

DRAFT as of 1.29.25
Schedule is subject to
change based on guest
speaker availability, except
for exam dates.

FBE 421 – Financial Analysis and Valuation

Syllabus – Spring 2025 – 4 Units

Class Meets Mondays and Wednesdays

Section 15324 10-11:50am JFF LL 105

Section 15325 12-1:50pm JFF LL 105



Professor: Julia Plotts
Office: HOH 221
Office Phone: 213-821-6798
Email: plotts@marshall.usc.edu
Zoom: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/juliaplotts>

Office Hours: In-person office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays (2-3pm *by appointment*)
Zoom office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays (*by appointment*)

Course Description

This course develops and applies the tools of financial analysis to evaluate the performance and assess the value of companies, with a strong emphasis on thinking like an investor. Through various cases and real-world examples, we will explore methods for leveraging financial data, strategic analysis and applying valuation techniques to make strategic and financial decisions. This course covers valuation methods from both conceptual and practical frameworks, providing a comprehensive set of tools for performance evaluation and business valuation.

As an applications-oriented course, you will gain practical skills and a conceptual framework. We will delve into topics such as mergers and acquisitions, venture capital/private equity, and the valuation of private companies. We will explore the distinct challenges of analyzing companies at different stages of their life cycle—from pre-revenue and high-growth companies to those facing financial distress—equipping you with strategies to assess value effectively even in complex situations.

The course will introduce key aspects of performance evaluation. You will develop an understanding of fundamental analysis, enhancing your ability to engage in financial and strategic discussions within your organization and with external analysts.

We will host guest speakers from the fields of venture capital and private equity, hedge funds, and CFO/M&A/corporate development. These industry practitioners will provide valuable insights, sharing their experiences and perspectives to help you connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications.

Learning Objectives

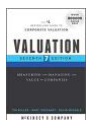
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the key aspects of financial analysis for both performance evaluation and valuation. Increase proficiency in the following areas: accounting, finance, strategy, company/industry analysis.
2. Utilize and interpret financial data to make decisions about courses of action for a firm.
3. Perform valuations for public and private firms for purposes of fundamental research, strategic analysis, transactions such as an IPO, a merger, acquisition, buyout or restructuring.
4. Apply valuation frameworks such as discounted cash flows (DCF) techniques, market multiples approach, transaction-based approaches, real-option analysis and sum of the parts analysis.
5. Understand other valuation issues and special situations such as valuing high-growth and private companies, analyzing investment decisions with uncertainty and valuing flexibility (real option analysis), the process of venture capital and early stage financing, and the approach to valuing highly leveraged companies and modeling LBO transactions.
6. Demonstrate critical thinking skills in the application of techniques in financial analysis and valuation. Gather, categorize, analyze, interpret, and evaluate relevant qualitative and quantitative

information and develop the ability to be creative and innovative through the completion of a final valuation project.

7. Conduct research using a broad range of sources, synthesizing and judging the quality of collected information and support written or oral claims logically and persuasively.
8. Apply valuation in a global context, considering the interplay of international markets, and economic, social and cultural issues.
9. Develop communication skills for discussing financial analysis and valuation.

Required Materials



Required Textbook: Valuation: Measuring and Managing the Value of Companies, University Edition (Wiley Finance) 7th Edition by McKinsey & Company Inc., Tim Koller, Marc Goedhart, David Wessels Copyright © 2020 Wiley: ISBN: 978-1-119-61186-8. If purchasing the book, the 7th edition (University edition) is recommended.

The free eBook (non-University edition) can be viewed and downloaded through this [link](#) on the USC Libraries ProQuest site.

Required Cases: Our course pack can be purchased online for \$52 through this [link](#) to HBS Publishing.

Index of HBS Cases and Notes:

Notes:

- Solving the Puzzle of the Cash Flow Statement
- Corporate Valuation and Market Multiples
- Primer on Multiples Valuation and Its Use in Private Equity Industry
- Valuation of Late-Stage Companies and Buyouts

Cases:

- The Walt Disney Company's Stock: Buy, Hold, or Sell?
- Whole Foods Market: The Deutsche Bank Report
- Ferrari: The 2015 Initial Public Offering
- Spyder Active Sports—2004
- Elon Musk's Twitter Deal: Valuation and Financing of the Leveraged Buyout
- LVMH: The Tiffany Acquisition
- Roark Capital: Buyout of Buffalo Wild Wings

**While there are only 4 cases assigned as group deliverables, I will be posting questions for the discussion cases and students will be asked to upload individual assignments to count towards the participation score.*

Course Notes

Slides, handouts and supplemental readings/articles will be posted on Brightspace. If you have any questions or need assistance with the Brightspace LMS, please contact the Marshall HelpDesk at 213-740-3000 or HelpDesk@marshall.usc.edu. Please see [Brightspace Resources for Students](#). Notes or recordings may only be made for purposes of individual or group study, or for other non-commercial purposes that reasonably arise from the student's membership in the class or attendance at the university. This restriction also applies to any information distributed, disseminated or in any way displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email or otherwise on the Internet, or via any other medium. Actions in violation of this policy constitute a violation of the Student Conduct Code, and may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings.

Other Resources

The Wall Street Journal, registration link for free digital subscription:

<https://libraries.usc.edu/databases/wall-street-journal>

Prerequisites and/or Recommended Preparation:

Prerequisite: (ACCT 410 or BUAD 280 or BUAD 305) and (BUAD 215 or BUAD 306 or BUAD 308). This course assumes knowledge of introductory corporate finance and accounting. It will be assumed that students are comfortable with the topics of standard corporate finance texts. Please review your basic finance and accounting concepts. The pace and schedule of topics covered in this class does not allow for review of these concepts. Working knowledge of excel is also important.

Grading Policies:

Final grades represent how you perform in the class relative to other students. Historically, the average grade target for this class is a 3.5 +/- 0.09. Three items are considered when assigning final grades: 1) your average weighted score as a percentage of the available points for all assignments (the points you receive divided by the number of points possible) 2) the overall average percentage score within the class 3) your ranking among all students in the class.

<u>Assignments and Exams</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
TESTS	
Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Individual Discussion Case Analysis, Pre-Work, Participation/In-Class Activities	10%
Group Deliverable Case Analysis	10%
Group Final Valuation Project (includes intermediate deliverable)	<u>25%</u>
	100%

Participation

Participation is an extremely important part of the learning experience in this course as the richness of the learning experience will be largely dependent upon the degree of preparation by *all* students prior to each class session. There will be quick attendance taken at most sessions and students will be provided with a printed name tag and should display it in every class.

If students are ill and need to miss class they can review the Panopto recording of the class, or get notes from classmates. There is no option to attend class via zoom. Please note that the majority of our guest speakers do not permit posting of the Panopto recordings. If you need to miss class for a speaker you should arrange to get notes from classmates.

A course that incorporates the frequent use of case analyses to illustrate the practical application of concepts and practices requires the student to diligently and thoroughly prepare cases and actively offer the results of the analyses and conclusions derived as well as recommendations during each class session. My expectation and that of your classmates are that you are prepared for *all* classes and will actively participate in and meaningfully contribute to class discussions.

One of the goals of this course is to help you develop the ability both to clarify your own position on an issue and to be able to articulate and defend it clearly. Sharing your perceptions and ideas with others is crucial for learning and for understanding how the diverse opinions that you are likely to encounter in an organization are debated. You will find yourself presenting and testing new ideas that are not wholly formulated and assisting others in shaping their ideas as well. You should be prepared to take some risks and be supportive of the efforts of others.

Effective class participation consists of analyzing, commenting, questioning, discussing, and building on others' contributions; it is not repeating facts or monopolizing class time. The ability to present one's ideas concisely and persuasively and to respond effectively to the ideas of others is a key business skill. One of the goals of this course is to help you sharpen that ability.

- **Outstanding Contribution:** Your contributions reflect considerable preparation; they are substantive and supported by evidence from the case, readings, and logic. Your comments or questions create a springboard for discussion by making a critical insight. You synthesize and build upon what has already been said in the discussion. The class learns from you when you speak; in your absence, the discussions would suffer.
- **Good Contribution.** You come prepared with substantiated comments. You demonstrate good insight and clear thinking. You are able to make some connection to what has been said in prior discussion. The class notices when you're not part of the discussion.
- **Minimal Contribution.** You participate but are unprepared. You rarely offer interesting insights into the discussion. It appears that you are not listening to what others are saying during discussion.
- **No Contribution.** You say little or nothing in class. If you were not in the class, the discussion would not suffer.

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam, which will consist of various multiple choice and short answer theoretical concept and practical valuation questions and problems. The questions will be both quantitative and qualitative in nature and will be based on material presented in lecture, cases, readings and guest speaker sessions. Students with exam accommodations must present verification letters to me *within the first two weeks of class* - see section below on Students with Disability Accommodations.

The date/time of the Final Exam is determined by the University. For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC Schedule of Classes at www.usc.edu/soc. Select the corresponding semester to view and click on the "Final Examinations Schedule" link on the left side of the screen. You are required to be present for both the midterm and final exam. Make-up exams will not be administered. If an exam is missed due to a legitimate reason, documentation must be provided and we will discuss how to handle the situation.

Case Analysis

We will analyze real companies and work through problems by analyzing different scenarios and courses of action. Case questions, hints/guidance and supplemental files will be posted in advance on Brightspace. You do not need to do outside research for any of the cases. In your analysis of the case studies (both discussion cases and group deliverable cases) you should place yourself in the role of the decision maker as you read through the situation and identify the problems and issues. In class we will probe underlying issues, compare different alternatives, and finally, suggest courses of action in light of the objectives of the case. The cases have been included in the curriculum as a means to provide self-study and practice in analysis. This includes *reading the entire case* and analyzing exhibits.

Individual Assignments: Discussion Case Analysis, Pre-Work and Participation/In-Class Activities

As part of your individual assignments you will be asked to complete pre-work on assigned discussion cases and actively participate during in-class activities and guest speakers. You are expected to submit your individual work through Brightspace prior to class, ensuring you are fully prepared to contribute meaningfully to our discussions.

Group Assignments and Case Analysis

Please work on your team case deliverables in teams of **4-6 students**. Do your best to work through the case utilizing readings and other supporting materials. Seeking assistance or "hints" from the instructor, TAs or past students is not authorized. A written case deliverable should consist of a **2-page** written executive summary using a standard font and font size (such as Times New Roman size 11-12), addressing the case questions with supporting computations and tables in a separate appendix (if relevant). Groups may be randomly selected to verbally present their findings on the cases during the

class session. The quality of work product should be reflective of what you would be comfortable presenting to a current or prospective employer.

Groups may change composition during the semester. If a set of students decide they can no longer work together, they are free to separate. If any member of the group cannot find another suitable group to join, they can work on an individual basis. It is advisable to ensure that your teammates' expectations for their performance in this course are consistent with your expectations for yourself.

Your case analysis will be turned in as a group written deliverable. Only one team member should submit on the due date/time electronically via the Brightspace assignment link. ***If your group changes during the semester, please make that clear on the cover page of the submitted assignment.***

Group Valuation Project with Kroll

We will be partnering with the outside valuation firm [Kroll](#) on a final valuation project. Kroll routinely assists clients with the valuation of businesses and business interests, as well as tangible and intangible assets and complex, hard to value securities. Kroll is the largest independent provider of business valuation services in the world.

The final valuation project deliverable is an annotated PowerPoint and financial model due the final week of class. Group presentations will be held in class. Attendance is required at this session. You will be asked to complete a confidential peer evaluation for your group.

Assignment Submission Policy:

Individual and group assignments must be turned in on the due date/time electronically via Brightspace. The cover sheet of each assignment should contain the first and last names of the students submitting the assignment arranged alphabetically.

Add/Drop Process

Most Marshall classes are open enrollment (R-clearance) through the Drop/Add deadline. If there is an open seat, you can add the class using Web Registration. If the class is full, you will need to continue checking Web Registration or the Schedule of Classes (classes.usc.edu) to see if a space becomes available. Students who do not attend the first two class sessions (for classes that meet twice per week) or the first class meeting (for classes that meet once per week) may be dropped from the course. There are no formal wait lists for Marshall undergraduate courses, and professors cannot add students or increase the course capacity. If all sections of the course are full, you can add your name to an interest list by contacting the Office of Under-graduate Advising & Student Affairs (213) 740-0690; if new seats or sections are added, students on the interest list will be notified.

Retention of Graded Coursework

Final exams and all other graded work which affected the course grade will be retained for one year after the end of the course *if* the graded work has not been returned to the student.

Technology Policy

Use of personal communication devices during academic or professional sessions is considered unprofessional and is not permitted. iPads and Laptops are acceptable *exclusively* for note-taking purposes. Videotaping faculty lectures is not permitted due to copyright infringement regulations. Audiotaping may be permitted if approved by the professor. Use of any recorded or distributed material is reserved exclusively for the USC students registered in this class.

Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have

another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace.

In this course, you may use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus, they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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](#)."

Tips for Performing Well in this Class:

The material for this course can only be absorbed gradually and consistently. On exams, I will ask to apply your problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Memorizing the materials will not adequately prepare you for the exams. Here are a few suggestions for effective learning of this subject:

- Complete all assigned readings prior to each class.
- Focus your attention during the class sessions and participate as much as you can in our discussions. Ask relevant questions in class; this will help your classmates too.
- Understand the materials, including the assigned readings, lectures, slides, and the recommended questions and problems along with their solutions.
- Stay abreast of the current events in the economy and financial markets through daily reading of The Wall Street Journal.
- Work effectively with your team.

Other:

The material presented and the classroom discussions is not intended to be financial advice to students in connection with any issue(s) they or others may have. If students have a financial matter, they are advised to promptly consult an experienced professional who can fully review the facts and advise them accordingly.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS*			
Week	Date	Class Topic	Readings/ **Deliverables
Drivers of Value			
1	1/13	Introduction and Course Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do we perform valuations? 	Chapter 1 Why Value Value? Chapter 2 Finance in a Nutshell Pivot MIA podcast
1	1/15	Markets and Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the stock market rational? Does it reflect the underlying fundamentals of the economy? Foundations of Value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Stock Valuation Decision Drivers – Dividend Discount Model How do firms create value? What is the relationship between growth, ROIC, and cash flow? According to the Core of Value Principle, what is the reason why an established company might have a low return on capital? What is the reason why a small or early stage company might have a low return on capital? Is growth always good? 	<i>Skim</i> Chapter 7 - The Stock Market is Smarter Than You Think Chapter 3 Fundamental Principles of Value Creation Watch first 2 segments “ Creating value: An interactive tutorial ”
Financial Analysis and Performance Evaluation			
2	1/20	<i>MLK Holiday – No Class Scheduled</i>	
2	1/22	Financial Statement Analysis and Benchmarking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we perform financial statement analysis? How do we analyze 10Ks, 10Qs, 8Ks, and other SEC filings? What is ratio analysis? What do ratios tell us about the financial health of a firm? Reorganizing the Financial Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare the financial statements for analyzing economic performance you need to reorganize the statements into: operating items, non-operating items and sources of financing. Review the examples in the chapter: 1) Invested Capital; 2) NOPAT; 3) Free Cash Flow; 4) ROIC. 	Discussion Case - The Walt Disney Company’s Stock: Buy, Hold, or Sell? (CP) Chapter 11 Reorganizing the Financial Statements, Review 32-minute asynchronous video on Chapter 11 and complete practice problems.
3	1/27	Foundations of Value and Financial Statement Analysis <i>continued</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the “Tale of Two Companies” example in the textbook (exhibit 3.2-3.3). Read: Time to Get Fit — an Open Letter from Altimeter to Mark Zuckerberg (and the Meta Board of Directors) Return on Invested Capital and Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the five sources of competitive advantage that allow companies to charge a price premium? What are the four sources of competitive advantage that contribute to cost and capital efficiency? Can you identify examples of companies with these? Review the empirical data. 1) Identify 3-5 high and low ROIC industries; 2) Identify two industries where the variation in returns is significant; 3) Identify the industries with better stability of ROIC (persistently high return industries) vs. the industries with persistently low returns. What are the three main components of growth? Rank these components (above average, average and below average) based on amount of value created (per dollar of revenue). 	Chapter 3 Fundamental Principles of Value Creation Chapter 8 ROIC Chapter 9 Growth

Week	Date	Class Topic	Readings/ **Deliverables
3	1/29	Financial Statement Analysis <i>continued</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will discuss analyzing and decomposing ROIC to develop an integrated perspective of company economics, credit health and capital structure. 	<i>skim</i> Chapter 12 Analyzing Performance
4	2/3	Cash Flow Analysis - Measuring Free Cash Flows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Free Cash Flow differ from the accounting Statement of Cash Flows? What are the steps in reviewing a statement of cash flow and determining the health of the cash flow machine of a company? Identify “sources” and “uses” of cash. 	Solving the Puzzle of the Cash Flow Statement (CP)
4	2/5	Intro to Valuation and Forecasting Future Cash Flows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review Whole Foods financial performance, benchmark to its comps and analyze two forecast scenarios and the resulting intrinsic valuation of the company. 	Deliverable (Group) - Whole Foods Market: The Deutsche Bank Report (CP) <i>Skim</i> Chapter 36 High-Growth Companies
Core Valuation Techniques, Valuation Applications and Strategic Considerations			
5	2/10	Core Valuation Techniques Enterprise Valuation – DCF-WACC Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a discounted cash flow (DCF) analysis? What are the steps in a DCF model? What are the different methods to estimate terminal value? 	Chapter 10 Valuation Frameworks Chapter 16 Moving from EV to Value per Share (<i>skim</i>)
5	2/12	Enterprise Valuation – DCF-WACC Approach	Complete Week 1-5 quiz on Brightspace, AOL Time Warner Mini-Case
6	2/17	President’s Day Holiday – No Class Scheduled	
6	2/19	Relative Valuation Using Market Comps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing the Right Multiple Sum of the Parts Valuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many large companies have multiple business units, each with competing segments with different economic characteristics. Does the market value conglomerates at less than the sum of their parts? 	Corporate Valuation and Market Multiples (CP) Primer on Multiples Valuation and Its Use in PE Industry (CP) <i>Skim</i> Chapter 19 Valuation by Parts
7	2/24	Applying Valuation Frameworks	Deliverable (Group) - Ferrari: The 2015 Initial Public Offering (CP)
7	2/26	Applying Valuation Frameworks	Discussion Case - Elon Musk's Twitter Deal: Valuation and Financing of the Leveraged Buyout (CP)
8	3/3	Special Topic or Guest Speaker	
8	3/5	<i>Midterm Exam</i>	
9	3/10	Estimating Cost of Capital	Chapter 15 Cost of Capital See zoom recording on WACC
9	3/12	Final Project Introduction	
10		Spring Break – No Class Scheduled on 3/17 or 3/19	
11	3/24	Mergers and Acquisitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the motivations behind M&A activity and a company’s decision to Buy vs. Build? 	Chapter 31 M&A

11	3/26	Mergers and Acquisitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application of valuation frameworks and evaluating strategic alternatives for a private, high growth company 	Deliverable (Group): Spyder Active Sports - 2004 (CP)
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Week	Date	Class Topic	Readings/ **Deliverables
Core Valuation Techniques, Valuation Applications and Strategic Considerations			
12	3/31	M&A continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the specific factors that differentiate deals that are successful vs. unsuccessful? Provide examples of the strategic rationale for a value-creating acquisition? Provide examples of revenue and cost savings synergies. See template for the LVMH Tiff case 	Discussion Case: LVMH: The Tiffany Acquisition (CP) Optional Podcast: Acquired: LVMH Season 12, Episode 2 - The Complete History & Strategy of LVMH
12	4/2	Private Equity and Leveraged Buyouts (LBOs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the characteristics of a strong LBO candidate? What are some examples of LBO exit/monetization strategies for financial sponsors? Review the historical global buyout value and identify high and low deal value periods and consider the cause for this change in activity. Review the average EBITDA purchase multiple and average Debt/EBITDA for LBOs over time. Review the median holding period for global buyout-backed investments over time. What are the recent notable industry trends that might impact company valuations? 	Valuation of Late-Stage Companies & Buyouts (CP) MarketWatch article on PE Private Credit Outlook article Skim the Bain Global PE Report
13	4/7	Leveraged Buyouts (LBOs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBO Models: What are the two primary indicators in an LBO analysis that determine feasibility of a deal to a buyer? What are the challenges in applying a traditional DCF/WACC model when dealing leveraged transactions? 	See supplemental LBO model practice problem recording on zoom Deliverable (Group): Intermediate Deliverable for Final Project
13	4/9	VC/Growth Equity Guest Speaker: Larry Cheng , <i>Managing Partner, Volition Capital</i>	See Pre-Reading on Brightspace. Review primers on pre/post money
14	4/14	Leveraged Buyouts (LBOs) and Roark Capital BWW case	Deliverable (Group): Roark Capital: Buyout of Buffalo Wild Wings (CP)
14	4/16	Distressed Valuation and Financial Restructuring Guest Speaker: Jeff Raitzel , <i>Managing Director, GLC Advisors</i>	Read Vino Company Case and Individual Deliverable Pre-Work Assignment
15	4/21	TBD: Special Topic or Final Project Workshop	Complete Week 9-14 quiz on Brightspace
15	4/23	Venture Capital Guest Speaker: Luke Sikora , <i>Partner at J.P. Morgan Growth Equity Partners</i>	See pre-reading materials on Brightspace
16	4/28	Final Project Presentations (mandatory attendance)	Deliverable: (Group) Project: Final Valuation Project
16	4/30	Course Wrap-Up	
FINAL EXAM		10am section final exam on May 12 th 8am-10am 12pm section final exam on May 9 th 11am-1pm	<i>Students are required to take the exam during their designated exam session time.</i>

Note: Schedule is subject to change based on guest speaker availability, except for exam dates. All chapter references are for the Koller text 7/e (University Edition); CP = HBS Course Pack

USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

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

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) 740-2500

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 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) 740-0411

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

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

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) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

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

About your Instructor:

Julia Plotts holds the Peter J. Fluor Family Chair in Teaching Excellence. She is a Professor of Clinical Finance and Business Economics in the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, and she currently serves as the Director of the Finance Career Services Hub and the Trojan Finance Academy. She previously served as the Academic Director of the Marshall MS Finance Program, ranked #1 in the U.S. by the Financial Times.

Professor Plotts has been teaching corporate finance and financial analysis and valuation in both the graduate and undergraduate programs since 2002. She has received several teaching excellence awards, including the USC Marshall Golden Apple Award for Teaching Excellence (14 times). She has led global programs trips to Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Bangkok, Melbourne and Sydney. She teaches in Marshall's Global Leadership Program and serves as a faculty advisor to Trojan Investing Society, Trojan Consulting Group and Marshall Case Team.

Prior to joining the faculty at USC, Plotts provided advisory services to companies in the retail and consumer industry coverage group at Banc of America Securities, LLC (Global Corporate and Investment Banking group). She coordinated and presented in-depth industry and company analyses to value and structure acquisitions, strategic alternatives and monetization opportunities for companies. She was a key contributor and driver in the origination, valuation and execution of IPOs, LBOs, strategic acquisitions and refinancings. She has consulted on shareholder value and corporate strategy for a variety of firms. Plotts worked as a lobbyist in the Financial Institutions Group of Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York and was a member of the staff of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Banking and Financial Services, and the Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Securities & Government Sponsored Enterprises during the 104th Congress in Washington, D.C.

Plotts has served as an instructor in the CFA® review program. She has authored several teaching case studies and was a contributor to the textbook "Valuation: The Art and Science of Making Strategic Investments."

Plotts is married to Tom, the Chief Financial Officer of Gravidas Diagnostics. They have two children, Thomas and Quincy (both are Marshall undergraduate students). She enjoys playing tennis and snow skiing.