

Inspiring the Next Generation:

**How the Secured Finance Foundation's Guest
Lecture Program and Martin I. Katz Scholarship
Are Shaping Future Secured Finance Leaders**

BY EILEEN WUBBE

Launched in 2019, SFFound's Guest Lecture Program aims to educate and inspire young, diverse talent in the secured finance industry by introducing students to asset-based lending (ABL), factoring, and other secured lending disciplines.

In support of this lecture series, the Secured Finance Foundation connects industry leaders with undergraduate and graduate finance students. Each Guest Lecture is led by individuals from SFNet's network of Foundation and Board members, committee leaders, or our local and community-driven chapter network, providing students with a high-level look at secured finance as an industry and a career path.

Guest Lectures provides access to SFNet's database of current internships offered by SFNet's member companies and a scholarship program to support internship acquisition and networking opportunities, both at the local level and at the national level.

To help ease the financial stressors that often come with internships, such as rent in a new city, commuting and work attire, the Martin I. Katz Guest Lecture Scholarship was created by the Katz Family to help bring diverse talent to the secured finance industry.

"My dad, Martin I. Katz, was one of the early turnaround consultants, long before it was considered an industry," said his son, Robert Katz, managing director, Eisner Advisory Group LLC. "He founded Executive Sounding Board Associates Inc. in 1978. One of the places he always attributed his success to was the Commercial Finance Association (CFA), the Secured Finance Network's predecessor. Prior to me joining the industry, at our dinner table, he would share captivating stories about the Association and its luminaries, many (but not all) members of the Hall of Fame, such as Larry Marsiello, Joe Pollicino, Sr., Bill Davis and Walter Einhorn, just to name a few.

"He loved education and being a part of the Secured Finance Foundation. He was an early member and constant contributor of the SFFound. The SFFound brought out his passion and he was always making sure his opinions were heard. I am sure, some would say, too active. I too, became an active member of the SFFound.

"When my dad passed away almost three years ago, I could think of no better way to honor his memory than establishing a scholarship in his honor and memory. At the time, Jennifer Palmer, president, JPalmer Collective, was SFNet's president. So, I reached out to her and two of my dad's favorite SFNet leaders, Jeff Goldrich, president, SLR Business Credit, who founded, along with another SFNet legend, Ted Kompa, Business Alliance Capital Corp., to establish a scholarship. That was the origin of the Guest Lecture Scholarship Program."

Katz hopes to see others contribute to the Guest Lecture Program and help it grow.

"Marty loved the SFNet and knew education made a



■ **NICOLE BYREN**
University of South Carolina



■ **JACKSON LANDA**
University of Chicago



■ **CHAPIN MEMMOTT**
Southern Methodist University



■ **JASRAJ SINGH**
Wayne State University

significant difference to him, a kid from an underserved community who put himself through college, and became a leader as a turnaround consultant, honored in 2018 by the Turnaround Management Association's Hall of Fame. What could be better than paying/playing it forward for our future?", Katz said.

The program has already impacted students, including Nicole Byren, a senior psychology major at the University of South Carolina; Chapin Memmott, a corporate communications & public affairs major at Southern Methodist University; Jackson Landa, an economics and data science major, University of Chicago; and Jasraj Singh, a junior accounting major at Wayne State University - Mike Ilitch School of Business, who completed their 2024 industry internships thanks to SFNet's Guest Lecture Program and the Martin I. Katz Scholarship.

Guest Lecture Experiences

SFNet presented “Opportunities in Lending” to undergraduate business program students at Baruch College in New York City in fall 2023. Ikhwan A. Rafeek, partner, Blank Rome, was the moderator and panelists included Jeff Austin, senior vice president, SLR Digital Finance, Joe Barbuzza, VP, credit officer Portfolio Management, Bank Hapoalim, and Ryan Kerner, vice president, JP Morgan Chase.

The presentation was presented “coffee table” style to discuss various topics such as what is SFNet, asset-based lending and panelists’ academic backgrounds and what led them to a career in secured commercial finance. They also discussed the various types of banks, non-bank lenders and service providers in the industry and what roles are available as well as different job opportunities, internships and networking. Michael Ticehurst, partner and field exam manager, Rosenberg and Fecci Consulting, helped coordinate the lecture and has since had two summer interns from SFNet’s guest lecture programs.

“Rosenberg and Fecci Consulting was very excited to get the exposure through the SFNet internship program and offerings, and the scholarship opportunity was the ‘cherry on top!’,” Ticehurst said. “Our interns provided their resumes, contact information and general information as requested, and were very excited when they learned they were selected for the scholarships. Our internship is a true introduction to ABL. It is hands-on. Mornings are spent learning new concepts, and the afternoons were spent refining the concepts. The interns were in the office with our team and often worked to aggregate information and recreate work completed by our field exam staff. The interns were a true part of our team, engaging in our firm meetings, on calls with lenders and clients, and even going on-site to clients for field work review and inventory test counts with a partner or manager of R&F. The goal of the internship is to give the intern an opportunity to understand field exam, and the important role it plays in lenders making informed and timely decisions regarding their collateral. We are very happily expecting to bring on 1 or 2 interns for summer 2025, and the door is open for both 2024 interns to be offered a full-time position upon graduation, should they be interested, as both Chapin and Nikki exceeded our expectations with their performance, professionalism, and personalities.”

Robert Bowles, founder, executive director, Bluewater Transaction Advisors LLC, guest lectured at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI, and was invited to speak to an accounting class virtually to a different set of students.

“We reached about 50 students and received six applications since then. Students were engaged and asking questions,” Bowles said. “Many students expressed that they had never heard of secured lending or of a collateral field exam. There needs to be an effort made to pass along the knowledge and experience to the next generation of industry professionals.”

2025 Guest Lectures:

Baruch College
Georgia State University
Kean University
Kennesaw State University
Lehman College
Northeastern-Chicago
Rider University
Rutgers University
St. John’s University
University of Georgia
University of Illinois

2024 Guest Lectures

Bentley University
CUNY Future in Finance
Florida Atlantic University
Georgia Tech
Hofstra University
Kennesaw State University
Lehman College
LIU Post
Marist University
Rutgers University - Newark Campus
Nova University
Queens University
Rice University
Rider University
Rutgers University - New Brunswick Campus
St. John’s University
Stony Brook University
University of Texas at Austin
University of Illinois
University of Indiana
Wayne State University

Internship Experiences

Jasraj Singh attended the guest lecture at Wayne State University, having never heard of asset-based lending or its

associated careers in school and had only had an “inkling” of knowledge about the field from research he did prior to the event.

“I was surprised by the depth of coverage the lecture went into,” Singh said. “I was interested in the process in which the industry operated on, and where Bluewater fit into the whole process. Interning with Bluewater solidified my interest and led me to think positively about possibly entering into a career in the industry. My experience at Bluewater was nothing short of amazing. I was able to learn something new about the industry and different situations every day. The professionals I worked with showed me the high level of quality and expertise they put into their work, which inspired me to put more effort into my own projects to meet that high standard. I was able to work on projects that were meaningful and that contributed to my learning and growth. After completing my internship, I was grateful to have been able to work with some of the brightest people in the industry and learn firsthand about the opportunities available.”

Singh’s internship consisted of helping Bluewater professionals with projects that allowed him to understand the in-depth field examination process and the best practices that went along with it.

“My favorite aspects about my internship were the collaborative aspect and being able to ask questions when needed. I greatly appreciated the mentorship I received, and all the lessons I learned have helped me excel in my academic journey. I was able to take away a lot from the experience, including more knowledge about the field as well as a greater understanding of financial statements and understanding lending processes. Accounting is a field that I had not associated with the ABL industry prior to my internship, but in the process, I learned just how important it was to understand how financials work alongside the impact of various accounting principles.”

After graduating from WSU in December 2025, Singh plans

to pursue his CPA and become an auditor. He is also interested in a career in the ABL industry.

“At WSU, I help lead the largest professional finance club on campus, the Financial Management Association (FMA), that helps fellow students start their careers through networking opportunities and internships. Through this, I have come to understand that many fields put great emphasis on early recruiting that end up making students think that no other fields exist outside of them. My internship with Bluewater opened my eyes to this, and I now encourage my fellow students to pursue opportunities outside the more generic paths that may exist. Organizations like Bluewater may get overlooked by many students, but still provide an equal, if not greater, opportunity as a whole to have a career in.”

For Rosenberg & Fecci interns Nicole Byren and Chapin Memmott, their internships gave them insight into opportunities where they could use their degrees once they graduate.

Byren had a contact who had interned at Rosenberg & Fecci the previous summer who spoke highly about the experience and was from her nearby hometown of Rumson, NJ. She heard about the scholarship through Ticehurst, who reached out to her about the guest lecture event and scholarship.

“The internship gave me a clear understanding of what a career in auditing and consulting looks like,”

Byren said. “It helped me develop technical skills, like financial analytics, and critical thinking skills, such as communication and teamwork. As a psychology major, I found out a lot of what I studied, like understanding human behavior, communications and problem-solving, complemented my internship experience. Working with clients and teams required strong interpersonal skills and the ability to analyze situations from different perspectives. Psychology has helped me approach challenges thoroughly and communicate effectively, which is a big part of succeeding in a job like that and in a career. Going into it, I



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was nervous because I was going to intern for a company that I thought had nothing to do with psychology, but it gave me so much insight into how companies work and how to collaborate with other people. The internship really made me want to go more into management.

“I was lucky enough to be able to go onsite to conduct an inventory check that wasn’t in office during the internship. With that, you go out and talk to people in a variety of industries to do inventory checks. Someone was with me, giving me the rundown on how the inventory checks work step by step. Not once did I feel like I was out of the loop.”

Graduating this May, Byren has been commuting into the New York City area while home on breaks speaking with prospects and networking with companies such as Merrill Lynch and UBS, for positions within sales, management and CRM assistant roles, to figure out her future plans.

Chapin Memmott was also encouraged to apply for the Guest Lecture Scholarship from Ticehurst and Steve Rosenberg and interned during summer 2024.

“The staff at Rosenberg & Fecci didn’t treat us as interns, but more so as employees who worked at the company, which was really special,” Memmott said. “I know that at other places, that’s not exactly what you do. You’re just shadowing people. They made us feel like we worked at the company and wanted us to be as involved as we could, joining meetings with everyone and have us check the work and trust we did it correctly. It really made us feel like they didn’t have to watch over at all times.”

When Memmott graduates in May 2026, she plans to move back to the East Coast and seek a job in finance, and is interested in trading, sales, private equity and wealth management.

“I’ve been looking at jobs this summer in those fields. I really enjoyed learning things on the accounting side during the internship and what I could do in my career. I found that helpful and it gave me an understanding of what fields I would like to go into.”

For advice for future interns, Memmott advised to fine tune Excel skills since she often used Excel during her internship.

Jackson Landa interned at San Francisco-based BizCap during the Summer of 2024. He attended the Wayne State University Guest Lecture over Zoom.

“I knew that I wanted to work in San Francisco, and do something in finance, whether it was credit investment or banking-related,” he explained. “I went on LinkedIn and reached out to people at firms that I thought would be interesting to work at, and I reached out to the BizCap team and asked if they could hop on a call and talk about a potential internship. I spoke with BizCap’s CEO, Chuck Doyle, and things took off from there and I had a great summer with them.”

Landa was based in San Diego at the time and stayed with cousins in the San Francisco area, but had to commute an hour and 20 minutes via ferry and car to the internship,

crediting the Guest Lecture Scholarship money in helping with his transportation and meals.

At BizCap, Landa helped with financial analysis, teasers for companies that are looking to help creditors lend and worked with SIMs and confidential information, such as memorandums and organized financial statements.

“I also offered some of my own investment recommendations, which was taken with a large grain of salt, and was more of an educational opportunity for me than anything serious for the team. But it was something fun for me to do after I’d finished all the financial analysis and number crunching on Excel sheets. The people at BizCap were absolutely amazing and I’m so grateful for them for letting me spend the summer there and work with them. They took me in with open arms and taught me a lot and spent time with me.”

This summer, Landa will be interning at private credit firm Apogem Capital LLC in Chicago.

“I’m really excited for that. Private credit has been one of my interests for a while and I am also part of a credit-focused club at school. I think I’d like to stay in the realm of credit for the time being because I have been learning about credit for a couple years now and it is an area that has really interested me and it obviously has had a lot of growth in the past few years. I’m also interested in special situations, more complex debt and equity investing, and potentially restructuring investment banking.”

Eileen Wubbe is senior editor of The Secured Lender magazine.