

MACKLIN BUSINESS INSTITUTE

MBI Director Steve Lang
Academic Director Brian Baick
Director Center for Entrepreneurship
 Robert Snyder
MBI Board Chairman Pamela Little,
 Sr. Vice President and CFO ATS Corporation
MBI Board Co-Chairman Leslie Levine, CEO
 InvisiTrack, Inc.

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Brian Cunningham, CEO
 Ocean Energy Systems, Inc.
 Howard Frank, Dean
 Robert H. Smith School of Business
 University of Maryland
 John Wall, Chairman and CEO
 Capital Markets Advisors, Inc.
 Elizabeth "Libby" Labash, CFP, First VP,
 Wealth Management
 Smith Barney
 John Bucy, Partner
 Edge Professional Services, LLC
 President, Avail Business Ventures
 Pat Cleveland, Associate Dean
 Robert H. Smith School of Business
 University of Maryland
 Solomon Graham, President and CEO
 Quality Biological, Inc.
 Maria Stephenson, Sr. Audit Associate
 KPMG, LLP

SPONSORS

- Carl M. Freeman Foundation
- Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship,
 University of Maryland, College Park
- Hogan & Hartson, LLP
- Maryland Department of Business
 and Economic Development
- Montgomery County Department of
 Economic Development

Macklin Scholar Stuart Kessler

Just one month shy of his 29th birthday, Stuart Kessler is out to prove that age is just a number when it comes to excelling at Montgomery College's Macklin Business Institute. It has been a long, and admittedly windy, road for this former Elon University freshman, current waiter and bartender, one-time Jeep salesman, seldom sleeping Macklin Scholar. While this may sound like too much for one man to handle, for Kessler, every day brings a new adventure.

We recently sat down with the busy student to learn more about his life and what brought him to Montgomery College.

What were your aspirations when you left your Howard County home and headed to Elon in North Carolina?

If you had asked me what my life goal was after high school, I would have said something like an actor or a stock broker. But I guess my original "life dream" was that I didn't have one. I was selfish and had no thoughts of the future.

What ultimately made you leave Elon?

Back then, I would have given you a

laundry list of reasons. However, the true problem was that I wasn't ready for the responsibility that comes with earning a college degree.

You began working in the restaurant business and it's something you enjoy and feel you're very good at to this day.

I work at a prominent steakhouse and climbed the ladder quickly. But I realized I spent nearly a decade in the industry and I hit a ceiling. All of a sudden, I'm 27 years old with nothing to show for myself except a stunning resume for a position in a restaurant [and a sizable amount of debt.] I used to think "failure is not an option" was a good motto, but I spent a good part of my twenties failing. I felt like a hypocrite.

So you decided to take on a new challenge, the MBI Program at Montgomery College?

I've had a lot of exposure working in group dynamics. I like working with people and that is the cornerstone of the program. I also have an addiction to being challenged. I love having to juggle 19 things at once and MBI requires it.

How are you managing your time between work and school?

The great balancing act of working, going to school, and being in the MBI program is not for the weak hearted. During the [busiest] times, I average three and a half hours of sleep a night. It's tough, but you can sleep when you're dead. It's worth it, though. I have never been able to hold my head as high.

Can your past experiences be an asset when presenting at the student business competitions that are an integral part of being a Macklin Scholar?

I am not sure if presenting is nature or nurture. I've always loved being the center of attention ... when I know what I'm talking about! And the idea of developing business models and conducting high-level presentations gives me goosebumps. There is nothing worse than falling on your face in front of a room full of people, and I have. The secret I have found is to realize that life is supposed to be fun and not a plague. Failure happens. Just be prepared for it.

What kind of advice can you give to younger students?



I didn't know what I wanted to do when I was younger and I used that as an excuse to run away from school. I still don't know what I want to do because it evolves every day. The best advice I can give is to jump right in and sort it out as you go.

And in 10 years you want to be...

I don't know where I want to be in 10 years because what I want to do next year evolves from day to day. I want a house, a wife, a car, etc. But I really just want to be happy. And maybe own a scuba diving shop in the Caribbean when I retire...