



Recommendation
of Eric Sprunk for
Honorary Doctorate
of Business

2025 Spring Commencement



President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula, MT 59812

September 24, 2024

Dear President Bodnar,

It is my privilege to nominate Eric Sprunk, an exceptional business leader, dedicated philanthropist, and proud alumnus of the University of Montana, for recognition as a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate degree from the University of Montana. Eric's remarkable professional achievements and lasting impact on future generations of business leaders make him a worthy candidate for this prestigious honor.

Eric's journey is deeply rooted in the values of hard work, integrity, and perseverance that define our state. Growing up in Missoula, he cultivated his leadership and teamwork skills early on, particularly through his love of basketball, which he played at Hellgate High School. Eric's passion for athletics helped shape the determination and discipline that would later become hallmarks of his professional success.

Eric graduated from the University of Montana with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Accounting from the College of Business. His education at the University prepared him for his exemplary career and instilled in him a lifelong connection to the values of this institution. To this day, Eric credits much of his success to the lessons he learned here and the relationships he built along the way.

These Montana roots provided the foundation upon which Eric built an extraordinary career. After joining Nike, Inc. in 1993, he quickly rose through the ranks, serving in various executive positions of increasing responsibility over the course of 27 years. From 2001 to 2008, Eric served as Executive Vice President and General Manager of Global Footwear, where he played a pivotal role in shaping Nike's product portfolio and leading the company's global product strategy. His work set a new standard for product innovation, design, and merchandising. From 2008 to 2013, Eric served as Executive Vice President of Global Product and Merchandising, continuing to build on his reputation as an innovative and forward-thinking leader. By the time of his retirement in August 2020, Eric was the Chief Operating Officer of Nike, Inc., a position he held since 2013. In this role, Eric demonstrated a unique ability to drive large-scale transformations within complex, diverse, global business environments while consistently delivering market-leading shareholder value and business outcomes.

Eric is known not only for his business acumen but also for fostering trust and loyalty among employees, customers, and partners—qualities that set him apart as a leader in the global business landscape. And Eric's influence extends far beyond Nike. As a corporate director



for Bombardier, Nordstrom, and General Mills, he continues to lend his expertise to other leading companies. Moreover, his work with burgeoning companies such as Jigx and HIILOS, as well as his role as a Venture Partner at FUSE, showcases his commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and helping launch new ventures. Eric's passion for helping others succeed is also evident in his philanthropic endeavors. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the USA for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), where he is dedicated to supporting displaced populations around the world.

Despite his extraordinary professional success, Eric has never lost touch with his Montana roots or his alma mater. He has served on the College of Business Advisory Board, the National Advisory Board for Grizzly Athletics, and in numerous other capacities, always seeking ways to give back to the University of Montana. He consistently dedicates time and resources to help business students reach new career opportunities, providing mentorship and guidance to the next generation of leaders. Beyond the University, Eric has also coached youth basketball, baseball, and football, further demonstrating his dedication to supporting young people in both their personal and professional development.

As Dean of the College of Business, I am fortunate to be able to work closely with Eric on many initiatives. He is a trusted sounding board, providing invaluable support. His ability to thoughtfully navigate challenging situations, coupled with his deep knowledge and experience, has been a tremendous asset not only to me personally but to the College as a whole. His contributions have shaped the strategic direction of the College, and his guidance has ensured that we equip our students with the tools they need to succeed in a competitive business landscape.

In summary, Eric's remarkable career achievements, altruism, and dedication to education in our great state make him a deserving candidate for an Honorary Doctorate. He is devoted to creating positive change to improve the lives of Montanans, the world, and all those fortunate enough to know him.

Thank you for your consideration of this nomination. It is my firm belief that Eric Sprunk represents the very best of what it means to be an alum of the University of Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Tilleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Suzanne Tilleman

Sprunk and Burnham Endowed Dean
University of Montana, College of Business

A large, light gray graphic of a mountain range with several peaks, located at the bottom of the page.

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President's Office
32 Campus Drive UM 109
Missoula, Montana 59812

Re: Nomination of Eric Sprunk for an Honorary Doctorate Degree

September 18, 2024

Dear President Bodnar :

It is with great pleasure and honor that I submit Eric Sprunk into consideration for an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana.

I am fortunate to have met Eric over twenty years ago when I became involved at Nike Corporation as a board of directors member. Eric was a long time Nike company veteran who had emerged as a leading executive at the company at the time I joined the board. Our mutual hailing from Montana as well as matriculation from the University of Montana helped form a natural bond and friendship.

I was able to observe and learn of Eric's incredible, skill, talent and perseverance as a manager but also as a leader and mentor to literally thousands of people in the Nike universe. Eric was also unique in his breadth – he successfully led groups across many different disciplines - from finance to product to go to market to technology. Achieving the executive level at a Fortune 25 company is incredibly difficult. Eric was unique in his approach. He was joyful, a team player and always took responsibility for the failures in his chain of command while distributing praise for accomplishments to others. Nike lost a rare talent when he retired and has not been the same company since he departed.

I have also been impressed with Eric's post Nike career. He relocated to Seattle and in short order had been nominated to multiple important corporate board responsibilities, civic commitments and projects important to the community. One would have thought he lived in the region for years. The same traits and skills Eric exhibited at Nike are benefiting countless organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

Lastly, I want to recommend Eric for his many and varied contributions to the University of Montana. He has been instrumental in support of both the Business School as well as Athletics. I am sure there are other areas of important support that I am unaware of. But Eric's largest contribution is his consistent and positive evangelism of the University of Montana. He is a proud alumnus and able to articulate well the many wonderful experiences and learnings he has gained from his education and his lifelong involvement.

I unreservedly recommend Eric Sprunk as an Honorary Doctorate.

Go Griz!



John Connors

UM 1984

8815 Overlake Drive West
Medina, Washington 98039

Joe Monahan
Chief Revenue Officer – gearUP Sports, Inc.
479 Hebb Park Road
West Linn, OR 97068

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana President’s Office
32 Campus Drive, UH109
Missoula, MT 59812

September 23, 2024

Seth,

I hope this finds you well. It was great catching up with you in August at the concerts and I hope the new school year is off to a strong start for UM. I am writing to support the nomination of Eric Sprunk for an Honorary Doctorate from the College of Business. I have known Eric for over 30 years, and we were colleagues at Nike for much of that time. We also have similar backgrounds. We are both proud native Montanans, UM graduates, worked as CPAs prior to Nike, and then went on to senior leadership roles far removed from accounting. Eric is a few years older than me, and I’ve always looked up to him as a mentor. Much of my leadership style was derived from observing how Eric led at Nike. He was always “people first” and he believes that leaders have a responsibility to create an environment for others to be their best selves and do their best work. He would say “the more responsibility you have as a leader, the more responsibility you have to give energy to the organization.” Those were not just words to Eric. I consistently witnessed him putting those words into action. For example, he did not schedule meetings on Fridays to allow him more time to walk the halls, check in with staff and lift them up. He was the only executive leader at Nike that would make this a priority and I have talked to many people that noted how much it meant to them.

Eric was a mentor to many at Nike and he was always available to meet despite his hectic schedule. Under that fun-loving, charismatic exterior, lies a super sharp business mind and a kind heart. He is that rare executive who is actually accessible, willing to help and wears KISS t-shirts and jeans to work. He is a great listener and a straight shooter that tells you exactly what you need to hear, even if you may not want to hear it. Looking back now, there were times that Eric believed in my potential more than I did and it made me want to work harder and do better to reward his confidence. I learned a number of valuable lessons from our meetings over the years that I still utilize today. I have listed a few below:

“Keep your periphery wide” – years ago when I was struggling with my career path I went to Eric for advice. He said one of the many great things about Nike is there are opportunities everywhere if you are a great teammate, you are curious, work hard and have a bias for action. He went on to say that I might consider moving laterally to down in the org to gain the different experiences I needed to grow. I had never considered that as an option and did not want to do it. However, he was right and over time it proved to be the best course of action to propel my future growth and development as a Nike leader.

“Plan the work and work the plan” – this seems so simple and intuitive, yet it is hard to do in large global companies with an organizational model like Nike’s. Create a 3-year strategic plan, annual business plans and scorecards to consistently measure progress and hold the team and yourself accountable. Thanks to Eric’s advice, I have done this with every team I have led since, and it has been highly effective.

Every year Eric, myself and other UM grads working at Nike would host a career day for a group of UM Seniors led by Dr. Sherry Liikala. We would meet with the students, talk with them about our careers, have lunch and walk them around campus. I looked forward to this event every year. Not only to meet with the students but to connect with my fellow UM alums at Nike. I still stay in touch with some of those students and UM alums and will always help them any way I can. It was our collective willingness to give back and the pride of being part of Griz nation that pulled us together. However, Eric was the catalyst for the event to happen on campus and his engagement meant a great deal to the students and all of us alums as well. In fact, the Montanan did a feature article on Griz alums at Nike back in 2010 and it was an honor for us all to be included.

Eric’s philanthropic commitment to UM has also been a big inspiration for me. I would see all that he was doing to invest in UM’s future and think to myself that I can do better. His example led my wife and I to consider the ways we could make a difference at our alma mater and develop an action plan. Eric’s many investments in UM have left a legacy that will endure for years to come.

In summary, Eric has had a profound impact on my life. Much more than he is aware. I am grateful for all that he has done for me as a friend and mentor over the years. He is an outstanding choice for an Honorary Doctorate degree from UM. He is proud to be from Montana and proud to be a Griz. He believes deeply in UM and the impact that higher education can have on the lives of students. In fact, he has credited his Montana upbringing and his UM education for helping him to accomplish the heights he has in his extraordinary career. He is a shining example for every Montana kid with big dreams that to quote him *“If I can do it, you can to!”* He was certainly an example to me, and I know he would consider it a great honor to receive this recognition from the College of Business. Thanks for your consideration and for taking the time to read this letter.

My best to you and your family and I look forward to seeing you next month at the UMF Board of Trustees meeting.

Best regards,
Joe

FROM THE DESK OF

Larry Krystkowiak

September 22, 2024

Re: Nomination of Eric Sprunk for the Honorary Doctorate Degree in the School of Business

President Bodnar
University of Montana

Dear President Bodnar,

It is with great pleasure that I submit Eric Sprunk into consideration for an Honorary Doctorates Degree at our Alma Mater, The University of Montana.

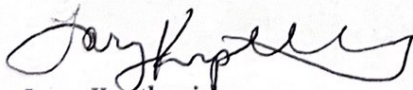
Not only is he a worthy candidate, having distinguished himself as a leader and innovator at Nike but he is also a strong advocate and proud supporter of our fine institution. Eric's business acumen is well chronicled and his resume and success speak for themselves.

Eric and I have been friends since High School and were roommates at Montana Boys State as Seniors in 1982. Eric has remained steadfast in his love and advocacy for the University of Montana and I can state honestly that I have never met a person with more passion and determination to make the University of Montana a better institution.

I have certainly been impressed with Eric's professional success, but I'm equally impressed with his zest for life, treatment of people, and how he has remained true to the values he holds over the past 40 plus years.

I am honored and thankful to have the opportunity to nominate this amazing father, husband and friend for an Honorary Degree in the School of Business at the University of Montana.

Yours truly,


Larry Krystkowiak

Mark Burnham
3130 Martinwood
Missoula, MT 59802

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana
32 Campus Drive – UH 109
Missoula MT 59802

13 September 2024

Dear President Bodnar –

I would like to submit Eric Sprunk for an Honorary Doctorate from the College of Business at the University of Montana. His accomplishments have been many. His commitment and love of the University has been demonstrated perpetually during his accomplished corporate career at Nike, where he served as Chief Operating Officer until his recent retirement. Corporate America values Eric's bias towards action, affability and willingness to build organizations witnessed by his board with Nordstroms, Universal Music Group, General Mills and Bombardier.

Eric is a successful and recognized international rock star from Montana and for Montana. Contributing his time, talent and treasure to the U – whether by guest lecturing in the College of Business, being a Commencement Speaker or providing significant philanthropic support to the College of Business, Student Athlete Academics, Football, Basketball and whatever other needs may arise.

Eric is the University of Montana.

Go Griz

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MB', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Mark Burnham



September 19, 2024

President Seth Bodnar
University of Montana
President's Office
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

President Bodnar:

Please accept this letter as my full endorsement of Mr. Eric Sprunk being recognized with an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montana. He is a proud graduate of the University of Montana, and a proud native of Missoula.

Eric's successful business career with Nike is well known. He took his degree from UM and ascended to a top leadership position of a company with arguably the most recognizable worldwide brand. All who know Eric are instantly drawn in by his down-to-earth personality and limitless energy. After retirement from Nike, he certainly has not slowed down. Eric was appointed to many corporate boards and engaged whole heartedly in the places he calls home, Seattle and the Flathead Valley. He is the consummate ambassador for UM.

More than just his success in the business world, Eric is exactly what the University of Montana represents. His hard work, high integrity, and commitment to his alma mater set him apart as a leader in business and leader in his community. His generosity both financially and with his time have helped build the Grizzly athletic department into what we all enjoy today. He is a mentor to many and perpetuates a positive image of all things that are great about this university.

The greatest compliment I can give Eric is how he treats people. He is never too busy, never too important, never too consumed with other duties, to focus on someone else and make them feel like the most important thing in his life at that moment. If you want to show students what you can do with a degree from UM, Eric Sprunk would be display number one.

Eric is well-deserving of this recognition and I am truly honored to add my endorsement.

Sincerely,

Kent Haslam
Director of Athletics



Intercollegiate Athletics

Hoyt Athletic Complex | Adams Center | Missoula, Montana 59812-8469 | t: 406.243.GRIZ | f: 406.243.2264 | w: gogriz.com
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Eric Sprunk served as the Chief Operating Officer of Nike, Inc. from 2013 to his retirement in August, 2020. Throughout his 27 year tenure at Nike, Mr. Sprunk held various executive positions of increasing responsibility, including Executive Vice President, Global Product and Merchandising from 2008 to 2013 and Executive Vice President and General Manager, Global Footwear from 2001 to 2008. Mr. Sprunk now serves as a member of the Board of Director at HILOS, Jigx, USA for UNHCR, Providence, Allbirds, Bombardier, General Mills, and Nordstrom. In addition to his roles on the Board of Director, Mr. Sprunk Chairs the Public Responsibility Committee at General Mills and is a member of the Audit Committee at Bombardier and General Mills. Mr. Sprunk also serves as an Advisory Board Member at pass_by, a Limited Partner at Untapped Capital and Flying Fish Partners, and a Venture Partner at FUSE. Prior to joining Nike, Inc. in 1993, Mr. Sprunk spent seven years as an executive at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. Mr. Sprunk is a graduate of the University of Montana, receiving his Bachelors Degree in Administration and Accounting from the School of Business.

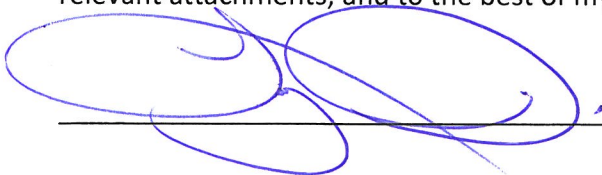
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD ~ 2014 Nomination Form

Date Submitted: March 14, 2014

1. Nominee Name: Eric Sprunk, COO
Address: NIKE World Headquarters
One Bowerman Drive, Beaverton, OR 97005
Phone: 503.671.6453
Email: leigh.nichols@nike.com
Class year: 1986

2. Nominator Name: Larry Gianchetta, Dean
Address: School of Business Administration
32 Campus Drive, Missoula MT 59812
Email Address: larry.gianchetta@umontana.edu
Phone: 406.243.6195
Class year: NA

3. Please describe the nominee's career achievements, professional honors, and professional membership / directorship: please see attached
4. Please attach or send separately your letter of nomination, any supporting documentation, and three supporting letters of recommendation **March 14** for the year of nomination. See the association criteria sheet for further details. The committee may, at its discretion, check references, including academic records and accomplishments, of a nominee. please see attached
5. I certify that I have researched the information disclosed on this nomination form, including relevant attachments, and to the best of my knowledge the information is accurate:



(Signature)

University of Montana
Alumni Association
115 Brantly Hall
Missoula, MT 59812-7920
406-243-5211 or 1-877-862-5867
DAA@umontana.edu



3. Please describe the nominee's career achievements, professional honors, and professional membership/directorship:

Career Achievements:

1986 – Pricewaterhouse, Staff Auditor and Manager
1993 – Finance Director and Controller of Americas
1994 – Finance Director and General Manager of Americas
1995 – Finance Director of NIKE Europe
1998 – Regional General Manager, NIKE Europe Footwear
2000 – Vice President and General Manager, Americas
2001 – Vice President of Global Footwear
2009 – Executive Vice President of Merchandising and Product
2013 – Chief Operating Officer

Selected Other Accomplishments:

Certified Public Accountant (Oregon) – license active 1990-2001
School of Business Administration Dean's Business Advisory Council
National Advisory Board for Grizzly Athletics
University of Montana Athletic Association Board of Directors
Youth Football Coach
Little League Coach

4. Please attach or send separately your letter of nomination, any supporting documentation, and three supporting letters of recommendation.

Letter of Nomination – Larry Gianchetta, Dean, School of Business Administration

Recommendation Letters:

Mike Harrington ('86), Associate Professor of Management, School of Business Administration

Robert Connole, Emeritus Professor of Management

Kent Haslam, Athletic Director, University of Montana

Chuck Bultmann ('66), Alumni, former National Advisory Board for Grizzly Athletics member

Other Supporting Materials:

Article from the *Montanan*

Article from the *Missoulian*

Eric Sprunk profile from NIKE Inc.



March 14, 2014

University of Montana
Alumni Association
115 Brantly Hall
Missoula, MT 59812-7920
Attn: Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee

Re: Nomination of Eric Sprunk

Dear Selection Committee:

On behalf of the School of Business Administration, I enthusiastically nominate **Eric Sprunk ('86)** for the 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award. Eric is **NIKE Inc.'s Chief Operating Officer**. Eric's career has been extraordinary and promises to continue on this trajectory, while he remains an ordinary, genuine guy proud of his Grizzly and Montana roots.

Growing Up Montana

Eric grew up in Missoula and graduated from Hellgate High School, where he was a stand-out basketball player. He attended Linfield College and played basketball for a year before the pull of Missoula brought him to the University of Montana. While at the University of Montana, Eric had his first child and earned a Bachelor of Science with a major in business and emphasis in accounting. Eric's academic preparation combined with his friendly, outgoing personality to make him an attractive student to the large accounting firms recruiting on campus. This created the first fork in the road for Eric – should he stay in Montana or accept a job with Pricewaterhouse in Portland. His father encouraged him to take the opportunity to work in Portland, and Eric took this advice. Eric has said, "My father taught me to always try to make the decision that gives you the most opportunity...That philosophy influenced a lot of decisions in my life."ⁱ

A Rising Star

When he graduated in 1986, Eric began working at Pricewaterhouse in Portland. Though an original draw of this particular firm was that Montana Power was a client, Eric ended up on the NIKE, Inc. account. After over six years with Pricewaterhouse, where he had risen to the manager level, NIKE recruited Eric to be Finance Director and Controller of Americas. He was not yet 30 years old. NIKE saw something special about him, and they gave Eric every opportunity to advance. Eric quickly migrated from a finance role to a managerial and strategic role. Eric has held the following positions at NIKE:

1993 – Finance Director and Controller of Americas
1994 – Finance Director and General Manager of Americas
1995 – Finance Director of NIKE Europe
1998 – Regional General Manager, NIKE Europe Footwear
2000 – Vice President and General Manager, Americas

School of Business Administration

Gallagher Business Building | Missoula, Montana 59812-6808 | t: 406.243.4831 | f: 406.243.6925

2001 – Vice President of Global Footwear
2009 – Executive Vice President of Merchandising and Product
2013 – Chief Operating Officer

Clearly, NIKE saw and continues to reward Eric for his performance and contribution to the company. His career achievement is remarkable. Yet, his business skills are only one side of Eric.

The Man

In preparing to write this nomination letter, I watched a video presentation Eric made to a group of graduate students at another university. He was wearing a t-shirt, jeans, and a smile. He was energetic, down-to-earth, friendly, funny, and genuinely interested in interacting with those in the room. He talked about his three kids. When you read the accompanying letters, you will learn that Eric is always like this. His great social skills and motivational ability have been keys to his ascension at NIKE. But he is quick to cite the importance of balancing career and being a happy person. Eric has stated, “I am glad I ignored the people who told me I would have to make compromises as a father if I wanted to get ahead...I have a strong belief that the better father, husband, brother, son, friend, uncle cousin, etc. I am, the better leader I am going to be at NIKE.”ⁱⁱ Eric’s family has followed him around the world. He is an involved father, coaching youth football and Little League teams for many years.

The Grizzly

Eric is proud to be a University of Montana alum, and his connection with the University has left an impression on many. His support letters demonstrate this. A classmate and friend, Mike Harrington, speaks of Eric’s honesty and integrity. One of his former professors – Bob Connole – speaks of the joy of mentoring Eric. Our Athletic Director – Kent Haslam – speaks of Eric’s commitment to the University of Montana and his positive reflection on the University. Eric has given his time and money to the University. He has served on the School of Business Administration Dean’s Business Advisory Council, the National Advisory Board for Grizzly Athletics, and the Grizzly Athletic Association Board of Directors.

In summary, Eric Sprunk ('86) is the epitome of a Distinguished Alum. The School of Business Administration would be honored and thrilled for Eric to receive this award. We have made this nomination confidentially, so Eric is unaware of it. Something tells me he would chuckle and accept it graciously and humbly.


Regards,



Larry Gianchetta
Dean

ⁱ “Just Doing It” in the *Montanan*, Spring 2010, p27.

ⁱⁱ “Big Sky to Nike COO: Eric Sprunk Talks About How Local Roots Helped Him Succeed” in the *Missoulian*, July 28, 2013

NYSE NKE: 79.44 + 0.47 

NIKE, INC MANAGEMENT

Behind a great company are strong leaders.

At Nike, we excel as a team. The Nike environment is a collaborative, matrix organization, where team members often report into two areas, such as a geography and a global function. In the Nike brand, teams work across footwear, apparel and equipment product engines; our core consumer categories - action sports, basketball, football (soccer), men's training, running, sportswear, and women's training; and in our six geographies - North America, Western Europe, Eastern/Central Europe, Greater China, Japan, and Emerging Markets. Our NIKE, Inc. affiliate brands operate in a similarly collaborative way, as well as critical corporate functions.

Below are select members of Nike's global senior team that lead our business and growth strategies. For a more complete list - [Click Here](#)

- ▶ PHILIP H. KNIGHT
- ▶ MARK PARKER
- ▶ DON BLAIR
- ▶ TREVOR EDWARDS
- ▶ JEANNE P. JACKSON
- ▼ ERIC SPRUNK



- OVERVIEW
- STOCK INFORMATION
- INVESTOR NEWS
- QUARTERLY EARNINGS
- FINANCIAL REPORTS & FILINGS
- EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS
- RESOURCES
- CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- GUIDELINES
- BOARD CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS



Chief Operating Officer

Eric Sprunk is NIKE, Inc's Chief Operating Officer leading all manufacturing, sourcing, IT and procurement for the company. Sprunk also oversees the company's efforts to drive innovation in the supply chain.

Sprunk was previously Executive Vice President of Merchandising & Product where he was responsible for all NIKE Brand product across the company's footwear, equipment and apparel engines from design and development to manufacturing and sourcing, delivering compelling stories to Nike consumers.

Sprunk joined Nike in 1993 and has worked in senior financial, product and global management roles. His most recent position was Vice President of Global Footwear where he drove the footwear creation process - developing new concepts, driving innovation and ensuring supply chain management across the product categories. Before Nike, Eric was an executive at Price Waterhouse managing the Nike account.

Executive Profile

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Name: Eric Sprunk

Title: Chief Operating Officer

Born: March 25, 1964, in LeMars, Iowa

Education:

- B.S., Accounting, University of Montana (1987)

Joined Nike: March 1993

First position at Nike: Finance Director/Controller, The Americas

Other positions held at Nike:

- Finance Director/GM, The Americas ('94-'95)
- Finance Director, Nike Europe ('95-'97)
- Regional GM, Nike Europe Footwear ('98-'00)
- VP/GM, The Americas ('00-'01)
- VP, Footwear ('01-'07)
- VP, Product and Merchandising ('07-'13)

Current responsibilities at Nike (aka "job description"): Managing Nike's global operations. This includes the manufacturing of our product, the global supply chain and movement of our goods from factory to retailer and to consumer, managing our world class facilities around the world, directing the procurement function for Nike, being responsible for the IT architecture, infrastructure and business solutions for the business and driving innovation in the manufacturing of our product. A critical element of the job is integrating all of this work – and more – to deliver seamless solutions for our customers and our consumers who have high expectations for operational excellence from Nike. Maybe the most important responsibility of all is making sure we have an organization full of talented and motivated employees that we continue to develop to bring all these strategies together to deliver value both in the short and the long term.

Recent success and/or accomplishments at Nike: In prior jobs was well known for a relentless pace of innovation in the product line and for driving innovation throughout the manufacturing process. In the new job we have embarked on a program to completely re-architect our IT infrastructure; kicked off significant programs to update our logistics infrastructure in Western Europe and N. America, driven further innovation in the manufacturing of our product through the Manufacturing Revolution Initiative and we have restructured the way the operations teams in the company work together and collaborate.

Professional career before Nike: Immediately upon graduating from the University of Montana I moved to Portland to start work for Price Waterhouse office as a staff accountant. I worked for almost 7 years for Price Waterhouse in both the Portland and the Seattle offices.

Awards & achievements:

NIKE PERSPECTIVES

a. Coolest thing about working at Nike

The foundations of this company are a very real part of my life. It's a company whose business and product I can personally relate to and have a lot of passion for. We're about helping people be more fit, be better athletes, run faster, run farther and everything else that our brand stands for. And we touch so many different people across the globe - including some who I look to as heroes. How cool is it to work for a company like this with a team of people who feel the same way?!?! And the best 'benefit' may very well be wearing jeans, a T-shirt, and Nike shoes to work everyday.

b. Favorite Nike innovation (and why?)

Not just inventing the industries best and most recognizable cushioning platform – Nike Air, but having the ingenuity and ability to 'show' it to consumers. It's like having the engine of a car showing through the body – so very cool and a meaningful way to communicate the benefits of the technology to consumers.

c. Defining moment in sports (personal playing experience or as spectator)

As a participant, it would have to be when I was a senior in high school and we lost the state championship game to a team we had beaten three times before. I often think about what I would have done differently with the beauty of hindsight and how much that experience has helped me. As a spectator, I love going to all sporting events. I love the emotion and passion of the games and the 'game day' experience. And while I love the traditional USA based events like the Super Bowl, World Series, NCAA Final Four, the NBA and others that I have been fortunate enough to have attended; football (soccer) matches cannot be matched. I have also had the great fortune of attending many football matches around the world and several World Cup matches. The emotion and passion exhibited by both the players and their fans are much deeper than anything I have seen in the US. The Olympics are close, but a great football match cannot be beat.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Life outside of work

Board memberships: Various University of Montana advisory boards. Portland OIC/Rosemary Anderson board.

Volunteer work/charitable associations: I firmly believe in giving back to the communities who helped make you who you are. As a result, I am involved in many philanthropic activities.

Family: Nicole (27), Colby (26), Cooper (18) and step kids Danny (18) and Meggie (16). I was married to my first wife for 25 years. Unfortunately that did not last and I found an amazing love with my current wife Blair who I married last summer.

Hobbies & interests: I'm a complete sports junkie. I love high school, college and professional sports. I love to snow ski and I love to be on the water in the summer wake-boarding and waterskiing. I am in the gym as much as I can be to get in a 'spin' class, work with my trainer or go for a run. Some of my best memories are of coaching my kids teams (14 years of that) and watching them participate in activities. I love music and was in the band all through grade school and high school as a Tenor Saxophone player and at one time I was pretty good at the piano but those skills continue to atrophy through the years (however I'm still a very practiced air guitarist.



March 12, 2014

Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee
UM Alumni Association
115 Brantly Hall
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812-7920

Re: Eric Sprunk/School of Business Administration Alumnus

Dear Members of the Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee:

It is a great honor to write this letter supporting the nomination of Mr. Eric Sprunk as a recipient of the University of Montana's Distinguished Alumni Award. I suspect that my familiarity with Eric is a bit different from others who are writing to support his most deserving candidacy. Although Eric and I grew up in Missoula and are the same age, we went to different primary and high schools and, therefore, I didn't really have an opportunity to become acquainted with Eric until he transferred to UM after spending his freshman year at another college where he had played basketball.

As accounting majors who graduated in 1986, we were in many classes together and became friends immediately. Because Eric's social skills are amazing, he was friends with nearly everyone! I have found that people of all walks of life – younger and older, male and female, business professionals and blue-collar workers, hard-rock and country-music fans – love to be around him. Everyone enjoys his sense of humor, his positive approach to life, and his willingness to help friends in any way possible. As simply one example of how Eric goes out of his way to help others, I was fortunate to be hired as Associate Dean of the School of Business Administration more than ten years ago mainly because of Eric. Back in late 2003, although I hadn't talked with him in a few years, I called to ask him if he would be a reference for me if I applied for the SoBA Associate Dean position. Eric said he would be happy to try to help. When I interviewed with Dean Gianchetta a few months later, Dean Gianchetta said that he'd heard from Eric Sprunk – several times. "I listen to Eric Sprunk," I recall Dean Gianchetta telling me.

My knowledge of Eric's reputation for honesty, intelligence, decisive and deliberate actions, emotional stability and maturity, respect, reasonableness, and loyalty is personal. We were classmates for more than three years and studied together for the CPA examination. In addition, I spent ten years at Montana Power Company in Butte, and Montana Power's outside auditor during my career was PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) – the successor organization to the firm

that had hired Eric as a young associate upon his graduation from UM. Many times during my conversations with PwC's accountants (some of whom were Eric's former associates), I heard their praise for his work ethic, knowledge, and personality – statements that were expressed with regret that he no longer was with the firm. (Of course, Nike quickly had recognized what kind of competence, charisma, and character that Eric brought to the table and had hired him away from PwC.) Clearly, PwC had great expectations for Eric based on his personal integrity and abilities in performing and leading work assignments.

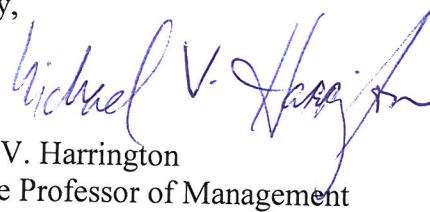
Eric always has been able to use his intelligence and creativity to solve difficult problems with objectivity and fairness. He never has taken an “easy way out” or acted impulsively. I think that it goes without saying that Eric has demonstrated in vivid fashion his flexibility and capacity to engage new undertakings during his professional career; his trajectory at Nike speaks for itself.

I cannot overstate Eric's commitment to fundamental honesty and integrity. Eric's overwhelming sense for doing the “right thing” and his concern for his fellow human beings is a rare commodity these days, and it is one of the reasons I so deeply value my friendship with Eric and why I hold him in such extremely high regard. I have consistently used Eric as an example of an individual who has achieved professional and personal success while maintaining his own dignity and respecting the dignity of others.

Eric Sprunk is an exceptional individual. He is talented, courteous, respectful, and driven. He is dynamic. He commits wholeheartedly to tasks and goals. I am humbled to be able to write this letter to support his most worthy nomination. I cannot think of an individual who I would consider to be a more “distinguished” UM alum than Eric Sprunk.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information or answer any questions as to Eric's candidacy. Thank you very much for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



Michael V. Harrington
Associate Professor of Management

DR. ROBERT J. CONNOLE, Professor Emeritus
School of Business
University of Montana

2825 TIVOLI WAY

Missoula, MT 59802
PHONE: 406.544.4534
E-MAIL: bdconnole@msn.com

Dear Members of the Distinguished Alumni Award Selection Committee: Committee

I cannot express how happy I am to write a letter in support for the nomination of Mr. Eric Sprunk as one of UM's Distinguished Alumni. I have known Eric since 1973 when he moved to Missoula with his family and closely observed his progress throughout his years as a student at Hellgate High School. Not only was he a superior student, but, he was one of the best class AA basketball players in the state of Montana. He was a winner then, and continues to be a winner to this day.

I was truly excited when Eric decided to become a Griz and continue his college studies in Accounting at UM's School of Business Administration. It allowed me to serve as a mentor to him and we have been very close ever since.

One of the joys in college teaching is watching your students rise to the top of their profession and reach their full potential. Eric is such an individual. He is the most successful student I had in almost 40 years of teaching. Eric's rise to the position as COO at Nike is a product of his remarkable management talent and hard work. He is also a wonderful father to his three children.

The University and the Business School alike can be proud of his accomplishments and Eric never ceases to give his thanks and support to his armada. He is a Griz through and through. I cannot think of a person more deserving of this recognition.

Robert J Connole
Professor Emeritus
School of Business Administration



March 6, 2014

Ms. Susan English
Chair, Distinguished Alumni Awards Committee
UM Alumni Association
University of Montana
115 Brantly Hall
Missoula, MT 59812-7920

Ms. English and Committee Members:

Please accept this letter as my full endorsement of Mr. Eric Sprunk being recognized with a Distinguished Alumni Award by the University of Montana Alumni Association. Eric is a 1986 graduate of the University of Montana with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

Eric is a Missoula-native and was recently promoted to Chief Operating Officer for Nike, Inc. He has taken his degree from UM and ascended to the number three position of a company with arguably the most recognizable worldwide brand. All who know Eric are instantly drawn in by his down-to-earth personality and limitless energy. He is the consummate ambassador for the University of Montana.

More than just his success in the business world, Eric is exactly what the University of Montana represents. His hard work, high integrity, and commitment to his alma mater set him apart as a leader in business and leader in his community. His generosity both financially and with his time have helped build the University of Montana athletic department into what we all enjoy today. He is a mentor to many and perpetuates a positive image of all things that are great about this university.

Eric is well-deserving of this recognition and I am truly honored to add my endorsement. If you or the committee would like to discuss this further, feel free to contact me at 406-243-5419. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kent Haslam
Director of Athletics



Intercollegiate Athletics

March 9, 2014

ATTN: University of Montana Alumni Association
Awards Committee

I am pleased to write a letter of recommendation for Erick Sprunk. I highly recommend Eric as a candidate for the Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Montana.

I have known Eric for over 15 years, I became acquainted with him when we both served on the NABGA(National Advisory Board of Grizzly Athletics). Over the time that I have known him, I have found him to be an extremely dedicated individual and hard worker with all the characteristics of a successful Business Man as evident with his recent promotion to Chief Operating Officer at Nike.

Eric has continually supported his University, both financially and with his personal time on the NABGA Board and other Business School and Athletic Department programs and activities.

I highly support Eric for this nomination.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck Bultmann". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Chuck Bultmann
Colleyville, Texas

NYSE NKE 79.44 0.47

NIKE, INC MANAGEMENT

Behind a great company are strong leaders.

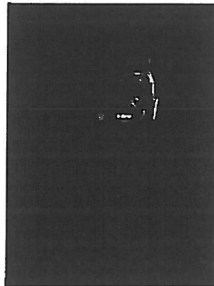
At Nike, we excel as a team. The Nike environment is a collaborative, matrix organization, where team members often report into two areas, such as a geography and a global function. In the Nike brand, teams work across footwear, apparel and equipment product engines; our core consumer categories - action sports, basketball, football (soccer), men's training, running, sportswear, and women's training; and in our six geographies - North America, Western Europe, Eastern/Central Europe, Greater China, Japan, and Emerging Markets. Our NIKE, Inc. affiliate brands operate in a similarly collaborative way, as well as critical corporate functions.

Below are select members of Nike's global senior team that lead our business and growth strategies. For a more complete list - [Click Here](#)

- ▶ PHILIP H. KNIGHT
- ▶ MARK PARKER
- ▶ DON BLAIR
- ▶ TREVOR EDWARDS
- ▶ JEANNE P. JACKSON
- ▼ ERIC SPRUNK



- OVERVIEW
- STOCK INFORMATION
- INVESTOR NEWS
- QUARTERLY EARNINGS
- FINANCIAL REPORTS & FILINGS
- EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS
- RESOURCES
- CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
 - BOARD OF DIRECTORS
 - GUIDELINES
 - BOARD CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS



Chief Operating Officer

Eric Sprunk is NIKE, Inc's Chief Operating Officer leading all manufacturing, sourcing, IT and procurement for the company. Sprunk also oversees the company's efforts to drive innovation in the supply chain.

Sprunk was previously Executive Vice President of Merchandising & Product where he was responsible for all NIKE Brand product across the company's footwear, equipment and apparel engines from design and development to manufacturing and sourcing, delivering compelling stories to Nike consumers.

Sprunk joined Nike in 1993 and has worked in senior financial, product and global management roles. His most recent position was Vice President of Global Footwear where he drove the footwear creation process - developing new concepts, driving innovation and ensuring supply chain management across the product categories. Before Nike, Eric was an executive at Price Waterhouse managing the Nike account.



Just Doing It

BY KEVIN VAN VALKENBURG
PHOTOS BY DAVID SAVINSKI

Above: Nike's Eric Sprunk says he's "proud to be a Griz."

Nike's Vice President of Merchandise and Product **Eric Sprunk '86** proves dreams can happen, especially if you have a Montana work ethic. And by the way, he's not the only one who's made it big with the company . . .

alumni profile



STANDING STILL IS HARD FOR ERIC SPRUNK. This is not an observation as much as it is a fact.

His insatiable curiosity is to blame. Sprunk is more comfortable on the move, telling stories, shaking hands, bear-hugging friends, asking questions, and, in general, pinballing his way through the cosmos.

He does not wear a suit to work. In fact, no one at Nike wears a suit. The standing joke among employees on Nike's Beaverton, Oreg., campus is if you're spotted wearing a tie, you're either interviewing for a job, or you're an analyst from Wall Street.

Sprunk is neither. He's Nike's vice president for merchandise and product, which means a lot of things, but mainly that he's in charge of overseeing everything Nike makes—from LeBron's sneakers to Tiger's red shirt—from design to development to manufacturing, and that billions of dollars are at stake when he makes a decision.

Discovering The Path

Sprunk's journey from Missoula's Rattlesnake neighborhood of Lincolnwood to the boardrooms of Nike is all the more interesting when you consider he had very different aspirations for himself growing up. But each mile marker along the way feels, at least to Sprunk, like it had a purpose.

Even though he was a standout basketball player at Hellgate High School, he didn't exactly fit the mold of the typical jock in the early 1980s. He took weekly piano lessons and played the tenor saxophone in the school marching and jazz bands. His mother, the business manager for the Missoula Children's Theatre, would not let him lead a one-track life.

"I should have given her more credit than I did at the time," Sprunk says. "I thought 'I have to take piano lessons as a sophomore in high school?' But that skill set is alive and well in me today. I think I have equal friendships with all different types of people from different backgrounds and different upbringings."

"I think of the people who know me, if you asked 100 of them where my values come from, 99 of them would immediately say Montana."

He makes a lot of decisions.

His typical wardrobe is a T-shirt and jeans. Comfortable sneakers are a must.

The ringtone on his BlackBerry is usually something by KISS. He's friendly with some of the band members, a detail he doesn't want to brag about, but is thrilled to acknowledge. The last time they were in town, Sprunk gave them each a pair of monogrammed shoes. He had to pinch himself.

He slips the word "awesome" into conversation a lot. He talks fast and doesn't always stay on topic, but somehow, he never comes across as unfocused. His focus, like a laser, simply changes targets. Quickly.

He has the relaxed gait and confident air of a former athlete—which he is—but the good sense to know when to make fun of himself.

In ten minutes of conversation, he can make you feel like a friend.

He also might be the most unlikely corporate executive in America, considering he started his career as an accountant, and now helps decide what shoes Kobe Bryant will market, and thus wear, each NBA season.

Nike certainly isn't run like a typical American corporation, but even within its ranks, Sprunk's ascension has been atypical.

"I get asked that question all the time: 'Seriously, how did you end up doing what you're doing? How is that even possible?'" Sprunk says. "For people outside the company, it's not possible. It would never happen at their companies. Here, it's a little more plausible. I just don't think that many companies would let somebody from finance end up running global product for what one would argue is one of the best consumer products companies in the world."

And to hear Eric Sprunk tell it, he owes a huge chunk of his success to his Montana roots and his degree from UM.

"I think of the people who know me, if you asked 100 of them where my values come from, 99 of them would immediately say Montana," says Sprunk, who graduated in 1986 with an accounting degree. "I don't make it public. It's not like I advertise it. But I'm very proud of it. I'm proud of being a Griz."

After graduating from Hellgate, he played basketball for a year at Linfield College in Oregon, but missed home, as well as his high school girlfriend, Kim, who would eventually become his wife. He returned to Missoula and enrolled in the business school.

"I wanted to be a corporate tax attorney," Sprunk says. "I figured after I graduated in accounting, I'd apply to law school and that's exactly what I'd become."

But then Sprunk took a class from Patricia Douglas, one of the school's infamously tough professors. One day she didn't appreciate that he was chewing gum in class, so she made him attach it to the tip of his nose and wear it for the rest of the hour.

"I thought it was some kind of joke," Sprunk says. "She was the hardest teacher in the business school, but she gave me discipline in my academic life I didn't have prior to that. I think I signed up for nine of her classes. I use the things she taught me in her business writing class every single day."

When Douglas was named UM's Professor of the Year in 1994, Sprunk wrote one of the letters recommending her for the award.

As graduation loomed, Sprunk began to understand that his outgoing personality, combined with his budding accounting skills, might actually make him an attractive job candidate when firms came to UM's campus to recruit. He weighed three more years of school against the financial security of working, and abandoned the idea of law school.

But he still had a decision to make. PricewaterhouseCoopers' Portland-based offices wanted him. But so did a highly respected firm in Missoula.

His family was in Missoula. All his friends were in Missoula. He was comfortable and confident in Missoula. Still he chose to live in Portland.

"My father taught me to always try to make the decision that gives you the most opportunity," Sprunk says. "He said 'You can always come back to Missoula. But if you don't go to Portland now, you may never get that chance again.' That philosophy influenced a lot of decisions in my life."

The initial appeal of PricewaterhouseCoopers wasn't, however, that Nike was a client. It was Montana Power that interested Sprunk. He wanted to work on the Montana Power account, make frequent trips back home, and eventually become a partner.

Nike just wouldn't leave him alone. He had a great relationship with the company, and was handling the majority of their account. His personality was infectious. He was a hard worker, but he was fun. One of the people he'd always looked up to, former Grizzly basketball player Craig Zanon, had left PricewaterhouseCoopers to work at Nike and kept recruiting Sprunk. In 1995, they offered him the position of finance director in charge of the Americas.

"It was a gut-wrenching decision," Sprunk says. "In hindsight, it was way more difficult than it should have been.

But at the time, I wanted to be a partner. Everybody who works in public accounting wants to be a partner, and I thought I could be one. So it seemed kind of careless to give that up."

But again, Sprunk stuck to his philosophy: Where am I going to have the most opportunities?

It was, once again, the best professional decision of his life.

One of the most appealing aspects of Nike, especially for Montana graduates over the past twenty years, is that the company has never particularly cared where its employees went to school, or what their background is in. As long as you're smart and willing to work hard in a collaborative environment, you can work at Nike, and you can do a lot of different jobs.

Employees jokingly call it the Matrix, but one of its selling points is that it's not hierarchical. If you want to talk to your boss' boss, you can. It's a competitive environment, but a fluid one.

That pitch wasn't limited to Sprunk alone. Around the same time Sprunk was hired, the company also recruited another UM business school graduate, Joe Monahan '89.

Pounding The Pavement

Monahan, like Sprunk, had never really imagined working outside of finance. Growing up in Butte, Monahan had played baseball, football, and basketball, and sports were an important part of his life. But professionally all he really wanted was to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, a hard-working Butte Irishman who spent a lifetime as a trustworthy CPA. He was doing exactly that at Moss Adams LLP until Nike talked him into coming to campus for an interview.

"I did the walk around campus, and then sat down by the lake for



lunch," Monahan says. "I'll never forget, I went back to my office, I called my wife, and I said, 'I'm going to go to work for that company. And I bet I'm not working anywhere else the rest of my life.'"


When Sprunk and Monahan bump into each other on campus these days, they bear hug and tease each other like old friends.

Monahan smiles. He and Sprunk are a lot alike, both in personality and in their journey up the ladder at Nike. They're both proud Montanans, both graduates of UM's business school where they were accounting majors, and both former CPAs. Nike is one of the few companies where their rise would even be possible. Monahan is now vice president of sales for North America, meaning he has to be both an outgoing people person and a details man. So how does a former accountant end up running one of the big sales divisions for one of the most recognizable companies in the world?

"I took jobs outside of my comfort zone just to learn," Monahan says. "I went from finance to manufacturing to sourcing to strategic planning. But I always thought it would be good to work in sales because of the relationship side of it. Growing up in Montana, that's kind of what you're about—relationships. I never really left Montana growing up, and now I get to travel the world. When you see what this brand means to people, it's pretty powerful. That's really cool."

The Monahan family is a baseball family, and thus, one of the biggest perks of his job is that he occasionally gets to introduce them to athletes like Alex Rodriguez, CC Sabathia, and Mariano Rivera. One of his great thrills in life was watching his sons take batting practice from Orioles Hall of Fame shortstop Cal Ripken.

But he has been adamant they not forget about their roots. His family still owns a place on Georgetown Lake, and some of his fondest memories of his own childhood involve fishing and boating



on the lake with his grandfather.

“My kids were all born out here,” Monahan says, referring to Oregon. “But if you ask them, they’re native Montanans. Last summer, I was really busy. I said ‘All right guys, here is the deal: I’ll take you on a weeklong vacation, anywhere you like.’ We narrowed it down to Maui or Montana. All three of them at the same time said they wanted to go back to Montana.”

have to go through three different levels of management to bend his ear. They can just as easily pitch him something face to face.

“A lot of times we’re in the business of putting things out in front of consumers they never thought were possible,” Sprunk says. “A lot of our growth comes from showing you something where you go, ‘Wow, I never would have thought of that. That’s unbelievable.’ That’s the heat of the brand. We believe we owe that to our consumers. So part of my job is making sure we have an environment that allows our people to be creative and innovative.”

Now more than ever, Nike is a global company. Its business

“I took jobs outside of my comfort zone just to learn.”

Feeling The Movement

Like Monahan, Sprunk would never be where he is today if his family hadn’t shown the ability to adapt in support of their father’s career. Nike asked Sprunk if he’d be willing to move and work for the company in Europe. After working for a few years in finance there, they asked him to take over their European footwear division.

It wasn’t the best time for his family to make a big move, and the safe play would have been to stay comfortable in the Pacific

Northwest. But again, Sprunk chose opportunity over comfort.

“It was good personally and professionally,” Sprunk says. “You have to hunker down and form a pretty tight bond, because literally you don’t know how to buy groceries or furniture. And your perspective on how you see the brand is different. There is a humbleness to be had, and an appreciation for diversity and inclusion.”

Sprunk took a division of the company that wasn’t doing well, and in two and a half years, he turned it into one of Nike’s better performing assets. He also experienced a bit of luck along the way. His two bosses while he was in Europe were Mark Parker and Charlie Denson. When Nike restructured its company, the two were named co-presidents.

“I remember going home one night and saying to my wife, Kim, ‘I think Mark is going to ask me to do the global footwear job,’” Sprunk says. “I was thirty-seven at the time. My wife was like, ‘You’re out of your mind. There is no way they’re going to ask you to do that job.’”

A week later he was offered the job. He ran global footwear for seven years, traveling the world, leading a team of designers, innovators, and marketing experts who were adept at anticipating what consumers wanted instead of reacting to it. He did well enough that in 2008 the company created a new position—vice president for product—that put him in charge of everything Nike makes.

Sometimes that means working directly with athletes, asking for their input and insight—although Sprunk generally leaves that to the creative types—and other times it means meeting with owners or league presidents, or simply supporting Nike-sponsored teams.

Every day, though, is about movement. Speed. Anticipation.

He can be demanding to work for, but he’s developed a reputation for cutting through corporate jargon. Employees don’t

outside the United States is growing faster than inside it. When Sprunk joined the organization in 1995, NIKE, Inc.’s revenue for the fiscal year was \$4.8 billion. At the end of fiscal year 2009, Nike reported revenue of \$19.2 billion. But Sprunk is still convinced it’s run like a much smaller company.

“Fundamentally, the culture of what we do is still the same,” Sprunk says. “It still rewards good work. It’s still way more about what you’re achieving, do you have integrity, and are you a good teacher, than it is about what school did you go to or whom do you know.”

Finding The Stride

That’s one of the reasons John Connors ’84, a UM business school graduate and former senior vice president of finance and administration and chief financial officer at Microsoft, agreed to join Nike’s Board of Directors in 2005.

Connors, an accounting major who grew up in Miles City, is one of UM’s most impressive success stories. He took a job with Microsoft in 1989 when the company had 2,800 employees and was generating around \$480 million in annual revenue.

Over the next seventeen years, he steadily rose up the ranks, working in virtually every part of the company—development, sales, information technology, and growth—and he contributed to and oversaw some of Microsoft’s exponential expansion.

In 2000, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer tapped him to serve as the company’s chief financial officer, and Connors helped navigate a volatile transitional period when the company faced multiple anti-trust suits, a difficult product transition period, and a stock that was seen as massively overvalued.

“It was around that time I got to know a lot of the Nike leadership team,” Connors says. “I knew there were a bunch of Montana graduates there because Montana natives are pretty good about knowing who has ended up where.”

One of Nike’s founders, former CEO Phil Knight, asked Connors to join the Board of Directors because he wanted to continue to bring in fresh perspectives and new ideas, even after he stepped down from being involved in the day-to-day operations of the company.

“When I was at Microsoft, I was recruited to serve on a lot of boards, and I’d almost universally turned them down,” Connors says. “But Nike was analogous to Microsoft in some ways. They’re both highly recognizable global brands who create products used by millions of people. They’re both meritocracies, where the best people are identified and moved up. I think a similar culture exists

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Joe Monahan believes growing up in Montana teaches one about the value of strong relationships.



A Team Approach

Alums explain how a UM education guides their careers at Nike.

Stefanie Henderson '04

Footwear Brand Merchandiser, Emerging Markets—Latin America

"As an athlete and a motivated student in the business school at UM, I always was challenged with maintaining balance across athletics, studies, and my social life. My experience at UM helped shape how I adjust to competing priorities on a daily basis here at Nike. It was an invaluable skill set to gain before heading into a dynamic, ever-evolving company like Nike."

Adam Steffen '04

Category Planner, North America Basketball

"My time at UM—and my Montana roots for that matter—really shaped how I approach my career, as well as my outlook on life. Growing up on a ranch, I did whatever it took to get the job done regardless of the time of day or the deadline. When I had a job to do . . . I did it. My dad tried to convince me in high school to take a year off and work before coming to college so I would know what it was like to earn a living. I

believe my response was, 'No, I'm good.' When I came to UM, I dove right in, even though others thought I would never finish because I was, shall we say, sociable. When I finally broke into Nike after I took the same approach as I did on the ranch and at UM—I relied on the relationships I've built. I think Montanans are especially good at this because they know how to work and have as much fun along the way as possible."



Trevor Rembe '93

Director of Allocation, North America Factory Stores

"There is great Montana pride that echoes from all of the Nike teammates. Nike is such a relationship-based company, and it is great to have the common thread of Montana running through. It doesn't matter if you're a VP or analyst, being a part of Griz Nation pulls the group together."

Brooklynn Lorenzen '04

Footwear Developer, Jordan

"So much of my experience at UM shaped the way I approach my job. Obviously, the MBA program and my undergraduate degree in communications helped prepare me in terms of understanding the business world and being able to effectively communicate with my teammates. But, in many ways, being a student-athlete at UM has more strongly affected how I approach my job, simply because the experience has influenced the way I approach everything in life. By

playing for such a historically successful program and coaching staff, there is a high level of expectation in terms of the amount of time and effort dedicated to playing ball, as well as overall performance, of course. The same can be said for working at Nike. It is a highly competitive work environment, and you are rated based upon your performance, which is dependent on the amount of work you put in and your ability to work well with others."

"I think a similar culture exists in both companies [Nike and Microsoft], where the employees really have a passion for their product."

John Connors was asked to join Nike's Board of Directors to bring a fresh perspective.

continued from page 29

in both companies, where the employees really have a passion for their product."

Connors—who spent his formative teenage years working on a farm, on an oil rig, for the railroad, and on a ranch—knew Sprunk's roots and journey weren't much different from his own.

"We have a lot of people from the business school who majored in accounting, who went to work for a big accounting firm, and then did well and ended up getting hired by their clients," Connors says. "There is just success story after success story."

Realizing The Success

If you ask Sprunk whether the twenty-two-year-old version of himself saw any of this coming, he does something rare.

He pauses for a moment to consider it all, then chuckles like he doesn't quite believe it either.

"I think people back then would be floored if you told them," he says. "Myself included. Because you never know. I wanted to be a corporate tax attorney. But it comes back to what I said about opportunities. The wider you keep your lens, the better off you'll be. Then you can spend the last twenty or thirty years of your career bringing your lens down, focusing on where you want to live and what you want to do."

Life can feel like a tornado some days, but that's a rush as much as it is a concern. Sprunk's line between work and play is quite blurry.

"I really do think I'm blessed with this job," Sprunk says. "I love sports. I show up

this morning and the new helmet design for The University of Montana football team and new uniforms are on my desk. That feels like I'm playing. I love that."

In addition to being a good friend and international business leader, Sprunk is an inspiration for many—including UM Director of Athletics Jim O'Day. "I can't say enough about Eric and what he does for our athletic department. He is a real visionary. Along with being a very well-respected member of our **National Advisory Board for Grizzly Athletics**, he is a strong believer in investing in our product."

Perhaps most impressive, O'Day says, is that fact that while Sprunk has obvious interest in the sports of football and men's and women's basketball, the majority of his private giving goes to assist the Olympic sports such as soccer, golf, tennis, volleyball, and track and field. "That in itself says a lot about him," O'Day says. "He knows the student-athletes in these sports struggle to get new equipment and uniforms, and he wants them to look as good as possible in their Nike gear. He believes that if they look good, they will perform even better. Looking back, he's been absolutely correct."

But there are a few weeks every year when the tornado slows down. When the stress of where LeBron James will play next season, what Under Armour and adidas are doing, or how many Manchester United jerseys Nike is going to sell this year is put on hold.

Sprunk's three children can always sense it coming. It begins with a drive east out of Portland, but it doesn't truly take shape until somewhere in Idaho, when the Sprunk family

car makes the slow and steady climb through the Coeur d'Alène Mountains and toward the welcoming embrace of Lookout Pass.

It's a journey every Montanan knows well enough. Lookout Pass isn't as scenic as some of the state's iconic throughways, at least not in pictures. But the peaks always seem taller, and the piercing blue sky always feels bigger than you picture in your mind.

The Sprunk kids smile when the Montana state sign appears on the horizon. They can sense the tension draining from their father's body as the mountains open up, the highway crests at 4,700 feet, and their descent begins.

It may seem foolish to attach great significance to a moment defined by the imaginary lines that exist only on maps. But the transformation is real for the Sprunks. They know Dad is about to feel different the moment Idaho is in the rearview mirror.

The stress of his job will fade. It will be easier to make him laugh. Time will slow down. In a few hours, he'll be sitting on his dock, looking at the ripples of Flathead Lake with a beer in his hand. Everyone who works at Nike for ten years gets a five-week sabbatical, and when Sprunk took his, he spent the entire time in Montana. He barely moved off his dock. 🏠



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Big Sky to Nike COO: Eric Sprunk talks about how local roots helped him succeed

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Eric Sprunk left his hometown of Missoula in the late 1980s to start an accounting career at one of the nation's top firms in Portland, Ore.

In June, Sprunk was named the chief operating officer at Oregon-based Nike Inc., making him one of the athletic apparel company's top executives.

It was the latest step in a steady climb Sprunk has made since 1993 when he left the world of accounting and dove into a career at Nike, a place where he's put a competitive nature and number-crunching background to use to help the company lead and innovate on a global level.

As COO, Sprunk spends his days strategizing about how operations can assist growth strategies and meeting with Nike's teams and partners throughout the world to make sure they "have what they need to do their best work every day."

Sprunk, a 1986 University of Montana graduate who still spends as much time as possible at his home on Flathead Lake, reflected last week on how his Montana upbringing has helped guide his career and what Montana businesspeople might learn from Nike's innovative corporate culture.

Q: You've talked in the past about how your Montana roots have helped guide you as you rose through the Nike ranks. What's the No. 1 way your Montana upbringing has helped you succeed at Nike?

A: I reflect on my Montana upbringing literally every day. I have a strong work ethic and I don't expect things from others that I don't expect from myself. I try to treat every person I come in contact with the same way irrespective of their position and always remember where I came from. I have had a great career so far, but I don't want it to define me as a person. Instead, I want my actions and words to define me. It's important that my friends in Montana see me as a positive representative of the school and community. It drives me.

Q: Let's flip that last question around: Nike is known for its unique and competitive corporate culture. Has that environment helped you advance in your career?

A: I do think it has helped me. I am a very competitive person. I set out to "win" at everything I do. Athletics taught me a lot about being competitive, but in the context of a team. Individual success is great, but it isn't nearly as fulfilling as winning as a team. At Nike we are very competitive, we know we are competing for our consumers. We work very hard at it and I like that. But our culture is very team-oriented and that is what makes us so successful.

Q: If Montana entrepreneurs could attend a bootcamp to learn about Nike business practices that have made it so successful, what would they learn that could help them grow their businesses?

A: I think Nike is excellent at many, many things. We obsess about our consumer around the world. We have a saying, “The Consumer Decides,” and in a complex world, in a big company with many different points of view, this simple saying that reflects the truth of the situation serves us very well. We relentlessly innovate our products and services to enable our consumers to be better. This is our competitive advantage and we fuel it and focus on it. We are relentlessly self-critical to make sure we hold ourselves accountable for excellence.

Q: Nike’s iconic slogan “Just Do It” celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. In your opinion, why have those three words so connected with people, and how has the slogan helped the Nike brand grow in the past quarter century?

A: “Just Do It” is a very simple, easy to understand slogan. It can be applied to many aspects of life. We have been able to dimensionalize for many years, but the simple truth of taking action and doing something is very powerful.

Q: If you could go back to your college days at the University of Montana what career advice would you give yourself?

A: I received great career advice at the University of Montana and I have been very fortunate to make some great decisions along the way. My success can be attributed to three things: Some of it is luck, some of it is timing, some of it was purposeful. I travel all over the world, go to amazing events and meet great people and still get to come home to Missoula and Flathead Lake with my family. Right now, I wouldn’t change a thing.

Q: What’s the one piece of career advice you’re glad you ignored?

A: I am glad I ignored the people who told me I would have to make compromises as a father if I wanted to get ahead. Hard work is a really important part of success. But so is balance in one’s life. As an example, I spent most of two decades coaching my kids’ youth teams. I know that made me a better leader. I have a strong belief that the better father, husband, brother, son, friend, uncle, cousin, etc. I am, the better leader I am going to be at Nike. So, I try and find the balance as best I can with all of those things. I work hard to find this balance and it isn’t easy. It would be easy just to work more, but I don’t think that is the way to success.