



Delivering Real World Experience to the Classroom:

Dr. Rusty Karst, College of Business Administration

A couple of years ago, Dr. Rusty Karst left the hustle and bustle of the business world to join the equally bustling world of academia. He joined the faculty in the College of Business Administration at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and is using his industry knowledge, combined with the knowledge acquired through his doctorate, to teach human resource management and compensation organization theory to business-minded Javelinas.

What would make a successful industry manager change careers? “I believe in the philosophy of continually challenging and developing oneself, no matter in what stage of life,” Karst said. “In reflecting on my career in industry, I felt I had successfully achieved my long-term goals and was ready to face a new challenge.

“I thus left the security and familiarity of 25 years in affiliated industries for the uncharted academic waters of pursuing a Ph.D. and becoming a university professor,” Karst said.

Joining the ranks of university faculty has been rewarding for Karst. “I have experienced much joy in the classroom thus far. I truly enjoy helping students make connections between course theory/knowledge and practice. Seeing them develop and grow is a great reward for me,” he said.

Karst said there are many industry and life lessons he learned along the way, and he tries to impart them on his students. “The most important lesson—take the time and make the effort to really understand your ‘self.’ Understand your strengths and what you enjoy. Then, do your homework in discovering areas and industries which lend themselves to what you are good at and what you enjoy.

“The next most important lesson—don’t chase money. It will find you if you truly find your place and contribute fully there,” he said. “So many people ‘settle’ in making employment decisions when they don’t really need to.”

Karst said he enjoyed his time working in industry. “As an organizational leader, I enjoyed seeing people within my oversight develop, progress and be promoted. One of my greatest achievements was successful succession planning—helping someone develop to a state of readiness, in being able to replace me.”

His least favorite part of the business world was “organizational bureaucracy and inertia, which can lead to mediocrity in adhering to the status quo.”

Karst recently earned his doctorate in business administration-management from University of North Texas. He previously received his bachelor’s degree in business management from Texas State University and his master’s degree in business management from Our Lady of the Lake University.

He has 25 years of progressive industry experience in financial services and insurance environments, including Director of Claims Service for USAA and Catastrophe Manager for Citigroup/Travelers. He has held leadership positions in large and small organizations and has had oversight and responsibility for large groups of people.

Karst is a subject matter expert in human resource management, risk management, catastrophe response and property and casualty insurance underwriting and claims administration.