



Business Honors Class of 2026

# Future Business Leaders Prepare for a Global Market



Mahmud "Wazi" Wazihullah

**“Do well. Do good. Have fun.”**

This is the personal credo of Mahmud “Wazi” Wazihullah — director of the Mercy College Business Honors Program — and one that he hopes Business Honors students learn to live by as well.

The Business Honors Program is a rigorous, four-year program that prepares undergraduate students for successful careers in business. Professors with extensive corporate experience — many of whom are former Fortune 500 executives — facilitate experiential learning and provide personalized mentoring. Business Honors students must demonstrate strong academic performance, leadership skills, motivation and passion for business to be accepted into the highly selective program.

When Wazi took on the role of director of the Business Honors Program last

fall, one of his priorities was to recruit more international students — with a goal of 20% of the students each year coming from outside the United States. The 2022-23 Business Honors freshman class met that goal, welcoming students from countries including Norway, Denmark, Chile and Albania.

“If there aren’t a few international students in the room, every discussion becomes an America-centric discussion,” Wazi explained. “But the moment that there are international students involved, it changes the dynamic and enriches the discussion tremendously because they can share how things work in their countries. An international perspective is essential in business. Ultimately, I’d like Business Honors students to work for Fortune 500 companies, which are all multinational companies.”

The international students benefit too, of course. Eirik Elvestad '24 is a Business Honors student from Norway. “If I decide to return to work in Norway one day, I will bring home what I’ve learned

at Mercy and in jobs here,” he said. “I’ll have a different mindset about business than people in Norway because I will have seen how things



Eirik Elvestad '24

work on the other side of the world.”

Elvestad explained that the Business Honors Program gives him practical knowledge and experience in the business world: “Compared with my friends who stayed in Norway, I would say that at Mercy, I’ve gotten a closer look at how businesses work and what it’s like to work for various companies. Business education in Norway seems to be more theoretical, so students don’t learn as much about what workplaces are like on the inside.”

The selectiveness and small size of the Business Honors Program enhances the student experience as well: “I’m in class with very smart people, so I learn very much from them. There’s a closeness because of how small each class is, so everyone feels very comfortable. And the professors are very good. Because of this program, I have seen how many opportunities are out there and gained a wider perspective on how businesses work.”

Wazi’s passion for ensuring a globally diverse student body and building students’ international perspectives is undoubtedly connected to his own experiences in life and in business. Just before Wazi was born in Bangladesh, his father left for London to attend the Royal College of Surgeons on a scholarship. A year later, Wazi’s mother visited

his father in London. Due to political unrest and armed conflict between Pakistan and Bangladesh, she could not return to Bangladesh, and Wazi was separated from his parents for five years. “During that time, I lived in a corrugated iron hut with open sewers, water coming through the walls whenever it rained during the monsoon season, not knowing if there would be food to eat at the next meal,” he explained. “Poverty.”

Once he was finally reunited with his parents, the family lived in England for six years before moving to the United Arab Emirates. At age 18, Wazi moved to the United States to study electrical engineering and finance at the University of Pennsylvania and later earned his M.B.A. at Stanford University.

Wazi explained that these experiences “...instilled in me the need to be a giving person. I have to give back to the world because I’ve been given so much. And by pure luck,” because his father won a scholarship to medical school, became a doctor and was able to lift his family out of poverty.

**“The moment that there are international students involved, it changes the dynamic and enriches the discussion tremendously because they can share how things work in their countries. An international perspective is essential in business.”**

After working as an investment banker, Wazi spent 10 years at Boston Consulting Group where he worked in at least 15 countries, including Venezuela, Canada, Portugal, Czech Republic, Singapore and New Zealand, for companies such

as American Airlines, Nissan Motor Corporation, Visa International and the New Zealand Dairy Board. Since then, he has also been an investor, a commercial real estate broker and a technology startup founder.

He sees so many benefits from having such an international perspective — one of the biggest being that it helps you think differently. Interacting with people from different cultures teaches you to constantly consider your audience, which makes you a better communicator. “I’m a firm believer that diversity makes things stronger, better and faster,” he explained.

Another way that students in the Business Honors Program gain an international perspective is by traveling and exploring the business world in different countries. The class travels abroad during spring break of freshman year to a destination such as China, London or Dubai. They visit a company each morning and experience the local culture each afternoon. Most students also study abroad for a semester in their junior year.

Wazi is passionate about ensuring that the education students receive in the Business Honors Program is “omnidirectional” — not just from professor to student or student to student but in as many directions as possible. “The professors learn from the students,” he said. Professors also invite guest speakers to visit classes and frequently assign real-world projects, asking students to create a marketing study for a guest speaker’s company, for example. “The students get great practice, and the speaker might end up learning something from the students,” Wazi explained. “Education needs to be interactive like this.”

With such a rigorous academic program focused on fostering international perspectives and such a passionate, globally minded leader at the helm, graduates of the Mercy College Business Honors Program will be primed to do well, do good and have fun — no matter where their lives and careers lead.