Cameron School of Business stresses quality, adapts to change

The Cameron School of Business prepares students for knowledge-based decisions, career progression, and business leadership in a global environment. PHOTO BY: JEFF JANOWSKI/UNCW

By Jan Ware

Robert Burton has deep roots in eastern North Carolina, and he has been a professor and academic leader at UNCW since 1999, becoming Dean of the Cameron School of Business in 2015.

In that time, Burton has seen the school of business evolve into a nationally ranked and accredited institution with support and guidance from hundreds of top business leaders who now call Wilmington home.

"We find ourselves in a fantastic partnership with the business community, and that partnership continues on, of our end, producing market-ready, driven graduates," he said.

UNCW Chancellor Jose Sartarelli emphasized the quality of graduates from the Cameron School of Business, which ranked 67th in the 2020 Fuqua & Quartly list of best schools for undergraduate business majors and is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

"I want to make sure that I get qualified students to come," said Sartarelli. "I want to make sure that I get professors who are the best qualified. And I want to make sure those professors develop programs that are the most innovative and impactful. With those three things you end up with quality education."

Preparing for work

The business community provides internships for CSB students to prepare them for the rigors of the workplace when they graduate, Burton said.

J.C. Smith, who oversees employee learning and facilities at Wilmington-based Live Oak Bank, said a fourth of the bank's 600 employees have taken CSB connections, most of the school with the business of many started out as interns.

"In fact, I had a May graduate start right from UNCW and probably four out of those six were interns who just went from intern to full-time," Smith said. "What I love about UNCW students is they come here, and they seem to appreciate the fact that they're going to have to work the real world and the work scored for that."

The school of business is home to the Cameron Executive Network, made up of more than 250 professionals and executives who mentor the school's students in one-on-one relationships.

"They are basically spending time educating and passing on great practices to students, and that's a great benefit," Burton said.

The goal of the executive network is to get students to think deeply about their careers and how they can position themselves to get a job when they graduate and serve the business community.

Burton said the pandemic has brought the school of business to support them through virtual online services.

"We've been able to adapt what we do on campus and bring it online," he said. "And students have been able to adapt and be successful in learning and knowledge for undergraduates from CSB."