



News Room

- Featured Stories
- Upcoming Events
- Faculty in the News
- Marshall News
- USC News: Business
- Contact Us



Entrepreneur and Navy Veteran Implores Marshall MBAs: 'Jump in the Pool'

Capt. Jeffrey Sapp Visits Marshall to Focus on Leadership

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One year ago, when Marshall faculty member Steven Mednick met Captain Jeffrey Kendall Sapp, a distinguished U.S. Navy veteran, and asked if he would come in and speak to one of his classes, he thought it was a long shot. Sapp lives in Washington, D.C. and has a busy schedule. " explained to him that it was just a class, but he still said he would come," Mednick later told students.

When Sapp addressed Marshall students on March 1, 2011, he met high expectations as he bounced around the small auditorium with his booming voice. Sapp's main directive to students was to be bold and pursue their passions. To get there, to find a business that will blossom, he encouraged students to be talented listeners and thoughtful leaders. "You have to develop a flat-out curiosity about

life," he said. "And if you want to swim, you've got to get in the pool."

Sapp was a star on the U.S. Naval Academy football team, and he went on to command a Naval destroyer, acquire three graduate degrees and run government agencies with budgets as large as \$4.5 billion.

Sapp warned students to not be too proud to admit when they are wrong or to fight battles that are not worth the carnage. "You may not cause World War II, but you could trash your business." When things go wrong, he said, leaders need to hold themselves accountable: "The very first question you should ask is did I contribute to it," he said.

For Mednick, an assistant professor of clinical entrepreneurship, Sapp represents an ideal example of an **entrepreneur** who thrives through vision and persistence. "The study of leadership is relevant whether the setting is a start-up or a Fortune 500 enterprise," Mednick said.

"Entrepreneurs must initially test themselves to reveal if 'they truly want it.' If so, they must employ learned leadership skills to inspire others to an expectation of future success. We were honored to have Jeffrey Sapp in Cases in New Venture Management because he answered the question to himself that 'he really wanted it' and then went on in multiple leadership roles to achieve things."

About the USC Marshall School of Business

Consistently ranked among the nation's premier schools, USC Marshall is internationally recognized for its emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation, social responsibility and path-breaking research. Located in the heart of Los Angeles, one of the world's leading business centers and the U.S. gateway to the Pacific Rim, Marshall offers its 5,500-plus undergraduate and graduate students a unique world view and impressive global experiential opportunities. With an alumni community spanning 90 countries, USC Marshall students join a worldwide community of thought leaders who are redefining the way business works.

