

2023 IMA Clark Johnson Achievement Award Submission

Ashland University

March 1, 2023

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Project Mission Statement

Ashland University Institute of Management Accountants Student Chapter's (AU IMA Club) project has used a three-prong approach to accomplish our project mission. First, we have worked and continue to work on increasing the enrollment and participation of all Dauch College of Business and Economics (COBE) students in IMA Club events by offering weekly workshops focusing on career development skills. Second, we are offering weekly study tables to build community and foster relationships within the COBE student body. Third, we are working to bring awareness and education to accounting and finance career paths by engaging our local accounting and finance businesses and creating networking opportunities for the COBE accounting and finance students to build their personal networks.

Project Description

Student participation in events has reached historically low levels. While we could casually blame the COVID-19 pandemic or the lucrative job market that our accounting and finance students are benefiting from for the lower numbers, but that does nothing to provide a solution. Regardless of the reason for low student participation, it is our goal to make the AU IMA Accounting and Finance Club events a weekly staple in the lives of the students at COBE. Focusing on career development workshops continues to benefit students across various disciplines within the College of Business at AU while adding value and tangible skills students can add to their resumes to make them better future employees. These workshops allow professors from different business disciplines to speak with the AU IMA club students to help see business as a whole and how it can be viewed from various lenses. Building community among the students has brought students together that likely would not have crossed paths. Study tables have allowed students to come alongside each other and work off individual strengths to help collaboratively study together. By building community within the student body, we are bringing back what many students have lost in the pandemic, a place to belong and a community to depend on. Continuing to welcome accounting and finance partners from our community has been one of the most crucial aspects of our program's success. Students continue to flock to Meet the Accountant night, Career Days, CPA firm field trips, and networking opportunities within the community from our accounting and finance partners. The relationships that we have worked for years building continue to bear fruit for the students and are always well-attended events. Building the IMA Club as a source of reliable and consistent career development workshops, community study tables, and networking opportunities within

the accounting and finance field has set us apart as a club that is worth their time and will add value to their education.

Ashland University business students are much like other college students across the world - we are busy! Students are typically enrolled in five courses each semester, with some in six or even seven classes. Most AU business students work a part-time job that requires 10-20 hours of their time each week. Additionally, all business majors must complete an internship to graduate, accounting and finance interns typically average 30-50 hours each week in addition to taking three courses to maintain their full-time student status. In addition to these demands on our time, we have a significant student-athlete population that further splits their time. As a Division II school, student-athletes are expected to condition, practice and travel for games throughout the year leaving no off-season. Students who choose to participate in Greek Life are also sharing their time with their sorority or fraternity at a rate of 10-15 hours each week. Additionally, Ashland University has a large commuter population that enjoys being involved but their involvement is dependent on the time constraints of traveling to and from AU daily. With AU IMA Club competing for the attention and valuable time of the students we have had to set ourselves apart and add value to the time they spend with us. Adding in study tables and a workshop series has allowed us to add value to not only accounting and finance students involved in the AU IMA Club but also be a source of education for the students of the College of Business and Economics as a whole expanding our reach far beyond simply accounting and finance majors and showing the integration between disciplines.

A Fresh View: New Leadership & New Life for AU IMA Club

Facing this opportunity, the faculty advisor, Sue Mullen, recognized a need for a transformation within the AU IMA Club. Reaching out to senior accounting student, Hilary Wallace, Mullen wanted to see if the club member was interested in taking on a leadership role to help steer the club forward over the next year. Together Mullen and Wallace brainstormed ideas to improve student engagement through career development workshops, networking opportunities with accounting and finance partners, and create a solid community within the College of Business and between the accounting and financing students in the AU IMA Club.

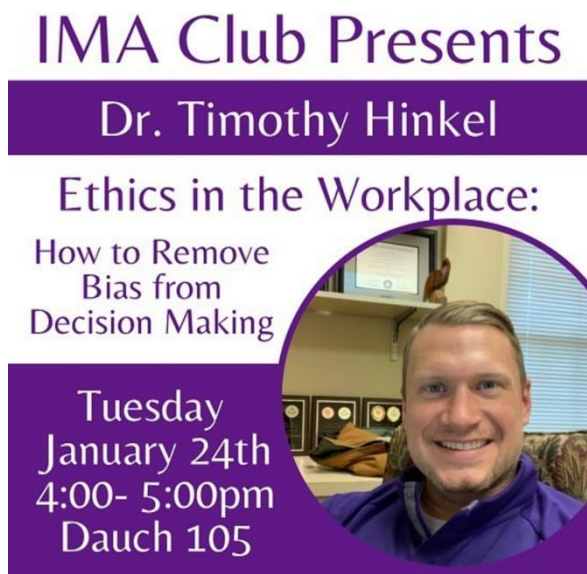
When asked to expand on what Wallace would bring to the AU IMA Club leadership Mullen explained,

“The leadership qualities that Hilary possessed stood out as someone who valued community and was able to communicate well with her peers. Hilary was often seen helping other students with homework, as well as asking questions of others. With Hilary’s career goals being focused on becoming an accounting professor the opportunity to step into a leadership role was a great fit for her to not only serve her peers but also gain experience leading meetings, networking with professors, and making connections in higher education.”

Wallace agreed to step into the leadership role as Incoming President and devote time to the AU IMA Accounting and Finance Club. Wallace laid out areas to focus on that would help the AU IMA Club focus on growth and engagement. Working alongside Outgoing President, Mark Biltz, the pair discussed student engagement ways that have worked in the past and new ways to explore in the future.

Increase Enrollment & Participation Through Career Development Workshops

Dr. Timothy Hinkel spoke at our Ethics in the Workplace career development workshop in January 2023 to kick off the new semester. With a small window of time to promote this important event we took to social media, personal contact with professors in the accounting and finance departments, and posted flyers around the College of Business. We had an outstanding turnout from students representing a variety of disciplines and even had multiple faculty members in attendance including the Dean of the College of Business and Economics, Dr. Dan Fox. Seeing the large support for the AU IMA Club events renewed our fire to continue reaching out to the various departments to encourage the multi-department promotion and participation in the upcoming AU IMA Club events and workshops.



IMA Club Presents
Dr. Timothy Hinkel
Ethics in the Workplace:
How to Remove
Bias from
Decision Making
Tuesday
January 24th
4:00- 5:00pm
Dauch 105

The personal connection has been and will continue to be crucial to the success of our events. Since faculty, staff and students are inundated daily with endless e-mails, Wallace suggested reaching out to each of the College of Business and Economics faculty members to request their support in our next event with the goal being to increase student engagement and participation in the AU IMA Club. Wallace visited professors during their office hours to discuss the benefits of promoting our next event to their students. We received wonderful feedback and many

excited professors with the ability to offer students a relevant extracurricular event, many even offered bonus points to their students to encourage attendance.


Our next scheduled event was a career development workshop featuring a local entrepreneur and Ashland University benefactor, Mr. Bob Archer. Mr. Bob Archer is the very successful CEO of Kent Watersports in New London, Ohio, a town approximately 20 minutes due north of Ashland University. We saw this as not only an opportunity to promote the AU IMA Accounting and Finance Club to the College of Business and Economics as a whole, but to also integrate another accounting and finance partner from our community while adding the benefit of career development with his topic covering business and entrepreneurship. Mr. Archer's company, Kent Outdoors, currently employs two of our accounting students working on their internship as well as a couple of Ashland University alumni.

Photos compliments of Sue Mullen

Business & Entrepreneurship Presentation

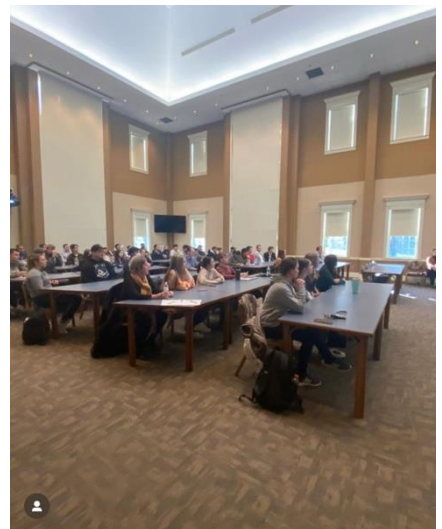
Mr. Bob Archer

Wednesday
February 1st
4:00 - 5:00pm
Dauch 115



Join the AU IMA Club in welcoming Mr. Bob Archer, AU board of trustees member, CEO of Kent Watersports, & AU sports super fan, as he speaks about business and entrepreneurship.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear from a business expert.



Build Community Through Weekly Study Tables

Community is a crucial part of the college experience. Community comes in many forms, we see sports communities, student leadership communities, Greek Life communities, friend communities, and club communities. Additionally, there were naturally forming communities of students that would study together between classes. The College of Business offers many places to sit and study together in rooms or lounge areas, as you walk through the halls you would see small groups of students studying together. Coming out of a pandemic where social distancing was the norm and the ability to meet in person was greatly limited seeing these small pods of students was refreshing. Wallace suggested that the AU IMA Club start offering study tables on a weekly basis to bring the community back to the college experience. Offering a weekly dedicated time to study together has been well received by the students. One benefit of a study table in addition to the community aspect is that junior and senior students are being able to step into the role of a mentor for the freshman and sophomore students in a way that professors may not be able to fill.



Provide Networking Opportunities Through Accounting & Finance Partnerships

The AU IMA Accounting Club has always faced challenges in attempting to earn some of the students' time. In addition to the time constraints, we have seen a new challenge emerge in 2022. The shortage of employees has made the job market for accounting interns and full-time employment extraordinary for job seekers. There is an abundance of accounting jobs which has increased demand for us as students, and many of us have received multiple lucrative offers with little additional effort above submitting a resume for consideration. Throughout the summer and fall, employers have been aggressively contacting the accounting and finance faculty at Ashland University to have an opportunity to talk to our students. While it seems like a wonderful position to be in we have found that students now see that they are in a position of power and do not need to focus on the networking aspect of the job search, AU IMA Club has worked to refocus the attention back on the importance of networking for not only to get the internship or initial job offer, but for long term connections in the industry. In the past, a student was able to set themselves apart from other job candidates by being an officer in the IMA Accounting Club or simply attending meetings to network with local employers. In our current job market, accounting and finance students do not need to set themselves apart to receive a job offer.

Offering the opportunity to network with accounting and finance employers will not only continue to supply our local employers with an ample supply of employees but assist students in building this lifelong skill and giving them the opportunity to practice their skills in a familiar environment. Our most popular networking opportunity every September is Meet the

Accountant Night. Before the networking event the AU IMA Club hosts a Networking 101 refresher where students can come and practice with other peers or faculty to help shake off the jitters many students face. At this event we have numerous employers in both public and private industry as well as government sector that talk with the students and collect resumes of those that they are interested in. After the event the majority of students receive one or more internship offers. The pay rates are truly outstanding for the students applying. They are averaging around \$25/hour for an internship, often supplemented with a signing bonus of \$2,000 - \$3,000. We even have a few students who have job offers contingent on their graduation in May 2024 and their starting pay exceeds \$64,000 annually and includes a \$3,000 signing bonus. While these offers are wonderful for the students it has been a hurdle to get the students to see the value in continuing to network throughout the year.

Photos compliments of Allison Waltz-Boebel (AU professional photographer)



Continued support from our public accounting and industry partners has been important for continuous networking and educational opportunities. Three important partnerships we have locally are with Rea and Associates, Whitcomb & Hess, and The JM Smucker Company. We continue to welcome these partners on campus or visit them for an in-person tour and meeting every year. In the fall the AU IMA Club traveled 10-minutes down the road to the offices of Whitcomb & Hess, a public accounting and financial management firm, where we had the opportunity to tour the office, learn the guiding principles of Whitcomb & Hess, and have a Q & A session with multiple staff members and partners. This opportunity is a great networking opportunity that was well attended by our members and great connections were made. Rea & Associates came on campus in the fall to talk about internship opportunities and continuing careers at the various Rea & Associates locations across Ohio. We learned about the Rea Way and how the culture at Rea set them apart from many of their counterparts. A former intern and recent AU graduate joined them to talk about his experience from Meet the Accountant Night, internship, being extended a job offer, and now working his way through additional certifications. He credited his connection with Rea & Associates with his involvement in the AU IMA Club and the invaluable skills he learned and opportunities to network he was given. In the spring we welcomed The JM Smucker Company and three recent AU graduates to talk about the internship opportunities for accounting and finance students. The JM Smucker Company continues to support AU accounting and finance students by offering a yearly scholarship award for an outstanding student. Through these events we can see the importance of networking.

Project Assessment

When we set out to revive and renew the AU IMA Club, we knew that this would be an ongoing and multiple year endeavor and it was important to have specific and measurable goals. Since the onset of the project, we have had increased attendance at career development workshops, a steady growth in study table attendance, increased multi-department involvement, and support from faculty within the College of Business, increased interest from industry partners in coming to speak to the AU IMA Club members, increased interest in being a part of the AU IMA Club leadership committee, and continued growth in the accounting and finance student community at Ashland University. The strength of this approach continues to be in developing a strong relationship with the other business faculty and the Dean of the College of Business and Economics, as well as creating a sense of community among all the business students. We have increased the frequency of and promotion of the AU IMA Club meetings. With more students being aware of the meetings we are subsequently seeing a higher level of attendance at the meetings. One of the accidental benefits was in having the Provost of Ashland University stop by and ask what club we were and what Bob Archer was speaking about during our February career development workshop. Extending the awareness of our club, within Ashland University and the Ashland community as a whole is important especially since accountants are often seen as leaders and business advisors. While this approach required a significant time commitment to reach out and connect with students, faculty, and speakers, we found it fruitful with an increased interest in AU IMA Club leadership and even interest from business faculty to get a chance to speak to the AU IMA Club members.

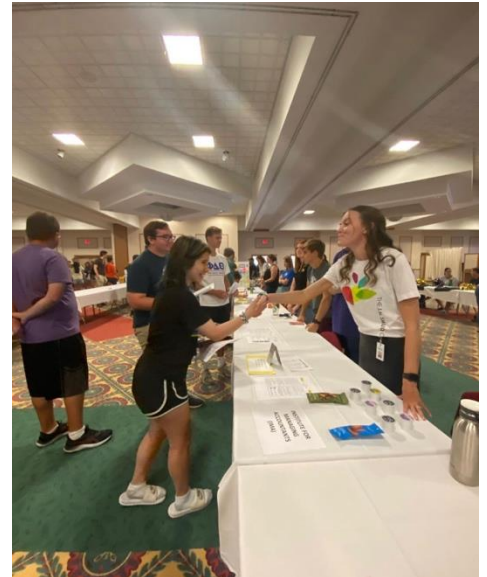
Additionally, this year is unique because our entire leadership team is graduating and moving on in May, so we have redirected our efforts slightly to recruiting leadership team members earlier in the semester to help transition from this year's leaders to this next year's leaders. Our approach for the 2023 – 2024 school year is to recruit and develop our AU IMA Club Officer team earlier allowing additional time to bring them alongside the current leadership to have a combined effort to finish the school year strong. By increasing the number of presentations, we have piqued the interest of two students. Ryan, a sophomore finance student, and Emily, a freshman accounting student, approached faculty advisor, Sue Mullen, and asked how they could become more involved in the AU IMA Club. They have attended all the meetings this year and were interested in taking on a leadership role to help continue growth of the club. Hilary approached LeighAnn, Hunter, and Haven to ask if they would be willing to join her and become a part of the leadership team as each person has unique skills that would make a stronger leadership team. Before the end of February, we have seven officers to help in implementing the remainder of our project. Now that we have more people willing to lend a hand and will be able to divide out the tasks as to not overburden any one member. We have already seen positive improvement in how much can be accomplished with many people helping. They say many hands make light work and with this in mind we feel that this can be sustainable for the long run and even replicated by other chapters.

Project Results

Although we have made significant progress and improved the awareness of our club during the 2022 – 2023 school year, there is still an enormous growth opportunity to increase membership and participation in our Ashland University IMA Accounting Club. The concerted effort by Mark Biltz, Hilary Wallace, and Sue Mullen rejuvenated the club. These efforts helped to create an environment of support for our students as well as the accounting and finance industry. Student engagement, faculty support, and overall campus awareness were at a record high for our Bob Archer presentation. This awareness has led to an increase in our officer team which will help support weekly meetings over the remainder of the spring 2023 semester and into the 2023 – 2024 school year.

2022-2023 Events

The following is a sampling of workshops, tours, networking events, promotional events, and other meetings that the AU IMA Club has done in the last year. Photos compliments of Sue Mullen



August 28th, 2022 – Freshman Orientation Involvement Fair – AU IMA Club was represented with a booth and students could visit to ask questions and learn more about the club.



September 1st, 2022 – Kick-Off – Speaker Zach McGrain from Career Services for Life Calling spoke to the AU IMA Club members



September 8th, 2022 – Meet the Accountant Night – Students networked with public accounting firms, corporate business partners, and government agencies.



October 19th, 2022 – Whitcomb & Hess Public Accounting Firm Tour – Students had the opportunity to tour a local Accounting & Financial Management office in Ashland, OH, and have a Q & A session with the partners and staff.

Photos compliments of Sue Mullen & Allison Waltz-Boebel



October 27th, 2022 – Becker Representative - Students had the chance to hear about the prep products that Becker offers and how they can help them review for future the CMA and CPA certifications.

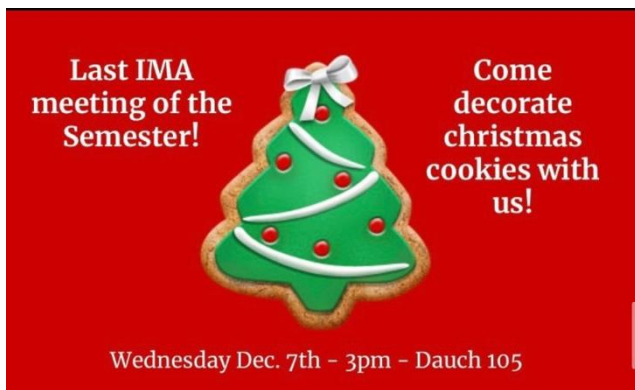
Becker+
IMA Meeting: Wednesday, October 5th at 3pm
Join us for a presentation about the CPA exam from Becker, A CPA exam review provider.
Free pizza will be provided!



Come and meet Rea & Associates
Wednesday, Nov. 16th
From 4-5 pm on Dauch 105



November 16th, 2022 – Rea & Associates Presentation – Students meet with multiple members of the Wooster office staff on campus and learned about internship opportunities.



December 7th, 2022 – Christmas Cookie Decorating – Students spent the afternoon playing Kahoot and decorating cookies in a fun filled afternoon with great community fellowship.

IMA Club Presents

Dr. Timothy Hinkel

Ethics in the Workplace:

How to Remove
Bias from
Decision Making

Tuesday
January 24th
4:00- 5:00pm
Dauch 105



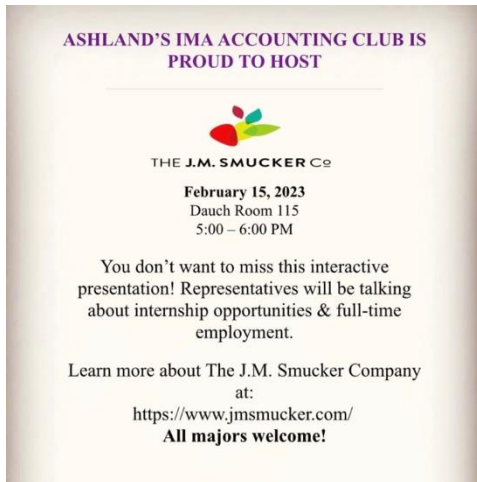
January 24th, 2023 – Ethics in the Workplace –

Dr. Timothy Hinkel spoke to the students and engaged them in a great discussion about how to handle ethical situations that arise in the workplace.



Photos compliments of Sue Mullen

February 1st, 2023 – Business & Entrepreneurship Workshop – Mr. Bob Archer spoke with the students about all the aspects of going into business for yourself and how important all the various business departments are, and how they must work together to be successful.



February 15th, 2023 – The JM Smucker Company – Corporate accounting and finance partner The JM Smucker Company visited campus to share internship opportunities with the students and discuss how closely related the accounting and finance career paths really are.

Looking to the Future: 2023-2024 Goals

Looking to the future we are hopeful that we will be met with continued growth and success in our three-prong approach to growing the AU IMA Club. First, we have added multiple ways to continuously engage the student population and increase enrollment and participation in the AU IMA Club career development workshops that focus on skills all business students will need when entering the job market. Second, we will continue to work to find times throughout the week to get together and meet for study tables. While we love the AU IMA Club study tables our hope is also to see students getting together organically and bringing the community element back to life after the pandemic kept us apart. Third, continuing to establish relationships within the accounting and finance communities so we can bring in valuable employers from public and private firms will allow the AU IMA Club members more opportunities to network and create lasting connections. By fostering relationships within the College of Business and Economics faculty we will be able to see continued growth through interdepartmental relationships that we will continue to grow.

The 2023-2024 AU IMA Club leadership team has put together a solid plan for next school year and continues to work on creating new opportunities for the AU IMA Club members. On the next page you will see a schedule detailing the plans for the remainder of 2023 and 2024.

IMA Spring 2023			
Week #	Day of Week	Date	Activity
1	Wed	1/11/23	Kick Off
2	Tues		NO MEETING
3	Wed		NO MEETING
4	Tues	1/24/23	Ethics in the workplace (Hinkel)
5	Wed	2/1/23	Business & Entrepreneurship (Archer)
6			NO MEETING
7	Wed	2/15/23	JM Smucker Presentation
8	Thurs	3/2/23	Accounting certification webinar with IMA Akron Chapter (morning)
			SPRING BREAK - NO MEETING
9	Wed	3/8/23	Resume review & mock interview practice (career services)
10	Tues	3/14/23	Entrepreneurship, how to work for yourself (Sudow)
10	Sat	3/18/23	Future Eagle Day (IMA & OSCP)
11	Wed	3/22/23	Spring Career Fair (IMA & OSCP)
12	Tues	3/28/23	Learning to learn, unlocking your learning style (Hartshorn)
12	Thurs	3/30/23	COBE Putt-Putt Day
13	Wed	4/5/23	Effective scheduling practices & apps to help with productivity (student led)
14	Tues	4/11/23	Write it down, how to take notes (career services)
15	Wed	4/19/23	Intern Q & A panel (past & present interns)
16	Wed	4/26/23	Senior sendoff – end of semester party – certification presentation
			FINALS WEEK - NO MEETING

IMA Fall 2023			
Week #	Day of Week	Date	Activity
1	Sun	8/27/23	Involvement fair
1	Wed	8/30/23	Kick-off/sign-ups Career Center for Life Calling
2	Thurs	9/7/23	Networking 101 (Mullen) Meet the Accountant Night
3	Wed	9/13/23	Learning how to learn (Hartshorn)
4	Tues	9/19/23	Marketing yourself, how to stand out (L. Russell) & Dress for success, how to dress to get the job you want (Rossi) COBE career closet
5	Wed	9/27/23	Whitcomb & Hess Tour (off campus tour & public accounting & finance partnership)
6	Tues	10/3/23	Communication is key, effective business communication (Tomlinson)
7	Wed	10/11/23	Becker CPA & CMA meeting
8	Tues	10/17/23	Legal right in the workplace, understanding your employee handbook (Sullivan)
9	Wed	10/25/23	Rea & Associates (public accounting & finance partnership)
10	Tues	10/31/23	Leadership skills, how to be a better leader (Fox)
11	Wed	11/8/23	Finance certifications meeting (Lopatin)
12	Tues	11/14/23	Internship success, learning in the real world (Hartsel)
13			THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO MEETING
14	Tues	11/28/23	What is accounting: the day-to-day management of money (Kaskey)
15	Wed	12/6/23	Senior sendoff – end of semester party – certification presentation
16			FINALS WEEK - NO MEETING

IMA Spring 2024			
Week #	Day of Week	Date	Activity
1	Wed	1/9/24	Welcome back & sign-ups
2	Tues	1/17/24	Accounting & Finance career crossovers (Hinkel & Lopatin)
3	Wed	1/23/24	Advocating for yourself in the workplace (Kalamas)
4	Tues	1/31/24	Investing in your future, 401K & beyond (Witherspoon)
5	Wed	2/6/24	JM Smucker (finance & accounting corporate partnership)
6	Tues	2/14/24	Ethics in the workplace, how to make ethical decisions (Hinkel)
7	Wed	2/20/24	Corporate finance & accounting partnership
8	Tues	2/28/24	Accounting certification webinar with IMA Akron Chapter
9			SPRING BREAK - NO MEETING
10	Wed	3/13/24	Let's talk about taxes, understanding your paycheck (Mullen)
11	Tues	3/19/24	What is finance - looking to the future for analysis & growth (Lopatin)
12	Wed	3/27/24	Business Analytics, metrics of measurement (Stoll/Holmes?)
13	Tues	4/2/24	Tech talk, using technology effectively (Lifer)
14	Wed	4/10/24	Strategic management, working together (Schmeller)
15	Tues	4/16/24	Intern Q & A panel (past & present interns)
16	Wed	4/24/24	Senior sendoff – end of semester party – certification presentation
17			FINALS WEEK - NO MEETING

	Promotional Event
	No Meeting
	Networking Event

	Career Development Workshop
	Accounting & Finance Workshop
	Fun Event

How Can Other Chapters Replicate AU IMA Club's Workshop Project?

All the efforts of the leadership team at the AU IMA Club have allowed us to continue to grow and reach more students, however, it is important to share that information with other IMA chapters so they too can implement a few simple ideas into their current plans to help develop more well-rounded students and offer more ways to develop their career skills for future employment. First, build connections, having a supportive community has been instrumental in the success of this project. Developing a solid leadership team and making connections with the students, faculty, and accounting and finance partners will help any club grow. Second, workshops will help students gain skills. Use your resources and community connections to build a workshop series for your club. We leaned heavily on the faculty within the College of Business and Economics to find speakers that can give students a look at the business from another perspective and set them up for future job success. Additionally, look at your local accounting and finance partners in the community, they love to speak to students and can bring real-world experience to the students and answer questions while allowing the students to build their network of professionals. Third, foster community among your members. We are all accounting and finance students, those that are older can offer mentorship to the younger members and working side by side at study tables bolsters a sense of comradery among the various classes and gives the students a place to be able to ask questions and get answers. These simple steps can help grow other chapters and allow for easy implementation across IMA sister chapters.