

WILMU[®]

PUPPY LOVE

An alumna's idea of bringing dogs into classrooms went viral, captivated international media, and improved reading scores.

Brooke Hughes

- DR. ROBIN WEINSTEIN: A BEACON OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP
- THE NEW APPLIED MATHEMATICS PROGRAM

■ A VETERAN HELPING VETERANS

■ LEGENDARY DEAN DR. JOHN GRAY RETIRES



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“Our team is devoted to depicting the people of our incredible University community with dignity, respect, and heart.” —*Dr. LaVerne Harmon*



Dear Friends,

We are delighted to celebrate the fall season with this new issue, featuring stories about our students, faculty, alumni, and staff.

Our cover story about alumna Brooke Hughes highlights her resounding success in offering puppy therapy as part of reading education. The program has so far resulted in a 32% improvement in reading scores for local elementary school students. Word about Ms. Hughes has spread nationally, and she has appeared on ABC Nightly News with David Muir and Good Morning America, as well as in USA Today, People, and Newsweek magazines.

We also share information about our new Applied Mathematics Program, which equips students with the skills they need to become successful applied mathematicians in their chosen careers. The curriculum emphasizes applications to real-world projects, cost analysis, graph theory, and cryptography.

Additionally, we profile the new College of Business Dean, Dr. Robin Weinstein, a self-described servant leader who hopes to continue preparing students for the global business world while inspiring them with a curriculum emphasizing ethical frameworks and servant leadership.

I'd also like to congratulate our magazine team for recently being recognized for excellence in editing by the Delaware Press Association (DPA). Our team is devoted to depicting the people of our incredible University community with dignity, respect, and heart, and I'm happy the DPA has acknowledged their hard work and talents.

Please enjoy the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LaVerne Harmon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. LaVerne Harmon
President



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CONTENTS

p.40

Dr. Diane Bansbach



FEATURES

24 COVER STORY *Puppy Love*

Puppies in classrooms: It was an alumna's idea that went viral, captivating the international media while improving reading scores.
by Eileen Smith Dallabrida

30 *A Beacon of Servant Leadership*

College of Business Dean Dr. Robin Weinstein has dedicated his life to serving others. He offers innovative and evocative perspectives on business, enriching the educational experience for students who can change the world.
by Maria Hess

36 *Developing Faculty*

The Conference on Teaching Excellence focuses on professional growth, building community, and, primarily, advancing teaching excellence for the benefit of students.
by Maria Hess



40 *When Will I Ever Need Math?*

Students often question the relevance of math, and teachers hear it all too often. At WilmU, however, those in the Applied Mathematics program discover math as a key to success. *by Diane Bansbach*



COURTESY OF SAMANTHA KIDWELL



4 News

The latest news on WilmU's faculty, staff, students and alums.

44 Sport

Five ex-Wildcat lacrosse players and a former assistant coach have become police officers; basketball player **DAJA CLAIBORNE** is selected for the Student-Athlete Symposium, in conjunction with the 2024 NCAA Inclusion Forum, *by Bob Yearick*.

48 Alumni

EMILY NAVARRETE shares her propensity for social justice, *by Eileen Smith Dallabrida*; **RODNEY LITTLE** is a veteran helping veterans, *by Bob Yearick*; the Wilmington University 2023–2024 Distinguished Alumni Award winners, *compiled by Maria Hess*; and News & Notes, *by Verlin Jay Alexander III*.

54 Wilmington University School of Law

Associate Dean of Library and Information Resources and faculty member **TREZLEN DRAKE** provides an introduction; the Mentor End of Year reception, *by Taylor Warrington-Purcell*; and the Barristers Ball, *by Taylor Warrington-Purcell*.

60 Criminal Justice Institute

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THE NEWS





The Middle States Commission on Higher Education Reaffirms Accreditation of Wilmington University, With Stellar Results

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) has officially reaffirmed Wilmington University's accreditation. All seven standards were met with no requirements and no recommendations.

"This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff," says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. "We are humbled that the MSCHE team noted our commitment to students and collaborative environment because we are deeply grateful for the privilege to serve."

The MSCHE sets rigorous standards for accreditation, covering areas such as mission and goals, ethics and integrity, student learning and support, and resources and planning. Wilmington University demonstrated high quality in these areas, in terms of its institutional credibility, commitment to continuous improvement, and ability to build trust and confidence among its students, faculty, and staff.

Evaluated as exemplary were WilmU's planning, finance, and strategic decision-making systems, as well as its design of online courses, which the MSCHE team identified for providing faculty the opportunity to customize standardized course

shells with their specific expertise. Other commendations were given for the University's ability to tailor experiential learning for its diverse student body by providing various experiential learning opportunities, including longer-term internships and co-ops, prior learning assessments, and micro-internship experiences.

The Middle States report also commended the University for its caring community: "The sense of security, trust, collaboration, and community exhibited at Wilmington University appears to not only meet the requirements of the standard — but go beyond."

The MSCHE team recognized WilmU's model of hiring qualified faculty with real-world experience, its employee offerings such as the Leadership Institute, and the University's dedicated Board of Trustees, which includes many long-serving members.

"We are thankful to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the team that evaluated us," says Dr. Harmon. "Their extensive knowledge of higher education, commitment, and expertise is integral to our success and the high standards we will always strive to maintain." **WU**

—*Maria Hess*

College of Education Dean Dr. John Gray's tenure at Wilmington University was distinguished by transformative leadership and a commitment to educational excellence.

Dr. John Gray Retires



DR. JOHN GRAY joined Wilmington University in 1993. He served as dean of the College of Education for 14 years, spending his final year assisting with special academic projects. Dr. Gray also served WilmU as director of Graduate Specialty Programs, chair of M.Ed. programs in School Leadership, Instruction, and Educational Technology, and as Clinical Studies coordinator.

He provided creative, thoughtful, and insightful leadership that fostered innovation during his tenure as dean. Additionally, Dr. Gray guided the reconstruction of the College's traditional doctoral degrees toward dissertation in practice, an applied research project of continuous

improvement in candidates' education settings. He led the restructuring of each doctoral program using current organizational and higher education standards, including new courses for the Higher Education Leadership and Organizational Leadership programs. The Educational Leadership degree was also rewritten to include three district, building, or teacher leadership pathways. This program was approved by the Specialized Professional Association and received national recognition.

"Dr. Gray was an instrumental figure in the scholarly study of teaching, learning, and leadership, and he exhibited extensive expertise in areas such as school leadership, clinical teacher preparation, higher education program advancements and educational philosophy," says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. "His work was centered on creating and sustaining high-quality programs and integrating real-world classroom experiences with prospective teacher training, which led to positive student outcomes and enriched learning experiences."

Dr. Gray was pivotal in transitioning teacher preparation, school leadership, and school counseling programs from theoretical frameworks to practical

application, emphasizing continuous clinical practice throughout the degree. His vision focused on integrating extensive real-world experiences, allowing candidates to apply classroom knowledge within the K-12 environment. Dr. Gray's dedication to immersive experiences was realized through establishing the Year-Long Residency Program, whose success and sustainability were secured by his support. The program addresses teacher quality and the state's teacher shortage, and it was the first of its kind in Delaware. Over 200 aspiring teachers have completed the program, and the current hire rate is 100%.

Regarding the College's growth, Dr. Gray was committed to establishing collaborative partnerships between Wilmington University and various educational institutions, schools, and districts across Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. These collaborations expanded the Master's in Education, School Leadership, and Doctorate in Education programs, exemplified by the extensive partnership with the Appoquinimink School District.

Creativity and innovation were of utmost importance to Dr. Gray. He opposed traditional grades and test-



Dr. John Gray

ing, preferring authentic assessments measuring students' natural abilities rather than memorization skills. He challenged program chairs and faculty to think outside the box regarding curriculum, programming, and partnerships.

Before his employment at the University, Dr. Gray maintained a distinguished career for 25 years in schools throughout Delaware, serving as an elementary school teacher, reading specialist, and principal. He has been affiliated with numerous organizations, including the Delaware Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. He was a board member

of the Delaware Foundation for Mathematics and Science Education and the Fairville Friends School in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

Additionally, Dr. Gray was appointed to the National Advisory Committee for the School Leaders Licensure Assessment and helped develop assessment and certification exams for school and district leaders. He earned numerous awards and fellowships, including the Harry Passow Fellowship in Curriculum and Teaching and the TTT (Training Teacher Trainers) Fellowship from Columbia University, the IBM Executive Educator Award, and the Outstanding Public Service Award from the Wilmington United Neighborhoods Association. He holds

an Ed.D. from Columbia University, where he taught for several years as an adjunct assistant professor, and an M.Ed. from the University of Delaware.

"There are many things I will miss about Dr. Gray, a brilliant yet down-to-earth leader who leaves an extraordinary legacy," says Dr. Harmon. "He inspired countless students, and his deep understanding of education and diversity resonated with everyone. He embodied our University mission in every aspect of his work, and his tenure was marked by a genuine dedication to fostering new generations of well-prepared teachers who will make a real difference, just like Dr. Gray did." **WU**

—*Maria Hess*



Dr. Debra Mason

A NEW FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBER

DR. ROBERT REYES, a seasoned professor and researcher, has joined the full-time faculty in the Doctor of Social Science in Prevention Science program in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

“Dr. Reyes is a new and welcomed addition to our Doctor of Social Science in Prevention Science program. He comes to us with the competencies and experience that will complement the delivery of this doctoral program,” says DR. SHAWN STEVENS,

chair of Wilmington University’s Doctor of Social Science-Prevention Science. “Dr. Reyes’ engagement with community and higher education programs and organizations, along with his varied research proficiency, will provide resources to help students in their journeys.”

A certified family life educator, Dr. Reyes is fluent in Spanish and English. His research includes studying adaptive cultural stress and coping among Latino families and the societal stresses on immigrant

Community Intervention

In early 2022, Wilmington’s City Council and the City of Wilmington agreed to pay \$38,000 to the Community Based Public Safety Collective to perform an analysis to help the city tackle and reduce community violence. The Collective interviewed over 58 stakeholders, surveyed 20 frontline intervention workers, and examined crime and hospital data to understand local violence.

The City Council accepted the “Landscape Analysis Report for the City of Wilmington” on Oct. 10, 2022. According to a City Council press release, “The report encouraged the administration to release funds to the appropriate entities for community violence intervention in a fiscally responsible and timely manner, to ensure that these entities have access to the necessary training, and to designate

a coordinator to oversee the ongoing implementation of the City’s strategy to interrupt community violence.”

Wilmington Mayor **MIKE PURZYCKI** and City Council President **TRIPPI CONGO** appointed Wilmington University adjunct and alumna **DR. DEBRA MASON**, the deputy executive director of the HOPE Commission and a former Delaware Department of Correction probation and parole officer and training administrator, to coordinate the initiative. She will be “on loan” from the Hope Commission.

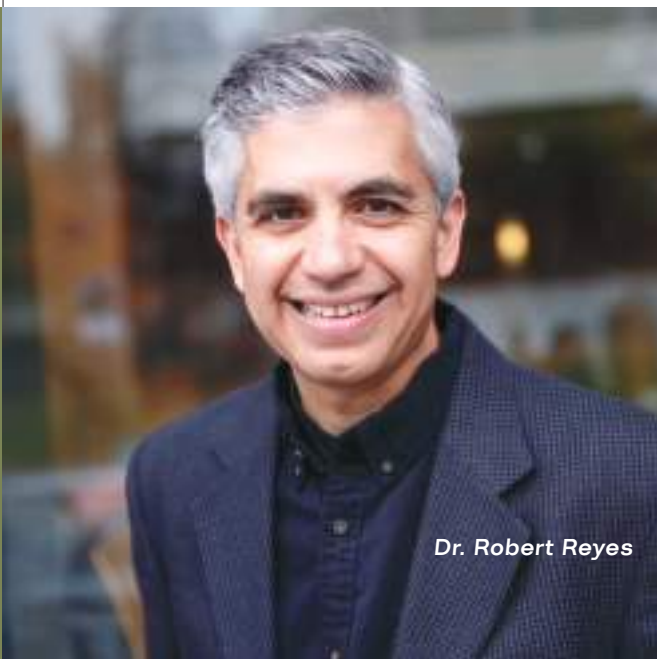
According to the release, the Collective’s responsibilities will include conducting organizational readiness assessments for participating community organizations, assisting with building organizational and programmatic readiness, and providing participating organizations with coaching on topics like financial

management, operational protocols, workforce development, and “facilitating intervention peer-learning between selected intervention organizations in Wilmington and established community-based public safety organizations in other cities to share experiential knowledge and best practices.”

“My plans are to increase public safety in the City of Wilmington by ensuring access to basic needs to those often overlooked and underserved,” says Dr. Mason. “The greatest challenge is funding and gaining support from the community. As of 2024, the Wilmington Street Team has done amazing work in the community and seen a decline in crime in District 11 and District 13.”

Dr. Mason earned a Doctor of Social Science in Prevention degree from WilmU in 2020 and has taught at the University since 2011. **WU**

—*Maria Hess*



Dr. Robert Reyes

“Dr. Reyes’ engagement with community and higher education programs and organizations . . . will provide resources to help students in their journeys.”

parents and their impact on parental involvement and educational outcomes. His experience includes more than 20 years on the faculty of the Human Development and Family Science Department at Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. **WU**

—*Eileen Smith Dallabrida*

PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMS THE EDUCATION PIPELINE

Resolving the shortage of teachers and creating a pipeline for education leaders is a complex issue. Wilmington University's multi-pronged partnership with Appoquinimink School District harnesses WilmU's commitment to boosting careers through education that is relevant and accessible, from students who are still in high school to teachers contemplating their next step on the career ladder.

"The partnership between Wilm-

ington University and Appoquinimink School District has grown tremendously over time," says **DR. MATTHEW BURROWS**, Appoquinimink superintendent. "From the beginning, our district has been wholly supported by WilmU's focus on supporting students and their success. We're fortunate that our partnership serves two types of students: our high school students on the path to college and our teachers advancing their degrees, elevating their craft, and preparing for leadership

roles. Having programs for both our students and teachers conveniently housed at our very own district buildings has made all the difference to ensure these opportunities are accessible to everyone."

DR. TYLER WELLS, dean of the College of Education and Liberal Arts, says programs are tailored to the school district's needs. Initiatives have evolved over the past four years as the ties between WilmU and Appoquinimink have become a trusted professional friendship.

"It's a deeply integrated and engrained relationship," Dr. Wells says.

DR. JENNIFER PALMER leads WilmU's National Board-Certified Teacher (NBCT) programs. The initiative allows educators to develop the skills they need to become experts in their fields, a status achieved by less than 5% of teachers nationwide. Teachers who complete certification also receive a 12% pay increase. Currently, 11 teachers in the district are working on submissions to the board.

"The teachers I have engaged with at Appo have been stellar," she says. One of them is **COLLEEN BARRETT**, who is working on her national certification in Early Adolescent to Young Adult Science. She says the opportunity to go through the National Board courses with colleagues from the Appoquinimink District was invaluable in helping her to succeed.

"Having peers to work through the ins and outs of portfolio components and then provide feedback



Dr. Matthew Burrows



From left: Middletown High School students Eva Dombroski, Laryn Fletcher, Kendall Reitzes, Austin Collazo, Alex Stokes, Riley Miller; Education Leadership Pathway Teacher Janice Nelson. These students take articulated courses during high school and can then enroll at WilmU with many college credits.



Corey White

“The convenience, value, and opportunities that come from completing this program made it an easy decision to sign up.”

—Corey White

and suggestions to one another made a very challenging process seem more achievable,” she says. “The cohort became a support team of fellow teachers within our district and buildings that cheered each other on and provided encouragement when we needed it most. The National Board coursework and instructors helped me focus on not just attaining certification but really pushed me to reflect on how I could improve my teaching practices in ways that would benefit each of my students sitting in my classroom right now.”

COREY WHITE, an instructional coach at Odessa High School, earned her master’s in School Leadership through WilmU’s collaboration with Appoquinimink, which allowed her to take classes on-site within the school district.

“Having classes in our district

buildings made it easier, as a mom of two, to go from work to class and still get home to do bedtime. The convenience, value, and opportunities that come from completing this program made it an easy decision to sign up,” she says.

White also enjoyed working in a cohort that included teachers of all levels and areas of study. Together, they explored issues that are relevant to school communities. “Being in a cohort with a blend of teachers from all subjects and levels in our district offers a variety of viewpoints that are invaluable to an aspiring administrator,” she says.

Appoquinimink’s “Grow Your Own” model through the Delaware Department of Education’s Pathways program nurtures the educators of tomorrow who will return to their hometown districts to teach. Students



Appoquinimink High School

finishing the Teacher Academy Pathway program, an immersive program that prepares them to be teachers through classroom experience and other hands-on learning opportunities, receive more than a high school diploma. They are presented with contracts for contingent job offers.

Students who complete the pathway are eligible to be substitute teachers in the district straightaway. After two years of college, they are qualified to be paraprofessionals. After completing their bachelor's degrees and teacher certifications, they have a standing full-time job offer with Appoquinimink.

ANGELIE ROSS-JIMENEZ, a Middletown High School grad, was presented with a full scholarship to WilmU. She got a head start by earning college credits during her senior year of high school. WilmU also paid for a summer class before she started her freshman year.

By the time she was 19, Ross-Jimenez had earned her associate

degree and a job as a paraprofessional at an elementary school while she completed her degree in elementary education. "I was able to get ahead in speeding up my associate since I took my Praxis exams and passed, receiving 19 credits," she says.

Life events often derail dreams of earning a degree. But WilmU's commitment to flexibility ensured Ross-Jimenez could keep her education on track while becoming a mother.

"Being at WilmU helped me continue my schooling and complete my bachelor's with the birth of my first baby. Freshly postpartum, I was able to take my class at home while still on maternity leave and not have to forsake my education just because I had a baby," she says. "Along with this, because I am on a full ride, I do not even have to worry about the finances. I can continue working hard. WilmU and Appo have done so much to support me through all the seasons of life, and I am thankful."

DR. EDWARD R. SMALL, director of

Human Resources at Appoquinimink, says the pathway program transforms entire families.

"When the students receive their teacher contracts, their parents are so happy they often cry," he says.

LINDSAY RICE, senior director of academic partnerships at WilmU, says the program frequently results in students finishing their degrees in only three years. Because students can earn their degrees faster, college expenses are lower. Students can also begin making money sooner.

Dr. Burrows says the productive relationship between his district and WilmU can serve as an example of how innovative universities can benefit public school systems and their communities nationwide. He anticipates a long and fruitful relationship that will flourish in years to come.

"I look forward to our continued partnership as both WilmU and Appoquinimink School District continue to grow," he says. **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida

REIGNITING AN OLD FLAME

Imagine two teenagers — one a GI, the other the daughter of a career military man — falling in love on an Army base in Germany in the 1970s. They are parted when the girl's father is transferred back to the United States.

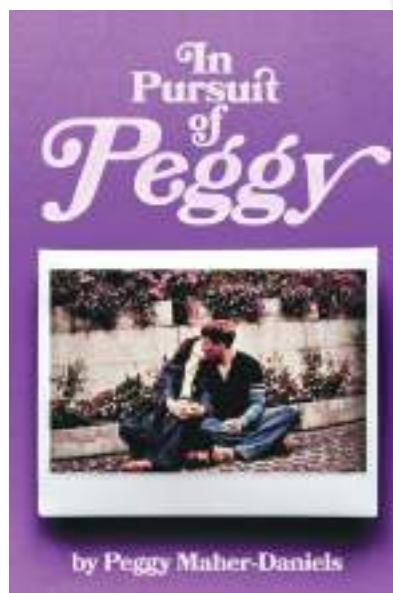
Forty-five years later, they reconnect via the internet. After all these years, they are still in love.

Sounds like a romance novel, right? Actually, it's the true story of **PEGGY MAHER-DANIELS**, a Wilmington University adjunct, who shares her experience of reclaimed love in her book, "In Pursuit of Peggy."

"It's basically an autobiographical romance, written in diary form," she says.

Maher-Daniels teaches Business Leadership and Human Resources at WilmU. She is also director of HR at Basciani Foods in Avondale, Pennsylvania. She wrote her first book, "Dumber Than a Box of Hair," in 2016.

"It's a compilation of all the crazy things people do to get themselves fired, like the bank teller who set up her boyfriend to rob the teller who worked next to her. The boyfriend wore the same hat and jacket to a happy hour he attended the week before, and



the teller he robbed identified him instantly," she says.

Maher-Daniels combines working with pursuing education and passion projects.

"I am a bundle of energy. I love teaching. I love human resources. I love traveling," she says. "I don't watch television. If you can manage your time well, it's amazing what you can get done."

During the pandemic, Maher-Daniels reignited her relationship with her old flame, who was identified in the book by his first name, **CRAIG**. She went online and discovered he was working in Iowa. Then she took a deep breath, picked up the phone, and left him a



voicemail, hoping he wasn't married or in a relationship.

"Within two hours, he called me. When I heard his voice, my heart quivered," she recalled.

Craig had been thinking about her, too, and had kept all her letters and photographs. Soon after, they met in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since then, they've maintained a long-distance relationship with frequent visits. Craig has been introduced to Maher-Daniels' two grown sons. He's divorced and has no children, and the two are exploring where they will live after Craig's upcoming retirement.

This fall, they will travel to Nuremberg and revisit their favorite spots during their teenage courtship in Germany.

"I tell my students to write from their hearts, which is just what I did with my book," she says. "I want to give people hope that they can be crazy in love." **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida

Empowering Minority-Owned Businesses

In 2020, during the pandemic, alumna **AYANNA KHAN** founded the Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce (DEBCC). Its goal is to provide a platform for Black entrepreneurs and professionals to connect, collaborate, and thrive.

Khan set up offices on Market Street in downtown Wilmington, and in just four years, the organization has burgeoned to 716 business members. In 2023, it was named the Black Chamber of Commerce of the Year.

The DEBCC hosts a variety of events and programs that are focused,

according to the website, “on every phase of your business journey.” This includes business education, networking, mentorship, and webinars. The chamber also hosts an annual gala in September, which this year was held at Deerfield in Newark.

Originally from New York, Khan took a job in Philadelphia in 2010 and moved to Delaware with her two children. She wanted to pursue a master’s degree and soon discovered Wilmington University. Its evening classes and Human Services master’s program fit her career path in

nonprofits nicely, and she received her degree in 2013.

“Wilmington tailors the course schedule for working adults with families,” she says. “As a result, I was able to get my degree in about a year-and-a-half. And the instructors were great.”

While the DEBCC takes most of her time, Khan, who lives in Middletown, also is president and CEO of Khan Consulting, which offers clients such services as grant writing, fundraising, and strategic planning. **WU** —*Bob Yearick*

Ayanna Khan





CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE PAVES ROAD TO SUCCESS

With a retirement surge among construction managers, Wilmington University's Construction Management Certificate offers up-and-coming workers a foundation for career advancement and paves an accelerated pathway to a business degree.

"This program embodies our commitment to providing industry-aligned education that prepares our students for immediate and impactful careers in the construction management field," says College of Business Dean **DR. ROBIN WEINSTEIN**. "By merging theoretical knowledge with practical application, we

ensure our graduates are not just ready to enter the workforce but are poised to become leaders in their industry. Our faculty, who are seasoned professionals in the field, bring a wealth of experience and insights."

All 18 credits of the certificate can be applied to a bachelor's degree. In addition, construction workers who have completed a Delaware apprenticeship have an opportunity to receive up to 42 academic credits for their work experience. By combining those opportunities, students are halfway toward completion of a 120-credit bachelor's degree program. **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida

From Aspiring Lawyer to Nursing Leader



Dr. Diane Juliano

Wilmington University alumna **DR. DIANE JULIANO** likes to say that her job is “to take care of the people who take care of the patients.”

She was promoted to that job — regional chief nursing officer for Jefferson Health East — in January of last year. Her appointment was the culmination of nearly three decades of dedication and achievement in a profession she loves.

“I often say becoming a nurse was the best decision I ever made,” Dr. Juliano says.

It wasn’t her first choice. “When I was younger, I actually wanted to be a lawyer, and ultimately a judge,” she says. But by the time she graduated from Arthur P. Schalick High School in Pittsgrove, New Jersey, in 1993, she had decided on Physical Therapy, and she enrolled in that program at Stockton University.

But after one semester, she says, “I realized that I wanted to switch gears to get out into the healthcare workforce faster, so I decided to transfer to a two-year nursing program (at Cumberland County Community College in Vineland).”

After receiving an associate degree from Cumberland County, she went back to Stockton for two years to get her Nursing bachelor’s. When she graduated, she vowed that she would someday earn a doctorate. But first, of course, she needed a master’s degree, and that brought her to Wilmington University.

At that time — January of 2004 — she had already become clinical

director at Cooper University Health Care in Camden. “Some people I worked with at Cooper had gone to Wilmington and really enjoyed their time there,” says Dr. Juliano.

Their recommendation sent her to the University website, where she found that it offered affordable tuition and, more important, a dual major in Nursing and Business Administration. Designed for nurses seeking expanded leadership roles, the program fit her needs perfectly.

The commute from her home was about an hour, and classes were conducted for four hours, two nights a week. Combined with her full-time job, it made for a packed schedule, but Dr. Juliano says it was well worth the effort, and she received her master’s degree in May of 2005.

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time at WilmU,” she says. “My instructors were knowledgeable, supportive, and geared learning toward both the working professional and the traditional student. When I graduated, I felt I was well prepared to take on professional challenges. I recommended the school to many of my colleagues — and

GROW YOUR OWN

The Delaware Department of Education recently introduced the Grow Your Own Initiative, a program dedicated to covering the tuition costs for paraprofessionals holding a minimum of 60 college credits. Wilmington University College of Education and Liberal Arts professionals **DR. STACIE ZDROJEWSKI** (Office of Clinical Studies



Dr. Stacie Zdrojewski



Lara Crowley

chair), **LARA CROWLEY** (Elementary Programs chair), and **DR. MICHAEL CURRY** (Secondary Education Programs chair) have collaborated closely with district-level administration to pinpoint and welcome

they did, and had the same wonderful experience.”

In 2018, she fulfilled her vow by earning a doctorate in Nursing Administration from La Salle University.

In 2019, after 11 years at Cooper, Dr. Juliano moved to Jefferson Health, in Washington Township, New Jersey, where her career has continued to blossom.

“In my nearly five years with Jefferson,” she says, “I’ve received so many opportunities to improve upon my leadership skills through executive coaching and numerous educational offerings, including the 2022 AONL Nurse Executive Fellowship.”

The fellowship enabled her to participate in the American Organization for Nursing Leadership’s nine-month program, which is designed to develop critical executive competencies to lead, influence and inspire a nursing workforce.

She is also a graduate of the Wharton Executive Education Program and has presented both nationally and locally, including being a keynote speaker. She is Six Sigma trained and has received numerous awards for her academic excellence and leadership. She’s a

member of the American College of Healthcare Executives, American Nurses Association, AONL, and ONL-NJ, where she serves on the board.

Despite all of these academic and professional successes, Dr. Juliano’s most important achievement was helping to save her father’s life by becoming his kidney donor four years ago.

She was able to qualify as a donor because of her decision in 2015 to undergo bariatric surgery. She lost more than 70 pounds in the first year after the surgery and was maintaining that weight in 2018, when her 65-year-old father, **CHARLES MACHO**, was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. He started dialysis immediately, but needed a kidney transplant in order to live a full and healthy life.

Dr. Juliano immediately stepped forward. “There was no questioning it,” she said in an article published on the Jefferson Health website. “I knew I would do whatever I could to help my father get better.”

The lab work and tests to ensure minimal risk of complications showed that she would be an ideal donor. But there was a complication: her father was not at an acceptable weight for the transplant. So, following in his

daughter’s footsteps, he too underwent bariatric surgery. The operation was successful, and he lost the required weight. But by then, COVID-19 restrictions were in place and the kidney transplant was postponed for several months.

Finally, in September of 2020, the operation was performed, and Dr. Juliano’s father was able to go off dialysis. Today, she says: “We both are doing well. My father had a stroke in January 2023 but has since recovered and is resuming his normal activities, including fishing in Key West. And I’m in the best shape of my life.”

Dr. Juliano and her husband, **GREG**, live in North Wildwood. He and his two brothers make up The Juliano Brothers, a popular band with gigs up and down the Jersey coast. She says she and her husband enjoy “anything to do with the shore,” as well as trips to Key West, where the band also performs.

Even then, though, she makes sure to be available for members of her team. “I pride myself on being an advocate for both patients and the staff I get to lead,” she says. “Being a transparent, accessible, and supportive leader is what I hope resonates with my team.” **WU** —*Bob Yearick*

eligible paraprofessionals aspiring to attain initial teacher certification in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or Middle-Level Education.

“These chairs have meticulously devised personalized learning plans for each student, ensuring a tailored approach to completing their coursework,” says **DR. TYLER WELLS**, dean of the College of Education and Liberal Arts. “Ongoing support, through personal communication and guidance, has been extended to these individuals as they navigate their educational journeys.”

After this grant cycle, adds Dr. Wells, “we envision the entry of eight new teachers into the field. The Teacher Preparation team is actively drafting an



Dr. Michael Curry



Dr. Tyler Wells

application for the next iteration of the Grow Your Own grant, eagerly anticipating another year of dedicated efforts with prospective candidates.” **WU**

—*Maria Hess*

Aspiring Scientists

Blazing trails in STEM fields



Sarah LaTorre uses a micropipette to move around small volumes of liquid to complete the CRISPR in a Box™ experiment. The experiment explores the fundamentals of CRISPR gene editing.

MEGAN MCGURMAN, CHRISTIANACARE

Researchers at Wilmington University are making strides in the sciences.

SAMANTHA KIDWELL, an undergrad majoring in Biology, was named a student facilitator trainee in the project by the CAREERS Cyberteam Program at The Yale Center for Research Computing. She is working under the direction of **DR. MILTON MULDROW**, director of Natural Sciences Programs and associate director of the NASA Space Grant Consortium of Delaware. Their participation is supported by a National Science Foundation Award.

Dr. Muldrow says Kidwell is a gifted and focused scholar, who already is the recipient of a NASA Space Grant. “She is a dedicated student, always talking to people

about her work. We are excited to see where she will wind up,” he says.

She and Dr. Muldrow are part of a multi-university team that will study aiptasia, a form of sea anemone, looking for target proteins and signaling genes known as sirtuins to identify insights into keeping coral healthy. Coral reefs, which form one of the world’s most important ecosystems, are rapidly declining due to warming oceans.

During her senior year at WilmU, 2024 graduate **SARAH LATORRE** engineered a payload for a sounding rocket designed to measure various parameters, including radiation levels. The data collected from the experiment were retrieved upon its completion. She joined ChristianaCare’s Gene Editing Institute as a

science education intern and was hired as an education program coordinator in her senior year.

“Sarah brought incredible energy and enthusiasm to the Gene Editing Institute from day one,” says **DEIRDRE HAKE**, director of strategy and operations at ChristianaCare’s Gene Editing Institute. “She has been an innovative problem-solver who continuously brings new ideas to the education program. Her ability to incorporate fun and creative activities while teaching high school students very technical genomic science keeps students engaged as they learn. In her short time with the Gene Editing Institute, Sarah has made a profound impact by reaching more than 1,000 students in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania through our education



Samantha Kidwell

program, Gene Editing 360™, and we look forward to her continued leadership as we grow the program.”

Recent graduate **AMAJA' MACK** is studying Geography at the University of Delaware, having earned a fully funded Breaking Barriers Fellowship for Ph.D. candidates from historically underrepresented and excluded backgrounds. With her WilmU degree in Biology, she is already making her

mark as the first student from WilmU's science programs to enter directly into a Ph.D. program and is its first graduate fellow in NASA's National Space Grant College and Fellowship Project.

Mack, along with a team of WilmU scientists, was spearheading efforts to shield coral reefs from the detrimental impacts of rising ocean temperatures.

The Biology major was also a member of WilmU's women's basket-

ball team, says Dr. Stefanie Whitby, director of Athletics and assistant vice president of Alumni Relations and Development. “She was a model student-athlete, demonstrating tremendous work ethic and dedication, not only in the classroom but on the basketball court. We're so happy to see her rewarded for her efforts and look forward to watching her flourish.” **WU**

—*Eileen Smith Dallabrida and Maria Hess*



Amaja' Mack is embarking on her Ph.D. at the University of Delaware.

PAUL PATTON



Dr. James Webb (center) with Brig. Gen. Jason Christman (left) and Senior Master Sgt. Angel L. Guerrieri-Figueroa

Honoring Distinguished Service

Since 2011, **DR. JAMES “JIM” WEBB** has led a dynamic charge as Wilmington University’s director of Military Affairs, doubling as an adjunct since 2016. Spearheading the Military Affairs Department, he’s not just a liaison to the Department of Defense; he’s the architect behind Wilmington University’s Military Veteran Student Organization and an essential partnership with Delaware’s Congressional delegation.

With a résumé packed with achievements, Dr. Webb’s collaboration has supported over 1,550 military-connected students at WilmU.

His efforts were recognized by the Delaware National Guard with the Delaware Distinguished Service Medal, presented at the 23rd Annual Senior Leader Conference in January.

One could paraphrase, but the content on the plaque speaks volumes. It reads:

“Mr. Webb played a pivotal role as a lead contributor in facilitating a significant development for the Delaware National Guard. Through his efforts, Wilmington University initiated a groundbreaking offer – a 20% tuition discount extended to both Delaware Army and Air National Guard members. This initiative marked a substantial milestone, offering substantial financial savings for Guard members seeking higher education opportunities. Mr. Webb’s contribution in establishing this discount program underscored his dedication to support and enhancing the educational pursuits of National Guard members, recognizing the value they bring to the community. The

impact of this tuition discount not only signifies a tangible benefit for Guard members but also demonstrates the university’s commitment, led by Mr. Webb’s efforts, to provide accessible education pathways and support for those serving in the National Guard. Mr. Webb’s role as a lead contributor in securing this tuition discount stands as a testament to his advocacy for educational opportunities and financial relief for Delaware National Guard members, fostering a positive partnership between Wilmington University and the National Guard Community.”

In 2023, Dr. Webb was selected for U.S. Sen. Tom Carper’s Service Academy Selection Committee, which handpicks top candidates for admission to prestigious U.S. service academies like the Air Force, Military, and

Naval academies. Except for the Coast Guard Academy, nominations from officials like senators, representatives, or the vice president are crucial for admission.

“Dr. Webb’s devotion to Wilmington University’s military-connected students is both admirable and evident in his achievements as the director of Military Affairs,” says **LINDSAY RICE**, senior director of Academic Partnerships and Military Affairs. “Through his leadership, his office provides support to these students, guiding them through the complexities of accessing and utilizing their military education benefits. Dr. Webb’s proactive approach extends beyond the campus, as he develops relationships with education service officers at regional bases and fosters community relationships throughout Delaware. These efforts ensure that Wilmington University’s military-connected students receive the support necessary for academic and personal success, both during their time at the university and in their future endeavors.”

Before embracing academia, Dr. Webb tackled high-stakes challenges while serving in the Air Force as a financial management and controller specialist stationed at Dover Air Force Base. He was also a trusted advisor and recruiter with the Delaware Air National Guard as a senior noncommissioned officer.

But now, his heart is with WilmU’s military students.

“Leading Military Affairs at Wilmington University is not just a job; it’s a mission,” says Dr. Webb. “It’s a chance to blend the commitment of military life with the opportunities of education. It’s about guiding service members, veterans, and their families to become thinkers and leaders. My reward is seeing this population grow, shaped by the values from serving, and ready to achieve more than they ever imagined.” **WU** —*Maria Hess*

THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

D **R. DENISE WELLS** became vice president of Academic Affairs on July 1, 2024. Her tenure at the University began in 2004 as an assistant nursing professor. She then assumed leadership roles as chair of the BSN Program and was dean of the College of Health Professions for 10 years. Dr. Wells was named assistant vice president of Academic Affairs in May 2022.

Her extensive background as a nurse and academic leader uniquely qualifies her to drive innovation and excellence in educational programs. As an experienced nurse leader and academic educator, Dr. Wells has worked in various clinical settings and the higher education industry. She is adept at e-learning, clinical research, assessment, and accreditation.

“I am honored to further serve the Wilmington University community in this new role,” says Dr. Wells. The University’s mission inspires her, since it is “centered on empowering students to achieve their personal and professional goals.”

She is committed to fostering academic excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, and, she adds, looks forward to “continued collaboration with our dedicated faculty and staff. This is an exciting time for higher education, and we are well-positioned to support our students in realizing their dreams. Together, we will continue to build an inclusive and diverse environment where every student can thrive.”

A faculty mentor of the WilmU Cheerleading Team since 2019, Dr. Wells received the 2021–2022 Leadership Award from the Delaware American Council on Education Women’s Network (DAWN), which is granted to women in higher education who demonstrate progressive leadership. She was a Delaware Today Excellence in Nursing Education honoree and earned the Citizenship Award during her Woman of the Year Campaign for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Delaware Chapter.

After earning her nursing diploma at Beebe School of Nursing, Dr. Wells received her BSN, MSN, and Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership, all at Wilmington University. She is a certified academic nurse educator and a National League for Nursing member. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

Dr. Denise Wells



A NEW CHAPTER

Dr. James Wilson

Dr. James Wilson transitions from VP for Academic Affairs to full-time professor, leaving a legacy at Wilmington University

Vice President of Academic Affairs **DR. JAMES WILSON** retired in June from the Executive Team but remains a full-time professor in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences' Mental Health Counseling program. Dr. Wilson is a National Certified Counselor, Approved Clinical Supervisor, and Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health.

He was appointed by Delaware **GOVS. TOM CARPER** and **RUTH ANN MINNER** to the Delaware Board of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Professionals, and he served from 1998 to 2006 as board president (two terms) and vice president (one term). Dr. Wilson was also a Delaware state delegate and past American Association of State Counseling Boards president. As president, he lobbied the California State Assembly on behalf of mental health counselors seeking to gain licensure status. This resulted in those counselors having licensure status in all 50 states.

Dr. Wilson's clinical experience includes working with WellSpan Philhaven, a facility that addresses mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. A pastoral counselor by training, he operated a limited private practice focused on individual and marital counseling, using insights and principles derived from theology and the behavioral sciences. Additionally, Dr. Wilson has volunteered as a mental health professional for the Delaware

Medical Reserve Corps since 2011.

In his 24 years at Wilmington University, Dr. Wilson played an integral role in advancing the University's growth and development. He joined the University in 2000 as assistant professor and division chair of Behavioral Sciences. He was named assistant vice president and associate professor for Academic Affairs in 2005, then earned the rank of full professor in 2010. Dr. Wilson joined the Executive Team as vice president for Academic Affairs in 2012.

In that role, Dr. Wilson oversaw the development and implementation of academic policies, managed the curriculum, and ensured the quality of educational programs. He facilitated faculty development, promoted interdisciplinary collaboration, and supported innovative teaching methods. Dr. Wilson also played a role in strategic planning and accreditation processes and helped foster a culture of continuous improvement within the University's academic departments. His efforts enhanced student learning experiences and expanded research opportunities.

"Dr. Wilson's work was instrumental in shaping the University's academic landscape," says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. "His extensive credentials in the mental health field will provide invaluable expertise to students within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, significantly enhancing their academic and professional growth." **WU**

—*Maria Hess*



Remembering Debbie G.

When **DEBRA GALLOWAY**, affectionately known as "Debbie G." to her University friends, passed away on May 21, 2024, she was surrounded by her husband, son, sister, and niece. She was 69.

Her loss was deeply painful for her WilmU friends and colleagues. After all, she worked at the University for 26 years as the assistant registrar and commencement coordinator in the Office of the Registrar. The go-to source for anything involving commencement, Galloway was indefatigable, staying late, opening early, and, as her friends remember — with love and humor — always speaking her mind. Her passion for and commitment to WilmU and her family, colleagues, and friends were steadfast. Through the many stories she shared about her grandkids Aiden, Cameron, and Isabelle, her University friends felt they knew them.

Galloway's obituary said she was active as a PTA president and loved gardening, traveling, and the Home Shopping Network. She was also part of a prayer group, offering hopes and wishes to those she knew and those she didn't. In her final moments, she was not only held by family but also in the hearts of her loyal friends, whose love and support were ever-present. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

EILEEN SMITH DALLABRIDA

PUPPY LOVE

PUPPIES IN CLASSROOMS: IT WAS AN ALUMNA'S IDEA THAT WENT VIRAL, CAPTIVATING THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA WHILE IMPROVING READING SCORES.

If happiness is a warm puppy, as “Peanuts” cartoonist Charles Schultz opined, the first graders in Wilmington University alumna **BROOKE HUGHES’** class are the most jubilant youngsters at Hanby Elementary School in North Wilmington.

The students also are dramatically improved readers, a fact attributed, in large part, to an innovative program in which children read aloud to puppies that are being fostered in the classroom.

“I started fostering puppies at my home during the pandemic while I was teaching virtually,” Hughes says. “Once we went back to the physical classroom, I kept thinking about all the wonderful benefits that puppies could bring to the culture of our school.”

She came up with a pilot plan for Foster Tales Puppy Therapy, in which first graders would care for puppies awaiting adoption at Rags 2 Riches Animal Rescue in nearby Garnett Valley, Pennsylvania. The puppies would stay in a pen in the classroom during the day and go home with students, teachers, or school staff at night. During the puppies’ nap time, students would snuggle with the pooches and read to them from children’s books.

Zoe



PHOTOS BY SUSAN L. GREGG





Brooke Hughes

In her proposal, the teacher addressed such concerns as allergies — puppies less than four months old haven't yet developed dander — and teaching kids to distract rambunctious pups with a toy. Puppies would take regular bathroom breaks outside. Those that aren't housebroken can't come out of the pen, which is outfitted with artificial grass.

Hughes floated her proposal for the pilot to **JULIET AGRESTI**, Hanby's principal, who agreed to a one-day tryout. The teacher immediately put a plan into action, enlisting the support of her students' parents.

"I never had permission slips come back so fast," she recalls.

The pilot rolled out on the day before the holiday break in December 2022, starting with three puppies. Students read one-on-one with a foster pet during the puppies' frequent snoozes.

"It brought a calming, joyful experience to the whole school,"

Hughes says.

The pilot was a resounding success with students and staff. Puppy therapy got a green light from the principal, becoming part of the reading education plan when the kids returned to school in January 2023.

Since then, the extra time kids put into reading has propelled a 32% improvement in scores, according to reading data collected before and after the puppy program was rolled out. Hughes, her students, and their four-footed friends have become media darlings, appearing on ABC Nightly News with **DAVID MUIR**, Good Morning America, and various Philadelphia TV stations. USA Today, People magazine, and Newsweek shared the good news. And a TikTok video of children reading to puppies went viral.

Hughes, who earned a master's degree in Elementary Education and Teaching at WilmU in 2013, says her academic experience helped

Kids in the puppy pilot have seen a 32% improvement in reading scores.



THE PILOT WAS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF.



Sydney



Hayley

her develop the critical thinking required to plan and implement a new and untested program.

"At Wilmington, every education class allowed for creativity and individual freedom. It's about thinking outside the box and having the confidence to use your passions to create something new and exciting," she says.

"This program perfectly exemplifies how innovative thinking and a passion for education can come together to create meaningful change," says College of Education and Liberal Arts Dean **DR. TYLER WELLS**.



“Brooke’s initiative of integrating puppies into the classroom has not only improved reading scores but also fostered a sense of empathy and responsibility among the students. It’s inspiring to see how our alumni continue to make such a profound impact in their communities.”

Startup costs for Hughes’ program were \$1,704 for such expenses as a portable pet crate, potty pads and toys, raised mainly through donations from donorschoose.com, a popular crowd-funded website that teachers utilize to raise money for supplies. Parents and animal rescue

supporters also chipped in through a wish list on the Amazon website and individual donations.

For schools and teachers who want to replicate her model, Hughes has created a proposal slideshow and document, available for purchase on Amazon and her website, fostertalespuppytherapy.com. A Foster Tales guide containing the proposal, sample permission slip, lesson plans, and classroom management tools will launch soon in response to demand.

“We’ve had inquiries about school puppy therapy from as far away as London,” she says.

Hughes understands the natural bond that develops between affectionate, nonjudgmental puppies and young children. “Growing up, I asked for a puppy every single day,” she recalls.

When she was 10, her parents presented her with Coby, a Shetland sheepdog, who took puppy training classes with her. “I was a very shy kid. I talked to Coby more than I did my parents, that’s how close we were,” she says.

Academic studies support the theory that animals can help draw children out of their shells. As part of a study published





Lincoln



Baylee



Riley



ONE OF THE YOUNGSTERS WHO HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY SPOKEN IN CLASS **BROKE HIS SILENCE** TO TELL A PUPPY A STORY.

in 2023 in the *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 118 school leaders, teachers, mental health professionals and researchers concluded that therapy dogs in educational settings help facilitate improvements in students' social and learning engagement, as well as their emotional and behavioral well-being.

Hughes' classroom includes students of varying abilities and behaviors, including children who

don't raise their hands and two children who use electronic communication devices to express their needs.

One of the youngsters who had not previously spoken in class broke his silence to tell a puppy a story.

"He verbally read an above-grade-level book fluently to the puppy," the teacher recalls. "It was a remarkable moment."

Principal Agresti says the puppies are making a positive impact on the school culture of support, safety, and compassion.

"Being with the puppies has helped many of our Hanby Bees to gain the courage to read when hesitant, transition into the building when anxious, meet behavior expectations when needing motivation, and communicating when language is a challenge," she says. "In addition, the puppies have been a wonderful boost for our school climate. Teachers need a snuggle, too, when they have a tough day."

That includes Hughes, who

loves dogs but can't manage one at her home in Philadelphia.

"I have my job at Hanby, plus advising gymnastics and cheerleading," she says. "I'm not home enough to take proper care of a dog, so it's extra meaningful for me to work with the puppies."

Like children, puppies come in different shapes and sizes with their own individual personalities. The smallest pup so far at Hanby was a tiny chihuahua mix. The biggest puppies were Charlotte and Wilbur, five-month-old pitbull mixes named for the characters in the classic children's book "Charlotte's Web."

"They weighed more than the kids," Hughes says.

So far, more than 60 puppies have found forever homes, many with students, teachers, and school staff. Jemmi, a pitbull chihuahua mix adopted by a student's family, gets daily pets from the children who fostered her when her new owner walks her to the bus stop.

Most of the puppies are

Cooper





transferred to the Pennsylvania shelter from Texas or North Carolina, the first step on their journey from abandonment to adoption. “They were either dumped at a shelter or left by the side of the road in a box,” the teacher says. “When the puppies come to school, they are surrounded by children who can’t wait to see them.”

Children get exercise and develop responsibility by walking the puppies during recess. They

learn empathy by caring for the puppies, making sure they have food and water, cleaning up after them if needed, and giving them lots of pets and hugs. Third graders volunteer to help the younger children care for their animal friends.

“The students are more empathetic with each other because of the puppies,” Hughes says.

The program has been so successful, Hanby has extended puppy therapy to the summer

school curriculum.

It’s a difficult time for the first graders when the puppies are adopted and leave the classroom and their foster friends at Hanby. Hughes reminds her students that preparing puppies for their new homes is an important part of Foster Tales’ mission.

“I taught them the word ‘bittersweet.’ We are sad that we don’t get to see the puppies anymore, but we are happy that they have a home,” she says. **wu**



Beckham



Dr. Robin Weinstein

A Beacon of Servant Leadership

BY MARIA HESS

*College of Business Dean
Dr. Robin Weinstein
has dedicated his life to
serving others. He offers
innovative and evocative
perspectives on business,
enriching the educational
experience for students
who can change the world.*

DR. ROBIN WEINSTEIN wanted to achieve “three Ps” in his life: preacher, politician, professor. He accomplished the first two in his 20s and earned his doctorate a month before his 30th birthday, allowing him to obtain a faculty position later that year with Wilmington University.

That’s a lot of success for a person who endured a difficult childhood. But Dr. Weinstein, the dean of Wilmington University’s College of Business and a professor of Human Resource Management, was informed — perhaps motivated — by adversity.

Deeply spiritual and philosophical,

he grew up in an environment that was constantly in flux, which made him more aware of and responsive to change. Had his life been stable and predictable, he may not have developed the soul of a preacher, the generosity of a teacher, or his love for humanity.

Nor would he have become an ordained minister, a deputy county administrator, a founder of a nonprofit who co-wrote legislation for people experiencing homelessness, a recipient of too many awards to list — most of them for service and leadership — or a dean. His résumé may not have been packed with achievements that many take a lifetime to accomplish.



He remains committed to his church and community, but now, Dr. Weinstein is focused on his deanship — though on Facebook, he calls himself a “professional helper.” He has no plans to radically change the College of Business. Instead, he hopes to enhance it by continuing to prepare students for the global business world, but also by inspiring them with a curriculum emphasizing ethical frameworks and servant leadership.

“There’s a legacy at the college and Wilmington University,” says Dr. Weinstein. “It’s about taking that mission, vision, and values and adapting them into the rapidly changing landscape of our world and giving our students the tools they need to be positive change agents in their

communities and workplaces.”

Considering what he’s overcome, along with his candor, empathy, and humility, Dr. Weinstein is the *ultimate* change agent.

What matters to Dr. Weinstein about his upbringing is what he took from it: That life is precious. While we’re here, he thinks, we have an obligation to joyfully serve others. And what better way to serve than by encouraging future generations of global business professionals to lead with integrity?

“Leaders have the opportunity and honor to serve,” says Dr. Weinstein, who was named dean in February. He earned his Ed.D. in Innovation and Leadership from WilmU in 2011, six years before receiving a Master

of Theological Studies in Faith and Public Policy from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and before that, a B.A. in Justice, Law and Society from Eastern University. Like many alums, he loved the University so much he wanted to be a part of its staff.

“The faculty at WilmU were engaged, and there was a very supportive environment,” he says. “I had heard about the University from a friend who was an alumna, and the flexibility for students it offered was something I needed at the time.”

Dr. Weinstein had been the deputy county administrator and director of administrative services for the County of Salem (New Jersey). He was hired as a human resources manager and public information officer and was charged with creating an HR department for 750 employees and eight unions. Within a year, he was promoted to the deputy county administrator role, the No. 2 position. He earned the trust of colleagues, union leadership, and employees, but came to the position with no actual HR experience. What he did have was credibility: a team player who could forge organizational partnerships. And he thought of himself as a servant leader. (Servant leadership, a concept introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970, is a theoretical framework that emphasizes a leader’s primary motivation and role is serving others.)

He calls the former job a “mishmash,” doing everything from HR to public relations to tourism campaigns. When he didn’t have the answers, he consulted an impeccable source — something many professionals do but don’t admit.

“I went out and bought the book ‘HR for Dummies’ the day they offered me the job,” says Dr. Weinstein. “I always show it to my students and keep it on my desk.”

Dr. Weinstein’s life didn’t unfold the way he expected. At Eastern, he developed his own major in Justice,



Dr. Robin Weinstein

Law and Society by presenting it to faculty. He mostly went to divinity school to study the intersection of faith and public policy and ready himself for a Ph.D. until a graduate internship with former U.S. Senator turned New Jersey **GOV. JOHN CORZINE** re-routed him to politics. He also didn't plan on becoming a pastor, despite becoming the founding pastor of Bethany Grace Community Church in Bridgeton, New Jersey, where he has served since 2005. He was supposed to be there for a two-week stint as a preacher, but he saw a need to serve Bridgeton, the third poorest city in New Jersey.

"I didn't want to see a church in the city I grew up in close its doors," he says. "I know it sounds cliché, but after seeing 'It's a Wonderful Life' for the first time in my senior year of college, I thought if I was going to make a difference, it should be in my home community."

"I never thought I would have been deputy county administrator at 24 or a pastor at 24," he adds. "And if you told me I'd be working in the College of Business (COB), I would have never thought that was possible. I don't have the traditional educational background in business as I don't have an MBA, and I took one undergrad business course and hated it."

He often finds answers (and comfort) in Scripture, in this case, Proverbs, which says, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps."

"The journey changed me," he says, explaining that people often chase after material things, relationships, or jobs they believe will bring them happiness. "I'm grateful that God didn't answer prayers the way I wanted them answered."

He had many prayers amid an unhappy childhood and had to overcome significant challenges, including depression, anxiety, obesity, and low self-esteem. He's sought guidance from therapists for years, and, throughout his childhood, he had a lateral lisp.

"I spoke with a very bad speech impediment until I was 18, when I went to college and had to learn how to talk all over again," he says. He found a speech therapist in the phone book who accepted his insurance and tackled the lisp with help from college pals.

In his desk drawer is his first-grade report card with notes from a teacher who mentioned his carelessness, which lowered his reading and language grades, yet contributed to his pleasant demeanor and eagerness to learn. "My mother wrote back to the teacher, saying, 'We're working on all his problems,' and she underlined all," says Dr. Weinstein.

"I was in first grade, so I didn't see the report card until much later. Even as an adult, I figured, yes, I guess I'm still a work in progress," he says. "I did have problems. I went to counseling for a lot of my childhood, trying to deal with the environment I was around. I have had to practice forgiveness because we're all human and make mistakes. I have also learned to be an active participant in not only my healing, but the healing of others. There are things I wish were different, but those things shaped me, for good or bad, into the person I am today."

In that same drawer, alongside the report card, sits an acceptance letter for graduate school from Yale University. He scored a half-scholarship and couldn't afford the rest of the tuition, so he didn't go. But the contrast between the report card and the Yale letter tells a tale of transformation, a journey from struggle to triumph, where dreams of an insecure kid became poetically tangible.

True Colors

Faith has been the guiding light that has enabled Dr. Weinstein to navigate and overcome challenges. "Rather than letting them be a hurdle," he says, "I learned to let them be steppingstones to help other people."

Throughout his journey, he has

been blessed with "many angels along the way," including teachers, church members, and several mentors. "I believe it's my duty to pay it forward," he says. "I strive to do so in every aspect of my life. Ultimately, our time is limited, but we have the power to use it and our resources to make a meaningful and lasting impact on each other's lives."

Especially WilmU students. "The nature of our student population is mostly open enrollment, and our students are coming in with different backgrounds and perspectives," says Dr. Weinstein. "I share my life story and challenges openly because it's important to acknowledge that how you start your race doesn't determine how you finish your race."

His true nature was unveiled through his own words, recently featured in WilmU's Employee Spotlight:

"After my second year at Wilmington University, I had two experiences that profoundly impacted my life. In the spring of 2013, I was in Disney World when I sensed a calling to go to an orphanage in Kenya. It was an odd place for such a calling to occur, and I had no desire to follow through on it. Nevertheless, I went during the summer to an orphanage where two-thirds of them had HIV. The love of the children was transformative. Upon my return, I spoke to my church about the experience, and I thought my mission was complete. While unpacking my bags from the trip, I was compelled to go to the mission field in my backyard. In October of 2013, I went undercover and spent a weekend with our homeless community in Bridgeton. It was one of the hardest and scariest things I have done. I then sat in my church, still dressed in my homeless attire, waiting for the Sunday service to begin. No one came to greet me, as they thought I was just another drifter from the streets. I went to the pulpit and shared my experiences from life on the streets for

those 48 hours. These two experiences led me to create the first Code Blue program in our community, where we sheltered our homeless brothers and sisters in churches during cold winter months. This program grew throughout the county and is now a statewide law to provide emergency winter shelter. I had the privilege of helping the legislature write the legislation, provide testimony for the legislation, and continue to advocate for those without a voice. These experiences helped prepare the way for a nonprofit I founded called The M25 Initiative. In 2021, we celebrated housing our 100th individual dealing with chronic homelessness. As I reflect on this journey, it is amazing how I had to go from the Magic Kingdom to an orphanage across the world before responding to the need right in front of me all along.”

—Dr. Robin Weinstein

Note: In 2023, the initiative housed over 150 people before the organization was dissolved.

The Road to WilmU

Dr. Weinstein began his WilmU career in 2011 as an assistant professor and assistant chair of New Jersey business programs. He was later named chair of the Human Resource Management Program in the COB and its dean in February.

“Wilmington provided me the opportunity to engage in education, which is a powerful way to change both people’s lives and communities,” he says.

He takes a holistic approach in working with people and organizations by “investing in and empowering them to be the miracle in their lives and the lives of others,” he says. “It’s about how we as individuals can inspire and encourage the impact of collective goodness.”

He’s moved by volunteers who give of their money and time in service

to others, and his philosophies are transferable to his University work. “It’s about being a good human being,” he says. “When you do a little good wherever you are, it creates a ripple effect. If each of us made that effort, imagine how much better the world could be.” Not that he thinks it’s easy. In general, church work and philanthropic efforts are difficult to navigate in today’s divisive society. “When I started at the church,” says Dr. Weinstein, “it would be unheard of to think about locking the doors for a service. Now, it’s second nature to lock the doors. We have to be concerned about security and active shooters and drills.”

He worries about the disruptiveness of social media and how it fosters tribalism and a reluctance to listen to one another. “We’re quick to vilify each other. Instead of embracing each other’s humanity, we dehumanize one another,” he says. Dr. Weinstein will step down as pastor this December, which might prompt the question of why he’s leaving now when values like his seem to be needed most.

“I had decided to leave the church in January, a month before becoming dean,” he says. Being bi-vocational was taking its toll, and the pandemic didn’t help. It’s important to note that he’s not leaving his faith or community, just his administrative church role.

“A good lesson in leadership is knowing when it’s time to step aside for the next generation,” he says. “I love preaching, and I love my flock. But sometimes, when you love something, you have to let it go. I think they’re ready for their next chapter, and I’m ready for mine, as well.”

That chapter will focus on his WilmU students and colleagues. “I view my work at the University as a form of ministry,” he says. “It’s an opportunity to serve, equip, empower, and inspire everyone who comes to the University to realize their potential and become positive change agents in the world.”

It’s awe-inspiring to imagine all

“When you do a little good wherever you are, it creates a ripple effect. If each of us made that effort, imagine how much better the world could be.”

—Dr. Robin Weinstein

his energies being channeled into his deanship. He has shepherded a congregation, managed a large government organization, led a nonprofit, and improved the lives of countless people in need. As the first Wilberforce Public Policy Research Scholar at the Sider Center, Dr. Weinstein was a principal researcher in revising widely read social justice publications like “Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger,” and “Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America.” He holds professional certifications from the Society for Human Resource Management, Human Resource Certification Institute, and Cornell University School for Industrial and Labor Relations. He has taught human resource and business management, leadership, ethics, philosophy, biblical and theological studies, and political science. He examined the



Dr. Robin Weinstein

relationship between servant leadership attributes and faith development among governmental leaders for his doctoral dissertation. There are more achievements; far too many to recount here.

His awards are numerous, too, including the Rutgers University Rand Center South Jerseyan of the Year, Greater Bridgeton Chamber of Commerce Gary Simmerman Community Leadership Award, Social Service Partner of the Year Award by the Puerto Rican Action Committee of Southern New Jersey, the Cumberland County Hometown Heroes Award, the NAACP of Cumberland County Freedom Fund Award — and the list goes on.

“Now I can serve on a larger scale by equipping others to be agents of change worldwide,” he says of his deanship, a philosophy that aligns with the University’s mission, vision,

and core values and, to him, the business world.

“Our College of Business prepares students to make a significant impact across diverse career fields, including for-profit, nonprofit, government, and social services,” he says. “We equip them with a versatile toolkit of skills that are transferable wherever they go, empowering them to become effective leaders in their organizations and communities.”

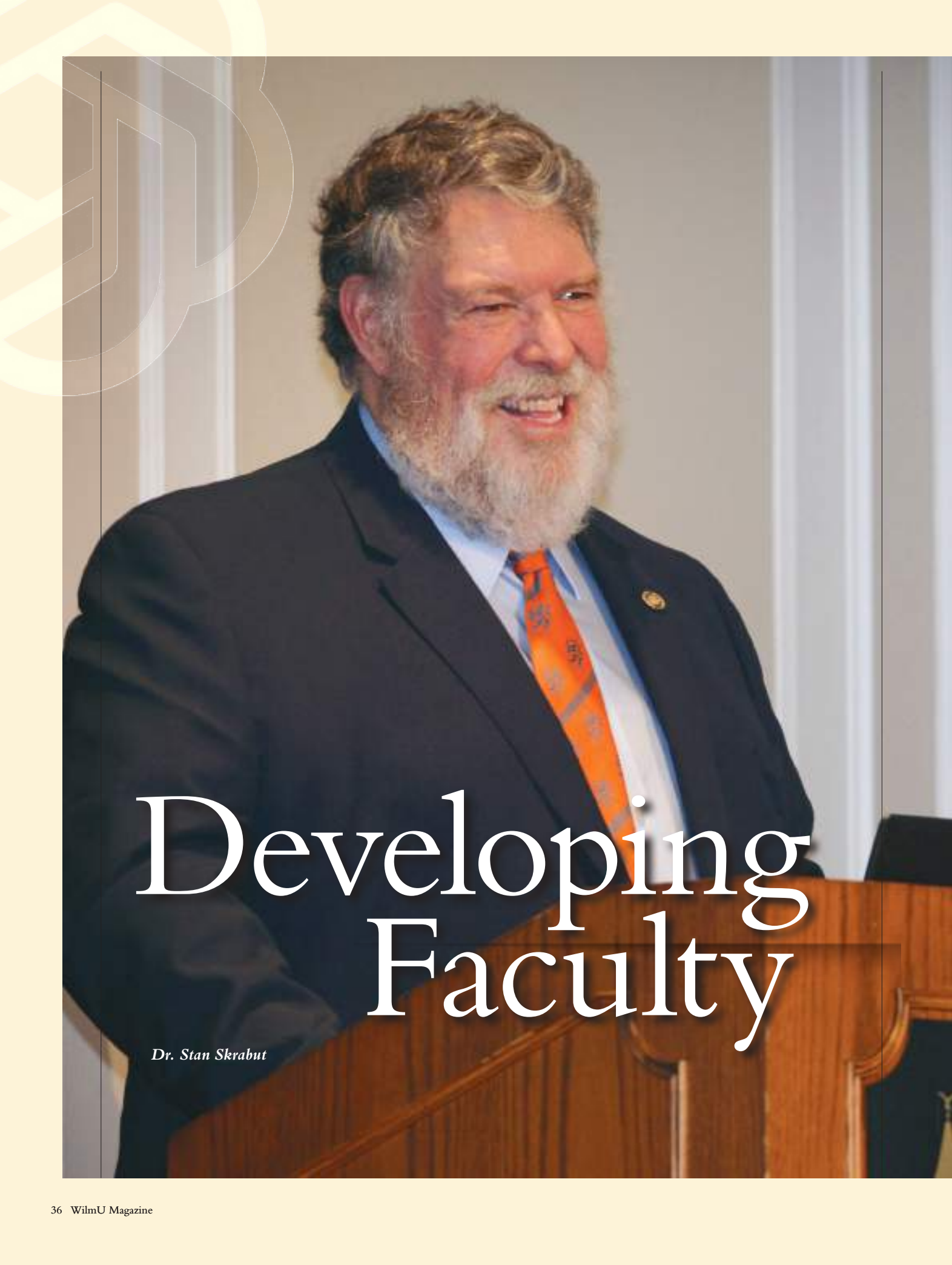
“Dr. Weinstein is an incredible colleague whose dedication to helping others and high energy make him a powerful force for change,” says Vice President of Academic Affairs **DR. DENISE WELLS**. “His charisma and creative problem-solving skills lead to meaningful results that benefit our community and beyond.”

Most important to him are the ethical frameworks embedded into the COB curriculum that are

illustrative of leading with integrity and servant leadership. His vision for the college can be summed up in one word: flourish.

“I want to help faculty and staff flourish as human beings and in their professional careers, so we can, in turn, help students flourish as well by achieving their career goals while making a meaningful, positive impact in the world,” he says. He’s aware that not everyone equates business with these powerful intangibles.

“Business is not about choosing between success and giving back,” says Dr. Weinstein. “I challenge that notion with an ‘and.’ We can be successful and have an obligation to give back.” He believes that when we embrace our humanity, we lead with humanity. “That’s when we’re authentic. That’s when people will follow.” **WU**



Developing Faculty

Dr. Stan Skrabut

The Conference on Teaching Excellence focuses on professional growth, building community, and, primarily, advancing teaching excellence for the benefit of students.

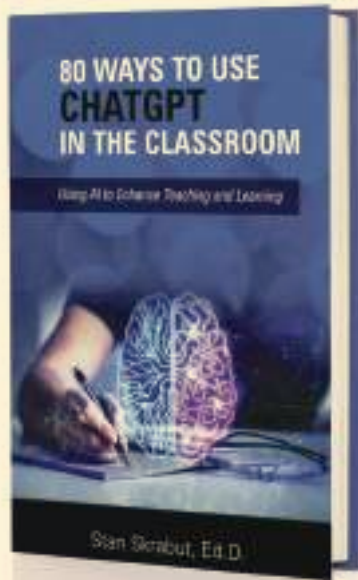
— | BY MARIA HESS | —

A

t a recent Conference on Teaching Excellence, formerly called Wilmington University’s Faculty Development Day, keynote speaker **DR. STAN SKRABUT** addressed generative AI and how it can answer questions, generate text, provide information, enhance student engagement, and support teaching and learning.

An author and instructional technologist, Dr. Skrabut holds an Ed.D. from the University of Wyoming. He is widely respected within academia, like many guest speakers who have graced WilmU’s faculty teaching conferences and who elevate the quality of intellectual discourse that mirrors WilmU’s dedication to nurturing educational excellence.

Dr. Skrabut’s book, “80 Ways to Use ChatGPT in the Classroom: Using AI to Enhance Teaching and Learning,” explores ways to incorporate generative AI into the classroom and how students can use ChatGPT for writing, research, and learning. ChatGPT is the most popular generative AI application. It’s a big enough deal to terrify those who don’t understand it — and no judgment is implied here. There’s a lot to understand. The fact that it responds to questions quicker than any human can is scary enough. But, at least for now, ChatGPT needs babysitters — human writers and editors who can fact-check its often inaccurate content



and turn its grandiose, unnatural language into something, well, natural.

Educators feel the pressure. They know ChatGPT is not going away, and their students use it. So, to support WilmU instructors, the Center for Teaching Excellence was on it. About 462 faculty members were in attendance and heard Dr. Skrabut’s presentation, according to **DR. ADRIENNE BEY**, director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 92% reporting a favorable reaction.

By the end of the session, participants could set up their own generative AI account, ask it questions, and integrate it into their teaching.

The goal is for faculty always to have a tangible takeaway. The conferences bring full-time and adjunct faculty together to explore relevant, timely information that aligns with WilmU’s career-focused curriculum.

“The programming is informed by the University’s



Over many years, thousands of WilmU educators have enjoyed diverse themes like pathways to instructional excellence, cultural awareness, and the art and science of teaching.



Dr. Stan Skrabut



annual strategic initiatives, faculty input, and current trends in teaching and learning in higher education,” says Dr. Bey, adding that participants can complete a satisfaction survey to offer other topics of interest and explain how the CTE can help them enhance their teaching skills.

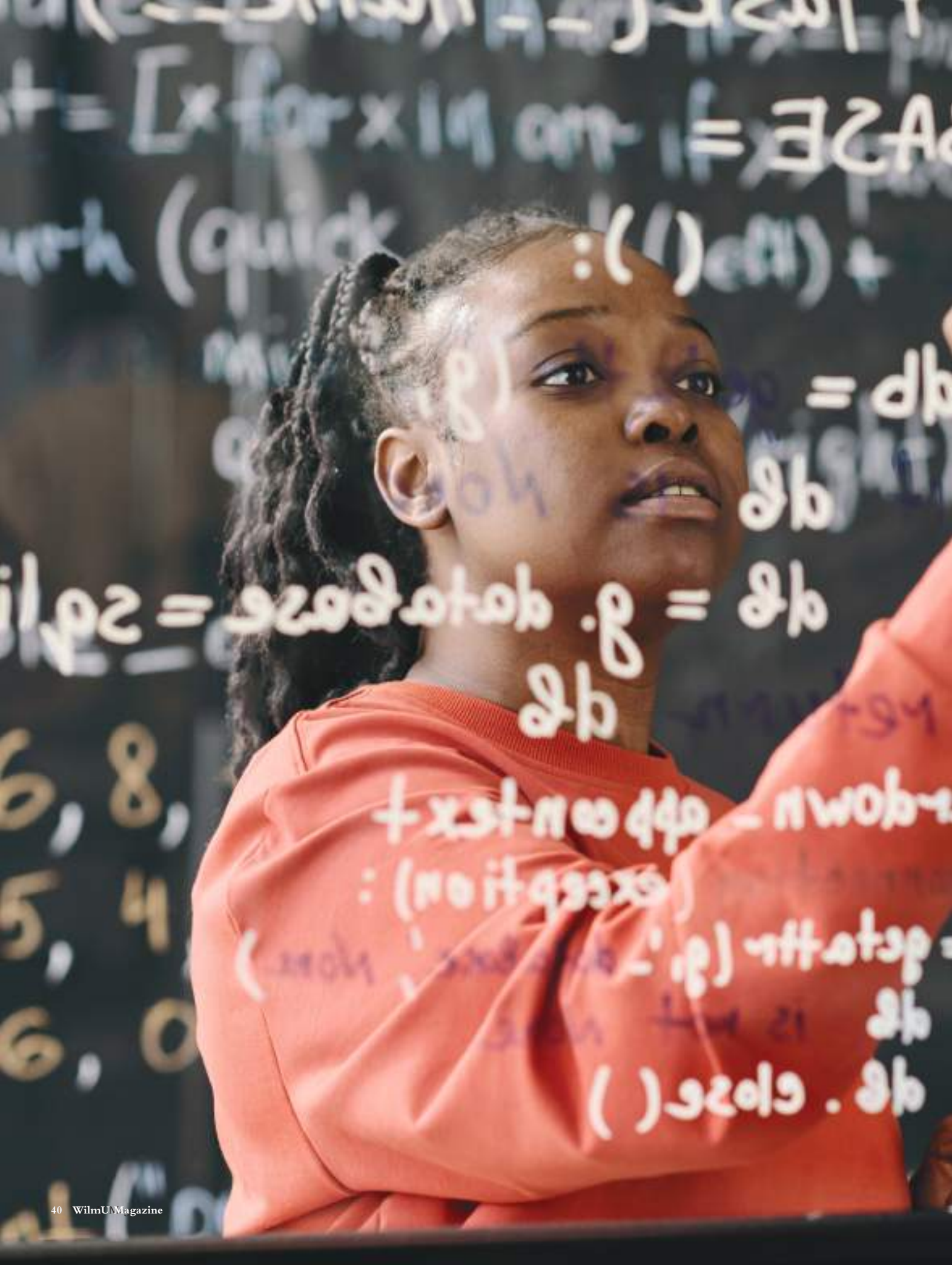
“Common responses include support in improving student writing, developing engaging content for students, and enhancing skills with various educational technologies,” says Dr. Bey. Over many years, thousands of WilmU educators have enjoyed diverse themes like pathways to instructional excellence, cultural awareness, and the art and science of teaching. They can choose numerous workshops, which have included topics such as trauma-informed approaches to teaching, grading and effective feedback, and enhancing student engagement in the classroom.

Before the pandemic, the conference was offered in a hybrid format, so faculty nationwide could attend in person or online. “Because of the pandemic,” says

Dr. Bey, “we were forced to hold the fall 2020 through spring 2023 conferences in a virtual-only format. In the fall of 2023, we went back to the hybrid format. What we are noticing now is that before the pandemic, more faculty attended in person than online. However, now we are seeing that more faculty prefer to attend online compared to attending in person.”

The CTE is vital in promoting continuous learning and advancing teaching excellence at WilmU. Professional growth is critical, and faculty members can learn about new pedagogical methods and remain effective and engaged in their roles. The conference also builds community. Full-time faculty share experiences with adjuncts, creating a forum to share challenges and successes, and to feel supported and connected to their peers.

WilmU is a student-centered institution, so the ultimate conference goal is to enhance student success and learning. When we equip faculty with the knowledge and skills to be effective, students are always the beneficiaries. **WU**





BY DIANE BANSBACH

WHEN WILL I EVER NEED MATH?

Students often question the relevance of math, and teachers hear it all too often. At WilmU, however, those in the Applied Mathematics program discover math as a key to success.

Dr. Diane Bansbach



The ability to problem-solve and analyze data drives innovation and progress in today's world effectively and efficiently.

In a 2023 Forbes article, researcher **NICOLE JANSSEN** writes, "The ability to leverage and act on data has become a powerful differentiator in today's business environment." Over the past several years, supply chain shortages have become a global challenge. Similarly, as Janssen adds, "There is a lack of human ingenuity around data science."

Hence, there is a need for applied mathematicians, who use mathematical tools and techniques to identify and solve real-world problems using data.

The new Wilmington University Applied Mathematics Program is designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experience to become successful applied mathematicians in their chosen careers. The curriculum emphasizes applications to real-world projects, including topics like minimizing waste, maximizing efficiency, modeling real-world phenomena, cost analysis, network

flow, graph theory, and cryptography.

Students select one of two concentrations: Data Visualization, which includes applied predictive modeling, forecasting, data mining, data visualization, and machine learning; and Programming, which focuses on programming, data warehousing, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. They conclude their studies with either an internship or experiential learning opportunity. They also develop their professional portfolios and networks.

WilmU course developer **MICHAL RAMOS** designed Calculus 3 and Linear Algebra for the program, which uses a project-based learning (PBL) approach, which, she says, "enriches the student experience by emphasizing real-world applications, fostering critical thinking, and promoting collaboration. Through hands-on projects, students develop practical skills, take ownership of their learning, and gain insights into diverse career paths within applied mathematics." Ramos adds that the PBL approach also enhances motivation and engagement and prepares students for success in the dynamic and interdisciplinary math field.

After earning an associate degree in Information Technology and Networking at Delaware Technical Community College, **FATIH GENÇ** transferred to WilmU and has been excelling in his studies. "Mathematics has always been my passion, so I wanted to continue studying a math-related major," he says. "I discovered that WilmU had a great Applied Mathematics program, aligning perfectly with my academic goals."

Another transfer student, **SYDNEY ADAMCIK**, is studying entirely online and also doing well. "I was mostly worried about having a sufficient support system," he says. "Thankfully, my professors have been extremely communicative, helpful, and supportive. I couldn't be more grateful to finish the last years of my degree with WilmU in the Applied

Applied mathematicians design, build, and maintain the systems and methods that enable data to be collected, analyzed, presented, and understood.

Mathematics program.”

Applied mathematicians are like the engineers and mechanics of the data world. They design, build, and maintain the systems and methods that enable data to be collected, analyzed, presented, and understood. They work with various data types, such as numerical, textual, visual, or audio. The professionals also apply multiple methods, such as statistics, machine learning, optimization, forecasting, or cryptography, to extract meaningful insights and solutions.

The experts then communicate their findings and recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders using clear and compelling visualizations, reports, or presentations.

So, yes, math is undeniably valuable and critical in today’s world, and applied mathematics is a versatile and valuable discipline that can be used in any domain or industry, according to indeed.com. Whether it’s health care, social science, environmental science, education, finance, manufacturing, research — or any other field — applied mathematics can help improve the quality, efficiency, and impact of the products, services, and processes these industries provide.

They can also help discover new opportunities, challenges, and trends and provide evidence-based guidance and support for strategic planning and action.

According to the Bureau of Labor

Statistics, the job outlook for applied mathematicians from 2022–2032 is excellent, and it is growing at a rate of 30%, much faster than average. The mathematicians are compensated well, with a median annual salary of nearly \$100,000.

Since mathematicians develop skills in problem-solving, mathematical reasoning, deductive reasoning, analytical thinking, making predictions, and pattern recognition, their roles can also include research analyst, financial analyst, data scientist, data engineer, programmer, web

developer, and software developer.

Whichever career they choose, Wilmington University students can apply their problem-solving and analytical skills to situations and data sets naturally occurring in industry. Students who graduate from the Applied Mathematics Program will be ready to pursue a rewarding career in our data-driven world. **WU**

Dr. Diane Bansbach is chair of the Math Department in the College of Education and Liberal Arts.



Sydney Adamcik



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SPORTS



Christian Zwickert

WILMU LACROSSE: POLICE PIPELINE?

by Bob Yearick

Is there something about Wilmington University's lacrosse program that compels young men to go into law enforcement?

Lacrosse debuted at WilmU in the fall of 2017, with the first season of NCAA competition starting the following spring. Since then, five ex-Wildcat lacrosse players have become police officers, while a former assistant coach is completing a decade of service with the Middletown Police Department.

The five ex-players represent nearly 15 percent of the 40 or so alumni of the lacrosse program. **COACH CHRISTIAN ZWICKERT** says no other profession except perhaps education

has attracted so many of his former players.

Both nature and nurture seem to be at work here.

Nature: Three of the five ex-Wildcats have fathers or grandfathers who were or are policemen, a heritage that absolutely influenced their career choices.

Nurture: All five former players acknowledge that the crucible that is Wildcat lacrosse helped forge the tools and character required of police officers. Zwickert conducts tough practices and holds his student-athletes to high standards. "I demand a lot; I'm not the easiest person to play for," he admits.

JAKE MOLLOHAN, a 2021 graduate in Criminal Justice, is typical of the nature/nurture dichotomy. Mollohan counts three retired policemen in his family: his father, a former New Castle County Policeman; a grandfather who served with the Delaware State Police; and another grandfather who was in the Dover Police Department.

Naturally, Mollohan became a third-generation police officer, joining the Harrington Police Department last year. But while family may have influenced his career choice, Mollohan says his days on the Wildcat lacrosse team "made it an easier transition into law enforcement."

"Not only do you have to be physically fit," he says, "but Coach Z also pushes you mentally; he tries to get under your skin to see how it affects you on the field. The demand he put on us physically and mentally, it lends itself to law enforcement."

Like Mollohan, **GIOVANNI MARINO** is a third-generation policeman. His father was chief of police in Paulsboro, New Jersey, and his grandfather was chief in Woolwich Township, New Jersey. Both are retired, but Marino is carrying on their legacy as a Woolwich police officer.

He graduated from WilmU last year with a degree in Criminal Justice after an outstanding career with the Wildcats. A four-year starter, Marino was the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference (CACC) Player of the Year in 2022.

Because of the family tradition, he has wanted to be a cop for as long as he can remember. And now that he's achieved his dream, he finds that it exceeds his expectations.

"I'm having the best time of my life," he says. "I absolutely love the job."

Marino says connecting with people — not necessarily solving crimes and making arrests — is the essence of community policing.

"We're not always dealing with bad situations," he says. "We take care of a lot of little things, like people getting locked out of their cars, or helping to find

a lost dog. We drop in on businesses during the day just to see if they need anything. I love communicating with people on a normal level like that."

The discipline and routine of police work is similar to his days as a lacrosse player, Marino says. "In lacrosse, you're following a schedule, and you get into a routine — waking up early, going to practice, eating at a certain time. And Z, he was a very discipline-heavy guy and there was a very specific way that things had to get done. That translates well to police work, because there are very specific ways that you have to complete certain tasks. If it's not done in a specific way, it's wrong."

One of Marino's coaches at WilmU was **MIKE ADAMS**. A patrolman with the New Castle City Police Department for the past three years, Adams has been on the Wildcat staff since he received his degree in Criminal Justice in 2019. As a player, he earned Second Team All-CACC honors.

Adams loves lacrosse, pointing out that it's both fast and physical. "It's known as the fastest sport on two feet," he says. With a chuckle, he adds, "And it's the only sport where you're legally allowed to hit someone else with a metal pole."

He believes that the type of player Zwickert recruits, combined with the mentoring those players receive, are factors that can lead to a law enforcement career.

"The people we have here and the ethics we instill in them, it makes them not only good players, but hopefully we help make them good human beings," Adams says.

Zwickert himself confirms that he focuses on developing his players' character as well as their lacrosse skills. "We want the guys to learn to adopt priorities in their lives," he says. "Faith and family is number one, academics second, lacrosse third. Everything else is a distant fourth. When guys come here, they understand that."

As Adams points out, being a Wildcat lacrosse player means long days during the season. Practices last from 9 to 11 a.m. five days a week in the fall and six days a week in spring. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the team lifts weights from 6 to 7:45 a.m. Lifting is often followed by scouting reports and strategy meetings prior to practice. That discipline and dedication is similar to the demands of being a police officer.

"It takes a certain mentality to wake up early in the morning and work out," Adams says. "A lot of people don't want to do that. You've got to push through that. The same thing with being a law enforcement officer. Working a 12-hour shift kind of stinks sometimes, but you push through for the greater good. I think lacrosse helps a lot with that."

JARED WAGENHOFFER is another ex-player whose career in law enforcement can be attributed to both nature and a bit of Zwickert nurture.

"I always wanted to go into law enforcement," Wagenhoffer says. That was due to the influence of his father, John, who has been with the New Castle County Police for 30 years, and will retire in 2025.

Wagenhoffer achieved his goal when he joined the Delaware State Police in October of 2021 after graduating in the DSP's 97th Academy class and winning the DSP Law Enforcement Core Values Award. He's currently assigned to Troop 4 in Georgetown.

After transferring from Wesley



Jake Mollohan



Giovanni Marino



Mike Adams and Christian Zwickert



Chris Smith

College, Wagenhoffer was a Wildcat midfielder for two years. He too attests to Zwickert's impact on players.

"Coach Z does a wonderful job of holding everyone accountable, and forces them to step up as leaders," Wagenhoffer says. "And law enforcement is definitely a career where you have to be a leader and take charge."

CHRIS SMITH echoes those thoughts. "Police departments want a person who can lead, who can hold their own and not back away from anything," says Smith, who has been a patrolman with the Stafford Township (New Jersey) Police Department since graduating from WilmU in 2019 with a degree in Criminal Justice. "And you're

taught that in lacrosse. The discipline and drive that you get through practice laid a good foundation for police work."

Like Marino, Smith derives great satisfaction from the job. "I grew up in Stafford," he says, "and from the time they asked me what I wanted to be in kindergarten, it was 'Stafford cop.' I love the town. The police have always had great support here, and I wanted to give back, to show my appreciation."

He also enjoyed his time as a Wildcat. WilmU lacrosse was brand new when Smith joined it as a junior, and he was named a captain his senior year. "I loved Coach Z, loved the area, loved the college," he says.

All five ex-Wildcats were coached by and often sought guidance from

ADAM STARRETT. A 10-year veteran of the Middletown Police Department, Starrett was on Zwickert's WilmU staff for the first four years of the program. He played for Zwickert at Wesley College and subsequently coached lacrosse at St. Mark's High School — when Adams played there — and Brandywine High. All of that came after his time in the Marine Corps from 2005 to 2013, which included a year in Iraq.

Not surprisingly, while Starrett was at Wilmington, the aspiring police officers on the team turned to him with their questions.

"A lot of them would ask me for advice and guidance about the hiring process," he says. "Or they would ask me about the profession in general. I was doing narcotics work around that time, and that always intrigued them."

Starrett earned a master's in Administration of Justice with a Concentration in Criminal Behavior from WilmU in 2017, and he has high praise for the school's Criminal Justice Department. "They have a phenomenal program, with phenomenal instructors. Some I knew from the field."

As for the link between lacrosse and law enforcement, he says: "It's definitely interesting. It's becoming almost the identity of the program."

Zwickert himself has some previous connection to the criminal justice system, having served briefly as a probation and parole officer for the State of Delaware. But his goal as a coach is greater than turning out law enforcement professionals.

"Our mission is the development of the person," he says. "We want them to leave here a better person than when they came in, so they can be the best coworker, the best friend, son, husband, the best father. We want them to be men of character and integrity, who do the right thing when nobody's watching.

"We're using lacrosse to teach life lessons." **WU**

CLAIBORNE SELECTED FOR STUDENT-ATHLETE SYMPOSIUM

DAJA CLAIBORNE, a junior guard/forward on Wilmington University women's basketball team, was selected for the Student-Athlete Symposium that took place in conjunction with the 2024 NCAA Inclusion Forum, held in Indianapolis from April 24 to 26.

The Student-Athlete Symposium's goal is to foster a sense of responsibility and leadership among participants and encourage them to champion inclusivity in both their athletic and academic spheres. Student-athletes will be engaged, equipped, and empowered to actively participate and contribute to the DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) initiatives within their teams, in their athletic departments, on their campuses, in their communities, and on a national level.

Claiborne, a Visual Communications major, is a member of the University's DEI Student-Athlete Council. **wu** —Bob Yearick



Daja Claiborne

ALUMNI

RODNEY LITTLE: A Veteran Helping Veterans

by Bob Yearick

Growing up in West Philadelphia in a family of seven, with a father who worked three jobs to pay the bills, **RODNEY LITTLE** was aware from an early age that college probably was not in his immediate future. That would come much later, at Wilmington University.

But first came the army.

“My father always made it clear that joining the military was one of the biggest options we had on the table,” Little says. He and four of his brothers embraced that option.

Rodney, the third eldest, joined the army during his junior year at University City High School. He went to basic training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina, in the summer between 11th and 12th grades, and when he graduated in 1978, he traveled to Fort Gordon (now Fort Eisenhower) in Augusta, Georgia, to train as a radio teletype operator. From there he went to Germany, then returned to the U.S. to serve at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), in Columbus, Georgia. During a 33-year career in both the active and reserve forces, he held virtually every leadership position from team leader to drill instructor, and achieved the rank of sergeant major E9, the highest noncommissioned designation.

Little transferred the skills he learned in the army to civilian life,

becoming a leader on the political and civic scene, and especially on issues involving veterans and active-duty military members.

Little’s volunteer work is extensive. He is treasurer of Common Cause of Pennsylvania and is on the Veteran Multi-Service Board and the board of the Fair Housing Rights Center, among others. He’s also commander of Delaware Chapter 94, National Association for Black Veterans. In addition, as a member of the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department from 1991 to 2011, he served 11 years as president of FOP Lodge 106, which represents that department. Previously, he was on former **U.S. SEN. PAT TOOMEY**’s Military Academy Selection Panel, and former Pennsylvania **GOV. TOM CORBETT**’s Advisory Commission on African American Affairs.

Last year, Little’s advocacy for veterans and members of the military led him to a new passion when he signed on as senior advisor to **MIKE MEYERS**, commissioner of the Military Basketball Association.

The MBA was formed in 2017 by Meyers, a retired army major, and **ANGEL ACEVEDO**, a retired first sergeant. Both were combat veterans — Meyers in Iraq and Acevedo in Afghanistan.

Following their return home, both

men learned of veterans who had taken their own lives as they dealt with the ravages of war and what they saw and did during their tours of duty. In fact, according to a report published by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2016, an average of 20 veterans per day die by suicide. Many veterans believe the actual number is much higher.

With Meyers serving as commissioner and Acevedo as deputy commissioner, the MBA quickly grew to more than 1,000 military athletes — both veterans and active duty men and women — on two continents. Through local, regional, and national games, tournaments and events, the nonprofit organization seeks to educate communities about the challenges and stigmas associated with post-traumatic stress and advocate for intervention in the alarming rate of veteran suicides.

In September of 2023, the MBA signaled that it had arrived on the national stage by signing a multiyear agreement with CBS Sports to televise the MBA Championship Game live in 2024, 2025, and 2026. The first of those games — from Temple University’s Liacouras Center — was aired on May 26. It capped three days of events in Philadelphia that included an MBA Hall of Fame Banquet and a town hall with the theme “Suicide Prevention through Sports.”

Little helped organize those events and has been a key addition to the MBA



“Rodney is the heart and soul of the Military Basketball Association (MBA) in the tri-state area.” —Mike Meyers, commissioner of the MBA

leadership team, according to Meyers. “Rodney is the heart and soul of the MBA in the tri-state area,” he says. “His expertise in event management, military affairs, law enforcement, veterans initiatives, and business development in the area is invaluable, and his addition has had incredible benefits to our efforts in New Jersey, Philadelphia and Delaware. I often listen to his council, and we could not have a successful event without him.”

Little is a strong advocate for the league. “The MBA’s footprint is global,” he says. “Our mission is to

prevent suicides and suicide ideation through resiliency, through comradery amongst players, and by educating the public about the traumas and the invisible mental health wounds associated with military service.” He adds that no one associated with the MBA has taken his or her own life.

As to why he added this new post to an already full plate, Little says, “I want to continue to give back.”

He brought that same attitude to WilmU, where he found a long-established welcoming environment for military-connected students. As

of January 2023, the University was serving more than 1,550 military-connected students. Two-thirds were pursuing undergraduate degrees, 30 percent were graduate students, and 3 percent were doctoral candidates. Seventeen percent were on active duty, 56 percent were veterans, and 27 percent were dependents.

That environment, combined with affordable tuition and evening classes, made WilmU the perfect choice for Little, who knew that a college degree would enhance his professional profile. In 2014, he enrolled in the Organizational Management program, taking courses at the Dover campus, near his home in Smyrna.

Little quickly became part of WilmU’s extensive military family.

“Rodney was always passionate about helping veterans,” says **JONATHAN MALLORY**, a student services associate in Dover. “He joined the Military Veterans Student Organization, and connected with a lot of veterans, and helped them with local services.”

Through his many government and civic contacts, Little also acquired more than 100 refurbished computers, and, with Mallory’s assistance, distributed them to WilmU veterans.

Little’s dedication to serving veterans is perhaps best summed up by his friend, **JOE GRIFFIES**, a veterans advocate and radio host with WIBG in Ocean City, New Jersey.

“Rodney Little is a patriot, and just an outstanding human being,” Griffies says. “He listens to veterans and their problems, and he takes steps to help them. We need more Rodney Littles in the world.” **WU**

EMILY NAVARRETE:

A Propensity for Social Justice

by Eileen Smith Dallabrida

EMILY NAVARRETE is a policy wonk with a passion for helping others. As she views it, the two go hand in hand: good policy propels positive social change.

“I see the need for compassion and services, especially mental health services,” she says. “It’s important for us to be healing as a society.”

When she began her studies at Wilmington University, Navarrete envisioned a career in law. That ambition shifted after graduation in May 2023, when she started a three-month internship in the office of **GOV. JOHN CARNEY**. It was an immersive, hands-on experience in which she drafted tributes and proclamations and assisted in creating bill memos for the director of Legislative Affairs.

She put her WilmU studies in Law, Policy, and Political Science to good use, conducting legal research on New Jersey offshore wind turbines. Her favorite part of the job was managing

phone calls from Delaware residents who needed assistance and helping to develop cases for the governor’s constituent relations team.

“For me, the main highlight of my job was developing empathy and compassion by talking to so many constituents,” she recalls. “I learned a lot about emotional intelligence.”

After her internship, Navarrete moved up to a gubernatorial staff assistant position, where she continued her work advocating for constituents. She spearheaded an initiative to develop the governor’s proclamations, tributes, and letters to constituents. And she managed the internship program.

“I came into the working world being socially aware, partly because of my activities at WilmU,” she says.

ALICE MILLER, former advisor to the Student Government Association, recalls Navarrete’s tenure as president. She remembers her as mature beyond her years, raising money for Sean’s

House, a safe haven for people with mental health concerns.

“Emily really excels as a leader. She has a stellar work ethic and cares so much about the students, especially students’ wellbeing and mental health,” Miller says.

Navarrete also served as president of WilmU’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. A standout on the Wildcats’ women’s soccer team, she was president of the Student Athletic Advisory Committee, focusing on how laws impact sports.

YAZMYNE VALENCIA, a former teammate, says Navarrete was an inspiration on and off the field.

“She’s caring, ambitious, persistent, authentic, and very vocal. Emily has shown me the importance of being strongly assertive and standing up for what you believe in, even if you have to stand alone sometimes,” she says. “If we were having a bad game, Emily was one of the first people to give a quick word of encouragement. She helped

THE WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY 2023–2024 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS

The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor the Wilmington University Alumni Association confers to alumni, reflecting their brilliance, compassion, and outstanding contributions. These individuals who excel in their fields have left an indelible mark on their communities through business and service. As torchbearers of a legacy that inspires others to succeed, these alums stand proudly as ambassadors of Wilmington University worldwide.

RICHARD CARTER



Founder,
President,
CEO,
Humanity’s
Kitchen, Inc.

CLASS OF 2011

Bachelor of Science in
Psychology

CLASS OF 2013

Master of Science in Human
Services, Administration of
Human Services

DR. MICHELLE COLLINS



Vice President,
Nursing
Excellence
and Magnet
Designation,
ChristianaCare

CLASS OF 2018

Doctor of Nursing Practice



Left to right: Alexander Norris, Jade Drummond, Claudette Warner, Emily Navarrete, Bria Alleyne and Amaury Mable

me build my confidence by simply being someone who believed in me.”

Navarrete grew up in southern New Jersey and is one of four children. In her freshman profile as WilmU, she confessed that Justin Bieber was the celebrity she would most like to date. Her Bieber fever has subsided — “that profile is a bit outdated,” she says— but other values haven’t changed. She remains inspired by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy as a civil rights champion.

“Starting in high school, I was

passionate about social justice and creating a better world for people to live in,” she says.

Working in Gov. Carney’s office was the first step toward that goal. The governor completes his second term in January 2025 and has announced his candidacy for the City of Wilmington mayor.

Navarrete has taken on a new challenge, as well. In May, she started as a program manager at Strive: How You Believe Matters, a nonprofit organization at The Warehouse

in Wilmington. Her work focuses on reaching out to schools and community organizations to connect with young athletes and nurture their skills as leaders of tomorrow.

She no longer has her sights set on a career in law. She would rather work with individuals, perhaps as a sports psychologist.

“I want to be hands-on. I want to be involved in people’s lives and make a one-on-one impact in helping people to reach their full potential,” she says. **WU**

ROB DEMASI



President,
Holy Cross
Preparatory
Academy

CLASS OF 2017
Bachelor of

Science in Behavioral Science

CLASS OF 2019

Master of Science in
Management

RUTH KING



Owner,
Workforce
Solutions

CLASS OF 1987

Bachelor of Science in Applied
Professions

CLASS OF 1992

Master of Science in Education

DR. KEITH PETTIFORD



Director of
Consumer
Credit and Risk
Management,
Harley-Davidson
Financial Services

CLASS OF 2004

Master of Science in Business

CLASS OF 2011

Doctor of Business
Administration



STAY INVOLVED

WITH YOUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP IS FREE!

Become an active member of your local chapter. Learn more about Wilmington University Alumni Association's events and meetings by visiting



WILMU.EDU/ALUMNI

1982



CAROL ARNOLD
B.B.A. in Business Management, of Plattsburgh, New York, was honored with the North

Country Women of Distinction Volunteerism Award.

1984



DAVID WOOLEY
MBA, of Newark, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Huron University.

1986



KEVIN WILSON
B.S. in Applied Professions, of Clayton, was honored for 50 years of service with the Clayton

Fire Company.

1998



DAWNE NICKERSON
B.S. in Human Resource Management, of Dover, was

chief of public affairs for the Armed Forces at Dover Air Force Base.

2001



JENNIFER COHAN
B.S. in Business Management, of Dover, was named Small Nonprofit CEO of the Year by Delaware Business Times.



KAISHA MCCREA
MBA, of Midlothian, Virginia, released her self-published book, "Life, Love, & Legacy: Honoring My Father William Lee Holman" on

Amazon. She was appointed chair-elect of the Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce 2024 Board of Directors in Virginia. McCrea founded the William Lee Holman Legacy Education & Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, which provides scholarships to graduating students in South Carolina.

2002



TERENCE HICKS
Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Innovation, of Johnson City, Tennessee, was awarded the Virginia Social Science

Association Scholar Award.

2005



DIANE JULIANO M.S.N. in Nursing Leadership, of Wildwood, New Jersey, was named regional chief nursing officer at Jefferson Health in New Jersey.

2006



ROY RAKSZAWSKI M.Ed. in Education Leadership and Innovation, and MBA, of North Wildwood, New Jersey, was named superintendent of the Edgewater Park Township

School District.

2007



BETHANY RAMEY M.S. in Administration of Justice, of Bishopville, Maryland, graduated from the FBI National Academy's 289th session in Quantico, Virginia.

2008



RONALD BERRY B.S. in Marketing, of Wilmington, was named Small For-Profit CEO of the Year by Delaware Business Times.

2010



TARA SAMPLE M.Ed. in Instruction, of New Castle, was named the 2024 Assistant Principal of the Year for Harford County (Maryland) Public Schools.

2011



CINNAMON ELLIOTT MBA, of Clayton, has been named president and CEO of Priority Plus Credit Union in Wilmington.

2012



REBECCA FELICIANO
B.S.N. in Nursing, of Ocala, Florida, was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by P.O.W.E.R. (Professional Organization of Women

of Excellence Recognized) for her service to the health care industry.

2013



AYANNA KHAN M.S. in Administration of Human Services, of Middletown, is the CEO and founder of the Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce.



QUINCY SEWELL
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation, of Clayton, Missouri, was named vice president of academic affairs at

Kankakee Community College.

2015



JEFFREY BENSON
DBA, of Seaford, received the Dan Fulwider Award for Community Involvement.



SAMANTHA BLINDE
B.S. in Media Design, of Allentown, Pennsylvania, was featured in the Future Founder Promise podcast, which focuses on company

building, leadership, and engineering management.



GEETA SANDEEP NADELLA M.S. in Information Systems Technologies, of Garner, North Carolina, earned a Ph.D. in Information Technology from the

University of the Cumberlands. He was awarded the International Outstanding Researcher Award by ISSN and Scientist of the Year by International Achievements Research Center (Canada).

2016



RODNEY LITTLE
B.S. in Organizational Management, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major,

serves as senior advisor to the Military Basketball Association commissioner.

2017



ROBERT DEMASI JR. M.S.M. in Management, of Wilmington, was named president of Holy Cross Preparatory Academy

2018



PAUL BECHLY DBA, of Wilmington, was elected as a fellow of the American Institute of Chemists.



BREANNA KOVACH
MBA, of Magnolia, was named Young Engineer of the Year by the Delaware Engineering Society

2019



SUPERIA INGALLS
B.S. in Business Management, of Mount Laurel, New Jersey, is the owner and restaurateur of Sisters' Pot

Kitchen, a soul food restaurant in South Jersey. The business will relocate to Florida next year.

2020



LEEUVON COGDILL
B.S. in Elementary Education K-6, of Monroeville, New Jersey, was named Teacher of the Year at Upper Pittsgrove

School District.

2021

TIARA DENNIS B.S. in Accounting, of Brown Mills, New Jersey, was promoted to assistant controller of finance at OTC Services.



CHARISSE FLETCHER B.S. in Computer Network Security, of Newark, co-authored the book, "Inside/ Out Testimonial Journeys

of Transformation."

2022



TIANA KELLY
DSocSci in Prevention Science, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is the founder of EmpowerMind Education and

Consultation LLC.



TIPH JONES Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation, of Wilmington, was named chief economic inclusion officer of

Metro YWCA of St. Louis.

2023



JUSTIN NORMAN
B.S. in Criminal Justice, of Bishopville, Maryland, was named deputy chief of the Bethany Beach Police Department.



JESSICA RASHEED
B.S. in Elementary Education K-6, of Wesley Chapel, Florida, completed a year-long residency program at Richey

Elementary School in partnership with Wilmington University.

NICHOLE SMITH B.S. in Health Science, of Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, was named director of Supply Chain e-Commerce Strategy at Mondelez International.



Wilmington University
School of Law

WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW



Forging Traditions at WilmU Law's Inaugural Barristers' Ball

Wilmington University School of Law's inaugural students began their exciting and challenging journey at orientation. Over the past year, they have created traditions, established a student culture, and helped chart the course that other classes will follow. It is an innovative and student-centered culture at WilmU Law, where first-year students play a crucial role in shaping the school's identity and legacy. The law school underscores the University's commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive environment for aspiring

legal professionals.

From establishing a student government to organizing the school's first Barristers' Ball, the students faced a unique challenge: creating a framework and traditions from the ground up. That journey began with the formation of the Student Bar Association (SBA), an essential component in the structure of any law school. Unlike established schools with decades of history and practices, these students had the distinct opportunity to craft the bylaws and set a precedent for future cohorts.

The SBA formation process was a testament to the dedication and leadership of four key student officers: President **GENESIS JOMA**, Vice President **DALTON LAHTI**, Treasurer **ELIJAH WESTOG**, and Secretary **BRITTON ODY**. They worked tirelessly, holding meetings throughout the year to draft SBA bylaws, guided by Professor **NICOLE MOZEE**. They laid the groundwork for a governing body that represented the student body and played a pivotal role in shaping the school's culture and direction.

With the bylaws in place, the SBA

expanded, bringing in more students to serve as committee co-chairs. This collaborative effort ensured a diverse range of voices was heard, fostering community among full- and part-time students. SBA meetings became a hub of activity. Ideas were exchanged, and plans were made.

One of the SBA's final tasks for the year was to plan a celebration that has become a hallmark of law schools nationwide: the Barristers' Ball. This formal event, often called the "law school prom," is a time-honored tradition where students, faculty, and staff celebrate their achievements and enjoy an elegant night of camaraderie. Planning such an event from scratch was no small feat, but WilmU Law's SBA made it happen.

Co-chairs **ALYNNA WILSON** and **HANNAH GOLDSTON** led the committee and set out to create an unforgettable evening with the support of other SBA committee members. The planning process involved numerous details, from selecting a venue to arranging catering, entertainment, and decor. The committee chose to host the inaugural event at WilmU's Brandywine location, transforming the usual study spaces into a sophisticated venue. This black-tie affair reflected the formality and significance of the occasion and marked the beginning of a new tradition for WilmU Law.

As the Barristers' Ball date approached, anticipation grew among the students and faculty. The event promised to be a celebration of their hard work and a preview of the traditions that future classes would continue. "For future generations to come, I want the Barristers' Ball to welcome them," says Wilson, a correctional counselor and JD candidate. "I want the next generation to participate, and I want them to know law school can be fun."

The electric atmosphere boomed with excitement and pride. The program included a formal dinner, dancing, and live music. The co-chairs

delivered heartfelt speeches, reflecting on the journey of the inaugural class and the significance of the first WilmU Law Barristers' Ball. "It felt like a family gathering," Goldston says. "It was a nice time to relax and dress up."

The event was a resounding success, a testament to the hard work and dedication of the SBA and the entire inaugural class. The night was filled with laughter, celebration, and accomplishment. For many, it was a moment to reflect on the unique experience of being part of the first class at WilmU Law and the legacy they were creating.

The Barristers' Ball also allowed students and faculty to connect more personally. It was a chance to celebrate their shared journeys and look forward to the future with optimism. "I was very, very proud of the dedication of the co-chairs, Hannah and Alynna," says Professor

Moze, who describes the Barristers' Ball as an opportunity for students to "take a moment and decompress from the rigor of law school and just enjoy themselves."

For WilmU Law's inaugural class, the Barristers' Ball was more than a celebration. It symbolized their efforts to build something from nothing, create traditions that would endure, and lay the foundation for future generations.

In the years to come, as new classes join the ranks of WilmU Law, they will look back on this first Barristers' Ball as the beginning of a proud tradition. The legacy of the inaugural class, their leadership, and their commitment to creating a dynamic and inclusive environment exemplify the spirit of WilmU Law. They will continue to inspire and guide the school's future. **WU**

—Taylor Warrington-Purcell



Mentor Close-Out and End-of-the-Year Reception:

A Celebration of Wilmington University School of Law's Inaugural Year



Law Faculty Member Edson Bostic

Wilmington University School of Law celebrated the culmination of its inaugural academic year with the Mentor Close-Out and End-of-the-Year Reception. The event, held at the Brandywine campus, brought together students, faculty, mentors, staff, supporters, and distinguished guests to share, recognize, and celebrate the many achievements of the first academic year. The Brandywine campus has been the temporary home for law students while the new law school building, projected to be completed in 2025, is under construction.

This evening reception was more

than a mere formality; it was a testament to Wilmington University's mission of providing broad access to affordable legal education within a student-centered culture. The law school is committed to serving qualified students from all walks of life, including traditional and non-traditional-age students and professionals transitioning from other careers.

The highlight of the evening was the celebration of the inaugural WilmU Law class and their mentorships with distinguished law professionals in the community. Students **HANNAH GOLDSTON**, **ELIJAH WESTOG**, and **MARISSA RAUSCHER** delivered heartwarming speeches, each reflecting on the incredible oppor-

tunities Wilmington University School of Law brought them through their mentors.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

The law school's mentorship program has become a standout feature, providing unparalleled opportunities for its students. Goldston, a 1L student, opened the student speeches by sharing her journey and the valuable opportunities she encountered through the mentorship program. "The establishment of a mentor program by the law school was what I believed worked best. Networking in law as a 1L can be intimidating, and having resources available to help us with that is paramount for our success," Goldston said. Her mentor, **DWAYNE J. BENSING**, legal director at the ACLU of Delaware, provided guidance that was instrumental in her academic and professional growth. Goldston's gratitude was evident as she spoke about the steadfast support she received from her mentor and the faculty.

EXEMPLIFYING THE PROGRAM'S IMPACT

BRITTON ODY, another first-year law student, exemplifies the transformative impact of the mentorship program. "In my very first year as a 1L with zero legal skills, I've already been paired with a federal circuit judge, and nowhere else

in the country could a first-year student get connected with an individual with such great legal magnitude,” Ody says. This connection underscores the program’s commitment to providing students with direct access to seasoned legal professionals, fostering academic and professional growth from the outset of their legal education.

SUMMER INTERNSHIP SUCCESS: A TESTAMENT TO STRONG COMMUNITY TIES

All 1L students interested in summer internship opportunities secured positions, underscoring the strong ties between WilmU Law and the Delaware legal community. The support from local law firms and legal professionals has been unwavering. The presence of the Delaware legal community at the reception highlighted their commitment to fostering the next generation of legal minds.

Dean **HEATHER KARNS**, associate

dean for Career Services, and Dean **KIMBERLY GATTUSO**, associate dean for Experiential Learning, played pivotal roles in establishing these relationships. Throughout the year, they traveled to law firms and courthouses, forging connections and creating the mentor program that has been instrumental in the students’ successes. Their efforts were acknowledged and appreciated during the reception.

WilmU Law remains committed to providing accessible and affordable legal education. With the new law school building set to open in 2025, the future holds even greater promise for expanding programs and resources that will benefit students and the community.

LOOKING AHEAD: A PROMISING FUTURE

The Mentor Close-Out and End-of-the-Year Reception was not just a celebration of the past year’s achievements but also a reaffirmation of Wilmington

University School of Law’s mission and values. The evening highlighted the collaborative spirit and dedication of everyone involved in shaping the future of legal education. As the inaugural class moves forward, they carry with them the lessons learned, the relationships built, and the unwavering support of a community committed to their success.

In this inaugural year, Wilmington University School of Law has set a high standard, embodying its mission to serve a diverse student body with affordable, high-quality legal education within a student-centered culture. As the school looks to the future, the foundation laid this year promises a bright and impactful journey ahead for all who walk through its doors. **WU** —*Taylor Warrington-Purcell*

Taylor Warrington-Purcell is the administrative coordinator and assistant to the dean at Wilmington University School of Law.



Dean Phillip Closius



Trezlen Drake

Long Live the Modern Library

In January, I began working at Wilmington University School of Law as the associate dean of Library and Information Resources. I arrived here through a winding path from law. After graduating from Georgia State University College of Law and passing the Georgia bar exam, I practiced law for a few years, not quite finding my fit. So, I attended the University

of Washington (Seattle) iSchool law librarianship program, designed to train lawyers as law librarians. Since my graduation a year later, I have worked as an academic lawyer-librarian.

When I tell people I am a librarian, I typically get one response: “Isn’t everything online?” As a former foreign and international law research librarian who has had to track down materials

that are neither in English nor online, I could spend quite a bit of time explaining how the demise of the print library is overstated. Instead, I would like to focus on the implied inquiry I always hear: *What do I actually do?* This question seems particularly relevant to my charge of building and maintaining the law library’s collection in electronic format.

WHAT IS A LIBRARY?

The traditional vision of the library is a museum for dusty tomes on shelves that hardly anyone reads. Those shelves surround tables where patrons might sit if they go to the library. They are controlled by old lady librarians in squeaky orthopedic shoes who tell people to be quiet. This image is a backdrop great for studying in silence, graduation pictures, and faculty portraits, but it is a relic all the same.

Many law libraries are indeed blessed with the architectural interest that many think of in their mind’s eye: stained glass and vaulted ceilings with Renaissance paintings; fat babies with wings; biblical renderings; clouds framing the room; and light spilling from above to illuminate truths found on the open page. But libraries today have complemented their visual appeal with utilitarianism. Libraries have adapted to modern research methods and evolved into ubiquitous centers where students do their work.

A STUDY CENTER

Students use the library as an extension of the classroom. Many study in the library between and after classes rather than take their work home. Others gather in groups to work on individual or group projects. They use the law library as a central meeting place to outline and study for exams. In a sense, the law library functions as a study hall for the law school with a facility to

socialize. Some libraries even provide games and puzzles for students to take a break from their work.

Law librarians work at the center of this study space, ensuring students can find reserve materials and casebook supplements to support their study. Librarians provide access to print and electronic resources available on and off campus. Librarians facilitate access to materials from other libraries through interlibrary loans. Librarians also direct students where to find answers to their reference questions; the research is the student's work.

A TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Students use the library as a technology center. They use the multi-function printer to duplicate resumes and print cover letters. They come to the library to use desktop computers when their laptops don't work or to borrow computers when their connected IT departments provide those resources.

In the library as a technology center, law librarians supply and arrange repair services for printers, copiers, and computers for students to use. They provide the necessary extras: keyboards, mice, toner, paper, staples, and paper clips. They also supply power cords to check out should students forget theirs at home.

Law librarians facilitate access to electronic databases. We reach out to, establish, and maintain relationships with vendor representatives. When we select a new database, we ensure those vendors are contracted and paid. We then provide access to legal databases through password management, troubleshooting access, and login problems. We organize training on new legal databases with a vendor representative or librarian. Librarians also keep abreast of changes in legal technology and databases when considering what to purchase for law school.

A TEACHING AND RESEARCH CENTER

Law librarians of all genders perform many duties outside of shushing patrons — which doesn't really happen anymore. We work with faculty, staff, and students to support research and scholarship efforts. We train our faculty's research assistants in good research techniques and inform them about resources that might help with their research.

Law librarians teach law students, faculty, and staff the efficient use of legal research databases. Most people already know how to perform a Google search. Law librarians augment those basic research skills by teaching users the quirks of navigating different legal databases to find the needed materials.

In addition, law librarians teach information literacy. There are, at minimum, 1.2 million terabytes of information on the internet (1 terabyte=1000 gigabytes), which increases daily. However, not everything online is easily accessible, factual, or relevant to a research query. Librarians train researchers to determine whether a website is trustworthy and has up-to-date information.

A CHANGING ENTITY

Unlike public libraries, law school libraries have been slower in adopting new online technology, partly because the American Bar Association (ABA), the U.S. law school accreditation organization, has required that libraries maintain a physical collection, i.e., books on shelves. Law school libraries have pushed the envelope on this requirement for decades as the commonly used legal publishers began providing online access to their information as technology advanced. COVID-19 left almost all law libraries brainstorming how to make their

resources available to all their users while publishers began adapting to meet those needs.

In February 2024, the ABA stopped requiring that law school libraries maintain a physical collection to receive and maintain accreditation. Instead, "the choice of format, ownership, and means of reliable access for any part of the law library's collection shall be sufficient for the law school to operate in compliance with the [accreditation] Standards and to carry out its program of legal education" (ABA Accreditation Standard 604 (b) (2024)). This change in accreditation standards allows me to create a purely digital library collection based on the needs of Wilmington University School of Law, a decision that I will make on a case-by-case basis.

Many believe that the library is dead because of the internet. If the library is considered dead, it is merely an image of a beautiful mausoleum. However, modern law libraries are very much alive and thriving. They serve as essential centers for study, technology, research, and teaching within law schools. They provide a convenient study space for law students when not in class, provide the resources and services that students, faculty, and staff need to thrive in the law community, and provide access to law librarians who can direct students and faculty in their research.

Only the mythical relic of the law library is dead. So, long live the modern library! **WU**

—Trezlen Drake, J.D., MLIS, MFA

Associate Dean of Library and Information Resources and Attorney Trezlen Drake has spent over 10 years as an academic law librarian, with experience in research, collection development, and electronic resources at top-ranked law schools and a strong record of service in the profession. Learn more about her at law.wilmu.edu.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE

by Maria Hess

Criminal Justice Director Scott Duffey connects with legends at the world's most prestigious true crime conference.

TRUE CRIME TITANS UNITE



Criminal Justice Director Scott Duffey with John Walsh and CBS Producer Steve Cohen

If there is ever a conference that brings together the biggest stars in the true-crime industry — sans the egos — CrimeCon is it.

According to its website, CrimeCon offers events that are “equal parts education and experience,” providing wide-ranging programs that combine hands-on learning and opportunities to interact with world-renowned speakers, TV personalities, and successful podcasters. It’s bliss for true crime buffs, who get to rub elbows with megastars like **NANCY GRACE**, Dateline’s **JOSH MANKIEWICZ**, and defense attorney **MARK GERAGOS**, who has represented clients like the Menendez brothers, Winona Ryder, Michael Jackson, and Nicole Richie.

The annual three-day gathering hosts about 8,500 people, welcoming “any type of person who has any type of fascination with true crime,” says Criminal Justice Institute (CJI) Director **SCOTT DUFFEY**, who has attended two conferences so far: first in 2023



BUSTED AT CRIMECON NASHVILLE!

Fox's Nancy Grace seems amused by a spoof suggesting Scott Duffey got busted.

in Orlando and this year in Nashville. “These stars are just walking through the halls with everyone else, attending lectures, and chatting willingly with fans and colleagues. They’re completely accessible,” Duffey says.

Anyone over 18 can attend, but only invited speakers can extend invitations to colleagues. Because Duffey is a regular podcast guest on “Surviving the Survivor,” its co-host and former network news correspondent **JOEL WALDMAN**, who partners with his Holocaust-survivor mother, **KARMELA WALDMAN**, invited him to attend. The show unpacks prominent cases aided by major players such as NBC’s **DENNIS MURPHY** and **DR. ANN BURGESS**, the forensic nurse behind Netflix’s “Mindhunter.” Since the podcast attracts over a million monthly viewers, it earned a spot at CrimeCon’s Podcast Row, accommodating at least 300 prominent true-crime podcasters.

Duffey appears on its Friday evening segment called “Great Scott!

Get your True Crime Fil,” with Joel Waldman and **FIL WATERS**, a retired Houston homicide detective who starred in Prime’s “The Interrogator.” Waters also presented at the CJI’s 2024 Violent Crime Symposium, an annual offering that Duffey leads.

Duffey was thrilled to be invited. But after attending two conferences, having a distinguished career with the FBI, and serving for years as a go-to source for international media, he’d now graciously accept an invitation as a guest presenter, adding, “It would be an honor to be part of a roster of such esteemed speakers.”

Duffey, as shown in the photos, has not only posed with these heavyweights but also interacted with them, gaining tips that enhance his teaching for WilmU’s Criminal Justice programs and the CJI’s True Crime Lecture Series at the DoubleTree Hotel in North Wilmington.

“The experience benefits me personally and professionally as a trainer

and faculty member,” says Duffey, who enjoyed a 22-year career as an FBI special agent working complex criminal investigations before becoming a supervisory senior resident agent. He has traveled worldwide as an adjunct instructor with the FBI, focusing on interviews and interrogations.

Duffey has brought several Crime-Con headliners to the lecture series, including **DR. KATHERINE RAMSLAND**, who will speak on Dec. 3. A forensic psychology teacher and inaugural director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at DeSales University, Dr. Ramsland has appeared in 200 crime documentaries and magazine shows. She is the executive producer of “Murder House Flip” and has consulted for numerous television programs, including “CSI,” “Bones,” and “The Alienist.”

“I’m at the conference, and Dr. Ramsland has just spoken to about 5,000 people,” says Duffey. “I ask her to come to Wilmington for 250

people, and she agrees! It's amazing."

He also invited **S. MONIQUE SMITH**, the longest-living Jane Doe in American history. "She was kidnapped as a baby and remained in captivity for 50 years," says Duffey. "She knew growing up that something was off. She was on the back of milk cartons for years and finally escaped."

But she was found, in part, thanks to **JOHN** and **REVÉ WALSH**. In 1981, their 6-year-old son **ADAM** was abducted from a Florida shopping mall and murdered. The Walshes turned to law enforcement but discovered no coordinated state- or national-level search efforts. In response, they established the Adam Walsh Outreach Center for Missing Children in Florida as a national resource for other families with missing children. In 1982, Congress passed the Missing Children's Act, allowing the FBI to add missing children's information to its national crime information center database. Two years later, former President

RONALD REAGAN started the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), which converged with the Adam Walsh Outreach Center.

"Monique has an amazing spirit, and I just fell in love with her as a lecturer," says Duffey. "I went up to her, pleaded my case, and now she's telling her story in Wilmington on Nov. 12."

WHY ATTEND?

CrimeCon participants show up for various reasons. Some are simply true crime buffs ecstatic to meet the icons. Others, like Duffey, come from law enforcement. It's the hands-on activities that get most people juiced. Participants can work on cold cases with renowned investigators, and there's even a Cold Case Club. Its auction items are legendary, such as a private Zoom call with actor, producer, and writer **RYAN PHILLIPPE**, who is involved with "The Innocence

Project" and is a well-known supporter of military and veteran caregivers.

The panels are thrilling, attracting moderators such as **SUSAN CONSTANTINE**, an internationally renowned body language expert and television personality, and FBI Special Agent **JENNIFER COFFINDAFFER**, a law and justice contributor for NewsNation. Discussions are bold, highlighted by panelists that include families of victims of high-profile cases, as well as subjects of highly rated documentaries. One year, **KATHY KLEINER RUBIN** spoke about surviving an attack by serial killer Ted Bundy. She was asleep at her sorority house at Florida State University when Bundy grabbed a log from a stack of firewood and entered through an unlocked door. He murdered two of her sorority sisters and then attacked Kleiner Rubin and her roommate. They only escaped because a car's headlights shone into their room, startling Bundy. According to a 2024 article in USA Today, "Bundy

SCOTT DUFFEY AT CRIMECON WITH:



*Forensic Pathologist
Dr. Micheal Baden*



*Survivor, Advocate, and
Cold Case Solver
Keri Rawson*



*Famed Criminal Defense
Lawyer Mark Geragos*



*NewsNation Contributor
Jennifer Coffindaffer*



Scott Duffey takes part in an active shooter training for WilmU colleagues.

PAUL PATTON



*Court TV Anchor
Vinnie Politan*



*Court TV's Erin
Moriarty and Podcaster
Joel Waldman*



*Podcast Producer
Ileana Diaz*



*Creighton Waters, lead
prosecutor for the Alex
Murdaugh case*

TRUE CRIME IS MORE THAN MURDER
 RE-CREATIONS AND COURTROOM SHOWDOWNS.
 THE GENRE IS RICH IN REAL-LIFE STORIES
 OF TRIUMPH, TRAGEDY, HEARTBREAK,
 AND HEROISM.

bashed (Kleiner Rubin’s) head with an oak log. Her cheek ripped open, her jaw shattered in three places, and she almost bit her tongue in half. She had months of physical recovery, including multiple jaw surgeries.”

Still, she survived, unlike the dozens of women Bundy murdered in the 1960s and ’70s, and she has channeled the experience into her work as an author and motivational speaker specializing in survivor impact.

Duffey says other panelists included family members of the four University of Idaho students, **MADISON MOGEN, KAYLEE GONCALVES, XANA KERNODLE,** and **ETHAN CHAPIN,** who were murdered. “CrimeCon invited them to share their stories and feelings with people willing to listen,” he says.

Another well-attended discussion featured **AARON QUINN** and **DENISE HUSKINS,** whose story is told in the 2024 Netflix docuseries “American Nightmare.” In 2015, they were attacked at home, resulting in Huskins being kidnapped and Quinn, left shaken, becoming the prime suspect. The public and law enforcement viewed the incident as far-fetched, and when Huskins reappeared, the couple was accused of staging it.

Given a platform often involving horrific experiences that humans endure, CrimeCon leaders walk a fine line. Duffey says they treat victims and their families with “the utmost respect and compassion.” On the other hand,

some participants make a living from tragedy, like prosecutors, podcasters, and pundits.

“It is without a doubt a wonderful idea to bring everyone together, though I can see that it may seem exploitive from the outside,” says Duffey. “When you’re there, you experience it for what it is. The fact that everyone is accessible, from a handshake to a conversation, is the amazing part. It’s almost like everybody is one. And victims’ families feel the love and support. They *want* to be there. They *need* to share their stories.”

CRIMECON AND THE CJI

Duffey is humbled when fellow former agents willingly come to Wilmington to share details about famous cases, as well as the esteemed professionals he meets at CrimeCon, like Dr. Ramsland and Smith.

“When you go up to people and ask them to do a lecture for a few hundred people in Wilmington, Delaware, and they say yes, especially for those with FBI credentials, you understand that this is forever a brotherhood and sisterhood, and they are always happy to help a colleague.”

Despite (or because) of his extensive experience and knowledge, Duffey is a lifelong student. “I have always felt that no matter how much time someone has in a particular law enforcement agency like the FBI, you

are always learning,” he says. “You realize that you *think* you’ve seen it all, but the next day arrives, and there’s something totally new and different.”

In a sense, that’s CrimeCon’s premise: to discover. Duffey points to Geragos, who still represents the Menendez brothers because they’re seeking a retrial. “You would never be able to meet and hear Geragos talk about the case word-for-word like this anywhere else,” he says. “It might be easy to judge the Menendez brothers. They killed their parents; they should stay in jail for the rest of their lives. However, at the conference, participants have access to more detailed information. People like Geragos discuss cases you thought you knew all about and teach you to keep an open mind.”

Paraphrasing from the CrimeCon website, true crime is more than murder re-creations and courtroom show-downs. The genre is rich in real-life stories of triumph, tragedy, heartbreak, and heroism. It’s about psychology, victimology, and methodology. And it’s constantly changing.

The conference provides Duffey with a deeply enriching experience that he shares in his classrooms, lecture series, and symposiums. His exceptional communication and sales skills ensure that students and true-crime enthusiasts gain invaluable insights, making them the true beneficiaries of his knowledge and dedication. **WU**

Scott Duffey has appeared internationally on numerous media outlets and podcasts regarding the world’s most high-profile cases. The True Crime Series is presented at the DoubleTree Wilmington (727 Concord Pike, in North Wilmington). Speakers are added often. For the full schedule, visit cji.wilmu.edu. To learn more about CrimeCon, visit crimecon.com.

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION DEAN DR. JOHN GRAY RETIRES

Dr. Gray's tenure at Wilmington University was marked by a profound commitment to nurturing future educators and a significant impact on the academic community. His compassionate and transformative leadership inspired students to pursue their passions as zealously as he did.

Read his story on page 6.

