

Gene Spaulding Inspires Students at Huntsman School of Business

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The Huntsman School of Business was honored to welcome entrepreneur and business leader Jean Spaulding as a guest speaker for the ongoing Entrepreneurship Leadership Series. Spaulding, an accomplished entrepreneur in the assisted living industry, shared insights on business, perseverance, and the importance of taking risks in one's career. His engaging presentation resonated deeply with students and faculty alike, emphasizing real-world applications of the principles learned in the classroom.

Spaulding began his talk by reflecting on his own journey, recounting his early days as a finance and economics student at Utah State University. He emphasized the value of learning from others, stating, "I promise you this class is worth a lot more than the one credit they're giving you. It's like a master's degree if you'll pay attention and apply some of the principles that have been given."

After graduation, Spaulding built a career in investment banking, eventually transitioning to entrepreneurship. He founded S Management, a company that operates and manages assisted living facilities across multiple states. He credited much of his success to leveraging opportunities, learning continuously, and surrounding himself with the right mentors and business partners.

Spaulding's speech was filled with powerful anecdotes that illustrated his philosophy on success. He shared a personal story about overcoming a cleft palate, which required years of speech therapy as a child. Instead of allowing this challenge to hold him back, he used it as motivation, stating, "Every one of us has a different challenge... Use it as an opportunity to become stronger, to become better, and to prove to others that you can do hard things."

He also highlighted the importance of networking and building relationships, emphasizing that many of his business opportunities stemmed from the connections he made throughout his career. "Get to know your professors, make sure they know you. Build relationships because those relationships can have a lasting impact on you for the rest of your life."

A key theme in Spaulding's talk was the significance of calculated risk-taking. He recounted how he took a major financial leap by investing in his first assisted living facility, despite it being on the verge of shutting down. With a strategic mindset and the willingness to take risks, he turned the failing business into a profitable enterprise. "You need two things: a skill and cash. If you have those, you can find a way to make something work."

His business philosophy centers around disciplined financial management, ensuring that his company never overleverages itself. Spaulding shared a crucial lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic when many businesses struggled due to high debt loads. "We were able to weather the storm because we weren't overleveraged. Always be responsible with your financial decisions."

Beyond business success, Spaulding spoke passionately about the importance of giving back. His company, S Management, established the 'S Cares' initiative, which provides financial assistance to employees in need. He and his family have also been deeply involved in humanitarian efforts, including providing clean water to communities in Cambodia.

He concluded his talk with a message on balance and fulfillment: "Enough is a choice, not an amount. Chase experiences, not just money, and always remember what truly matters."