



Success Story

MBA Alumna Provides Leadership in the Arts

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After more than 20 successful years in marketing for large corporations and a hospital, Terri (Engel) Golas '86 decided she wanted a change. With an MBA in marketing and management from the University of St. Thomas, she sought out a leadership position in the arts.

"It's mission-driven business vs. profit-driven business," Golas said. "I really enjoy being able to apply my years of business experience to help an arts organization meet its goals."

In 2009, she became general manager at the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, which has recently partnered with the University of St. Thomas to offer a series of string quartet performances in Cullen Hall.

"It's exciting to be partners with St. Thomas, as the University embarks on building a Performing Arts Center," she said. The plans for the future Center include theatre space for dramatic and musical performances for the University and community use.

Established in 2005, ROCO is a 40-piece professional chamber orchestra, whose primary performance venue is the Church of St. John the Divine. The hand-selected group of musicians includes many soloists and university music professors, including two musicians who were in Grammy-nominated groups.

Golas said ROCO's founder, Alecia Lawyer, sought out high-level musicians who have a passion for music and connecting with the audience.

"She is proud to say they smile when they play," she said. "When they love what they do, it shows."

ROCO is unique in that it commissions new music from contemporary composers and often premieres new work at its performances.

The orchestra works to dissolve the barriers between audience and orchestra, and make classical music more approachable and relevant. For instance, the program includes composer notes and pronunciation guides for the musical terms.

“No one feels dumb when they come to our concert,” she said. “It makes you feel smart. It’s very accessible.”

At intermission, the performers snap on a name badge and come out to meet the audience, so that music becomes the medium for connecting people, Golas said.

In the 1980s, Golas chose to pursue a master’s at UST after earning an English degree at the University of Houston. She liked the small class sizes of UST and the flexibility while working full-time.

“The program was ideal for a working student, not only because the classes were at night, but because I was learning things I could immediately apply to my work,” Golas said.

Golas said the MBA gave her the foundation for business and the opportunity to compete for jobs and be successful in the business environment.

“As an English major, I didn’t have any business background,” Golas said. “The education I got at the University of St. Thomas changed the course of my career. With an MBA, I was able to move into business and management and have a very rewarding career.”

Golas worked as the director of market development for Compaq, director of brand management at BMC Software, and she managed advertising, marketing programs and sponsorships for the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, where she oversaw its “Red Line, Making Cancer History®” campaign.

Now, Golas can use her business skills to make a difference working with the musician-founder at the chamber orchestra.

“I can bring the business knowledge to make Alecia’s vision successful,” she said.

Golas said UST enjoyed a full audience at its first ROCO String Quartet performance in September. Two upcoming performances will be held on **Feb. 23** and **April 12** at 7 p.m. in Cullen Hall. Tickets are \$20 general admission or \$10 for students.

“Guests should expect an extraordinary audience experience,” she said. “It’s intimate. They get a sense of the artists themselves, and they’ll walk away with a new feeling of what chamber orchestra is like.”