

CalBusiness

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**2011 BUSINESS LEADER
OF THE YEAR**

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Lifelong Learning,
Lifelong Giving

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Jordan Kerner, MBA/JD 76

Movie Producer and Dean, School of Filmmaking, University of North Carolina School of the Arts Winston-Salem, N.C.

As a movie producer, Jordan Kerner, MBA/JD 76, chooses projects that can enlighten as well as entertain. It's a philosophy that has guided virtually all of the movies he has worked on, from *Less Than Zero* to his latest production, *The Smurfs*.

"I hope viewers come out of the theater fully entertained, and I hope that five years later all the messages resonate inside of them," says Kerner.

In addition to producing movies, Kerner has led the School of Filmmaking at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts as dean since 2007. Blending his film-making career with education, Kerner ensures students study and work with professionals. While producing *The Smurfs*, Kerner enabled more than 50 students to shadow the director, cinematographer, and others creating the \$110 million movie, which opened in July and has grossed over half a billion dollars in worldwide receipts.

As dean, Kerner also is focusing his lens on multidisciplinary entertainment business jobs, collaborating with UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State to craft a joint degree program. He traces the idea to his experiences with the University of California. In 1972, he entered UC's Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. Wanting to expand his studies to include business and public policy, he created a proposal for a joint degree with what is now the Haas School.

While in school, Kerner founded *Comm/Ent*, a journal concentrating on communications and entertainment law. After passing the bar, he worked in the motion-picture department of a Beverly Hills law firm and then for CBS, Universal, and ABC before co-founding a production company in 1986 that is now called Kerner Entertainment.

In the late 1990s, Kerner started talking with the family of Peyo, the Belgian cartoonist who created the Smurfs, about making a movie, promising to be faithful to the characters. Kerner's respectful approach to *Charlotte's Web* (2006), convinced the family to sell him film rights.

When developing scripts, Kerner shares his ideas about pertinent lessons with the screenwriters. His films have explored the importance of nurturing friendships and combating bias against sexual preference (*Fried Green Tomatoes*); the impact of substance abuse (*When A Man Loves A Woman*); and treating those who are different with respect (*The Smurfs*).

"In *The Smurfs*, that permeates the film," Kerner says. "I think these are really important lessons."—*Kim Underwood*

Libby Leffler, BS 06

Business Lead to COO, Facebook Palo Alto, Calif.

Talk about a social networking butterfly: Since graduation, Libby Leffler, BS 06, has gone on to work at two of the hottest Silicon Valley tech companies—Google and Facebook—after serving as president of Tri Delta and serving as its national spokesperson while at Cal. Leffler's current role as business lead to Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg has taken her to the World Economic Forum in Davos and empowered her to become an advocate for women in business.

"I love that today my work impacts the experience of millions of people who communicate and connect," Leffler says.

After graduating from Berkeley-Haas and a short stint in consulting, Leffler realized she wanted to work in a fast-growing technology company and play an integral role in developing a meaningful brand. She spent months interviewing at Google before landing a job there helping to strategize sales operations.

About a year later, she interviewed for a position at Facebook. Leffler was offered a job in sales, but declined. "I was afraid of taking the risk of leaving my comfortable job at a large, established company for something new and unfamiliar," she explains.

Then Leffler had second thoughts. After sleepless nights thinking about how compelling Facebook was and worrying she was too risk averse, Leffler called the recruiter to see if the position was still available. It was, and she got the job.

While working in sales, Leffler interviewed to be the right hand to Sandberg, who *Forbes* recently ranked the fifth most powerful woman in the world. Sandberg hired Leffler on the strength of a sample executive briefing. "Libby's work was just outstanding and stood out above all of the others," Sandberg says. "She cares deeply about our company mission."

Leffler loves that Facebook makes a difference in people's lives. "One Facebook user's sick son baffled her doctors," says Leffler. "After the woman posted pictures of his condition on Facebook, she figured out what was wrong and got help, advice, and support. That's what makes this job really rewarding."

In her current role, Leffler has earned "a seat at the table" of influential businesswomen, including Sandberg, her mentor, who reviewed her notes before Leffler spoke in Munich at a women's conference. Leffler's message to other young women? Dream bigger and take risks. Like she does.

Follow Leffler on Facebook at [facebook.com/libby](https://www.facebook.com/libby) and on Twitter @libbyleffler. —*Diane Anderson*

