

**ACCT 559: STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS THROUGH A CFO LENS
Spring 2023**

**The 8:00 am to 9:20 am class will meet in JKP 112 on Tues/Thurs
The 9:30 am to 10:50 am class will meet in JKP 202 on Tues/Thurs**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will address strategic and operational issues that companies face in multiple industries, and the responses of chief financial officers who are responsible for financial planning and analysis, financial reporting and decision making. We will view the business from the eyes of the chief financial officer.

The course will include CFOs from ten companies within eight industries, each focusing on key issues that their companies/industries face and how they address them. For seven of the Company's, we will have three sessions. In the first session, we will discuss the company and its industry, focusing on relevant issues and relevant performance measures. In the second session, we use a board meeting format to focus on how the subject company might drive performance via strategic alternatives. In the third session, we will hear from the CFO of the subject company in a heavily interactive session as to how they manage the business with respect to the important issues and key performance indicators("KPIs").

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a CFO
2. Apply practical thinking skills from various business disciplines to industry/company issues
3. Develop an appreciation for a financial management perspective on strategic and operational issues
4. Increase resources and skills for business problem solving
5. Broaden awareness of industry risks and strategies and apply this knowledge to on-the-job situations
6. Experience direct interaction with CFOs

COURSE MATERIALS

There is no textbook for this class. Reference materials as well as materials for the industries/subject companies will be posted on Blackboard. If you have any questions or need assistance with the Blackboard Course Pages, please contact the Marshall Help Desk at 213-740-3000 (option 2) or HelpDesk@marshall.usc.edu.” Alternatively, (213) 740-5555 will get you the USC ITS Help Desk.

GRADING

We will adhere to the USC Leventhal School of Accounting and Marshall School of Business grading standards for graduate courses, for which the target course GPA for electives is 3.5.

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>% of Overall Grade</u>
Written company board analysis	100	20%
Leadership of Board Meetings (50% group and 50% individual)	100	20%
Assignments	85	17%
Oral Participation	85	17%
CFO Question Outlines	30	6%
Final Paper	<u>100</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	<u>500</u>	<u>100%</u>

GROUP PROJECT TEAMS

Group Project teams will be used in the Board Meetings described below. Each group project team will engage as a team for board meetings. The board meeting teams will typically be three to four members. I will assign the teams.

BOARD MEETINGS

The class will engage in seven board meetings throughout the semester, each focusing on a single case/entity that we are studying. During the first, the entire class will participate, and debate three specific hypothetical proposals presented to the Board. In each of the other six, three teams will lead the meeting, and each will propose a specific action by the subject company and support that action from the perspective of the CFO. The rest of the class will function as the board of directors and will participate in the discussion. The three groups will support their position and refute the positions of the other two groups, using relevant data to support their positions.

The board meetings will be graded for both the written four-page outlines, and the oral performance (both group and individual). Grading criteria includes strength of support for every position, effectiveness of countering other group positions, data used in all aspects of the board meeting and quality of the comments made, both individually and as a group.

ORAL PARTICIPATION

This course has a strong emphasis on oral participation. Students will be graded on the quality and consistency of oral participation in all class sessions. Examples of high-quality comments are those that pertain to key performance indicators (“KPIs”) and how they are used, current leading issues in a particular industry, aspects of board meeting positions (when interacting with a CFO in a subsequent session), and typically any comment that reflects advanced relevant research on a company, industry, or issue. All students should participate in the board meetings, not only the students in the debating groups. Students are encouraged to discuss any aspects of oral participation during office hours. If

participation is difficult for you, please make sure and see me early in the semester and I will give you some tips that will help you.

ASSIGNMENTS

These are individual assignments. **Case assignments** - most assignments will relate to the entities for which students **are not** in a debating group. Included in this assignment category will be an introductory board meeting assignment for everyone. Assignments must be typed and turned in on Blackboard prior to class on the date of the related board meeting. These assignments should be 1 to 2 pages in length. **Topic assignments** – Throughout the semester we will have class days devoted to topics that are important to understanding the CFOs responsibilities, including, developing, and using KPIs, mastering investor relations, financing operations, etc. As a general rule, there will be a related assignments for each of the topics covered. **Guest CFO assignments** – In addition to the seven CFOs who come to class as part of the company cases, I am planning for three additional CFOs that will address the class on topics of interest. For at least two of these CFO visits, we will have assignments.

CFO QUESTION OUTLINES

We will have CFOs come to class throughout the semester. I expect the CFO's opening remarks to be no more than 15 minutes. Those remarks will include comments related to the three strategic positions presented during the class board meeting. I also expect that the CFOs will ask questions of the debating groups to have them explain their strategic proposals. Each student will be assigned to prepare questions related to one of the CFOs. The questions should focus on the CFO's industry and company. Questions should predominately pertain to strategies and operations as well as CFO's strategic and operational role. These students will also be expected to lead Q&A session during the presentation, with strong participation of all students in the class.

FINAL COMPANY COMPARISON PROJECT

Each student will complete a four-page final paper selecting a strategic priority that is shared by two of the entities we have analyzed and evaluate their comparative business objectives and operational responses. The papers will be graded on how effectively they address the following points about that single topic:

- Discuss each company's environment and business objectives that surround the selected strategic priority.
- Compare and contrast the companies' operational responses.
- How can the CFO measure performance with respect to the strategic priority and operational responses?
- How can the Company (and CFO) drive behavior and performance to meet the desired objectives. Include the use of performance measures, resource allocation and potential returns/rewards to the company.
- In your opinion, which company is more effective in managing these issues and why?
- Finally, what can each company learn from the other?

CLASS DAY AND TIME

This is a residential class. In-person attendance is expected, and unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC OSAS requiring remote attendance, there is no option to attend class via Zoom. Class attendance and participation is important in developing a coherent view of the materials covered in the course. Attendance is mandatory for every class session.

Class session will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 to 9:20 a.m. or from 9:30 to 10:50 a.m. **When CFOs join us, all sessions will be at 8:00 a.m. and on those days we will not have a 9:30**

am class. On occasion, a CFO may need to join us on Zoom instead of in-person. All student cameras need to be on at all times during these sessions.

COURSE FORMAT

All course materials can be found in Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu>). Session activities may include reading assignments, weekly lessons, interactive exercises, homework assignments, Blackboard discussion forums, class sessions, and quizzes or exams. It is expected that students will have completed all required activities and assignments before attending each class session.

Students should ensure that they can access all online tools via Blackboard prior to the start of classes.

Zoom is the platform used for all online sessions and online office hours. A link and instructions to join the Zoom sessions will be posted in the Blackboard Course Pages. For more information about Zoom, go to: "[Show Me" Videos - Zoom Learning Center \(learn.zoom.us\)](https://learn.zoom.us)

THE IMPORTANCE OF COURSE EVALUATIONS

The student course evaluations are valuable. This course is continuously improved based on feedback from students and instructor observations.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the USC Emergency Information web site (<https://emergency.usc.edu/>) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC's Blackboard learning management system (blackboard.usc.edu), teleconferencing, and other technologies.

USE OF RECORDINGS

Pursuant to the USC Student Handbook (www.usc.edu/scampus, Part B, 11.12), students may not record a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class. In addition, students may not distribute or use notes or recordings based on University classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than personal or class-related group study by students registered for the class. This restriction on unauthorized use applies to all information that is distributed or displayed for use in relationship to the class.

COURSE OUTLINE*

Class Schedule		
Week	Dates	Original
Week 1	Tuesday, 10 January 2023	Introduction to Strategy and Operations Through the CFO Lens
	Thursday, 12 January 2023	T'Shaka Lee - Deloitte Partner -Global/US audit Process Transformation Leader - The attributes and skillsets of a successful CFO

Week 2	Tuesday, 17 January 2023	John Toth, Class Co-Conspirator - Welcome to My World - Role and Responsibilities of the CFO
	Thursday, 19 January 2023	Introduction to our first case - The "Jules" Venture Capital Case
Week 3	Tuesday, 24 January 2023	Jules Board Meeting
	Thursday, 26 January 2023	Emily Westerhold - Strategic Finance and Operations Lead, Andreessen Horowitz
Week 4	Tuesday, 31 January 2023	ARC Case Study
	Thursday, 2 February 2023	ARC Board Presentations
Week 5	Tuesday, 7 February 2023	John Toth - Discussion/debrief of ARC Case
	Thursday, 9 February 2023	Lessons Learned from first two cases and speakers.

***Note – remainder of the course outline will be updated as CFO class visit dates are finalized**

OPEN EXPRESSION AND RESPECT FOR ALL

An important goal of the educational experience at USC Marshall is to be exposed to and discuss diverse, thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial ideas that challenge one’s beliefs. In this course we will support the values articulated in the USC Marshall “[Open Expression Statement](#).”

Marshall Learning Environment: Open Expression and Respect for All

The USC Marshall School of Business shares the University’s Unifying Values:

- We act with integrity in the pursuit of excellence.
- We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion to promote well-being.
- We engage in open communication and are accountable for living our values.

We value each person's humanity and voice and strive to ensure that every member of our community feels that they belong and are respected.

We support the USC Statement protecting free speech and the academic freedom of faculty and students. Certain limited categories of speech are not protected by the law, such as expression that is defamatory, incites violence, constitutes a true threat or unlawful harassment, or violates privacy,

confidentiality, or intellectual property rights. But other than the limited categories of legally unprotected speech, we are committed to fostering a learning environment where free inquiry and expression are encouraged and celebrated and for which all members of the Marshall community share responsibility. We recognize that speech that is deeply offensive may nevertheless be legally protected and seek to restrain ourselves from responding with censorship or reprisal.

The classroom is an environment in which students and faculty should not feel they will be punished, ostracized, or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, or concerns, or for making mistakes. As part of the educational process, students and faculty will discuss topics that may make some people uncomfortable, unhappy, distressed, or even offended. Sometimes there will be strong disagreements about these topics, and the care with which they are discussed is paramount. It is the shared responsibility of members of our community: to treat each other with courtesy, dignity and respect; to appreciate the spectrum of viewpoints on an issue; and, to be actively involved in working through contentious issues together.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

eeotix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu

chan.usc.edu/otfp

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Appendix I. MARSHALL GRADUATE PROGRAMS LEARNING GOALS

How ACCT 559 Contributes to Marshall Graduate Program Learning Goals

Marshall Graduate Program Learning Goals	ACCT 559 Objectives that support this goal	Assessment Method*
<p><i>Learning Goal #1: Develop Personal Strengths.</i> Our graduates will develop a global and entrepreneurial mindset, lead with integrity, purpose and ethical perspective, and draw value from diversity and inclusion.</p>		
1.1 Possess personal integrity and a commitment to an organization’s purpose and core values.	4,5,6	Board Meetings
1.2 Expand awareness with a global and entrepreneurial mindset, drawing value from diversity and inclusion.	2,3,5,6	Industry study, final paper, CFO Sessions
1.3 Exhibit awareness of ethical dimensions and professional standards in decision making.	2,4,5,6	Board Meetings, CFO sessions
<p><i>Learning Goal #2: Gain Knowledge and Skills.</i> Our graduates will develop a deep understanding of the key functions of business enterprises and will be able to identify and take advantage of opportunities in a complex, uncertain and dynamic business environment using critical and analytical thinking skills.</p>		
2.1 Gain knowledge of the key functions of business enterprises.	1,3,4,5,6	Industry study, HW assignments, CFO sessions
2.2 Acquire advanced skills to understand and analyze significant business opportunities, which can be complex, uncertain and dynamic.	2,3,4,5,6	Board Meetings, final paper, CFO sessions
2.3 Use critical and analytical thinking to identify viable options that can create short-term and long-term value for organizations and their stakeholders.	2,3,4,5,6	Board Meetings, final paper, HW assignments

<p><i>Learning Goal #3: Motivate and Build High Performing Teams.</i> Our graduates will achieve results by fostering collaboration, communication and adaptability on individual, team, and organization levels.</p>		
<p>3.1 Motivate and work with colleagues, partners, and other stakeholders to achieve organizational purposes.</p>	<p>1,4,5</p>	<p>Board Meetings, CFO sessions</p>
<p>3.2 Help build and sustain high-performing teams by infusing teams with a variety of perspectives, talents, and skills and aligning individual success with team success and with overall organizational success.</p>	<p>1,4,5</p>	<p>Board Meetings, CFO sessions</p>
<p>3.3 Foster collaboration, communication and adaptability in helping organizations excel in a changing business landscape.</p>	<p>1,4,5</p>	<p>Board Meetings, CFO sessions</p>

**Appendix 1B. USC LEVENTHAL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR
MASTER OF ACCOUNTING
AND MASTER OF BUSINESS TAXATION PROGRAMS**

How ACCT 559 Contributes to Leventhal Graduate Program Learning Goals

Leventhal Graduate Program Learning Goals	ACCT 559 Objectives that support this goal	Assessment Method*
<p>1. Technical, Conceptual, Problem-Solving Students will be competent in and be able to apply discipline specific knowledge and skills in the fields of accounting and auditing. This learning outcome includes the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as an understanding of the strategic role of accounting and auditing in business organizations and society.</p>	1,2,3,4,5,6	Industry study, HW assignments, Board Meetings
<p>2. Professional Development Students will be able to communicate clearly and strategically, after considering the relevant audience, situation, and purpose of the communication. Students will demonstrate the ability to work productively with others to accomplish established goals.</p>	2,3,4,5,6	Board Meetings, Final paper
<p>3. Research/Life-Long Learning Students will be able to use relevant research databases and academic/professional literature to gain new knowledge and analyze business situations.</p>	2,4,5,6	Industry study, Board Meetings, Final paper
<p>4. Ethical Principles and Professional Standards Students will be able to apply ethical principles and professional standards in analyzing situations and making informed decisions.</p>	2,4,5,6	Board Meetings, CFO sessions
<p>5. Globalization and Diversity Students will be able to demonstrate an international perspective and appreciation for diversity and cultural differences, along with their significance in global business</p>	4,5,6	Board Meetings, CFO sessions

Appendix II

SAMPLE PEER EVALUATION FORM

Please identify your team and team members for the ____ Project(s) that you worked on. Then rate all your team members, *including yourself*, based on the **contributions** of each team member for the selected assignment according to the criteria listed below. On a scale of 0 – 2 with 0 indicating does not meet expectations, 1 meets expectations and 2 exceeds expectations, rate each person on each of the five criteria. Lastly, add up the points for each person with the maximum number of points for each person being 10. In the box below, describe the exact contributions of each team member, including yourself.

Team Members/ Assessment Criteria of Team Contributions	Team Member 1	Team Member 2	Team Member 3	Yourself
1. Role Performance				
2. Assists Team Members				
3. Listening and Discussing				
4. Research and Information Sharing				
5. Time Management				
Total				

Contribution details: