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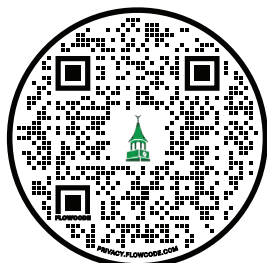
A portrait of Dean Phillip J. Closius, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a purple patterned tie. He is smiling and standing in front of a bookshelf.

Dean Phillip J. Closius

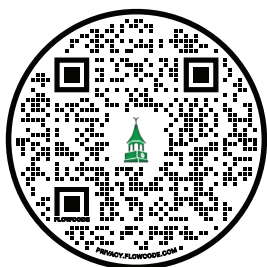
INTRODUCING THE WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

With its inclusive culture, the new law school will prepare students who reflect the communities they serve, promote access to the bar, and make a case for a more diverse legal field.

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“Led by Dean Phillip J. Closius, our law school will offer unique curricula emphasizing bar passage, affordable tuition, and a culture of inclusiveness.”

—Dr. LaVerne Harmon



Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce The Wilmington University School of Law.

As you will read in our cover story, Wilmington University started planning the addition of a Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree within a new school of law in April of 2022. I am delighted to report that The Wilmington University School of Law will welcome its first classes in the fall of 2023.

Led by Dean Phillip J. Closius, our law school will offer unique curricula emphasizing bar passage, affordable tuition, and a culture of inclusiveness. Like Wilmington University, the school will center on service to students, teaching excellence, convenience and flexibility. Our faculty will comprise practicing attorneys who bring real-world experience into the classroom.

Wilmington University is embracing an exciting new chapter. In addition to our feature about the law school, you will read many stories depicting the contributions that our staff, faculty, athletes and alumni are making worldwide. It's a great time to be a Wildcat.

Please enjoy the issue. [WU](#)

Sincerely,

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

Dr. LaVerne Harmon

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not necessarily reflect the official policies
of Wilmington University.*

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COVER PHOTO by Paul Patton



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PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK SPRAGUE

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Compiled by David Bernard



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THE NEWS



Brandi Luloff

NATIONAL HONORS FOR TWO ALUMNAE



The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the highest recognition that K–12 STEM teachers can receive. They are given to teachers from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories as a group (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

For the year 2020, both Delaware PAEMST recipients were Wilmington University graduates. (The 2020 awards are the most recent.)

BRANDI LULOFF of Townsend Elementary School in the Appoquinimink School District was the mathematics awardee, and **LEONA WILLIAMS** of Forwood Elementary School in the Brandywine School District won the science award.

The two dedicated teachers took markedly different paths to a career in education.

For Luloff, overcoming a childhood learning disability convinced her that she could make a difference in the lives of students with similar challenges. For Williams, teaching became a second career that brought more satisfaction than her highly successful years in the corporate world.

Luloff earned her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh and, in 2009, her M.A. in Elementary/Special Education from Wilmington University. She is currently studying for her M.A. in School Leadership and Administration at WilmU.

In achieving those academic levels, she overcame difficult elementary and high school years.

“In elementary school, I was identified with a learning disability and told that school would be difficult,” Luloff says. “Those challenging times, although frustrating, made me stronger. The trials I endured became my strengths and turned into

my passion for education. I followed my heart.”

Luloff has been teaching for 18 years, the last seven at Townsend Elementary. She was named the school’s Teacher of the Year in 2018. Last fall, she became Townsend Elementary’s full-time instructional coach, a role in which she works closely with classroom teachers to support student learning across the curriculum.

After careful consideration, Luloff says she chose WilmU for both of her post-graduate degrees. “I did research on both UD and Wilmington,” she says. “From the reviews and talking to people who have been in the program, Wilmington got just outstanding comments. And the instructors and everyone there were so supportive. So it was without question where I wanted to return for my second master’s.”

Of her Presidential Award, which was announced on Feb. 14, 2022, Luloff says: “I never imagined experiencing something like this when I first came into education. It’s the most amazing and honoring experience that I could ever have to represent my school and district. They have offered so many opportunities for me to excel and build.”

Williams’ entrée into professional education came as a Parent-Teacher Association mom supporting science education. But first came a successful career as a technical sales representative for Hercules, Inc. in Wilmington.

Williams joined the corporate world after receiving a degree in Chemistry from the University of Delaware in 1987. She enjoyed her 13 years with Hercules, but the job required a lot of travel, which meant time away from her three children. When her oldest entered Forwood Elementary School, she chose to become a stay-at-home mom.

She immediately got involved with the PTA, and began working with Forwood students in a science club format. She soon organized an

**BRANDI
LULOFF**
and
**LEONA
WILLIAMS**
took
markedly
different
paths to
a career in
education.



Leona Williams

annual science fair, which is now in its 20th year. Her involvement kindled an interest in teaching, and she enrolled in the Master’s in Elementary Education program at then Wilmington College.

“It fit my lifestyle,” Williams says of the program. “I had a young family, it was cost-effective, and I liked the schedule that allowed me to take classes in the evening when my husband was at home with the kids. And it was respected in the community. I knew many of the teachers I would be working with had earned their master’s at Wilmington.”

After receiving her degree in 2007, Williams began teaching fourth grade

at Claymont Elementary School, where she had been substitute-teaching. For the past 12 years, she has taught fourth and fifth grades at Forwood. A Next Generation Science Standards Lead Teacher, Williams piloted NGSS-aligned science kits and enriched learning experiences with STEM in her multicultural fourth-grade classroom, which includes English Language Learners.

When buildings closed due to the pandemic, she made creative use of Zoom as an education tool. Her students investigated sound waves, created musical instruments from recyclables, and met the female marine biologist who helped Disney animators create

realistic waves for the movie “Moana.” Williams was named the 2020 Elementary STEM Educator Award winner by the Delaware STEM Council for her efforts.

As a Delawarean, Williams says, having the First State’s Joe Biden in the White House makes her PAEMST “extra special.”

“It’s a tremendous national honor,” she says. “It acknowledges educators who are developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills through STEM to prepare students for their future in a technology-rich world.” **WU**

—Bob Yearick

Seven Degrees of Dissertation

Cape Henlopen District leaders earn doctoral degrees from Wilmington University

After successfully defending their action research dissertations, seven Cape Henlopen District administrators received their doctoral degrees from Wilmington University in May.

More than three years ago, Cape Assistant Superintendent **JENNIFER NAUMAN** was exploring options to obtain her doctoral degree. Traveling to the University of Delaware in Newark was impractical, so she turned to Wilmington University.

When a Wilmington University representative told her the college didn't have a cohort in Sussex County, she asked what she could do to make access to the degree fair for southern Delaware residents. She was told if she could get five scholars to sign up for the program, it could be held in Georgetown.

Nauman had no problem recruiting fellow educators for the program, including herself, Lewes Elementary Principal **KIM CORBIDGE**, Beacon Middle Assistant Principal **KATHLEEN SHEEHAN**, Cape High Principal **NIKKI MILLER**, Mariner Middle Assistant Principal **EMILY LEHNE**, Sussex

Consortium Assistant Principal **LIZ CHERICO** and Sussex Consortium Special Education Coordinator **TRISH WILSON**.

Dissertations included *Increasing Collective Teacher Efficacy in a Middle School Setting*, by Emily Lehne; *Closing the Achievement Gap of Black Students Through Educational Huddles*, by Kim Corbidge; *Literacy Instruction to Show Growth in Students with Severe Disabilities*, by Elizabeth Cherico; *Increasing the Compliance of Individualized Education Programs*, by Patricia Wilson; *The Importance of Ninth Grade: Targeting Ninth-Grade Students to Remain On Track for Graduation*, by Nikki Miller; *Using Intervention Methods to Increase Middle School Mathematics State Testing Scores*, by Kathleen Sheehan; and *Improving the Achievement of African American Students Through Collaboratively Building Academic Equity*, by Jennifer Nauman. **WU**

—Ellen Driscoll

(This story was first published in the Cape Gazette on May 30, 2022. Printed with permission.)



COURTESY OF THE CAPE GAZETTE

Cape Henlopen School District's newly minted doctors: From left: Lewes Elementary Principal Kim Corbidge, Beacon Middle Assistant Principal Kathleen Sheehan, Cape High Principal Nikki Miller, Mariner Middle Assistant Principal Emily Lehne, Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Nauman, Sussex Consortium Special Education Coordinator Trish Wilson, and her sister, Sussex Consortium Assistant Principal Liz Chericco.

Of Volunteers and Vests



Kirk Trate and Jim Morehead

T

Three members of WilmU's criminal justice community lent a hand earlier this year to provide protective gear to civilian first responders in Eastern Europe.

KIRK TRATE, **TOM COURY**, and **JIM MOREHEAD** helped to organize the collection of 268 used ballistic vests from police departments in Chester County, Pennsylvania, which were part of nearly 1,600 vests a statewide police drive donated to Ukrainian firefighters, doctors, nurses and medics.

Their volunteer efforts began on the phone. In March, about two weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Assistant Professor Kirk Trate of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences got a call from Tom Coury, a former coordinator of WilmU's criminal justice programs in New Jersey.

Coury, who'd earned a master's in Homeland Security from WilmU and who, like Trate, had completed the FBI National Academy program for law enforcement leadership, reported a recent discussion he'd had with a former Pennsylvania police chief named **JEFFREY LUSK**, who'd been working as a security consultant in Ukraine until the invasion.

Lusk was planning to gather outdated, surplus vests that would otherwise have been destroyed from police departments across Pennsylvania, Coury told Trate, then deliver them to his former colleagues in the Vermont State Police for transport to Ukraine by the Vermont Air National Guard.

Trate spread the word among his local law enforcement contacts, which included West Chester Police Chief Jim Morehead. Morehead, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice at WilmU's May 2022 commencement ceremonies, also attended the highly selective FBI National Academy. "WilmU is very well represented by faculty and alumni among National Academy graduates," says Trate.

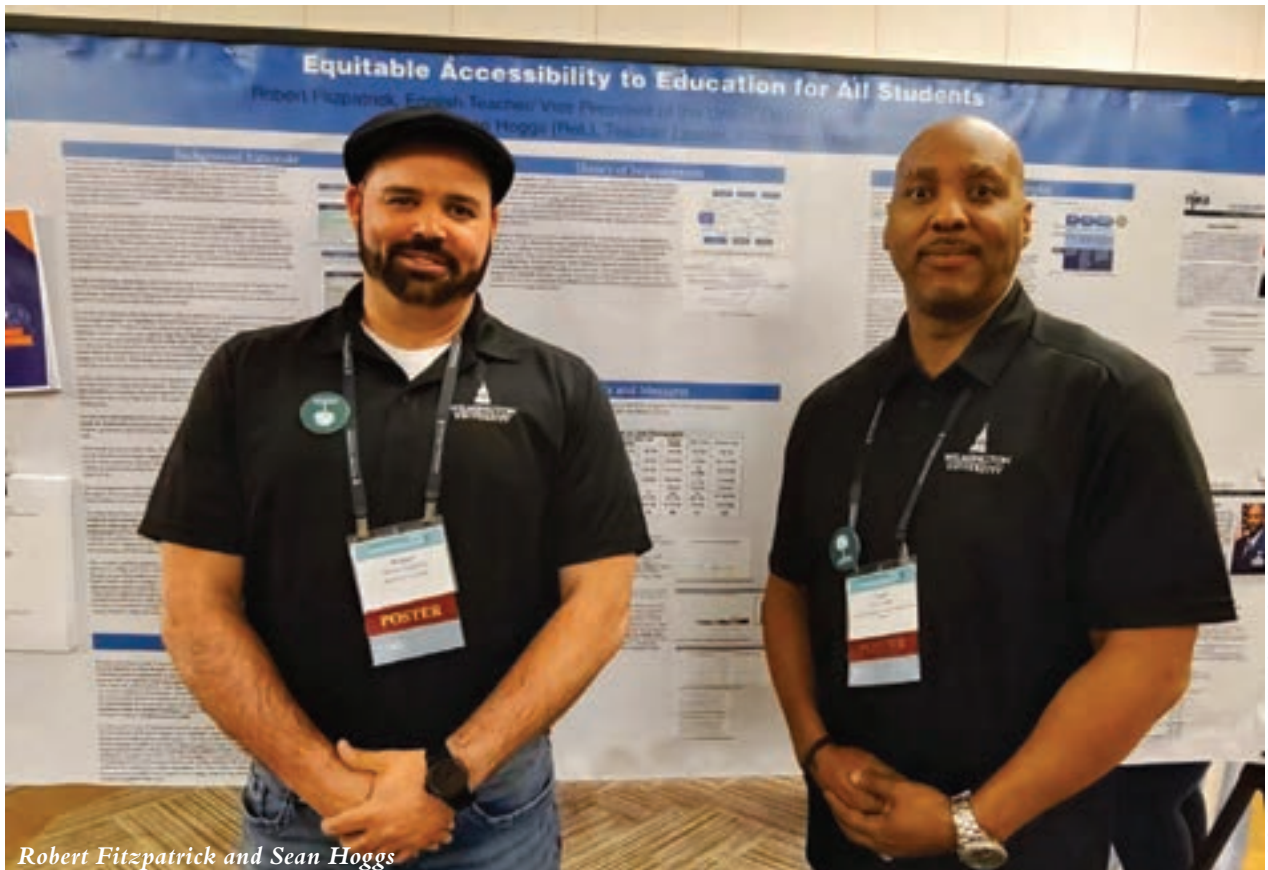
Morehead arranged a ballistic vest drop-off event at the Chester County Government Services Center in West Chester, which collected the 268 vests in a day, and helped load and transport them to Lusk in central Pennsylvania.

"It was a very positive thing," says Trate. "We picked up the phone and reached out and helped a lot of people. It confirmed what I've always thought: when there's something that needs to be done, the criminal justice community can pull something together to get it done for people, wherever they are." **WU**

—David Bernard



Jim Morehead and Kirk Trate



Robert Fitzpatrick and Sean Hoggs

PHOTO COURTESY OF R. FITZPATRICK AND S. HOGGS

Education Leaders with an Eye on Improvement

A school that fails to meet the needs of its most vulnerable students might be building even more barriers between those students and their educations. Two Wilmington University doctoral candidates say a process called improvement science can help schools close the achievement gap among marginalized learners.

In a research poster titled "Equitable Accessibility to Education for All Students," **ROBERT FITZPATRICK** and **SEAN HOGGS** encourage school

administrators to employ a user-centered, situation-specific approach to improving teaching and learning to identify problems, develop solutions, and create more inclusive educational environments.

Fitzpatrick and Hoggs, both second-year candidates in WilmU's Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership degree program and teachers in New Jersey high schools, presented their poster at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Summit on Improvement in Education in San Diego in March.

"The response was both humbling

and overwhelming," says Hoggs. "We really did not think we would get the attention that we did, [but] I found myself deeply immersed in conversations with summit attendees who really understood improvement science, who tested the basis of my research."

The poster, one of 43 selected for presentation at the summit, provided Fitzpatrick, who teaches English language arts at STEM Civics High School in Ewing, and Hoggs, the senior aerospace science instructor at Northern Burlington County Regional High School in Columbus, the

opportunity to reflect on the coursework they've completed toward their dissertations-in-practice.

What is improvement science? A type of accelerated learning-by-doing, it focuses on applying the latest studies as well as "action research" conducted on site by school administrators to build and refine the process of education. "There is now data readily available," says Hoggs, "that sets the educational leader in position to better execute his or her station."

In their poster, Fitzpatrick and Hoggs point out that improvement science has shown that instituting restorative practices instead of disciplinary measures, for instance, or individualized learning plans over uniform instructional interventions, can help schools make greater strides toward equitable education among their student populations.

Improvement science is a tenet of the Carnegie Foundation's mission to rethink aspects of K-12 schooling nationwide. The foundation was a driving force behind WilmU's recent revision of the Educational Leadership Ed.D. toward which Fitzpatrick and Hoggs are studying, says **DR. KAE KEISTER**, chair of advanced programs in the College of Education and Liberal Arts.

"Three years ago, we rewrote the Educational Leadership curriculum to focus on improvement science methodologies," says Dr. Keister, who created the program with former professor **DR. JOSEPH CROSSEN**. "We're pretty thrilled that these fellows have taken those concepts so far."

"In all, it was an incredible experience, one that will never be forgotten," says Hoggs, "and I'm truly humbled to have been afforded the opportunity to represent Wilmington University and to serve as a voice, however small, on the subject of improvement science." **WU**

—David Bernard

Cybersecurity Grad On Road to Success

Only a few years ago, **MARY ANTWI** was a certified nursing assistant and a single mother, working two jobs to support her young family. Her quest for a well-paying career led her to Wilmington University, where a student-friendly focus on flexibility allowed Antwi to keep her jobs while going to school.

Her hard work and sacrifice paid off in May, when she completed her bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity and received three competitive job offers.

To help her evaluate the pros and cons of each position, Antwi turned to **DR. MARK HUFÉ**, director of the Center for Cyber Security at WilmU's College of Technology. "I didn't know which one to choose and I am grateful to Dr. Hufe for helping me to make the right decision," she says. **WU**



Mary Antwi

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARY ANTWI

BLUEPAL



ADJUNCT NAMED MRS. USA EARTH

CHRISTINE RICH, an adjunct professor in the School of Technology and a Wilmington University alumna, now has another title: Mrs. USA Earth 2022.

As winner of the Mrs. USA Earth Pageant, held in Orlando in January,

she pledges to “raise awareness about environmental issues and advocate for more sustainable living.”

She had previously won Mrs. Delaware 2013 and Mrs. Delaware United States 2015.

The owner of Blue Palm LLC in Middletown, Delaware, which

offers personal care services, Rich was named one of Delaware Business Times’ “40 Under 40” outstanding young professionals in 2019.

She received her master’s in Elementary Education from WilmU and was the recipient of the University’s Trustee Award for Service in 2014.



Christine Rich is an adjunct professor in the School of Technology.

Last year, she was inducted into the Epsilon Pi Tau International Honor Society for Professions in Technology.

Rich is currently completing her doctorate in Higher Education Leadership and Innovation. She is a Green Team Organization member at WilmU, an Invisible Disabilities Ambassador, a volunteer with the Center for the Inland Bays, runs a TED Talk for women entrepreneurs,

and is a member of and volunteer with Science Cheerleaders.

In a statement after she was crowned Mrs. USA Earth, she said, "I am looking forward to going into my community and making an impact. I want to use this title to put focus on my work with oceanic conservation that I do through my nonprofit, the Spout Initiative. With this organization, I created free lesson plans for teachers

who are then able to seamlessly incorporate those ideas and practices of environmentalism into their own lesson plans. I also want to highlight all the other women that have been on this journey with me and put focus on their work and what they're doing in their local communities. It is our collective work that will truly make meaningful impact for the planet." **WU**

—Bob Yearick

Stages of Achievement

RICHY ROMERO's made some noteworthy changes over the past year.

In the First State Ballet Theatre's recent production of Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" at the Grand Opera House, he danced the role of Von Rothbart, a wicked sorcerer who changes the lovely Odette into a swan, and who can change himself into an owl when it suits his purposes.



Romero and dancer Katie Capristo practice an arabesque press lift.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHY ROMERO

About a month later, he crossed the stage at the Chase Center on the Riverfront to graduate from Wilmington University with a Bachelor of Science in Education Studies, a change of course from the Elementary Education (K–6) bachelor's he began here. It's a change that has enabled him to pursue a career in dance instead of the classroom teaching he'd once envisioned.

Dancers are, after all, known for being flexible.

"I love working with kids," says Romero. "But over the past two years I've realized that Zoom meetings and online learning were not a part of my passion for education. I had to re-evaluate my studies."

At the same time, he was considering his next move in dance, and planning to join his partner where she enrolled in graduate school. "As a dancer, you send out your résumé of things you've done, and you audition," he says. Last fall, when the Denver, Colorado-based modern ballet group Wonderbound invited him to join the company for its 2022–23 season, he leapt at the opportunity.

Romero was determined to finish his degree, though he was no longer sure about Elementary Education's semester of student teaching and the professional exams required for a state teaching license. **DR. JAMES BOYD**, a faculty advisor in WilmU's College of Education and Liberal Arts, helped point him toward the non-licensure bachelor's in Education Studies, a teaching-adjacent degree.

"Academically, it was an easy step. He had a great GPA, he had credits to spare," says Dr. Boyd. "He had talked with me, with considerable angst, about leaving the idea of teaching behind. I said, take the opportunity, follow your dream. You can come back to complete your certification and teach whenever you want."

For Romero, who began training with Wonderbound on Aug. 2, following the dream is a bigger step. As an athletic 13-year-old who joined a hip-hop dance class at a Vineland, New Jersey, studio, "dance was a new challenge for me to get better at something," he recalls. "Then, at First State Ballet Theatre, I had a great seven years there. Now it's taking me across the country. I'm not really sure where life is going to take me, but this is an interesting time."

"It is a big success story for one of our graduates," adds Dr. Boyd, "though not necessarily on the path toward teaching that we would expect. It's a story about how goals change, how unexpected things come along, and how we meet challenges by being flexible and adapting to the situation." **WU** —David Bernard



GAME ON!

GAMING IS A MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY. Career possibilities abound for gamers committed to developing creative thinking and production skills.

Wilmington University's undergraduate Game Design degree program merges interactive design, video production, graphic design, 3D modeling, and programming for the ultimate student experience. Students need

this holistic approach. As gamers, they'll need serious expertise to create video games for major platforms, consoles, mobile devices, and simulations.

WilmU's Game Design program has two new concentrations: Game Art Production and Interactive Programming. The programs offer students a chance to specialize in industry-specific disciplines. Even students

already working in the field may want to explore and grow their existing skills in these two areas and redefine their completion degree options. The unaltered, original Game Design program, established in 2010, serves those students looking to do it all within the game design and development industry. **WU** —Maria Hess

To learn more about Game Design at WilmU, visit wilmu.edu/technology.

Exercise for Everybody

In April of 2020, shortly after “coronavirus” became a household word, a Los Angeles-based technology company called Within launched a virtual reality fitness app called Supernatural. Through the lenses of a VR headset, a user could take part in a full-body cardio workout, with a coach’s guidance and encouragement and the music of their choice, at exotic locations like the Egyptian pyramids, the Galapagos Islands, or the surface of Mars, without leaving their rec room.

Many of the app’s initial reviews applauded the immersive escape it offered during the COVID-19 lockdown, but WilmU grad

LEANNE PEDANTE, head of fitness and lead coach for Supernatural, credits its popularity to more than just wanderlust.

“I’ve been really surprised and delighted by how many people who’ve been trying this out,

thought there was no place for them in their previous attempts at fitness,” says Pedante, noting the traditional gym experiences that can discourage routine exercise. For example, “with Supernatural, you can move your body without having to stand in front of a mirror.”

For Pedante, making exercise inclusive is a personal mission. She’s described herself as a former “anti-athlete” who skipped phys ed class and avoided team sports at Wilmington’s Cab Calloway School of the Arts High School. However, a step aerobics class at the YMCA helped her regain balance after treatment for depression and eating disorders.

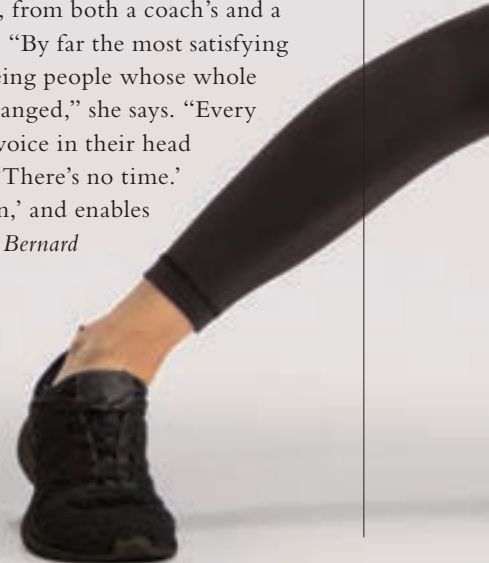
“The class felt like everybody was included, all

ages, all body sizes,” she recalls. “It was fun and joyful, not punishing. It changed the way I looked at exercise. And I wanted to teach others how to reach that feeling.”

Pedante earned her WilmU bachelor’s degree in Interactive Multimedia Design, but she pursued a personal trainer certification after a move to California. She was coaching for a treadmill-based fitness studio startup when a director with whom she was making workout videos recommended her to Supernatural’s creators for their new project.

In addition to developing workouts, shooting video, and recording voiceover tracks, Pedante oversees Supernatural’s social media community. The app, which was purchased by Meta, the parent company of Facebook, in 2021, has more than 63,000 fans on that site, many of whom offer coaching of their own. “In Supernatural, all of our members become cheerleaders for each other,” she says. “We empower our members to become a valuable source of support.”

That built-in community plays a key role in the exercise app’s effectiveness, from both a coach’s and a participant’s point of view. “By far the most satisfying part of the work I do is seeing people whose whole opinion of their self has changed,” she says. “Every one of those people had a voice in their head that said, ‘I’m too old,’ or ‘There’s no time.’ Supernatural says, ‘You can,’ and enables you to do it.” **WU** —David Bernard





Leanne Pedante



*Kristen A. King-Dennis and her children,
Taylor Dennis and Justin Dennis Jr.*

A Source of Inspiration

The late U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice **RUTH BADER GINSBURG** wasn't just an advocate for gender equality and women's rights. She believed in equality for all, especially underrepresented and underserved members of society. Perhaps that's why Bader Ginsburg was a hero to Wilmington University alumna **KRISTEN A. KING-DENNIS**. Both were proponents of reading advocacy. Both were fiercely independent yet devoted to their families. And both believed that every child deserved to succeed.

Kristen, who wanted to be a teacher all her life, started her professional career in the spring of 2005 after earning an Associate in Applied Science in Early Care and Education from Delaware Technical Community College, graduating cum laude. She became a preschool teacher at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Newark after the birth of her second child, then opened an in-home daycare while pursuing her Bachelor of Science in Early Education (K-6) from Wilmington University, which she earned in 2010. She was also certified as a Teacher of Elementary (K-6), a Teacher of Exceptional Children (K-12), and a Teacher of Reading.

The mother of two young children, Justin Jr. and Taylor, Kristen then served the Christina School District, where she taught and advocated for children with special needs.

Her parents, **WILLIAM KING SR.** and **BARBARA KING**, her sisters **LAUREN WARNER** and **BRITTANY MEAD**, and brother **BILL KING JR.** — not to mention nieces, nephews and many friends — watched in awe as Kristen juggled motherhood, college coursework and teaching. Kristen was the rock; the go-to for advice, the one who “hated to be the center of attention,” says her sister, Brittany Mead. “She was my mentor. She always did things for others but took care of herself, too. She was all about strength, and I saw her as a role model for women.”

In 2018, Kristen was diagnosed with HER2-Positive breast cancer. “But she beat it,” Mead says. When it came back, she knew it was worse, but she was intent on pursuing her master's at Wilmington University. Despite the severity of the disease, Kristen earned her Master of Education with a concentration in Special Education while working full-time, receiving multiple rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, and undergoing numerous surgical procedures.

By July of 2022, she had met the requirements for the

degree when the cancer metastasized to her liver. Her health was failing rapidly. And since her liver could not adequately remove toxins from her blood, the buildup of those toxins had led to brain damage.

Her close-knit family came to the painful realization that Kristen would likely not cross the stage at commencement the following January. So, on July 26, 2022, dressed in full academic regalia, Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON** and colleagues visited Kristen at home to confer the Master of Education degree. There, surrounded by her family, Kristen accepted her degree.

Dr. Harmon then awarded Kristen's children, Justin Jr. and Taylor, now 19 and 16 respectively, two full undergraduate scholarships to WilmU.

"Kristen couldn't cry because she couldn't produce tears," Mead says. "But she was aware of her surroundings, and I know her heart was happy."

After the conferral, Kristen was able to thank Dr. Harmon. "She also said, 'I tried,'" Dr. Harmon says. "I feel fortunate to have met Kristen and to witness her humility and strength. I know how much she believed in education, and I hope we brought her peace in some small way, knowing that we will welcome Justin Jr. and Taylor when they're ready."

Kristen died on July 30, 2022, four days after receiving her diploma. She had just turned 40.

At the family's request, WilmU employees delivered a cap and gown to be displayed at Kristen's funeral. More than 500 people attended the services. "It was a testament to how many people loved her," Mead says. "She never crumbled. She never complained. And for so long, she was

an inspiration to anyone going through cancer. She fought with every fiber of her being and maintained her dignity."

And while it's easier said than done, Mead says, "she wouldn't want us to be sad. Even when things took a turn for the worse, Kristen didn't want to be a burden."

She would be happy to know that Justin Jr. and Taylor look forward to college. "But she would also want them to understand that most people don't get this kind of opportunity, to realize how fortunate they are, and to remain humble," says Mead. "WilmU has set up our next generation for success. It's a huge game changer, and we could not be more grateful."

"We are the grateful ones," says Dr. Harmon. "It was an honor to be welcomed so warmly by Kristen's family and to meet her parents, children and siblings. We will never forget Kristen or her family."

She always said that success was the best revenge, Mead says. "Kristen believed that no matter what, no one could ever take your education away from you. That's why I know how much these scholarships meant to her."

Like her role model, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Kristen was an inspiration to others. One of Bader Ginsburg's most famous calls to action was: "Whatever you choose to do, leave tracks. That means don't do it just for yourself. You will want to leave the world a little better for your having lived."

The Supreme Court Justice and the master's-level teacher had much in common. Neither wanted special treatment, despite their hardships. And both left the world a little better. **WU** —*Maria Hess*



A tight-knit family. Front row: Bill King Jr., Kristen, Lauren Warner, Brittany Mead; Back row: Bill King Sr. and Barbara King. At right: Kristen loved boating on the Bohemia River.

A Real-World Internship

JADA BRINKLEY, a Wilmington University senior majoring in Business Analytics, is an intern at the Wilmington Alliance, a nonprofit organization focused on economic development and inclusion, promoting the collective good, and community-based interventions to halt violence in the city.

It's a win-win-win relationship. Brinkley is helping staffers at the Alliance to understand the data collection and reporting capabilities of Apricot 360 more fully. This software platform is utilized extensively by nonprofits. Brinkley's work will also help Alliance leaders make strategic recommendations on using data to impact their investments in community initiatives.

"I transferred to Wilmington University in the summer semester of 2021 to pursue my bachelor's degree in Business Analytics," says Brinkley. "My experience at the institution has been nothing but positive and I've exponentially grown in an educational and professional manner."

Brinkley says she has gained applicable knowledge quickly. "This includes expertly crafting my Excel skills — which will always be needed — diving into R (language designed for data analysts, data scientists and statisticians) and

SQL (Structured Query Language) for the first time, building models to analyze large datasets, importantly learning how to interpret data analyses in context, working with my classmates on extensive group projects, and so much more."

According to Wilmington Alliance CEO **RENATA B. KOWALCZYK**, "Jada's radiating positivity is infectious to everyone she encounters, and she exudes exceptional zeal in all that she pursues. Jada will help Wilmington Alliance capitalize their results-oriented value to master data-driven decision making and leverage collaboration opportunities."

Kowalczyk adds that Brinkley has a 4.0 GPA, "and is gaining critical aptitudes to thrive in a world of big data."

"I am wildly impressed by Wilmington Alliance's devotion and initiatives for an equitable community right in our city," Brinkley says. "I'm passionate to exceed in my new role because the work is for the good of the others. It's a true blessing to be involved."

In her free time, which there isn't much of these days, Brinkley is active in her church, loves to read, and enjoys long nature walks.

"Internship programs are an essential part of our program," says **DR. KATHY RATAJACK-KENNEDY**, dean of the College of

Business. "Students gain on-the-job opportunities that help them apply the theoretical concepts from the classroom to a real-world experience. We are proud of the relationships that we have with industry leaders and grateful for their willingness to provide our students with the opportunity for career exposure."

"Without Wilmington University, I would not be able to accomplish any of these responsibilities," says Brinkley." (Professor) **DR. SPARCO** was lovely enough to introduce me to this opportunity. And several of my professors have instilled in me such a solid groundwork to understand the relevance of data and how it can support any function or industry. They're such knowledgeable experts who are willing to teach beyond the course requirements, connect with us students, and effectively relate the learning material to real-world applications."

"I attribute the intensive, jam-packed seven-week block classes at WilmU to aid me in this kind of adaptability, because I've been taught to learn quickly and effectively in a fast-paced environment," says Brinkley. "I am so excited about the present and future, which is largely enabled by my esteemed institution." **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida and
Maria Hess



Jada Brinkley



Introducing
The Wilmington University
SCHOOL OF LAW

With its inclusive culture, the new law school will prepare students who reflect the communities they serve, promote access to the bar, and make a case for a more diverse legal field.

The Wilmington University School of Law will welcome its first classes in the fall of 2023.

“The Wilmington University School of Law represents our history of providing career-oriented programs for students from diverse backgrounds and our responsiveness to the needs of the community,” says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “It will embrace a culture of inclusiveness, welcoming qualified students who reflect the communities they will serve.”





ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Like Wilmington University, the law school will serve qualified students from all walks of life, including traditional- and non-traditional-age students, professionals transitioning from other careers, and multicultural populations. As a student-centered offering, the school will primarily employ faculty who are practicing lawyers skilled at bringing their experiences into their classrooms.

“Our success is determined by our students’ successes,” says Dr. Harmon.

“Our law school instructors will genuinely care about their students and be committed to making a difference in their lives. One of their main functions will be to prepare students for the real world that awaits them as attorneys.”

As dean, **PHILLIP J. CLOSIUS**, J.D., will utilize his extensive experience in academia and the practice of law to ensure student success. He served as dean and professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law and The University of Toledo College of Law. In addition, Closius taught at Southwestern University School

of Law (California), the University of Bridgeport School of Law (Connecticut), and the Ohio Northern University Pettit College of Law. He garnered experience in practicing law at several firms before establishing a career in academia and is Of Counsel for Silverman, Thompson, Slutkin & White, a Maryland- and Washington, D.C.-based firm. A graduate of Columbia Law School, Closius also has published extensively.

The dean believes that WilmU shares his philosophy of offering equitable and quality education to diverse students. “I have been astounded by how much President

The Wilmington University School of Law will offer highly competitive tuition rates, in addition to scholarships, tuition assistance and comprehensive student services.

are rarely commensurate with their debts.

Many grads are forced to choose alternative career trajectories. “Think about the people who want to specialize in areas of law they find meaningful but can’t because they have to choose specialties that aren’t as rewarding — just to pay off their loans,” says Closius. “That’s why one of the biggest barriers to becoming a lawyer right now is the cost of tuition.”

The Wilmington University School of Law will offer highly competitive tuition rates, in addition to scholarships, tuition assistance and comprehensive student services. The cost for full-time students will be \$24,000 per year and \$18,000 per year for part-time students — the lowest rates of any law school in the region.

“Wilmington University will break the traditional law school tuition paradigm by charging reasonable tuition,” says Closius. “Full-time students will know from the start that it will cost them, at most, a total of \$72,000 to earn a law degree.”

PASSING THE BAR

Law students nationwide face many obstacles, including low passage rates on bar exams.

“Our curriculum and testing strategies will prepare students to pass the bar everywhere, not just in Delaware,” says Closius. “Our goal is to get students to where they want to be, whether that’s Delaware, Arizona, or anywhere they choose to practice.

Of course, we want them involved in Delaware practices and businesses while they’re with us since the University has always been a vibrant contributor to the local community.” Law students will be encouraged to work with Delaware lawyers and judges and become involved in pro bono activities statewide, says Closius. “We will also provide students access to mentors and generate a speaker series featuring lawyers practicing in various specialties.”

Law students also need to complete clerkships. In Delaware, they must participate in a 21-week clerkship with a Delaware lawyer. At WilmU, students will be granted academic credit for participating in clerkships in their final year *instead* of during their first 21 weeks of practice, which is usually the case. Also, students won’t need to do their clerkships while carrying full course loads since clerkships will count for nine of their 15 required credits.

The Wilmington University School of Law will align with the University’s mission of preparing students for success in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Externships will replace traditional clinics so students can have real-world legal experiences. They can understand attorneys’ challenges and have hands-on opportunities to help solve them.

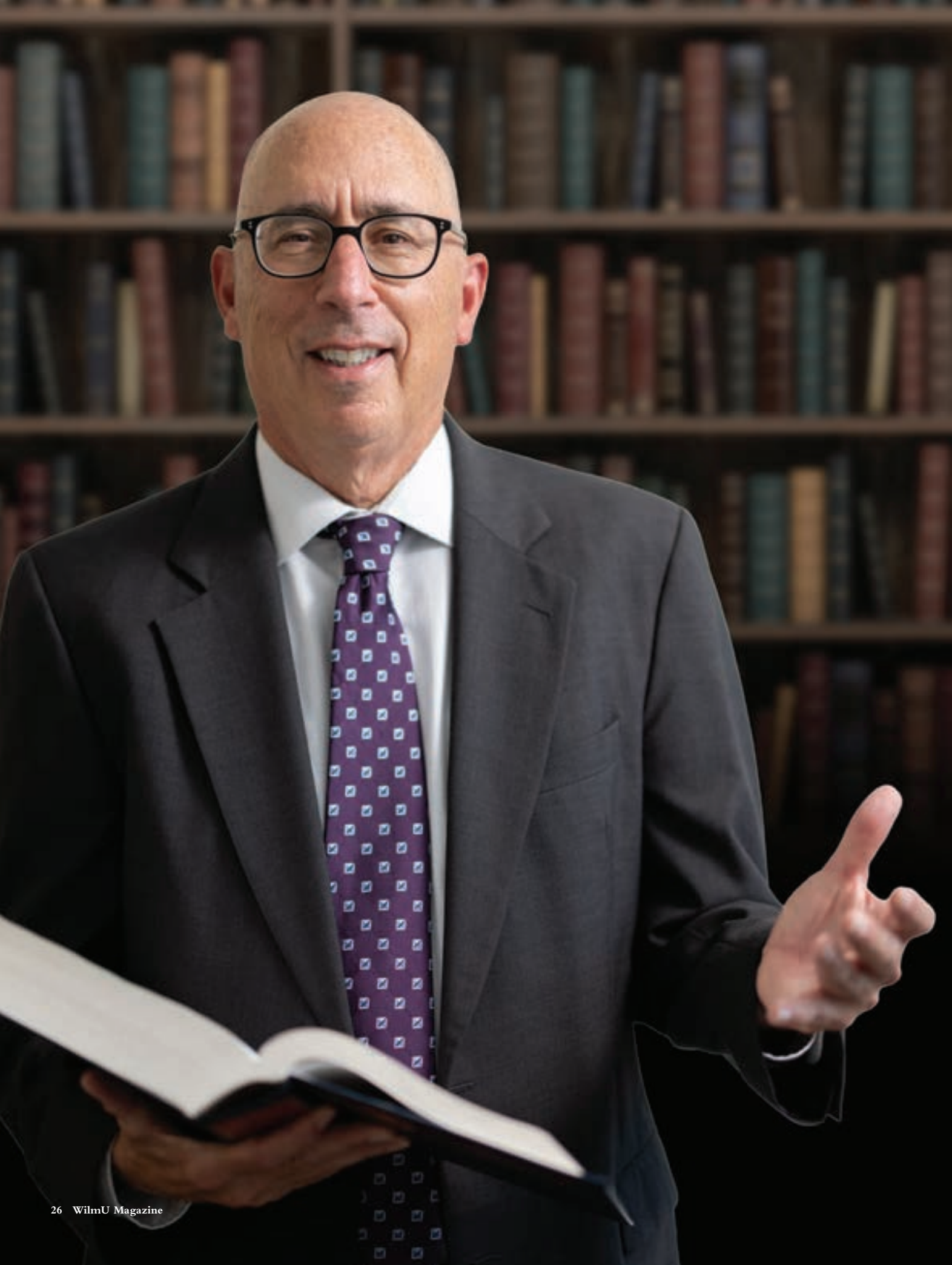
“Our students will work in actual law firms, government agencies, legal aid, or social justice entities,” says Closius. “Externships can also lead to employment. And right now, there is a promising market for law graduates regionally and nationally.”

Dean Phillip J. Closius believes that WilmU shares his philosophy of offering equitable and quality education to diverse students.

Harmon, the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff care about serving students and providing opportunity. It’s a special place, and I’m happy to be part of it.”

BURIED IN DEBT

Closius considers the University forward-thinking in its approach to legal education in terms of relevant curriculum and affordable tuition. Most of today’s law students face exorbitant tuition rates for their legal educations. Even when new lawyers land good jobs, their starting salaries



The Wilmington University School of Law will emphasize responsible citizenship and respect for a pluralistic society.

THE WILMU WAY

Since its inception 54 years ago, Wilmington University has fostered an inclusive environment and offered convenience and flexibility to traditional and non-traditional students. The law school will mirror that philosophy.

To accommodate qualified students from all walks of life and in various stages of their careers, the law school will offer three program options starting in the fall of 2023: a full-time, in-person daytime program; a part-time, in-person daytime program; and a part-time evening program.

“The part-time programs are helpful for students who’ve been out of school for a while or work full-time,” says Closius. “When you look at law school GPAs, many students do their worst in the first semester simply because they’re overwhelmed. This allows them an easier transition to law school.”

Graduates will be expected to exhibit an advanced level of applicable knowledge appropriate to their fields of study, and program competencies will include disciplined inquiry, information literacy, and ethical codes and behaviors. The law school will also establish learning outcomes such as competency and understanding of substantive and procedural law, legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context.

“Students will also learn the logic and deductive reasoning skills that encompass the phrase, ‘Think like a lawyer,’” says Closius. “They will understand the ethical responsibilities of being a practicing attorney and be given an appreciation for the history and meaning of the American legal system, the values of community involvement, social justice, and pro bono service — all essential to a successful legal career.”

Student need always informs initiatives and core values at WilmU. “In addition to affordability and convenience, our law school will ultimately center on service to students, teaching excellence and access to the legal profession,” says President Harmon. “Our faculty will treat students with dignity and respect and help them become creative problem solvers. Students will also be encouraged to embrace lifelong learning since keeping up with technology, techniques and research will be critical to their long-term success.”

The Wilmington University School of Law will emphasize responsible citizenship and respect for a pluralistic society. “We believe in the value of educational opportunity,” says Dr. Harmon. “It is a privilege to serve students of diverse backgrounds. As future ambassadors of our law school, our alumni will be encouraged to instill a sense of trust in those they serve and be advocates for civic engagement and social justice.” **WU**

“Our curriculum and testing strategies will prepare students to pass the bar everywhere, not just in Delaware,” says Closius.



A group of Wilmington University family nurse practitioner students took part in an inventive mobile integrated paramedicine clinical experience — the first of its kind in the country.



Spearheading Innovations in Nursing Education

During the Spring 2022 semester, 17 Wilmington University family nurse practitioner (NP) students took part in an innovative mobile integrated health/community paramedicine clinical experience, the first of its kind in the country. The experience, facilitated by **DR. AARON SEBACH**, dean of the College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences, paired WilmU family nurse practitioner students with the Salisbury Wicomico Integrated Firstcare Team (SWIFT) in Salisbury, Maryland. SWIFT is a partnership between TidalHealth and the Salisbury Fire Department and is staffed daily with an NP and paramedic.

SWIFT was established in 2017 with a primary goal of connecting with “high utilizers” of emergency medical services (EMS) in Salisbury. High utilizers are defined as those who call 911 five or more times in a six-month period. The team engages with these patients to address social determinants of health, or economic and social conditions that influence one’s health. Social determinants include housing and food insecurity, transportation, and health services like medication compliance and primary care.

SWIFT paramedics receive specialized training in community paramedicine, which is a relatively new discipline. Paramedics operate in expanded roles to improve care coordination and access to care by engaging a community’s underserved populations. With the SWIFT program, paramedics and NPs collaborate to provide chronic disease management and address social determinants of health to enhance the patient experience, improve the health of populations, and reduce the per capita cost of healthcare.

In August 2021, SWIFT expanded to offer a Minor Definitive Care Now (MDCN) program. Now, an NP and community paramedic respond to low priority 911 calls as determined by the Medical Priority Dispatch System, an evidence-based series of screening questions to predict the severity of a patient’s condition and determine the appropriate level of EMS response required. SWIFT responds in a dedicated EMS Chevrolet Suburban, allowing the fire department’s ambulances to remain in service and available for higher-acuity medical emergencies. On-scene, the NP and community paramedic develop individualized treatment plans that include medication administration, wound care, and splinting, among others. Follow-up appointments are arranged with primary care providers or specialists, as needed. At the conclusion of each visit, home safety and social determinants of health

*Paramedics
operate in
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underserved
populations.* 🚒

From left: Dr. Aaron Sebach, dean of the College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences and Mobile Integrated Health Nurse Practitioner with TidalHealth; MSN NP student Meagan Prime; Salisbury Fire Department Paramedic Miranda Webster; and Chris Truitt, assistant chief of Emergency Medical Services.



assessments are performed. Based on these assessments, patients are referred to appropriate community resources.

Seeing the value of SWIFT, Dr. Sebach identified an ideal opportunity to expand interprofessional education (IPE) experiences for WilmU family NP students. IPE, pairing two or more disciplines to cultivate collaborative practice and improve patient centered care, is not new. The National League for Nursing (NLN) acknowledges the benefit of IPE and, therefore, encourages nurse educators to develop meaningful IPE experiences. To date, nurse educators across the country have designed IPE experiences connecting nursing students and NP students with pharmacists, physical therapists, social workers, and occupational therapists. Dr. Sebach identified a nationwide gap in IPE experiences pairing family NP students with community paramedics. Traditional family NP experiences occur in an office setting and not in the community, a patient's residence, or in collaboration with paramedics and fire departments.

The number of students who expressed interest in the clinical experience was surprising. After posting an announcement in Canvas about the opportunity, Dr. Sebach's inbox was flooded with emails from students.

Some students drove two hours one-way for the clinical experience while others booked hotel rooms. The commitment and interest from students underscored the value of this unique clinical experience.

During the experience, WilmU family NP students responded to low-acuity 911 EMS calls. Once on the scene, they utilized their classroom training to obtain patient histories, conduct comprehensive physical examinations, develop differential diagnoses, establish evidence-based treatment plans, and collaborate with an interdisciplinary team. Examples of conditions treated included COVID-19, urinary tract infection,

sprained ankle, nausea and vomiting, hypoglycemia, otitis media (ear infection), and more. Between 911 calls, students conducted home visits with SWIFT patients to address social determinants of health to promote health equity. The experience ended with a tour of the Salisbury Fire Department headquarters.

Students enjoyed their two-day clinical experiences. "This was a great experience in an excellent program that can connect with people who have community resources," says **LISA TURNER**. "Often in the primary care setting or hospital, we have a limited time frame to get the big picture of issues the patient is experiencing. We often just have enough time to fix their immediate problems."

Another student, **EVGENIA KHODUKINA**, says, "As a future provider, it's important for me to take the patient's life outside of the office into consideration when managing their health problems."

Adds **KRISTEN ABBOTT**, "I loved seeing the extent of the community outreach and interprofessional collaboration to help patients struggling to find resources and to stay out of the hospital. Something as simple as installing a doorbell for a patient to be able to hear their meal deliveries makes a huge impact for patients."

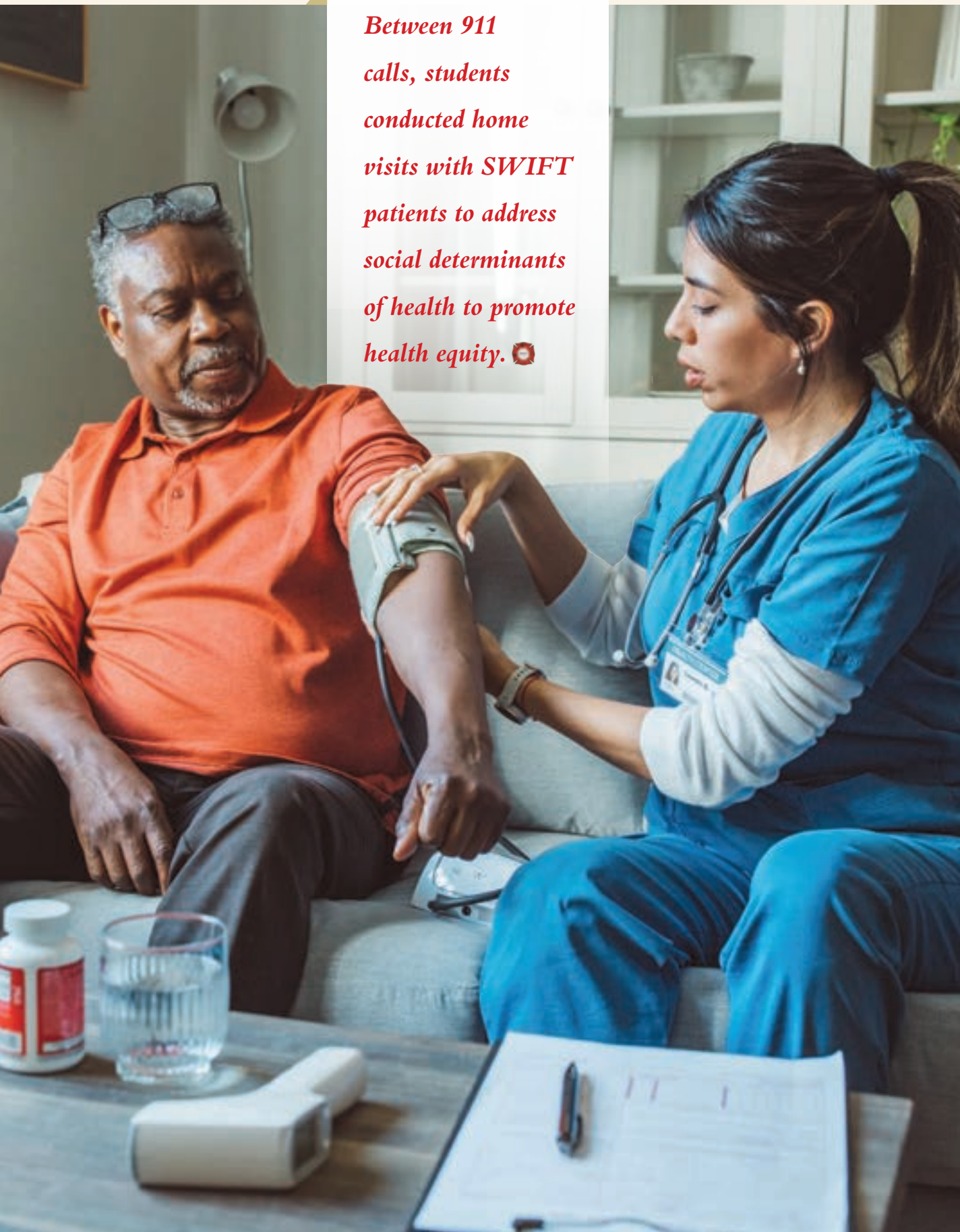
A second goal of the clinical experience was realized by students, depicting alternative roles for family NPs outside of the traditional office setting.

Due to the overwhelming success of the clinical experience, Dr. Sebach and the NP faculty plan to offer it each semester. Wilmington University remains on the forefront of innovation in nursing education, offering unique experiences for students. **WU**

To learn more about the college, visit wilmu.edu/health.



Between 911 calls, students conducted home visits with SWIFT patients to address social determinants of health to promote health equity. 🏠



A GRADUATE, A FATHER AND A SISTER



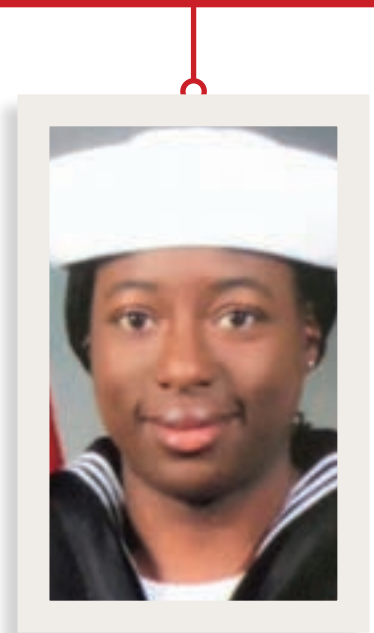
A commitment to **lifelong learning** inspires a poignant moment for a proud military family



STEVEN CHRISTIAN



LOWELL SEYMOUR CHRISTIAN



JENNIFER CHRISTIAN



Steven Christian was able to bestow his father's diploma at his Calverton National Cemetery gravesite.



When Gunnery Sgt. **STEVEN CHRISTIAN** enrolled at Wilmington University to earn a Master of Science degree in Cybersecurity with a concentration in Supervisory Controls and Data Acquisition (SCADA), he did so partly for his father and partly for himself.

His father, Petty Officer First Class **LOWELL SEYMOUR CHRISTIAN**, was his hero. “He was an avid reader, intellectually gifted, and an expert in his field,” Steven says. “He always taught me the importance of education. So, I wanted to make him proud and somehow match his level of intellect. And he loved Wilmington University.”

After 20 years of active-duty service, Lowell had retired and enrolled at WilmU to study finance for his bachelor’s degree. “My father had every intention to immediately enroll in a master’s program.”

But he never got the chance. Lowell suffered a fatal heart attack before he could enroll in his graduate program.

Steven was studying at Tuskegee University at the time. “When my



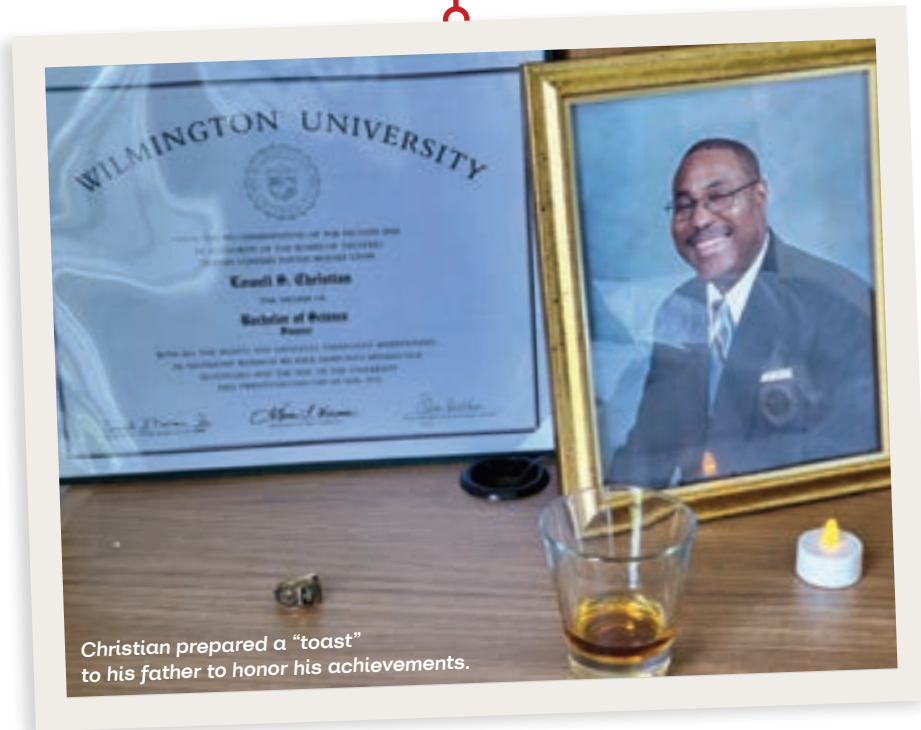
Christian’s sister, Petty Officer 3rd Class Jennifer Christian, accepted her father’s diploma, and Steven followed her to accept his.



dad died in 2005, I was 18. My first official act as an adult was to bury him.”

He withdrew from Tuskegee and joined the Marine Corps “to continue the lineage,” he says. Throughout multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, Steven chipped away at his education, enrolling in nine universities and colleges, and taking courses non-stop. “When you’re on active duty,” he says, “you’re challenged with scheduling and finding a college that understands your situation.”

Then he remembered his father’s alma mater. “I was able to study 100% online at WilmU,” says Steven, who is stationed in Texas and working in cybersecurity. “I had attended enough schools to know that I wanted to be academically challenged by an institution that was respected. In terms of the SCADA concentration, I have not seen a better program anywhere else — and I did my research. The professors genuinely cared and provided really cathartic feedback — every one of them. I never felt that anywhere but at WilmU.” (For the non-tech folks among us, SCADA is largely about critical infrastructure. “ICS and SCADA provide systems controls for dams, oil and gas systems,



Christian prepared a “toast” to his father to honor his achievements.

electrical grids and water systems,” says **JAMES FRALEY**, chair of WilmU’s Master’s Cybersecurity program. “This also includes things like the control systems for nuclear power plants, utilities, power distribution and systems.”)

Steven was set to graduate in May of 2022, but something was missing. During his time at WilmU, he started thinking about the many courses Lowell had taken and hoped it might be possible for his father to receive his degree posthumously. He wondered if both their degrees could be awarded on the same day — at the same ceremony.

Not surprisingly, a team of caring WilmU colleagues made it happen.

“It was a privilege to honor Mr. Christian, who proudly served our country,” says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “We are equally proud of his son, Gunnery Sgt. Steven Christian, who maintained his coursework while also serving in the military. Steven is a passionate ambassador of Wilmington University. We are humbled by his kind words, and, like his father, his

belief in lifelong learning.”

The night before commencement, the family had flown into Philadelphia to attend the ceremony at Wilmington’s Chase Center on the Riverfront, where Steven’s sister, Petty Officer 3rd Class **JENNIFER CHRISTIAN**, accepted her father’s diploma, and Steven followed her to accept his. The next day, they drove to Calverton National Cemetery in New York and conferred Lowell with his degree.

“I had the program with his name and my name in it, a copy of my thesis, and the pen they gave me at commencement,” Steven says. “I buried it at his gravestone.”

That was the hardest thing he’d ever done. Never mind his wartime service, including the time he and three other Marines jumped off a truck on a highway near Pohang, South Korea, to save a man trapped inside a smoking, wrecked vehicle.

“My father loved his children and service to the Navy, but his education was the greatest thing he felt he had ever done,” Steven says. “He didn’t get to live that out, so for my sister and I to finish it for him and take it to him, that was my entire life.” **WU**





Steven Christian



WilmU established the first Game Design and Development bachelor's degree in Delaware.

TOTALLY CONNECTED

Job opportunities in the esports and gaming industries abound. That's great news for WilmU students, who benefit from an exciting new partnership.

| BY DAVID BERNARD |



A new collaboration between the College of Technology and a Delaware esports startup aims to introduce high school students to the possibilities of STEM education and careers through video gaming.

Signed in April, the partnership teams WilmU's experienced instructors and career-focused degree and certificate programs with the tech-enthusiast entrepreneurs of Futures First Gaming. The Wilmington-based company organizes esports tournaments, informational events, and training workshops that prepare students from under-resourced communities for jobs in technology, including the business of games.



WilmU will host Futures First Gaming events at locations throughout the state while highlighting the opportunities its College of Technology degrees and certificates offer.



For **STEPHEN SYE**, CEO and co-founder of Futures First Gaming, the WilmU partnership is an ideal match. “One of the most crucial priorities we identified from the outset of our company’s launch was the need for educational credentials in our programming,” he says. “We accomplished this by identifying a university partner who shared our vision to provide innovative STEM education to today’s youth that also shares our commitment to providing equitable opportunities to under-represented groups and the industry’s growth in this region.”

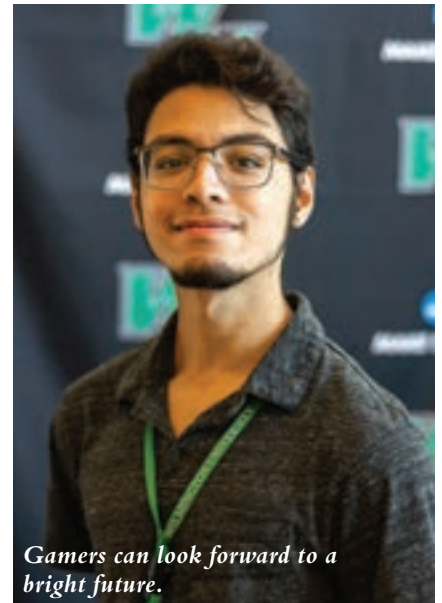
WilmU, which established the first Game Design and Development bachelor’s degree in Delaware, will host Futures First Gaming events at locations throughout the state while highlighting the opportunities its College of Technology degrees and certificates offer.

The partners’ agreement “leverages the capabilities of both to ensure that there’s academic rigor around learning that benefits students, and opportunities for students with credentials in esports and game design,” says Adjunct Professor **SCOTT SHAW**.

“There’s so much more to it beyond programming and game design,” he says, “and this agreement provides pathways to educational credit for skill building as well as opportunity to gain a wider perspective of the industry.”

Founded in 2020, Futures First Gaming aims to increase diversity in technology and entrepreneurship fields while promoting esports in Delaware. Its Workforce Development program, a job-skills training and paid internship program for 14- to 18-year-olds that covers coding, game design, business management, marketing, and event production, has received the approval of the state Department of Health and Social Services. Its Girls Who Game event, held at WilmU’s Pratt Student Center in June, featured competitive gameplay, panel discussions featuring tech industry women, and hands-on PC building and video editing workshops.

These efforts go hand-in-hand with WilmU’s mission to make higher education accessible to all students, says **LINDSAY RICE**, the University’s senior director of Academic Partnerships. “We’re committed to expanding opportunities for more high school students to connect, learn, earn credit for what they’ve learned, then explore all the opportunities that await them in the rapidly growing esports and gaming industries.” **WU**



Gamers can look forward to a bright future.

SPORTS



TENNIS:

A SEASON TO REMEMBER



Coach Troy Donato led the women's tennis team's stellar season as it became the third team in Wilmington University Athletics' NCAA era to win a regional tournament.

For the Wilmington University women's tennis team, the 2021–22 season was one of unprecedented achievement.

Made up of seven international players — two from Spain, two from England, and one each from Austria, South Africa, and the Netherlands —

the team broke several school records on its way to winning multiple championships. Not incidentally, the players also excelled in the classroom.

In conference play, the Wildcats went 9-0 for the first time in school history and won the Central Atlantic Athletic Conference (CACC)

regular season championship and the Conference Tournament Championship, which earned them an automatic bid to the NCAA Division II East Regional Championship this past spring.

Individual awards abounded. **COACH TROY DONATO** was named both the 2021 CACC Coach of the year and the USTA Delaware Region College Coach of the Year. Freshman **NEUS RAMOS MORENO** won Conference Player of the Year honors, and three players — **BEGONA GOMAR PEREZ**, **LENTINA IVANKOVIC**, and **JESS PURDY** — were named second-team All-Conference.

In May, in the East Regional #1 Bracket at Delcastle Tennis Center, the team defeated No. 5 Le Moyne, 4-0, to earn a trip to the NCAA Division II National Championships in Altamonte Springs, Florida. They thus became just the third team in Wilmington University Athletics' NCAA era to win a regional tournament, joining the 2012 and 2015 golf programs and the 2015 baseball team.

In Florida, where they were seeded 14th among “the sweet 16,” the Wildcats lost to No. 3, the University of Indianapolis, but Donato says the trip was “amazing” and his team was “super competitive.”

“So many coaches and officials and other players came up to me afterward and said they were shocked that we were just the 14th seed,” he says. “We lost, 4-0, but most of the rallies were anywhere from 10 to 15 shots — it wasn't like we were being blown off the court. The biggest takeaway from the trip is that we are not far off from the top teams in the country.”

Donato, who was hired in July

of 2019, coached the team to three victories in the fall, but then COVID terminated the spring season after just two matches. The coach made the best of the shutdown by hosting meetings on Zoom and WhatsApp with the team, who all live in a group house that's within walking distance of the main campus. He says these virtual get-togethers helped bond the team and provided impetus for the stellar season that followed.

The coach is quick to share credit for the 17-4 2021-22 overall record. He credits his "mentor," University of Delaware Director of Tennis **PABLO MONTANA**, with helping him recruit international players. And he calls his assistant coach, **BOUBACAR TOURE**, "the heart and soul of the team."

"I've never been to Europe," Donato says, "so I don't really know what it's like there, but Boubacar does. He is someone that the girls can relate to. He finds a way to bring a piece of home to them. He's a nice bridge between me and the girls."

Donato says other Wildcat coaches, such as men's soccer's **NICK PAPANICOLAS**, have been generous with their counsel. The Athletics Department also gets kudos. "They support us with anything we need to do well," he says, citing a new ball machine and a team van to take the girls to practice, home matches and nearby away contests.

But he gives most of the credit to his players. Calling them "hard-working, confident, and like a family," he believes most of them could play Division I tennis. "They choose to come here because they know they're going to be on a team that's going to be nationally ranked. And if you're among our top three, you're most likely going to have a national individual ranking."

The last remaining player from his first team is Perez, who received her MBA in May. "I knew Troy from when he was the assistant coach at Goldey-Beacom," she says, "and I was happy when he came here. He's very energetic and enthusiastic and he's always making sure everyone is OK. He knows how to handle situations and bring the team together. We're all very good friends."

Conference Player of the Year Moreno, who, like Perez, is from Spain, says that when she arrived at WilmU last fall, "everyone was so nice. Now it feels like home — like a family."

Of Donato, she says: "He tells us, 'if you have any problem, you can call me, I will do my best to help you.'"

All the bonding has helped not only on the court but also, apparently, in the classroom. The Regional champs posted a 3.69 team GPA, second overall to men's golf among Wildcat athletic teams.

Donato's parents, **PATTI** and **JIM**

DONATO, are among a dedicated group of fans who attend home games at the Delcastle Tennis Center (which is co-owned by Toure). Patti Donato, a former Area League coordinator for the Delaware District of the U.S. Tennis Association, says the men's soccer team and several USTA officials attend most matches, along with some faculty. **MALONE HARMON**, husband of University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**, is a regular, and Dr. Harmon herself attended the Regional Championship match.

Also at every match is another member of the WilmU tennis family — the coach's dog, a female German shepherd mix named Kova, after retired tennis star Anna Kournikova. (His parents' dog is named Ace, after the tennis term for an untouched serve.)

"It's just a great atmosphere," Patti Donato says. "The girls are lovely, just a nice group. They're good but modest."

Donato continues to search for quality players, making extensive use of Zoom and working with agencies in Europe and other parts of the world. He evaluates not only tennis skills, but personalities.

"I think it's important to recruit people who want to be here," he says. "Fortunately for us, because of our location between two major cities, we're able to give them a full experience. For their four years with us, we want to make sure we give them memories for a lifetime. That's really important. I tell them, when you leave here you're going to have plenty of stories to tell your parents, your grandparents, your kids."

With two new players coming in from France and Sweden, Donato is looking forward to the 2022-23 campaign. "Looks like a great year to me," he says. **WU** —*Bob Yearick*





AARON LEWIS: A LOVE FOR BASEBALL AND THE BADGE

AARON LEWIS enjoys both his jobs — a full-time career as a Wilmington Police officer, and a part-time role as head coach of Delaware Military Academy baseball. But one’s a profession, the other is a calling, and that becomes obvious when he discusses them.

A master corporal with the WPD,

Lewis reflects on his 15 years in the department with satisfaction, tempered by reality: “About two years ago, being a police officer wasn’t very fun with all that was going on in the world. But it’s slowly getting back to being appreciated now. The department is great. I love the direction it’s going with this administration.”

Sounds like a man who is happy with his career choice. But ask him about coaching, and the enthusiasm meter cranks up to 11. “I love every second of working with high school kids,” Lewis says.

And it shows. Last year, he led DMA baseball on a historic run to the state championship. Not only was

it the first state title in any sport in the school's 18-year history, it also made Lewis the first African American head coach to win a baseball championship in Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association history.

This year, the honors continued with his induction into the Delaware Baseball Hall of Fame. The championship and HOF are just the latest achievements in Lewis' life-long involvement with, and love for, baseball.

Growing up on Wilmington's West Side, he was first attracted to the game when, as a 6-year-old, he went to see an older cousin play in a Little League game. "He was the best player in the league, and everybody loved him," Lewis remembers. "I liked that, and I went home and told my mom I wanted to play baseball."

Since he was three years shy of being eligible to actually be on a roster, he became the bat boy for a team in Wilmington's Bus Zebbley League. Two years later, still too young to officially enter a game, he talked his manager into allowing him to hit, and promptly became the first bat boy in league history to smack a home run.

That flash of athleticism and power was no fluke. Lewis would go on to stardom in high school, college, and semi-pro baseball. He also excelled in basketball and, for one

year, football, at the high school level.

Lewis' career at St. Elizabeth's High School in Wilmington is the stuff of legend. He was a four-year starter in basketball and baseball, earning all-Catholic first-team honors three times in both sports, and he was a three-time first-team All-State outfielder.

In his senior year, Lewis finally persuaded his mother to let him play football. The results were spectacular: He became St. E's starting quarterback and safety, leading the team to the state Division II championship game, where they lost a heart-breaker to Middletown, 9-7. He was named first-team All-State as a safety and second-team as a quarterback.

Of his one-year gridiron sojourn, Lewis says: "I had more fun in football in that one season than in the other sports combined in my high school career."

When he graduated in 2000, his grades weren't up to NCAA standards, so he enrolled at Cecil Community College, in nearby North East, Maryland. At the time, the school's baseball coach was **BRIAN AUGUST**, current head coach and associate athletics director at WilmU.

"Aaron was one of my first recruits at Cecil. He's a first-class guy and a big-time player, a high-level baseball player," says August, who himself made it to Class AA as an infielder.

Under August, Lewis continued to dominate on the diamond. As a sophomore, he ranked second in the nation in home runs among junior college players and was named Regional Player of the Year.

After receiving his Associate Degree in Criminal Justice in 2002, Lewis rejected other opportunities in order to enroll in what was then Wilmington College. "I had offers from North Carolina State, UD, and Delaware State, but Wilmington was the best fit with my work and family life," he says.

At the time, he had a 2-year-old daughter and was working as a house painter. With day-time hours consumed by work, family and playing for the Wildcat baseball team, he took courses at night.

He again majored in Criminal Justice. "I wanted to be a cop from the time I was 16 or 17," Lewis says. "I wanted a job where I would be helping people and where no boss would be looking over my shoulder at every action, where I could make my own decisions. And at the time, the thought of carrying a gun was very intriguing to me. Now, it doesn't appeal to me at all."

Luckily, Lewis had a mentor in his pursuit of a law enforcement career: **BARRY CORRIGAN**, a sergeant with the Delaware State Police who also was a St. Elizabeth's graduate.

The two met when Lewis went to a St. E's football game in the fall of 2000. Corrigan, working security at the game, approached Lewis as he was leaving the stadium.

"St. E's is a very tight community," says Lewis, "and Barry said he had heard I wanted to be a police officer. He told me he was with the State Police, and he would be happy to talk any time."

The two became close friends, and Lewis says Corrigan, who retired from the DSP in 2014 and is now a Red Clay School District constable, has helped him "tremendously."

"He's given me great advice, especially about family life, and how to handle yourself on and off the job," says Lewis. "He's very professional in his job and a real family man."

At WilmU, Lewis again excelled on the baseball field. He was named first-team All-CACC, Region X Player of the Year, and first-team NAIA All-American. His achievements earned him induction into the WilmU Athletics Hall of Fame in 2011.

"Wilmington was geared to helping students make the best of what they can do," Lewis says, "especially with the class options. The administration was very helpful, and so were the coaches and **FRANK AIELLO**, who was the athletics director then. He also happened to be my math

teacher when I was at St. E's."

Lewis received his degree in 2004, and joined the WPD three years later. After the mandatory stint as a patrolman, he became a field training officer, then transferred to the Mobile Enforcement Team for a year before joining the Drug & Organized Crime Unit as a detective for nine years. Since 2019, he's been one of two Evidence Control officers in the Support Services Division.

Meanwhile, he has stayed active in the sport he loves. He was an eight-time All-Star in the Delaware Semi-Pro League, playing a few years on Local 74 with August before retiring in 2009, and he held assistant coaching positions, first with St. Elizabeth's and then with William Penn High School, before taking the reins of the DMA team in 2013.

"When I played I was always captain and was always trying to help other players," Lewis says, so coaching has come naturally to him. He obviously has a talent for it. Following last year's championship run, DMA notched its 100th win this year, finished with an overall 16-4 record, and made it to the quarterfinals of the state playoffs.

Lewis coached Corrigan's son at St. Elizabeth's and Corrigan was an assistant coach at DMA from 2014 to 2020. "Aaron made my son a better player," Corrigan says, "and he does

a great job with those young men at DMA."

August's son, **TYLER**, a junior, is the team's co-captain and a 2022 All-Stater. "I wanted my son to play for him," says August, "He's a great coach, hard-nosed, knows the game, teaches discipline, runs a big-time program, has the players playing summer ball, going to the weight room, trying to develop them. And he stays on them about their grades. Runs it like a college program."

Lewis, who lives in the Pike Creek area of Wilmington with his wife, **MICHELLE**, and their three children, can retire in 2027 with 20 years in the WPD. What then?

"I'm looking into maybe working in schools, maybe as athletic director or dean of students, and coaching also," he says.

He says his plan is to pursue a graduate degree in the next year or so, and that he will "absolutely" go back to WilmU for that degree.

If he does, and if his friend and former teammate Brian August is still helping the baseball program, Lewis may once again wear Wildcat green and white.

"I'd love to be one of his assistants," says Lewis.

Says August: "I would love to have him."

Stay tuned. **WU**

—Bob Yearick



ALUMNI

MARK SPRAGUE: Piloting an Airport's Future

by Bob Yearick

Wilmington University alumnus **MARK SPRAGUE** grew up in a decidedly nautical environment. His hometown of Tuckerton, New Jersey, sits on Great Bay, 6 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The borough of about 3,300 boasts a working maritime museum and village. Tuckerton Creek flows some 1.5 miles into Little Egg Harbor. Two yacht manufacturers, Viking and Ocean, are located nearby.

While young Mark loved being on the water as much as the next kid, this preponderance of maritime commerce and activity didn't tempt him to look to the ocean for a career. Instead, he cast his eyes higher — to the skies. Eventually.

When he entered Pinelands Regional High School, where he participated in theater, marching band, and soccer, he had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. When the school held career fairs, he says, "none of the jobs interested me."

But one day during his sophomore year, while he was working part-time at the Tuckerton Acme, all that changed. He was manning the cash register when he met a woman who worked for the FAA at Atlantic City International Airport (ACY). "We

didn't have scanners in the checkout lanes," Sprague says, "so we had to ring everything up by hand, and while I was doing that, she and I got to chatting."

When the woman said she worked in the airport control tower, he expressed interest, and she invited him and his father to visit her at ACY. A few days later, Sprague and his dad made the 30-mile trip, and it turned into a life-changing event for the 16-year-old.

"The airport environment was just fascinating to me," he says. "Being in the tower and hearing the planes talk to the controllers, watching all the planes take off and land, seeing them on the radar, and hearing how the air controllers were so calm. I had never been exposed to anything like that, and I was hooked."

That view from the control tower launched a 30-year career in aviation that has included several titles, including pilot, flight instructor, airport manager, and, currently, deputy director of airport operations and facilities at St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) in Florida, where he is overseeing four major construction projects.

Once he chose his career path,

Sprague wasted little time in starting the journey. A month after graduating from Pinelands Regional in June of 1990, he enrolled in the Air Traffic Control program at Community College of Beaver County, in Monaca, Pennsylvania. But he quickly found a more exciting course of study.

"CCBC required Air Traffic Control majors to get their private pilot's license," he explains, "and once I began to fly, I switched majors instantly."

He earned an associate degree as a professional pilot from CCBC in 1992. That summer, he moved to Virginia Beach, and put his brand-new pilot's license to work by flying the iconic banners familiar to beachgoers everywhere. From Virginia Beach to Nags Head, North Carolina, Sprague, at the controls of a Piper Pawnee, advertised happy hours, bands, snow crabs, and two-for-one specials.

"It felt good to finally get paid to fly," he says.

Then, looking for a school where he could continue his aviation education and get a bachelor's degree, he heard about what was then Wilmington College from a cousin who lived in New Castle. At that time, the school offered an



Mark Sprague

Aviation and Airway Management and Operations program. Sprague moved to New Castle and enrolled in the program.

“I wanted more of a smaller class size and flexibility to work,” he says. “Wilmington offered all of that, and the recruiters were among the

friendliest I’ve met. **KEVIN BARRY** was one of them, and I’m glad I can call him a friend.”

Barry, the University’s senior director of Web Communications, says Sprague was and is “very goal oriented. He pursued his goals in the most positive way. And he’s remained

the same guy since I met him — always positive.”

Sprague says his two years at Wilmington “were memorable, with lots of good times.”

His course schedule allowed him to work full time while studying for his degree. His first job was at

Philadelphia International Airport as a customer service agent for American Airlines. In his senior year, he became a flight attendant for Capitol Airlines, a charter service out of Philadelphia. Meanwhile, training at Wilmington Airport, he became certified as a flight instructor while building his total flight hours.

“I flew on the weekends and studied during the week,” he says.

After receiving his degree from Wilmington in 1994, he continued to expand his credentials, earning his airline transport pilot license, and becoming instrument-rated for multi-engine planes.

Those credentials helped him land a job as director of operations and chief pilot at Northeast Aviation at Northeast Philadelphia Airport. From there, he moved on to become a captain and flight instructor with Comair Airlines in Cincinnati. Comair ceased operations in 2012, but at that time it was the world’s largest regional airline and a subsidiary of Delta Air Lines.

In May 2001, he returned to where his dream had started, joining Spirit Airlines in Atlantic City as a pilot and first officer. While he loved the thrill of being at the controls of a 180-seat jet airliner, Spirit was a domestic airline, and he longed to fly internationally. But 9/11 changed his plans, as it did for many other people.

Perhaps no business was more transformed by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers than the airline industry. Delta, United, US Airways and Northwest all declared bankruptcy following the tragedy. As a result, thousands of pilots were furloughed. Sprague knew they would be the first to be recalled once the industry started to recover, and that would make it difficult for him to catch on with a larger, international airline.

“At the time, I was 29,” he says, “and I knew that getting hired by a bigger airline would probably take 8–10 years, and I would start at the bottom, and mandatory retirement age at that time was 60.”

A career correction seemed to be in order. So, he says, “I decided to go from the airline side to the airport side.”

In 2004, he moved to the nation’s capital and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, working at both Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. “As the airport duty officer,” he says, “I was in charge of making sure the airports were in compliance with FAA regulations.”

He also gained some experience in runway, taxiway, and ramp rehabilitation — experience that proved invaluable when he moved to Florida in 2015 to take on his current title at PIE.

Located on Tampa Bay, north of St. Petersburg, the airport marks the birthplace of commercial air transportation. On Jan. 1, 1914 — barely a decade after the Wright brothers’ flight at Kitty Hawk — the first ticket for air travel was sold by the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line to a fare-paying passenger.

At the historic airport, Sprague oversees four departments — facilities, operations, IT, and aircraft rescue firefighting. Right now, most of his attention is on the extensive construction project that was underway when he arrived in 2015. At a cost of about \$120 million, the project will enlarge and enhance airport facilities, including the terminal, taxiways, and technology, to accommodate more and larger airlines as well as more passengers.

“We just completed rehabilitation of our primary runway,” he said in April.

“Now we’re replacing and upgrading the exit lanes technology. We’re also relocating the airfield electrical vault, which includes connections to runway lighting, navigational aids, etc. We expect that to be done by summer.

“And we’re designing two new taxiways. They’ll be completed by the end of 2023.”

While supervising all of this, Sprague must also ensure that construction doesn’t interfere with normal airport activity. As he told *Blueprint Magazine*: “When you’re doing a construction project at an active airport, it’s different from a roadway. You can’t just shut down a lane and put traffic cones in.”

PIE is busy, and getting busier. In January, passenger traffic increased 48 percent from January 2021, with 143,414 people flying out of or into the airport, and March was the second biggest month in the airport’s history, with 255,309 passengers.

While Sprague enjoys the challenges of his job, he also appreciates Florida’s Gulf Coast lifestyle. “I don’t like snow,” he says, “and Florida has always been a place I wanted to live.”

He’s giving back to the community, having volunteered for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program for the past four years. “Currently,” he says, “I’m mentoring two ninth-grade students in the Take Stock in Children Program.”

His leisure time is dominated by the beach, baseball (he’s a fan of the Philadelphia Phillies, who train in Clearwater) — and reflecting his childhood spent on and near the water — boating. “I love to fish,” he says.

Right now, he doesn’t own a boat. “But,” he says, “I do have a boat lift on my property on Tampa Bay, so there *will be* a boat in the very near future.” **WU**

ALONNA BERRY: Starting a School to Serve the Community

by David Bernard



A LONNA BERRY comes from a family of educators. “At least eight, maybe 10, over the span of three generations in Sussex and Kent Counties,” she says. They were a major influence on her decision to pursue teaching as a career, and through them she learned the importance of giving.

“Service to the community was never a question,” says Berry, who earned a Master of Science in Management for Organizational Leadership from WilmU in 2015 and who is currently studying toward a Doctor of Education degree in Organizational Leadership, Learning and Innovation. “It’s just what I saw the people around me doing, often through education. From the time I was a young child, I was

volunteering, as though it were built into my muscle memory.”

Berry’s roots in education and her instinct to serve have led her to pursue an even more ambitious plan: to start a school. Scheduled to open in fall 2023, the Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence in Georgetown will be a free public charter school open to students in rural southern Delaware.

Named after Berry’s cousin, a Milton native, attorney, and civil rights and social justice activist who leads the Equal Justice Initiative, a Montgomery, Alabama-based nonprofit, the school aims to focus on “service learning” in the community as well as the classroom.

“Service learning is acts of service, but it’s also a framework for education,” says Berry. “You present students with

opportunities they can learn from, class-based projects that apply what they have learned to community experiences, such as in working with a local hospital, small businesses, or community organizations.”

In its first year, the school — to be located at the Howard T. Ennis School on the Delaware Technical Community College’s Georgetown campus — plans to hold classes for sixth and seventh graders. Adding one grade-level a year as its students advance, the school will host 12th graders by its sixth year.

The proposed school has been a six-year effort for its founder, who has entrusted its day-to-day operations to an executive director and board members since accepting the position of policy advisor and statewide trauma-informed care coordinator for Delaware **GOV. JOHN CARNEY**.

“Above everything else,” she says, “the ability to keep going, to not give up, depends on building a strong community of people who care as much as, if not more than, you do about the work.”

For Berry, who tutored prison inmates toward their GEDs while earning her bachelor’s degree at Syracuse University, who taught for Teach for America in Jacksonville, Florida, and who has held leadership roles in numerous statewide nonprofit organizations, providing an educational opportunity to an often-overlooked population exemplifies **BRYAN STEVENSON**’s longtime advice to solve social problems by stepping closer to those affected by them.

“He asked, what are we doing for the community, and for each other in our own community,” says Berry. “I hope the school, and service learning, can teach students that you can be from rural Sussex County and do something that makes a difference.” **WU**

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.

2002

ANTHONY GLENN, Ed.D. in Leadership and Innovation, of Newark, received the annual Herm Reitzes Award for Service from the Delaware Sportswriters and Broadcasters Association.



JONATHAN ARENA, B.S. in Information Resource Management, of Newark, was named a "Delaware

Achiever & Innovator Under 40" by the Delaware Business Times. Chief information officer of Vitesse Systems, Arena authored "Cyber Security Essentials for Small Businesses," and is an adjunct professor for WilmU's College of Technology. He also serves on several academic boards and as treasurer of the Technology Forum of Delaware board.

2009



JUSTIN WEEKS, M.S. in Homeland Security, of Dover, joined Morris James as an associate in the firm's Injury Law area. He

represents plaintiffs in personal injury litigation matters, including motor vehicle, truck, and motorcycle accidents, products liability, and workers' compensation.



JASON HALE, Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Innovation, of Wilmington, was named director of operations

for the Cape Henlopen School District. Hale oversees instructional technology, information technology, child nutrition, facilities and maintenance, and transportation.

2011



JOYCE LEGGETT-PARSONS, M.S.N. in Nursing Leadership, of Salisbury, Maryland, was named director

of nursing at Hudson Behavioral Health, also in Salisbury.

2013



SHALLON POULSON, D.B.A., of Newark, joined Del-One as director of compliance, after working

extensively in the financial services and compliance industries.



MATTHEW KEEN, M.Ed. in School Leadership, of Wilmington, joined Sussex Academy as director of

students and athletes.

2014



WENDY CORKRAN, M.S.N. – Family Nurse Practitioner, of Millsboro, joined Atlantic General Health System

to support southeastern Sussex County (Delaware) communities.

2015



JAMIE NICKERSON (left), B.S. in Business Management, of Georgetown, acquired Atlantic Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, a commercial business in Delmarva.

2016



RENEE BAKER, D.B.A., of Sicklerville, New Jersey, was named a Raymond James Financial 2022

Businesswoman of the Year honoree. She leads its adviser inclusion networks, which support advisers and the communities they represent, providing a forum for sharing ideas to enhance businesses.



KELLY GRIFFITH, Ed.D. in Organization Learning, Leadership and Innovation, of Wye Mills, Maryland, was

named the executive director of the Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium.

2019



ELLEN LAULETTA, D.N.P., of Hammonton, New Jersey, opened Awaken Aesthetics, a boutique

aesthetics and skincare provider in Hammonton.



MARC GARDUNO SR., M.S.M. in Nonprofit Management, of Camden, was elected Quartermaster

General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans' organization. The Army veteran previously served as both Assistant Quartermaster General and Commander of the organization.

2020



GAIL CARTER-HAMILTON, M.S.N. in Executive Leadership, of Philadelphia, was named the first chief racial

equity officer by the City of Philadelphia's Department of Public Health.

2021

TRACY IGLESIAS, M.S.N. in Nursing Leadership, of Marlton, New Jersey, joined the Paramedic Science faculty of Rowan College at Burlington County. She also received the Nurse of the Year Award at the 2021 National Conference on EMS.



UPDATES





TOP TECH AWARD for Master's Grad

Two months before receiving her master's degree from Wilmington University in May, **NITIKA TANUBODDI** added a significant achievement to her résumé: the Graduate Student Research Award from Epsilon Pi Tau (EPT) Honor Society, the leading international honor society for technology.

Tanuboddi was one of 11 regional winners in the William Everett Warner Awards Program, named after the founder of EPT. The awards were presented in March, at the International Technology & Engineering Educators Association annual conference, held in Orlando.

Tanuboddi, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Journalism in her native India, enrolled at WilmU in 2020 in the Information System Technology graduate program, with a concentration in Information Assurance. She developed the research paper that earned her the award, *AI Solutions for Today's E-Commerce Evolution*, as part of the Field Experience/Internship course taught by Adjunct Professor **DR. BONNIE WHITLOCK**.

"Professor Whitlock was so encouraging while we were choosing our projects, and guided us through the process," Tanuboddi says. In doing preliminary research to decide on her topic, Tanuboddi says she learned that artificial intelligence has had a significant role in the growing e-commerce industry, particularly during the pandemic. "That's when I came up with my topic," she says.

She says her research demonstrated that "AI has helped us in the e-commerce field not only in terms of our shopping needs, but also through technological advancements like chatbots, voice assistants, etc. That has led to more consumers enjoying the big shift to shopping online, from the comfort of our homes, rather than in stores."

Tanuboddi came to the United States in 2017 and lives in Newark with her husband. With her master's in Information Security, she hopes to become a business analyst in the banking industry or in information technology. **WU**

—Bob Yearick

Nitika Tanuboddi



Aaron Sebach

Dr. Sebach: A New Dean

DR. AARON SEBACH has held many roles throughout his clinical and academic careers, including director of WilmU’s graduate nursing programs; chair of its Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program; certified nurse practitioner, emergency department nurse, legal nurse consultant, and nurse educator; and two-time doctoral graduate. As of May, he’s added yet another role to

his CV: Dean of the College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences.

“The word ‘opportunity’ comes to mind,” says Dr. Sebach, who follows Dr. Denise Wells in the post upon her promotion to assistant vice president for Academic Affairs. “I am both humbled and excited about the opportunity to serve Wilmington University in a new role, advancing excellence and innova-

tion in health professions and natural sciences.”

He says he sees several similarities between his work as an educational administrator and as a nurse practitioner for Salisbury, Maryland-based Tidal-Health Peninsula Regional.

“Advocating for patients is one of the most important roles of nurses and nurse practitioners,” says Dr. Sebach.



Bank of America Partnership Puts Students on Career Path

A recent collaboration between Wilmington University's College of Business and Delaware Bank of America, a corporate partner, provides undergraduates with jobs, leadership training, and a firm footing on their career paths.

DR. AUDREY BLUME, chair of WilmU's Business Management Program, and **KIM PLUSCH**, assistant director of Career Services, met with Delaware Bank of America recruiting and career services leaders **DIANE OSWALD** and **NICOLE PIPER** to review BOA's full-time, 16-month Leader Development Program. WilmU senior business students were encouraged to apply to the program that began in June.

BOA selected three WilmU students: **ELIZABETH TYRE**, B.S., Business Management; **JOSLYN BENSON**, B.S., Business Management; and **AALIYAH REESE**, M.S., Organizational Leadership. The students are receiving pay equivalent to a BOA manager, plus employee benefits. Those who successfully complete the program will be offered full-time, permanent positions with Bank of America.

The initiative reflects WilmU's dedication to education and programs that enhance student work experiences, says College of Business Dean **DR. KATHY KENNEDY-RATAJACK**. "This partnership demonstrates our commitment to strong industry partnerships that provide our students with employment and career advancement opportunities." **WU**

—Eileen Dallabrida

"As a dean, I'll advocate for our students. The healthcare system is dependent upon interprofessional collaboration. As a dean, I'll collaborate with colleagues to create a seamless educational experience for our students. In my nurse practitioner role, I rely on the nursing process of assessing, diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating. As a dean, I'll use that nursing process to make data-informed decisions." **WU**

—David Bernard



Dr. Audrey Blume

PAUL PATTON



Kim Plusch

COURTESY OF KIM PLUSCH

EVENTS

WANT YOUR EVENT LISTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE?

Kindly send your information to David Bernard at david.bernard@wilmu.edu.



THIRD TUESDAYS
INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI CHAPTER MEETINGS



University Events

For registration, newly added listings or scheduling changes, visit WilmU's online calendar at **EVENTS.WILMU.EDU** or contact the University Information Center at **(877) 967-5464** or **INFOCENTER@WILMU.EDU**.

Nov. 15, 2022



Pete Lapp

TRUE CRIME LECTURE SERIES: PETE LAPP

WilmU's Criminal Justice Institute presents retired FBI Special Agent Pete Lapp, whose counterintelligence and espionage investigations led to the arrest and conviction of Cuban spy Ana Belen Montes. 5:30 to 8 p.m., at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 4727 Concord Pike, Wilmington. Free and open to the public, but registration is required. **Contact cji@wilmu.edu or visit cji.wilmu.edu for more information.**

Jan. 3–12, 2023

WINTER COAT DRIVE

WilmU's Student Life and Alumni Relations departments are collecting winter coats for the needy this January. If you'd like to donate, please drop off your new or gently used winter coats at the New Castle campus, the Wilson Graduate Center, or the Brandywine, Dover, or Georgetown sites.

For more information, contact studentlife@wilmu.edu or alumni@wilmu.edu.

Compiled by David Bernard



Alumni Events

Jan. 1, 2023

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI NOMINATIONS

Wilmington University's annual Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes a graduate who has made significant contributions to the community through business, charitable efforts and service affiliations. They lead with compassion, make a positive impact in their fields, reflect the University's excellence, and create a legacy others may strive to achieve. The call for nominations opens on January 1, 2023. **For more information, visit wilmu.edu/alumni/distinguished-alumni.aspx.**

← Third Tuesdays (Ongoing)

INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI CHAPTER MEETINGS

Join WilmU graduates worldwide at virtual meetings on the third Tuesday of each month from 6-7 p.m. **Contact donna.j.hardy@wilmu.edu for a link to the Zoom videoconference.**

Third Thursdays (Ongoing)

ALL-ALUMNI CHAPTER MEETINGS

Connect, engage, and grow with WilmU! All alumni from New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties, New Jersey, and everywhere else are invited to meet fellow graduates on the third Thursday of each month from 6-7 p.m. **Contact donna.j.hardy@wilmu.edu for information on in-person and virtual meeting plans.**

Fourth Wednesdays (Ongoing)

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

Students and alumni are invited to network and plan events of interest on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 6-7 p.m. **Contact donna.j.hardy@wilmu.edu for information on in-person and virtual meeting plans.**

Monthly

WILMU ONLINE BOOK CLUB

Students, alumni, faculty and staff are invited to participate in a virtual book club hosted monthly by the WilmU library. Visit wilmu.edu/library/bookclub.aspx to preview the latest selection, borrow the book from a local library, and register for the discussion.



Admissions Events

Ongoing

WILMU WEBINARS

Listen in on 20-to-30-minute information sessions covering financial aid, undergraduate programs, graduate studies, and other topics, then submit your questions to WilmU staff. **View a [schedule of upcoming webinars](#) and register at wilmu.edu/VisitUs.**



by Maria Hess

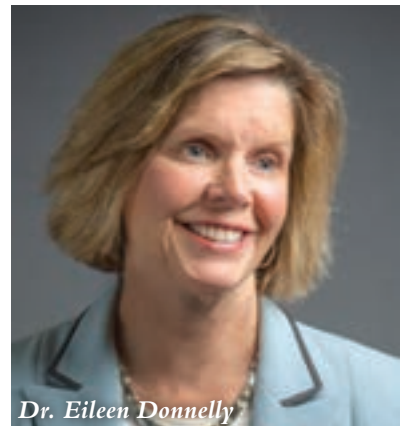
We offer these longtime colleagues best wishes in their retirements.



Dr. Peter Bailey

DR. PETER BAILEY joined the University in 1996 to lead its Aviation program after retiring as an Air Traffic Control and Air Defense Officer in the U.S. Air Force. He has since served in various capacities, including a leadership role in the College of Business, where, as an associate professor, he taught and mentored thousands of students. Dr. Bailey developed the University's five-week Fusion programs and worked collaboratively with a team to spearhead its first Online Learning program. He championed the concept of establishing an institutional presence in North Wilmington and Middletown, then negotiated and implemented classroom and office spaces that served students where they lived. Dr. Bailey worked with the State of Delaware to implement its Early College Program at Wilmington University, then started the high school Dual Enrollment program that now serves Delaware students statewide. As vice president of External and International Affairs, Dr. Bailey built awareness

of Wilmington University with community, corporate, nonprofit, and political leaders, and established new opportunities through academic partnerships. He was responsible for the Academic Partnership Office, as well as the Military Affairs and International Admissions and Affairs departments. Dr. Bailey often presented new ideas that helped the University remain competitive, and many of his contributions will inform its future.



Dr. Eileen Donnelly

DR. EILEEN DONNELLY joined the University in 2006, after spending most of her career in the business sector with Proctor & Gamble, Avon Products, and F. Schumacher & Co. She held many roles during her University tenure, including leading Information and Educational Technology and student service areas, and was founding dean of the College of Online and Experiential Learning. Dr. Donnelly started the University Information Center and taught undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Business. She also co-chaired the Retention Committee for 11 years, served on the Executive Oversight Committee since the University implemented Banner, and provided oversight for the Guided Pathways initiative. Additionally, she was instrumental in facilitating the University's partnership with Guild Education. As vice president of Enrollment Management, Dr. Donnelly led the University Partnership Center, which manages relationships with corporations and

nonprofit organizations to increase enrollment. She also led strategic enrollment planning, student information systems planning, institutional research, and student service areas of advising, student success, student outreach, and transfer credit evaluation. Dr. Donnelly was highly regarded for her proven track record of concept ideation to implementation and her collaborative approach to leadership.

CAROLE PITCHER joined Wilmington University in 1996, after a career as a bond analyst at Standard & Poor's, then Delaware Technical Community College, where she worked in its Distance Learning Department. She has held several positions at the University, including director of Distance Learning and assistant vice president of Administrative Affairs. Pitcher led in the areas of Information Technology, the University Information Center, and Corporate Partnerships. As vice president of Administrative Affairs, Pitcher led University sites in Delaware



Carole Pitcher

and New Jersey and facilitated communication among students, faculty, and numerous administrative departments at all locations. She also provided leadership to assistant vice presidents of Online and Experiential Learning, Educational Technology, and at the University’s instructional locations. Always a passionate ambassador, Pitcher possessed a rich, historical knowledge of the Wilmington University story and shared her wisdom enthusiastically and compassionately.

DR. SHEILA SHARBAUGH joined the University family in 2000, after serving as an ER nurse for more than two decades. She was also the first student to be admitted to and graduate from Wilmington University’s Master of Science in Nursing Leadership program.

Dr. Sharbaugh’s 22-year University trajectory included roles as a chair and professor (assistant, associate and full), and dean of the College of Health Professions. She also served with Dr. Angela Suchanic as co-chair of the 2015 Self-Study for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Assessment. In her role as assistant vice president for Academic Affairs, to which she was named in 2012, Dr. Sharbaugh worked with deans and chairs to help build solid curricula that assured students were prepared for success in the workplace. She



Dr. Sheila Sharbaugh

garnered great respect from colleagues for her numerous leadership strengths, collaborative approach, and personal commitment to students.

Several other longtime colleagues retired recently. They include Wilson Graduate Center Receptionist **KIM BOONE**, who served the University for 20 years; **DR. REBECCA MATTERN**



Kim Boone



Dr. Doris Lauckner

GHAPOUR, chair of Psychology/Organizational Dynamics Programs for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (16 years of service); **DR. DORIS LAUCKNER**, director of Clinical Mental Health Counseling and clinical coordinator of Practicum and Internship for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (21 years of service); and **DR. KAREN SUNDQUIST**, chair of School Counseling for the M.Ed. program in the College of Education (10 years of service).

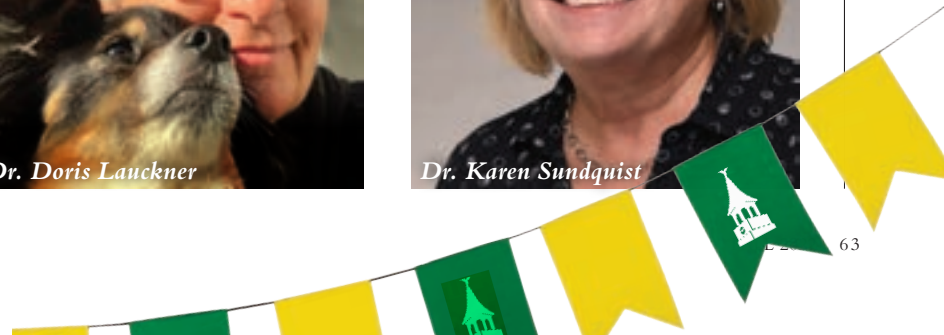
“I am deeply grateful to these colleagues for their considerable contributions to the University and dedication to students,” says President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “Saying goodbye to such respected and devoted co-workers is bittersweet, but I wish them good health and happiness in their next chapters.” **WU**



Dr. Rebecca Mattern Ghabour



Dr. Karen Sundquist



NEW AT WILMU



The Bachelor's in Organizational Leadership

It is the only online organizational leadership program in the nation to incorporate coursework on trauma-informed approaches.

A collaboration between faculty at WilmU's colleges of Business and Social and Behavioral Sciences, the new Bachelor's in Organizational Leadership program prepares students to lead in diverse environments and build proficiencies in decision-making, interpersonal relations, change management, and team facilitation. Students also explore trauma-informed approaches since trauma impacts communities, and professionals can benefit from

appropriate training. WilmU offers the only online Organizational Leadership program incorporating trauma-informed-approaches coursework.

"We thought about a managerial approach, where leaders ask how they can best serve their employees, what motivates employees, and what will make them more engaged," said Organizational Leadership Chair **DR. MARY PAT BRAUDIS**. She adds that the program prepares students

for project and staff management rigors with comprehensive business coursework but also integrates social science coursework in leadership psychology and workplace culture.

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WOMEN'S TENNIS: A SEASON TO REMEMBER

The 2021–22 season was one of unprecedented achievements. Read about these stellar athletes who excelled on the court and in the classroom on **PAGE 44**.

