

Influential Storytelling

University of Michigan | Ross School of Business | Sanger Leadership Center

wolf & heron

M | MICHIGAN ROSS
SANGER LEADERSHIP CENTER

THE CHALLENGE

The **Ross School of Business** at the **University of Michigan** is consistently ranked as a top business school for its academic rigor and high-caliber graduates.

But students, faculty, and career advisors felt that students' ability to tell compelling stories about their experiences was highly variable, and lacking impact. This skill gap was demonstrated in students' entrepreneurial pitches, answers in interviews, and even when discussing the incredible experiences they were gaining as students at Ross.

Students also shared a desire to build authentic connections as a community and extend their learning beyond the classroom.

The **Sanger Leadership Center** identified the skill of **storytelling** as a key way to help students develop executive presence and communication skills. Storytelling training would be offered as an optional co-curricular enrichment opportunity to students.

The founding design principles of the program would be to:

- > Develop students' leadership capacity with the skill of impactful storytelling.
- > Create a more connected, empathetic student body.
- > Build executive presence.
- > Achieve high attendance and community involvement.
- > Offer comprehensive content that builds skills over time.

THE SOLUTION: STORY LAB

Wolf & Heron worked with the Sanger Leadership Center to develop a fully tailored annual program for MBA and BBA students that includes a customized 4.5-hour in-person or virtual workshop and one-on-one story coaching.

- 1 | Students apply to participate in the program.
- 2 | Accepted students attend one of the **Influential Storytelling** workshops.
- 3 | Students who attend the workshop may apply to share their stories on the Ross Showcase stage.
- 4 | Selected applicants receive 2–3 one-on-one virtual story coaching sessions with a Wolf & Heron coach. Recently, coaching is also offered to students who do not plan to showcase their stories.
- 5 | Students practice their stories at a closed dress rehearsal and receive additional feedback.
- 6 | Students share their stories at a Story Showcase in front of a 200+ in-person audience or via a live stream.





STORY LAB OUTCOMES

“ Wolf & Heron is committed to creating meaningful experiences and quality programs. They care about the fine details, yet approach design comprehensively. Unlike other partnerships I have worked with, they are very flexible and open to developing a uniquely customized learning journey that addresses the specific needs of our participants.

Evan Marie Allison
Associate Director, Sanger Leadership Center

Since its inception, Story Lab has been referenced as one of the **defining experiences of the Ross MBA program** by graduates and is now be available to students throughout the university system.

5

YEARS OF
OPERATION

150+

ONE-ON-ONE
COACHING SESSIONS

#3

REASON TO
CHOOSE TO ROSS*

17

STORYTELLING
SHOWCASE EVENTS

27

WORKSHOPS
DELIVERED

74

STORIES SHARED
ON SHOWCASE STAGE

1000+

STUDENTS TRAINED IN
STORYTELLING

3500+

MICHIGAN COMMUNITY
MEMBERS REACHED

“ Story Lab has been the best program that I have done at Ross. It pushes students to start dialogues on topics we otherwise wouldn't talk about, bringing the Ross community closer together.

Samantha Yee, BBA 2019

“ The Story Lab workshop offered an awesome and super well-facilitated opportunity to craft our own stories and build relationships with peers. I gained a lot of insight about effective storytelling in the retreat and I am looking forward to continuing to leverage and build these skills going forward.

Julia Kehoe, MS/MBA 2022

“ I went in with high expectations and I didn't come back disappointed! The Story Lab experience is a very empowering one and helps build confidence in public speaking and communication in general. I'd highly recommend it to anyone and everyone. The value added is definitely worth the time.

Aseem Mahajan, MBA 2022

“ Story Lab taught me tools essential for me as a writer, student, and leader. Connecting to an audience with emotions and language isn't taught in our courses, but it requires much consideration and practice. I was grateful Story Lab offered a comfortable environment to learn and eventually master the art of storytelling. The opportunity to connect with other Masters students was also refreshing.

Antoinette Wade, Masters of Mgmt 2019

“ It has been especially challenging to get to know my classmates during a pandemic. Story Lab served as a relationship-building accelerator by creating a safe, inclusive environment for us to bring our authentic selves, share stories, and engage in deeper, more meaningful conversations!

YC Wong, MBA 2022

“ Story Lab is a MUST for every student at Ross. Communication is obviously key to influencing others, but how ideas are communicated is just as important as what is actually said. Story Lab gave me the tools to be a powerful communicator and I can't wait for the next opportunity to practice storytelling.

Hollis Farris MBA 2020

LINKS: CLICK FOR MORE

Story Lab Home Page
Story Lab Podcast
*#3 Reason to Choose Ross

www.wolfandheron.com

Some Student Stories:
Chris Monti Gui Ruggiero
Sarah Wood Tracy Cohen