



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Karen Hughes Quintos '85



To Karen Hughes Quintos for her professional accomplishments in global brand management and her commitment to the Smeal College of Business and Penn State.

Karen Quintos intended to major in accounting ... until she took an intermediate-level class then known as “the weed-out course” among Penn State students. “I studied harder than I ever had and barely broke a C,” she said.

When she informed her family she was switching her major to business logistics, her dad told her she would be driving forklifts and working in a warehouse the rest of her career. Instead, she has risen through the ranks of companies like Merck & Co., Citigroup, and Dell, where she is senior vice president and chief marketing officer. And no, she has never driven a forklift.

The “breadth of what you can learn and experience” in business logistics started Quintos on her path to top corporate echelons, she said. She began by interning at Merck and was hired there three months later.

“One of the things Merck did as part of their leadership development program, was take up-and-coming executives out of their comfort zone and put them in a new area to grow and develop,” she recalled. “After 10 years in global support functions, I was sent to Wilson, N.C., to manage one of Merck’s packaging facilities.” There she was exposed to leading a line organization and was inspired by the value these employees deliver for customers, spurring her to earn a master’s degree in marketing and international business from New York University.

Her next position was vice president of global operations and technology at Citigroup, where she learned the competitive value of managing customer lifecycles. “If you win a customer when they’re 16 years old by issuing them their first credit card, and continue to delight them, you can keep that customer through a lifetime of their financial services needs,” she said. “The customer must be at the core of everything you do.”

In 2000, Quintos joined Dell, where she has held executive positions in supply chain management, sales, services, customer support, and marketing. She assumed her current role in 2010.

“I’ve worked in multiple industries, across multiple functions. I think that breadth and that depth have really benefited me as a well-rounded CMO,” she said. “Great CMOs are as much about building great brands as they are about leveraging customer data and being the customer’s advocate.”

Quintos considers it essential that women in top executive positions advocate for other women in business. “Because there are not very many of us at these senior levels, when you get there you need to step up,” she said. “As the mother of two girls, I feel they can do anything they set their minds to, and girls need strong role models to inspire them and support their dreams.”

A Lehigh Valley native, Quintos said she grew up in a “Penn State family,” with alumni parents who have been strong role models for her. “Penn State has always been at the core of our family and community values,” she said.

She serves as executive sponsor of Dell’s largest networking group, Women in Search of Excellence; is on the Austin board of Susan G. Komen; and on the advisory board for Catalyst, a national nonprofit working to increase diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace.

Quintos serves on the Smeal College of Business Board of Visitors and the *For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students* campaign committee. Recently, she assisted in developing Penn State’s “Penn State Lives Here” brand and served on a task force to re-launch the Smeal brand. In 2009, she received the Smeal College of Business Distinguished Alumni award and in 2010 was named a Penn State Alumni Fellow. She and her husband, Tony, created the Hughes-Quintos Family Trustee Scholarship to enhance diversity at Penn State.

Karen and Tony are both life members of the Penn State Alumni Association. They live in Austin, Texas, with their three children: Alex, Carmella, and Elle.

