



# JOHNNIE TALKS | “ALL IN”

## > Elizabeth (“Betsy”) Ann Bassan (AN75) LET YOUR PASSION FUEL YOUR “ALL IN”



Betsy Bassan is the President and CEO of Panagora Group, a woman-owned small business she founded in 2011, providing novel and integrated solutions to global health and development challenges around the world. She brings over 30 years of experience as an innovator in the international development field. Over the last nine years, Betsy has grown Panagora into a 134-person company working in 23 countries with a robust portfolio and a proven track record of excellence. In 2018, the company was named Small Business of the Year by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Panagora’s main client.

Betsy is a leader in her industry and is recognized as a successful entrepreneur outside of it. She recently received a 2020 Enterprising Women of the Year Award for her leadership and mentorship in the women-owned business sphere and was named one of “The 30 Most Inspiring Women in Business” by InsightsSuccess Magazine in 2017. As an indication of her expertise and leadership, Panagora ranked in the top 20 percent of businesses on the 2019 and 2020 Inc 5000 lists of the “Most Successful Companies in America” by Inc Magazine.

Betsy has decades of hands-on regional experience working across Africa, Asia, Europe and Eurasia, and the Middle East, and across a variety of sectors, including global health, private sector development, environment, democracy/governance, and organizational development. During her career, Betsy has held various executive and leadership positions, where she led many strategic initiatives and innovative programs to provide services to people in need around the world.

Betsy has held several key industry leadership positions among the major professional, advocacy, and trade associations in the international development sector. Through the USGLC, a membership-based foreign aid advocacy group, Betsy helped build support for critical foreign aid programs. As Program Vice President and then Chair of the Society for International Development-Washington D.C., a leading professional association, she greatly enhanced its profile as the “the public square of development” through cutting-edge knowledge exchange.

As an industry leader who has developed novel approaches to major global health problems, Betsy also works tirelessly to elevate the voice of small business in international development. Through the Panagora platform, Betsy led the founding of the Council for International Development Companies (CIDC) and, as chair, transformed the Small Business Association for International Companies (SBAIC) over three pivotal years from an informal network into a registered and recognized advocate.

She lived overseas for seven years in Kenya and Sudan, where she worked for a variety of NGOs and USAID missions. She holds an M.A. from Columbia University in New York City, where she completed a joint degree program (Planning in Developing Nations) in the School of International Affairs and the Division of Urban Planning; and a B.A. cum laude from St. John’s College, Great Books Program, in Annapolis, Maryland. She speaks French. She has three children, Madeleine, Rebecca, and Ben.



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## > Martha Franks (SF78, GIEC17) THE ALL IN ON THE PRACTICAL GENIUS OF COMMON LAW



Ms. Franks spent the academic years 2012-14 in Beijing, China, developing and teaching a liberal arts curriculum at the Affiliated High School of Peking University (BDFZ). She brought to that task her experience as a part-time faculty member at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. At St. John’s, and then at BDFZ, she taught the classics of Western literature through discussion classes. Both the books and the style of teaching were new experiences for her Chinese students.

Ms. Franks has had a separate career as a lawyer. She began that career with a few years at a large Wall Street law firm, after which she moved to New Mexico, where she has practiced water law for thirty years. She has worked on a variety of cases involving environmental issues as well as water rights quantification issues, including cases before the United States Supreme Court. She offered a class in American Law to Chinese students.

In addition, Ms. Franks has a degree in theology from the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia. She has several publications in both water law and theology. She is a painter, having attended the Marchutz School of Art in Aix-en-Provence, France.



# JOHNNIE TALKS | “ALL IN”

## > Melanie K. Kirby (SF97) ALL IN ...THE HIVE FAMILY



**Occupation:** Professional Apiculturist- Queen Honey Bee Breeder, Consilience Researcher, Extension Educator, Writer

**Place of Residence:** New Mexico

**Background:** Melanie was born and raised in New Mexico of Pueblo Native American roots (Tortugas Pueblo). She graduated from St. John’s College (Great Books) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with a degree in Advanced Liberal Arts, Philosophy and Science, 97.

Melanie accidentally became a beekeeper by assignment, after enlisting as a U. S. Peace Corps Volunteer stationed in South America. She became fascinated with the bees and began pursuing a career in apiculture, working for several commercial operations in Hawaii, Florida, and Michigan. She established her own small-scale, survivor-stock queen breeding farm in the southern Rocky Mountains in 2005. She considers herself to be a seed saver—with the bees as the seeds—by finding and sharing quality stock lines with beekeepers around the nation and globe. Melanie serves as an international consultant and has had the blessed opportunities to learn from bees and their keepers in Mexico, Paraguay, Canada, Jamaica, Ukraine, Nicaragua, France, Morocco, British Columbia, Spain, with tribal communities and across the USA. She continues to be humbled by working and learning from such marvelous creatures—sharing that for her, “the mystery is the allure.” In her spare time, Melanie is a ceramicist and wildcrafts exquisite medicinal hive products and beeswax arts. She is working on several books, a technical field manual for breeding survivor honeybees and one for UNM Press titled *Nectar Nomads in the Land of Enchantment* when she isn’t spending time with her children and enjoying the glorious outdoors. Melanie helped to establish several regional educational and breeding cooperatives nationally and internationally. She continues to learn from Mother Nature and Father Time and recognizes the profound interconnectedness of all beings. Current Projects: Melanie is completing her Master’s in Entomology from Washington State University and is the new Extension Educator of Land Grant Programs for the Institute of American Indian Arts.

**Connect with Melanie:** Melanie <https://www.linkedin.com/in/melanie-kirby-3b473057/> and on Instagram @ziaqueenbees



# JOHNNIE TALKS | “ALL IN”

## > Douglas Lynam (SF96) FROM MONK TO MONEY MANAGER: A FORMER MONK’S GUIDE TO FINANCIAL HAPPINESS



Growing up in a wealthy family, Douglas Lynam saw firsthand the adverse effect money can have on people. He was so disturbed by it, in fact, that he joined a monastery after graduating from St. John’s and took a vow of poverty.

A decade later, he had made his peace with the reality—and necessity—of money in contemporary society. Now working as a financial advisor and a finance cartoonist, he publishes his new book, *From Monk to Money Manager*, on March 26.

“My family idolized money. And in the monastery, we believed that money was the root of all evil,” he explains. “I found that neither extreme is successful for folks, because my family shattered and the monastery went bankrupt. So I vowed to learn everything I could about money management to make sure I never repeated either mistake.”

Lynam’s monetary education began while he was still a practicing monk. When guests would come to the monastery, he noticed that they were often not only having spiritual difficulties, but financial ones as well.

“I’d pray for them, but also insist we make a budget, because the universe is not going to work a miracle to fix a problem that you have the power to solve,” he says.

He had a knack for the work, and soon, he was providing financial consultation to many guests and attempting to solve the monastery’s considerable monetary woes. While he wasn’t able to save the monastery—years of bad bookkeeping and budget balancing couldn’t be overturned—Lynam had found his passion ... and the topic for his first book.

“*From Monk to Money Manager* tries to bring the best money management practices and the highest ethical values together,” he says. “St. John’s is critical in that journey because it taught me excellent critical thinking skills and opened me up to the world of spirituality in a way I had been completely closed off to.”

This was due in large part to Mr. Charles Fasanaro, a tutor on the Santa Fe campus whom Lynam grew close to while working on his senior essay on Blaise Pascal.

“He was so instrumental in shaping my life and guiding me toward a deeper spiritual practice,” he says. “When I first started the Program, I was pretty hostile towards religion and spirituality. But one of the things the Program showed me was that as you look at all the different thinkers and philosophers and brilliant minds throughout the course of human history, they’re each saying something different. So how do you synthesize it all? You’ve got this wealth of experience that’s been lived, taught, and passed down through the tradition of civilization. How do you figure out for yourself what’s important and find out what your values are? That’s the real question. Of course, there’s no simple answer and it is a lifelong journey, but I think St. John’s sets one up for the adventure very brilliantly.”

The book, Lynam explains, is his exploration of one central idea: that money is the root of everything, good and evil, and that one must do whatever is possible to make it serve the good—however that is defined for oneself.

As he puts it, “It’s not up to me to tell you what your values are, but what I can do is show you how money can be used to serve your values more fully and live the most abundant life that you can.”





# JOHNNIE TALKS

## > Michael Strong (SF84) LET YOUR PASSION FUEL YOUR “ALL IN”



One of the most experienced designers of innovative schools in the U.S., Michael founded Moreno Valley High School in Angel Fire, NM, a charter school that was ranked the 36th best public high school in its third year of operation and has remained highly ranked ever since. Most recently Michael founded The Academy of Thought and Industry, the high school model for the largest and fastest growing Montessori network in the U.S. He is the author of *The Habit of Thought: From Socratic Seminars to Socratic Practice*, and the lead author of *Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the World's Problems*.

### MICHAEL STRONG

#### **Strong's Law:**

Properly structured free enterprise always results over time in higher quality, lower cost, and more customized products and services. This principle applies just as forcefully to the entrepreneurial supply of law, governance, community, housing, education, health care, and other environments supportive of happiness, and well being as it does to technology. Our world suffers because we have not allowed entrepreneurial initiative to fully address the most important issues facing humanity.

**Founder:** The Academy of Thought and Industry (campuses in SF, NYC, Austin, and St. Louis)

**Lead Author:** *Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the World's Problems*

**Author:** *The Habit of Thought: From Socratic Seminars to Socratic Practice*

**Co-Founder:** Moreno Valley High School (ranked the 36th best public high school in 2006).

**Co-Founder:** Conscious Capitalism, Inc.

**TEDx UChicago:** “The Creation of Conscious Culture through Educational Innovation”

**TEDx GrandRapids:** “Innovate: Experience”

**TEDx UFM:** “Socratic Practice as Disruptive Technology”

**Voice & Exit:** “Startup Cities”

**Blog:** “The Purpose of Education is Happiness and Well-Being for All”