

October 26, 2026

Admissions Committee

I am writing about Leo Fiascone. Leo is a very bright and talented young man with a strong work ethic.

I am Chairman of Pan American Bank & Trust, a privately owned Chicago-area community bank of about \$536 million in assets.

During the summer of 2026 Leo approached us and offered to help us think about practical uses of artificial intelligence that fit a relationship bank, at no cost and with no obligation through a formal presentation stage. Before I agreed, I reviewed his prior work, including a bilingual AI citizenship tutoring platform he built for Erie Neighborhood House, and confirmed that he had led the work himself. I also read several of his published articles on policies and programs he believes could strengthen Chicago. The writing is excellent and non-partisan. He is trying to build consensus after research and after speaking with leaders in the field. He has a deep-rooted love for the city of Chicago and wears it on his sleeve.

We thought this project would be interesting for Leo to work with us on and align well with our recently formed AI committee, which is comprised of several members of our leadership team. The purpose of this committee is to identify opportunities for the integration of AI in key areas to gain efficiency in a safe and sound way. I felt strongly that Leo was the right person to work with our executive team and was willing to dedicate the time and had the ability to do the grind work: interview each department head, identify inefficiencies and time-consuming tasks in each of the critical areas, document it and provide a written assessment that could be used by our team or outside consultants in the integration and real-world implementation of AI. That is exactly what he did.

Leo worked with our leaders in lending, credit, operations, BSA, finance, facilities, HR, and technology, all the critical areas of the Bank. He identified what the bank needed, tested those needs against our standards, and sourced skilled AI integration firms against a matrix so the proposals reaching our C-suite and AI Committee would be curated rather than generic. He handed those firms his thirteen-page consulting brief and spent hours working with each of these established AI integration firms to help them understand the details and nuances of our bank. It is the process and an assessment I would have wanted a paid advisor to produce.

He treated the bank and our culture with complete respect. He learned how we work, including the systems and technology we have invested in and integrated into our platform. He didn't arrive with a plan to replace people.

He identified several key areas of work that consume hundreds of hours each year. We are a relationship and client service-based organization offers personalized banking experience for our clients. That is our differentiator, Leo did not invent that observation. He listened to our people and was disciplined enough to keep it front and center under seventy-five other potential workflows.

In addition to the technical aspects of his work, Leo also focused on the standards our bank treats as non-negotiable. He took our Five-Star Pledge and Crest of Culture seriously. Leo kept returning to a rule our founders would recognize, technology must serve the team and the client, not the other way around. He wrote an expectation into his assessment document that I particularly liked: if a presentation could be given to any community bank with the logo swapped, it is not ready for Pan American Bank.

He checked in and kept my team in the loop. The work arrived when he said it would. Our people enjoyed working with him. That is not a small thing in a bank that lives on relationships.

I should be precise about what Leo is and is not. He is not a banker. He is not a systems architect. He did not implement software on our core. His role was to understand enough of the technology to run the process intelligently, ask the right questions, and bring in people with expertise he did not have. He earned our trust. He kept confidential material confidential. He showed up prepared, with well written and concise documentation, and did not confuse activity with results. When he did not know something, or when he struggled with banking, regulation, or the specifics of a department, he organized his questions and found the person who could help him.

There are many people I have encountered over the years who have more experience and credentials than Leo but do not grasp as well the specific needs of a community bank. Client experience, a positive work environment, soundness and sustainability, and data security are the things we value most. He did an excellent job in organizing the work around those priorities. His work ethic and temperament are key strengths of his.

Leo is a very respectful and thoughtful young man. He did the uncredited part of a project: the questionnaires, the second meetings, the part of the process that outlines the business need to the technologists who will be responsible for integration. That is the kind of work that turns a project into a successful implementation.

Leo far exceeded what we expected. The bank is now moving forward on several of the components his work facilitated. I would gladly have him work with our executives again on a future project. Leo clearly brought his A-game to this project and initiative, and we were extremely pleased with the outcome and results.

Sincerely,



Nicholas S. Giuliano, Chairman