



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Sara Thurwachter Brand, Ph.D.

Outstanding Young Mechanical Engineer, 2013

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1996

MSME, University of California at Berkeley, 1998

Ph.D., ME, University of California at Berkeley, 2000

Founding General Partner

True Wealth Ventures

Founding general partner of True Wealth Ventures, Dr. Sara Brand started a venture capital fund based in Austin to invest in women-led businesses that are improving environmental and human health.

Before gathering the necessary skills to become an impact-based investor, Sara chose to study mechanical engineering, as she always liked to learn how things were made and how they worked. She considered mechanical engineering the “liberal arts” of engineering and wanted to gain a broad understanding during her undergraduate education to later inform what path she would pursue.

Sara became passionate about “greening” up the semiconductor industry given the environmental impact she foresaw electronics devices having during her lifetime. She continued her studies at U.C. Berkeley, receiving an MS and Ph.D. in mechanical engineering with a focus on green design and manufacturing, and a minor in public health and energy. She also received a Management of Technology Certification from Berkeley’s Haas School of Business.

She began her professional career at companies including Intel and Applied Materials, applying her skills toward technical roles within the semiconductor industry. Sara later realized that she wanted to better understand how business decisions were made in order to have a bigger impact on the environmental and technical developments occurring in the semiconductor industry at the time.

She joined McKinsey & Co. out in the San Francisco office, where the head of their semiconductor practice sat and addressed strategic challenges

across the industry as a management consultant. From there she entered venture capital (VC) in Silicon Valley, where she helped manage a \$150M fund. Sara immediately latched onto VC work, as it required a blend of her technical training: meeting with entrepreneurs who were thinking about how to solve the next big problems and helping portfolio companies with their business challenges. She knew this is where she could leverage her experience, skills and passions, and sought more operational experience before coming back to VC.

Sara spent 10+ years at AMD, which eventually brought her back to Austin. She worked directly for 3 Fortune 500 CEOs and their teams in strategic and operational capacities, running two different business units, and spending time on the other side of the VC equation - acquiring and integrating VC-funded companies into a much larger company.

During this same timeframe, Sara and her husband Kevin, also a UTME '96 grad, founded (512) Brewing Company. Their firsthand experience of starting a company with green principles from the ground up helped them develop it into the largest draught-only, self-distributing microbrewery in the United States.

Sara is now a passionate and active member of the entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports gender diversity in the consumer health and sustainability sectors. She serves on the Cockrell School of Engineering’s External Advisory Board and on the Texas Health Catalyst Panel at the UT Dell Medical School to foster health technology innovations across industry, academia and community.