Working closely with the architect, Edward Dart, and Fr. Michael Komechak, O.S.B., whom he appointed to coordinate the project, Abbot Daniel in June 1970 saw his labors crowned with the blessing of a building that would win several architectural awards in the years ahead.
Soon after, Abbot Daniel, who had long believed that creativity and energy were best stimulated by changes in leadership, decided to resign his office and return to the presidency of what was about to become Illinois Benedictine College. Fr. Roman Galiardi, O.S.B., who had succeeded Abbot Daniel as president in 1965, was completing his service in that position, and Abbot Daniel felt that the school would best be served if a monk succeeded him.

So, in 1971, Abbot Thomas Havlik, O.S.B., was elected and Abbot Daniel (by his own choice) again became known as Fr. Daniel, and for another five years he oversaw the College’s continued development. A new gymnasium, the Dan and Ada Rice Center, was constructed, and the school’s first graduate program, the Master of Business Administration, was inaugurated.

In 1976, Fr. Daniel, resigning the presidency, accepted the post of chairman of the College Board of Trustees. He hoped, through fundraising efforts, to support the work of his successor as president, Richard C. Becker, Ph.D. However, in early June 1977, Pope Paul VI appointed Fr. Daniel titular Bishop of Natchez, Miss., and auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Joliet. His episcopal ordination by Bishop Romeo Blanchette took place at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus on the feast of St. Daniel, July 21, 1977.

Bishop Daniel’s educational stature was soon recognized by his appointment as a trustee for The Catholic University of America. But the situation in Joliet soon required most of his attention, as the health of Bishop Blanchette, struck down by Lou Gehrig’s disease, deteriorated. From January until August of 1979, when Bishop Joseph Imesch arrived, Bishop Daniel served as apostolic administrator.

On March 11, 1980, Pope John Paul II named Bishop Daniel the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Salina, Kan. He was installed on May 23, his 57th birthday. During his 3.5 years in Salina, he reorganized the diocesan offices for greater efficiency and raised funds for the construction of a Catholic student center at Fort Hays State University.

Bishop Daniel was named the eighth archbishop of Dubuque, Iowa, on December 20, 1983, and was installed on February 23, 1984. Here as always, he placed great stress on leadership development, and the quality of his pastoral letters was much admired, as was his gift for delivering a homily or address perfectly fitted to his hearers. From 1987-1990 and again from 1992-1993, he served as the treasurer for the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

Feeling a diminution in energy, and pleased with the 1994 arrival of Coadjutor Archbishop Jerome Hanus, O.S.B., Archbishop Daniel submitted his resignation, which was accepted by the Holy Father on October 16, 1995. In “retirement,” he moved to Aurora, Colo., where his younger brother, Fr. Edward Kucera, O.S.B., was stationed.

For more than a decade, well past his 80th birthday, he assisted as a minister of confirmation within the Archdiocese of Denver and as a respected speaker and retreat master for a variety of groups all over the country. In the summer of 2007, he took up residence at the Villa Raphael in Dubuque, and three years later back and hip problems obliged him to move to the Stonehill Care Center, where he remained until suffering a major heart attack a few days before his death.

Archbishop Daniel visited St. Procopius often, and after his retirement he presided at most of the community’s ordinations. His presence at the monastery was always a pleasure anticipated and enjoyed by his fellow monks. He remained close to his classmates from Blessed Agnes (now St. Agnes) Parish, often attending their various reunions.

The monastic community celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial on Saturday, June 10, 2017, the 47th anniversary of the blessing of the Abbey church and monastery. Archbishop Daniel is survived by his monastic community and by two brothers, Fr. Edward, O.S.B., and Henry.

Please remember Archbishop Daniel in your prayers.

Memorial contributions may be made to Benedictine University in memory of Most Rev. Daniel Kucera. Please direct your gift to The Bishop Daniel Kucera Scholarship Fund. Gifts may be made online at ben.edu/giving, by phone at (630) 829-6072 or by mail: Benedictine University, University Development, 5700 College Road, Lisle, IL 60532.
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You can contact the editor at lhale@ben.edu.

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