

WILMU[®]



RECRUITING CHAMPIONS WORLDWIDE

*Why student-athletes
across the globe choose
WilmU*

Austria's Valentina Ivankovic

- RESOLVING THE STATEWIDE TEACHER SHORTAGE
- A CUTTING-EDGE APPROACH TO CYBERSECURITY
- WILMU'S SAFETY CADET PROGRAM



Give Today, Change Tomorrow.



When you give to the **WilmUnity Support Fund**, you help to provide educational opportunities and a promising future to students who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Learn more at wilmu.edu/WilmUnity

“As I read the stories in this spring issue,
I felt a sense of hope.” —Dr. LaVerne Harmon



Dear Friends,

As I read the stories in this spring issue, I felt a sense of hope. They reminded me that the people of the Wilmington University community — our Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni — are the heart and soul of an institution that continues to thrive despite the past few years.

One story focuses on the College of Education’s innovative initiatives designed to attract future and diverse educators amid a statewide teacher shortage. Many teachers are leaving the field after the enormous strain imposed on them by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a lack of diversity in new teachers, so K–12 students don’t have the role models they need. That’s why WilmU is passionate about creating unique opportunities for teachers of all backgrounds.

You’ll also learn why our Cybersecurity program was designated a National Center for Academic Excellence for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and National Security Agency. Our gifted College of Technology faculty and staff are continually updating the Cybersecurity curriculum to stay on the cutting edge of this evolving discipline.

We’re thrilled to report on our international student-athletes and the reasons they choose WilmU. We can attribute much of their success to a supportive Athletics Department staff, resilient coaches, and dedicated faculty.

Finally, our Safety Cadet program primarily prepares Criminal Justice majors for law enforcement, though students from other majors enthusiastically participate. Led by experienced and knowledgeable specialists who stress the importance of service and professionalism, the program guides cadets who are instrumental in supporting a safe and secure environment on campus.

As always, I’m mentioning just a few of the many stories we’re excited to share about all of our colleges and community. I hope you’ll derive inspiration from them, as I did.

Enjoy the spring. I wish you well. **wu**

Sincerely,

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

Dr. LaVerne Harmon
President



President

DR. LAVERNE HARMON

Editor-in-Chief

DR. MARIA HESS

Contributors

Staff Writer/Proofreader

BOB YEARICK

Staff Writer

DAVID BERNARD

University Photographer

SUSAN L. GREGG

University Photographer

PAUL PATTON

Writers

VERLIN ALEXANDER III

JANICE COLVIN

Photographer

RON DUBICK

*Have a question,
comment or story idea?*

Contact Dr. Maria Hess
maria.f.hess@wilmu.edu

Want an event listed?

Contact David Bernard
david.bernard@wilmu.edu

Like us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/
WilmingtonUniversity/](http://www.facebook.com/WilmingtonUniversity/)

Follow us on Twitter:

[@thewilmu](https://twitter.com/thewilmu)

**WilmU Magazine is designed and
published by:**

**Today Media Custom
Communications**

**3301 Lancaster Pike, Ste. 5C
Wilmington, DE 19805,
800-466-8721
www.todaymediacustom.com**

Chairman

ROBERT F. MARTINELLI

Project Manager

KIM FORTUNA

Art Director

RANDY CLARK

*WilmU Magazine is a publication for
WilmU students, alumni, staff, faculty,
friends, and Board of Trustees. Produced
in-house and distributed twice a year, the
magazine has a circulation of more than
65,000. Personal views expressed in
articles do not necessarily reflect the official
policies of Wilmington University.*

CONTENTS



COVER STORY

18 *Recruiting Champions Worldwide*

With skills that could take them to many colleges, these global student-athletes choose WilmU.

by Bob Yearick

26 *Filling the Teacher Pipeline*

WilmU's College of Education has created innovative solutions to resolve the statewide teacher shortage.

by Bob Yearick

32 *The Importance of Cybersecurity*

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and National Security Agency designated WilmU a National Center for Academic Excellence for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity.

by David Bernard



32

38 *Safety Cadets: At Your Service*

Since 2019, Safety Cadets have been a constant presence on all WilmU campuses. And they've made a positive impression.

by Bob Yearick

COVER PHOTO: Dan Lauletta



Jahsha Tabron

COURTESY OF DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Nick Papanicolas

4 *News*

The latest news on WilmU's faculty, staff, students and alumni; plus, Luminary.

44 *Sports*

The 2011–12 WilmU men's golf team is inducted into the CACC Hall of Fame; profiles of coaches Kim Huggins-Habbert and Nick Papanicolas. *by Bob Yearick*

50 *Alumni*

Dr. Kelly Griffith: Maryland's Superintendent of the Year, *by Janice K. Colvin*; School nurse extraordinaire Cynthia Brown — *by David Bernard*; and News & Notes — *by Verlin Jay Alexander III.*



60

56 *Updates*

Reports about WilmU faculty, students, alumni and staff; plus, New at WilmU.

60 *Events*

See what's going on at campus locations, and what the Alumni and Admissions departments are cooking up.

Compiled by David Bernard



CONNECT WITH US



Read exclusive stories on our digital edition.



Don't forget to connect with Wilmington University on Facebook.

THE NEWS

ALL ABOUT AL

Ask around. Anyone who has worked with **AL DIEMEDIO** has glowing reviews and is sad to see him retire. DiEmedio joined then-Wilmington College in 2004 as an assistant professor and program coordinator and was promoted in July of 2006 to director in the College of Education (COE). On paper, his titles are straightforward. In reality, the passionate WilmU ambassador touched the hearts of countless colleagues and mentored thousands of students throughout his distinguished career.

“A running joke in the COE is that everyone in Delaware once had Al DiEmedio as a high school principal,” says COE Dean **DR. JOHN GRAY**. “While that is not quite true, we would be far better off in this state if it were. Al epitomizes the life and work and values of a true professional educator and wonderful human being, from his experiences as an infantryman in Vietnam, to teaching in and leading several different high schools, to directing higher education programs that produce highly effective teachers for schools in this region. Al has always

served as a model for others to emulate and has done so with competence, caring and compassion. He will be sorely missed at WilmU, but his impact will persist for many years to come.”

That impact is reflected in sentiments too numerous to list in full, so we’re forced to summarize.

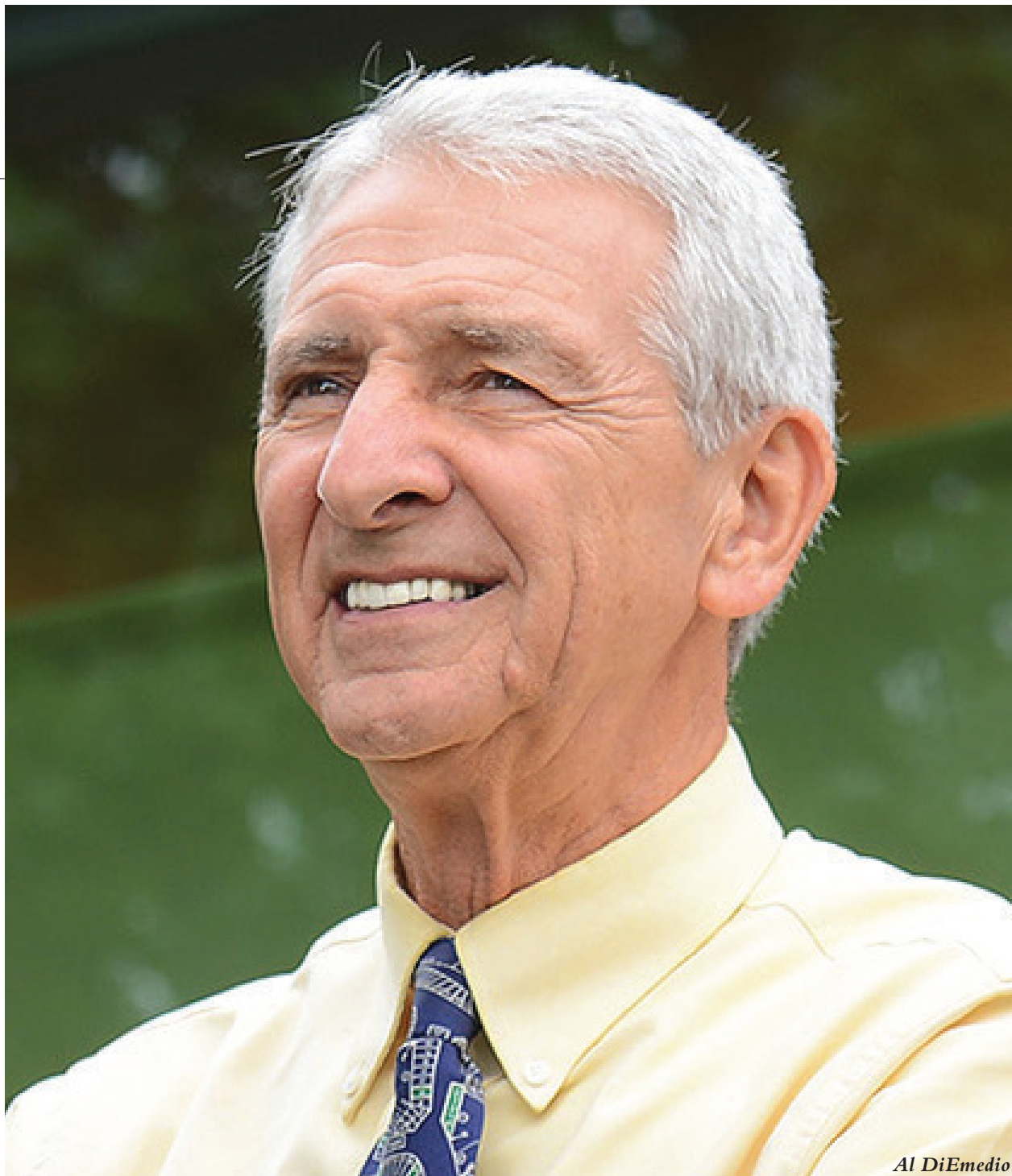
Associate Professor and Chair **DR. KAE KEISTER** calls DiEmedio the “consummate gentleman in all areas of Wilmington University and life in general.” “I first worked with Al on the state level as members and officers of the Delaware Association of School Administrators,” she says. “After my arduous cancer surgery, he was there, right at my bedside, to cheer me on and give me his support. He always had time to listen, a laugh to share, and a love of life for the vital work of educating young people.”

Adjunct Program Coordinator **DR. JOANNE DAMMINGER** calls DiEmedio “one of the most supportive and professional colleagues with whom I have had the pleasure of working,” while Adjunct **MEGAN SCHNETZER** says, “he has a presence about him that exudes joy and makes everyone around him feel safe.” Another adjunct, **ELEANOR WEINGLASS**, says, “Wilmington University’s great loss will be Al’s family’s great gain. They will have his energy, kindness, intelligence, wisdom, and good humor full-time instead of part-time.” Add to that a sentiment from Praxis Coordinator **ASHLEY WILSON**, who calls DiEmedio her “work grandfather.”

DR. KATHRYN BROWN, the COE’s Director of Advanced Programs, will miss DiEmedio’s wisdom and humor. “It will feel a bit different going in and sitting in the chair by the door in his office,” she says, “but I’m confident in the good memories it will bring to mind.”



Left: Al DiEmedio and his wife, Dianne, with their nine grandchildren: Nikko, Maya, Reagan, Emmi, Chase, Rowan, Tyler, Max and Cameron



Al DiEmedio

Says **DR. MICHELE BREWER**, chair of the Office of Technology, Assessment, and Compliance, “Al’s approach in guiding students, colleagues, and those in need of a gentle ear is irreplaceable. I will be forever grateful for all the lessons and laughs we shared.”

Undergraduate Student Advocate **DR. JAMES BOYD** calls DiEmedio his dear friend of 20 years. “My fondest memory of Al was when we would find ourselves emailing one another at midnight about certain students we were trying to help, until one of us would say, ‘Hey, it’s bedtime!’ I will

miss my friend. And, even more important, our students will miss their friend.”

By all accounts, DiEmedio’s influence will be long-lasting, not that saying goodbye is easy. But to paraphrase Winnie the Pooh, how lucky we are to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.

Friends and colleagues too numerous to list send DiEmedio wishes of good health and happiness in his next chapter. As Dr. Brown says, “Godspeed, Al.” **WU**

—*Maria Hess*

TOP TEACHER



Jahsha Tabron

COURTESY OF DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Alumna **JAHSHA TABRON** was named Delaware’s 2022 Teacher of the Year.

“The most important thing any teacher can do is be a mirror to students,” says Tabron, a special education English teacher at Brandywine High School in Wilmington. “When you lead a classroom, you talk about assigned readings and healthy habits. But if you also mirror good values, in class and as part of the community, you’re doing much more than just lecturing to your students.”

Tabron has been sharing this message statewide, with educators as well as lawmakers, business leaders, and nonprofit organizations. It’s her goal to highlight the potential that teachers, working together, can have in strengthening a community.

“Students need community connections,” she says. “During the pandemic this has been difficult, but students need to see the value of education. We can show them this, through the connections we foster with them and their families.”

Tabron, who earned a Master of Education in School Leadership and Instruction from then-Wilmington College in 2003, is a teacher who strives for inclusion in her classroom. For special education students in grades 9 through 12, inclusion is an urgent need as they face the future. In addition to helping them to relate stories they’re reading to lives they’re living, Tabron is also supporting disabled students in making the transition to post-secondary education or employment and helping their families locate social or behavioral assistance.

In a letter nominating Tabron for the Teacher of the Year honor, retired Brandywine High School teacher **M. DWAYNE CALDWELL** described how she becomes an active participant in students’ learning: “1) be truthful about what is actually happening; 2) determine the steps that need to be taken to change; and 3) hold yourself accountable for taking the steps. This approach has guided all of her work — as a building leader, as a mentor to new teachers, with special needs students, and with me.”

DASHEENA ROBINSON, a Brandywine High School alumna who counts Tabron as an inspiration in becoming a teacher, saw Tabron’s



COURTESY OF BRANDYWINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

care for her classroom firsthand. “Society could discourage students due to socioeconomic status, race, or intellectual level, but it only took one person to truly believe and invest in order to counter the negativity,” she wrote in a nominating letter. “When students were tired and frustrated with life’s circumstances, Mrs. Tabron served as a voice of



Alumna Jahsha Tabron strives for inclusion in her classroom.

compassion and hope for a better tomorrow.”

Tabron says a “voice of compassion” is essential for students who are often overlooked. “It’s important for educators to teach students the power of self-advocacy, to help them find their own voices,” she says. “I will always speak for you until you can speak for yourself.”

She believes the key to speaking for the voiceless is listening. Ask only questions about what a person is telling you, without steering the conversation back to yourself.

“There are so many places to go with that,” she says. “I talked with a friend; you could say I’ve known her for many years. But that project introduced me to so many things

I’d not known about her family, her fears, her dreams. It changed the way I listened to everyone. Because everyone wants to be listened to.”

Eleven of the past 14 Teachers of the Year chosen by the Delaware Department of Education earned their bachelor’s or master’s degrees at Wilmington University. [WU](#)

—David Bernard



Rick Goodale

Highlighting Positive Police Stories

As Wilmington University alumnus **RICK GOODALE** stepped into his new job as public information officer (PIO) of the Gastonia, North Carolina, Police Department last summer, he was well aware of the challenges facing him.

Goodale had just retired from the Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department, where he served 27 years, the last five as the department's PIO. The most populous county in Maryland, Montgomery is adjacent to Washington D.C., so Goodale gained a wealth of street experience and expertise in dealing with the public.

Located 10 miles from Charlotte, Gastonia is a bustling city of about 80,000 and it's part of a large media market. The PIO is a civilian position, and Goodale is responsible for sharing information with the public about other city agencies.

Perhaps his major challenge is combating what he calls "the anti-police narrative" that has occurred across the country.

"So often, the only news you hear about police are negative stories," he says. "Very rarely does the great work that men and women in law enforcement do on a daily basis make the news. My job is to highlight those stories about the Gastonia Police Department.

"We know there will be incidents that will not be beneficial to police officers, and what happens to one agency — think Minneapolis PD and George Floyd — affects police officers all across the country."

He won't rely totally on conventional media outlets, but will use the department's social media to tell its stories.

"We will put out all stories — good and bad — and hope the good stories act like a bank deposit. If you put enough deposits in the bank,

knowing that at some point you will have to make a withdrawal when a negative story happens, we will have made enough deposits so that we don't go in the red — losing the community's trust."

Goodale always had his eye on a career in law enforcement. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1988 and served in the Security Police field. After mustering out in 1992, he lived with his parents in Seaford, Delaware, and enrolled in Criminal Justice classes at the Georgetown Campus of what was then Wilmington College.

After a short stint as a seasonal police officer in Ocean City, Maryland, he joined the Montgomery County Police in 1994. He continued to take online courses intermittently at WilmU, finally receiving his degree in May last year. Two months later, he moved to North Carolina.

"Online classes were a godsend for me because I probably would have never had the time to attend in-person classes with my work schedule of nights and weekends," he says. "I thoroughly enjoyed my WilmU experience."

He views the Gastonia area as an ideal place to eventually retire. "I've been coming to this area on vacations since 2015. I love it down here, especially the weather so far," he says. "I'm an avid golfer and I love all outdoor activities here."

He plans to pursue a master's in Communications or a digital-related field.

"I love the job of a PIO," he says. "You're in the middle of all the inner workings of your agency and you get to be the public face and voice of your agency. I run the department's social media pages, I interact with the community and local media on a daily basis, and I also create video content for the department and write press releases.

"I would highly recommend to anyone who has an interest in public relations/media work to consider a career as a public safety PIO." WU

—Bob Yearick

Dr. Danley Co-Authors Article in Pediatric Journal



Dr. Amy Danley

SUSAN L. GREGG

DR. **AMY DANLEY**, associate professor in the College of Business, was among co-authors of an article in the October issue of *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

She joined four physicians from Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and **DR. KANDI WIENS**, co-director of the Penn Master’s in Medical Education Program, in publishing “Burnout and Perceptions of Stigma and Help-Seeking Behavior Among Pediatric Fellows.”

Dr. Danley, who has an extensive background in statistical analysis and research studies, was brought into the project by Dr. Wiens, with whom she had worked previously. “They had already put the study together and needed a stats person,” says Dr. Danley, “so Kandi called me and asked if I would join the study.”

The study attempted to shed light on burnout among what Dr. Danley calls “a very under-researched population” — pediatric fellows. It was conducted via a 48-item inventory distributed to all 288 fellows in CHOP’s pediatric center. Responses came back from 152 and indicated that more than half met the threshold for burnout. They also experience significant workplace-based stigma around seeking help for psychological distress.

The article noted, “Fellows with burnout are more likely than their peers to perceive significant stigma around help-seeking for their distress, making them a particularly at-risk learner population.”

Dr. Danley was a WilmU adjunct for eight years before becoming a full-time faculty member in 2009. Before that, she spent more than 20 years with DuPont and AstraZeneca in the areas of marketing and data analytics.

She has been partnering on research studies for about eight years and overseeing dissertation research for more than a decade. She currently serves as Dissertation Committee chair and committee member for many DBA students. **WU**

—Bob Yearick





Justin Brooks

WilmU Student Scores Sigma Beta Delta Scholarship

JUSTIN BROOKS, an undergraduate baseball student-athlete in Wilmington University's Business Analytics program and a member of Sigma Beta Delta (SBD), was selected by SBD to receive a scholarship for the 2021/2022 academic year. This is the first time a WilmU student was chosen for the honor.

The scholarship's objective is to recognize and honor the academic achievement of undergraduate and graduate members of SBD, a scholastic honor society that focuses on academic achievement among students

in the fields of business, management and administration. SBD has more than 100,000 lifetime members.

This is a competitive scholarship, and nominations are open to all chapter members of SBD. College of Business Dean **DR. KATHY KENNEDY-RATAJACK** says that winning the scholarship is notable. The organization has more than 400 chapters and grants a maximum of 33 scholarships each year, ranging in value from \$1,000-\$1,500. Each chapter can nominate only one student. **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida



Abbey DeJuliis is a graduate of WilmU's Year-Long Residency program.



WilmU’s Year-Long Residency: *Making Students Into Teachers*

It’s been about a year since **ABBIE DEJULIIS** earned her Bachelor of Science in Middle Level Education (Grades 6–8), and she’s currently winding up her first-year teaching seventh grade English at Stanton Middle School in Wilmington. But it’s not the first year she’s spent in front of a classroom, and according to DeJuliis — a graduate of WilmU’s Year-Long Residency student teaching program — that’s made all the difference.

“Many of the teachers at Stanton have told me that they would have never known it was my first year,” she says. “The residency was incredibly challenging in many ways, but I honestly could not have been more prepared.”

The Year-Long Residency program, pioneered at WilmU’s College of Education, has revolutionized teacher preparation. It offers bachelor’s and master’s degree students the option of co-teaching alongside a mentor teacher in select partner schools throughout Delaware for an entire school year as an alternative to the traditional 80-day student-teaching model.

Managing the responsibilities of a full-time teaching job while also completing the college coursework embedded into the residency isn’t easy. More than a few year-long student-teachers have discovered just how physically exhausting the job is. Plus, over the past two years, COVID-19 has required every teacher to adopt a whole new set of skills.

“That difficulty did breed success overall,” says DeJuliis. She’d learned the benefit of practical, hands-on experience in her previous career as a hairstylist, and the year she taught eighth-grade social studies at A.I. DuPont Middle School in Wilmington with mentor teacher **BRIAN ELLIOTT** enabled unparalleled opportunities.

“There are things, like special education practices and progress reporting, that are not learned as a student in a classroom,” she says. “You have to be doing them as a teacher in a classroom in order to learn them. You can’t learn those things from a book.”

The Year-Long Residency helped her gain those advantages, and more. “I have my systems, I have my teaching style, and I have my discipline style already established,” says DeJuliis. “I understand the population and the expectations of me as a teacher in Red Clay Consolidated School District. I could not be more thankful for the experience.”

WilmU Assistant Professor **TYLER WELLS**, who oversees the Year-Long Residency, sees incomparable value in the program. “The fact that Year-Long Residents are experiencing success from day one of their careers as teachers shows that the College of Education’s teacher preparation programs are preparing students well for the realities of teaching in today’s public schools,” he says. “But the key to success is the students. They deserve all the accolades.” **WU**

—David Bernard

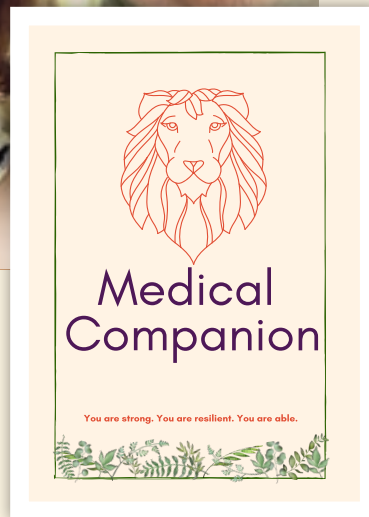
An essay by WilmU Adjunct Professor **Dr. Rachael S. Rudinoff**

A Medical Companion



A selfie of Dr. Rachael Rudinoff and her husband, Mark, in Costa Rica

COURTESY OF RACHAEL RUDINOFF



In January of 2020, I set out with my husband, Mark, on a five-day vacation to Costa Rica to visit my son, Ezra, who was studying abroad. Five days turned to five weeks after my husband unexpectedly ended up in the ICU. He spent two weeks in a medically-induced coma and two more weeks of rehabilitation in the hospital. I found myself in a country where I did not speak the language and in a hospital where, although they spoke English, they were also speaking a foreign medical language.

One friend gave me some valuable advice. She shared, “Write it down. Write it all down.” I grabbed the journal I brought with me to record my reflections of our vacation and wrote down every test, prescribed medication, and diagnosis given. In addition, I found I was struggling

to remember to care for myself, so I tracked my food intake, created reminders to exercise and a daily to-do list. When you’re away from your home for five weeks, you need to take care of all the current insurance and hotel arrangements, and also remember to have someone clean out your fridge at home, care for your dog, and manage the bills. Additionally, I spent a few minutes each night writing personal reflections to help keep my mental wellbeing in check.

After returning home, I realized how vital that journal was. Every doctor back home had many questions. They wanted to know specific procedure dates, what was prescribed, and what outcomes occurred. It made me realize that many people go through, or caregivers go through, unexpected medical journeys, such as a physical injury, a cancer diagnosis, long COVID or stroke rehabilitation.

Whatever the journey, there is a balance of keeping track of the day-to-day information and supporting your emotions throughout the journey. This is why I created the “Medical Companion: A

5 Week Tracker of Medical & Self-Reflection Journal,” where someone can track medical information and self-reflection. It can be carried easily from one appointment to the next to be recorded and shared. I hope that through my experience, I can help others by giving them a place to write it all down. **WU**

“Medical Companion: A 5 Week Tracker of Medical & Self-Reflection Journal” is available on eBay and Etsy.



Micah Edwards

Ford Celebrates a WilmU Alumnus

The Ford Motor Company recently announced winners of its “Freedom Unsung Teacher Heroes of COVID-19” Awards, honoring 25 U.S. educators who positively impacted students throughout the pandemic. According to a company press release, “Ford Freedom Unsung is an annual award series that celebrates ordinary individuals doing extraordinary acts in the African American community.”

Among the winners announced during the Global Automotive Summit in Detroit was Wilmington University alumnus **MICAH EDWARDS**, a middle- and upper-school Mathematics instructor and academic advisor at Delaware’s Sanford School. He is also a faculty advisor for the school’s Black Student Union. Edwards earned an M.Ed. in Special Education from WilmU, where he is also an assistant coach for the men’s basketball team. **WU**



From left: Adrienne Johnson, James McCloskey, and Melissa Jones: the library dream team



Read All About It!

The Wilmington University Library received the 2021 Award for Excellence in eLearning: Outstanding eLearning Support for Faculty or Students from the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges. The organization represents nearly 200 institutions that offer distance education courses to students in the United States, Canada, and worldwide.

Assistant Vice President and College of Online and Experiential Learning Dean **DR. SALLIE REISSMAN** submitted the nomination to ITC, which asked its members to designate an organizational unit that had built a solid reputation for outstanding services for online students. According to ITC, the students could be on- or off-campus and take fully online or blended learning courses. ITC board and independent members comprised the judging panel.

*WilmU's
library
team
recognized for
excellence*



The award acknowledges the collaborative work of Library Director **DR. JAMES MCCLOSKEY**, Instructional Services and Academic Collaborations Manager **MELISSA JONES**, and Assistant Library Director **ADRIENNE JOHNSON**.

"The library staff is focused on equipping WilmU students with the skills and competencies required to handle information," says McCloskey. "This award highlights the dynamic, innovative, and customized approach WilmU librarians bring to their information literacy instruction. This collaborative effort, under the leadership of Adrienne Johnson and Melissa Jones, inextricably links the library to the research and teaching process in a systematic way."

Johnson is equally humble. "We are honored by this recognition for the work of our entire library staff, and especially our instruction librarians," she says. "This initiative is a prime example of how teaching faculty and librarians can work collaboratively to make an impact on student success. Our students have benefited by becoming skilled researchers, writers, and information-literate professionals."

The team acknowledged College of Business faculty for their insight and expertise, which was critical in this partnership. "The COB faculty worked closely with librarians while developing the Academic Research Writing (MGT6502) course," says Jones. "There was an identified need to include information literacy instruction throughout the course to ensure student success with research and writing assignments." **WU**

—Maria Hess

Visit wilmu.edu/library to learn more.



RECRUITING CHAMPIONS WORLDWIDE

They come from Austria, England, Spain, the Czech Republic, Jamaica, South Africa, Colombia, and other countries throughout the world. With skills that could take them to many colleges, these student-athletes choose Wilmington University.

BY BOB YEARICK
PHOTOS BY PAUL PATTON

*Soccer Wildcat Manuela Restrepo Ramirez
hails from Medellin, Colombia.*

WilmU may not offer the typical campus environment, with dorms, sororities, and fraternities, but it has excellent academics, supportive coaches and faculty, and teams that have achieved success in Division II athletics. And over the last couple of decades, that winning ethos has earned a worldwide reputation.

International student-athletes are particularly prominent on the men's and women's soccer teams, the women's tennis team, and the men's golf team. Those coaches have found that athletes from foreign countries make unique and valuable contributions to their squads as they compete in the demanding Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference (CACC).



Head Coach Nick Papanicolas and Konstantinos Parisis

MEN'S SOCCER

NICK PAPANICOLAS started coaching at WilmU in 2003 and recruited his first player from a foreign country two years later. A first generation Greek-American, Papanicolas says he “always wanted a team full of student-athletes from different parts of the globe.”

Mission accomplished. His current team has athletes from 15 countries, and his coaching staff hails from six countries.

Papanicolas says international student-athletes had an almost immediate impact, and not just on

the soccer pitch. “When I started bringing in more international athletes, my team GPA went way up,” he says. “All our Academic All-Americans are international student-athletes. They have made a positive impression on the campus community and staff, they’ve been a pleasure to have on my team, and the diversity is essential to our success.”

“Coach Nick” says WilmU’s size is not a deterrent to recruiting. “The University may be ‘small’ in some ways, but we have many things that other universities don’t. For example, low tuition and low cost of living in Delaware. Also, in the

last 10 years my program has been nationally ranked, which definitely attracts athletes.”

Before COVID, Papanicolas sometimes traveled to countries like Colombia, Jamaica, Canada and England, and complemented his in-person recruiting with YouTube videos. “COVID brought on the use of Zoom in order to communicate with the athletes, which was a huge help,” he says.

Athlete placement agencies, particularly active in Europe, are another recruiting tool, and they are well aware of the University’s prowess in soccer. When **ELLIS MCSHARRY**, a



junior from England, was contacted by Papanicolas, he had never heard of WilmU. “But my agency explained to me the success and high standards that it has been competing at for many seasons,” says McSharry.

The Business Management major had multiple offers from U.S. schools and originally committed to a college in Florida. “But once I heard from Coach Nick and learned about Wilmington, I couldn’t turn down such a good opportunity,” he says.

McSharry, who also competed for the University’s track and field team, arrived in Wilmington in 2018. He acknowledges that there was a period

of adjustment, both socially and academically.

“I think without dorms on campus it’s a lot harder for international student athletes coming into the country, as they have to move into a house,” he says, adding that Coach Nick prepares international athletes in advance for everything they might need to move to a new country.

The classroom also initially was a challenge. “The way they grade and use APA in America was very difficult,” McSharry says. “But WilmU helped me endlessly with this, and every question I had was answered very quickly.”

Goalkeeper **KONSTANTINOS PARISIS**, from Greece, did extensive research on the University after Papanicolas contacted him. “The school’s program had one of the best records in 2019, and was located in a very nice area close to major cities, and that immediately grabbed my interest,” Parisis says.

He got plenty of playing time in the fall of 2021 as a redshirt freshman, and he’s also doing well in his Sports Management major.

“The fact that Wilmington offers such small classes is one of my favorite things,”





Jess Purdy, Head Coach Troy Donato, and Marley Trifunovic

says Konstantinos. “In the four classes I’m taking I’m averaging 14 classmates, something that gives us the opportunity to interact and get to know each other. Same thing applies for our professor; we’re able to address him directly whenever we need to discuss something.”

WOMEN’S TENNIS

TROY DONATO, the 2021 CACC Women’s Tennis Coach of the Year, has athletes from Spain, the United Kingdom, Austria, The Netherlands, and South Africa on his team. He evaluated all of them through video.

“Many people think I travel all over the world in search of the athletes,” he says, “but in fact I have never been outside the United States in my entire life.”

He says WilmU has been successful in attracting international student-athletes for many reasons. “One of the big ones is our safety and commitment to the students. Another would be how successful the various sports programs are. And lastly, we’re in an ideal location. Being halfway between two major cities is a huge draw for people that want to come to the States.”

He’s another coach who eschews the “small” label when it comes to the University. “I always call our school a family that the students join,” he says. “I’ve even had other coaches come up to me and say that the way my team supports each other is very rare. And I still hear from past athletes. Even after they graduate, they know they’re welcome back. Once a Wildcat always a Wildcat!”

VALENTINA IVANKOVIC definitely sensed that family vibe when she

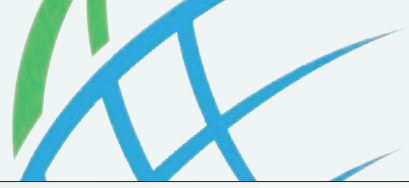
joined the tennis team. A junior majoring in Business Management, Ivankovic is Croatian but was born and raised in Austria. She says she immediately felt welcome when she arrived at WilmU in January of 2020.

“Everyone is so supportive, and whenever there is an issue you get immediate help,” she says. “Also, the professors are super kind and understanding. The classes are very interesting. I love it.”

She says Donato “always tries his best to make us feel comfortable. I can get a little bit homesick every now and then, but he is such a good support. And he always tries to bring the best out of us on the court.”

Donato has obviously succeeded in that effort, as demonstrated by the team’s 2021 season, when the Wildcats won the conference championship.

A key member of the team is **JESSICA PURDY**, from England,



Everyone is so supportive, and whenever there is an issue you get immediate help. Also, the professors are super kind and understanding. The classes are very interesting. I love it.” —Valentina Ivankovic

who transferred from Emporia State University in Kansas to pursue a degree in Liberal Studies.

She is excelling on the court, where she plays number 1 or 2 singles and number 2 doubles, and in the classroom, where she’s close to a 4.0 GPA.

“I’ve been happy at WilmU so far because everyone is welcoming and friendly,” says Purdy. “The classes, either online or face-to-face, are manageable, and the professors have been helpful.”

A senior academically but a sophomore athletically, she says she may use her two remaining years of eligibility to pursue an MBA. “If not,” she says, “I’ll return to England and either complete a master’s degree there or coach.”

Another tennis player, **LARIZE NEL**, is proud of the team’s academic excellence. “We had the best GPA among all the sports,” says the Accounting major, who hails from South Africa.

She says her WilmU experience “has been nothing but the best. Everyone on the tennis team gets along well, and we’re a big family away from our homes. The teachers are helpful, and classmates are always prepared to help when it’s needed.”

MEN’S GOLF

The men’s golf team has a long-standing stellar reputation that comes from taking on

— and beating — the top schools in Division II. That reputation has aided Coach **MARK HALL** in attracting athletes from around the world. Five of the eight men on the 2021 team came from foreign lands.

“Our schedule definitely helps,” says Hall. “Almost everybody on it is in the top 30 in Division II.”

Academics also is a factor, he says. “Athletes can choose from a lot of academic degrees, and international student-athletes seem to like that. Several of them are working on their master’s.”

The whole package brought **JAN LEKES** here from the Czech Republic.

A sophomore majoring in Biology, Lekes says he had many scholarship offers. “But after reviewing all of



Fenna Swaan, Valentina Ivankovic, Begona Gomar, Jess Purdy, Larize Nel, Marley Trifunovic, and Neus Ramos Moreno



As of right now, I have no idea what I want to do when I graduate, either staying in America or going back to Spain. The only thing I know for sure is that I am living this experience, which for me is not only an opportunity, but also a privilege . . .” —Jimena García Risoto

them and comparing them from a golf, academic, and price point of view, Wilmington was a clear choice,” he says. “Over the years, it has stayed close to the top of the golf rankings, and the Biology program it offers is also very good.”

Lekes says Hall has shepherded him through the transition that confronts every foreign student. When he arrived here last August, Lekes says, “Coach helped me handle all the important things I needed to do to become a student and golf player at WilmU. He goes out of his way to ensure that our stay here is pleasant, and we are doing good.”

Lekes hopes to earn a Ph.D. in Microbiology, find a job in the U.S. initially, then return to his home country and start a microbiology lab.

In the meantime, he says, “I’m living the dream of many Czech kids and I’m enjoying it to the fullest. The teachers are always there to help, and the classes are interesting and fun to attend. I’ve made a lot of friends, and everyone has been really nice and supportive.”

Lekes lives with **PABLO QUINTERO**, from Colombia, and other international teammates in a Newark apartment complex. Hall recruited Quintero after seeing him in action on videotape.

A freshman Business Management major, Quintero was unfamiliar with WilmU until Hall contacted him, but he’s happy he made the 2,430-mile journey from his hometown of Bogota.

“I really like WilmU,” he says,

“and I’ve done really good in class.”

On the golf course, he admits, “I haven’t played very good — but we still won conferences!”

WOMEN’S SOCCER

During the COVID crisis, Head Coach **JEFF ZOYAC** says he “put a lot more time into recruiting overseas. I did it all by video — highlight tape and game footage.”

His success is reflected in the 2021 roster, which included seven international athletes.

Zoyac has found that cost is a major factor in attracting them. “Tuition here is very reasonable, and that helps a lot,” he says.

Now in his eighth year as head coach of the women’s team, Zoyac says the athletes reflect the rest of the world’s passion for soccer, or as it’s known in other countries, football. “They take it way more seriously, and they play all day long,” he says.

As a result, their game is well-developed when they arrive here, Zoyac says. “They’re a little more advanced technically than Americans. They’re more polished, like with foot skills sets and receiving. Plus, they arrive at practice early and they stay afterward.”

JIMENA GARCÍA RISOTO is one international athlete who was already familiar with WilmU when she arrived here because she played against the Wildcats two years ago as a member of the Concordia College squad. When the New York school announced it

would close its doors with the fall semester of 2021, Risoto, who is from Spain, began looking for a place where she could earn her master’s in Business Administration and use her two remaining years of athletic eligibility.

She entered the transfer portal, and received several offers. But after a couple of meetings with Zoyac and Assistant Coach **DOUG CUNNINGHAM**, she says, “I decided that Wilmington University was a good program, and I committed.”

Risoto earned playing time almost immediately, but it wasn’t easy. “I knew from the very beginning that I needed to work even harder to get a spot here,” she says, “not only because I was new and came from another team, but also because we have 31 athletes on the roster, which makes everything harder as well as exciting.”

“I’m so thankful and happy for the spot I’m in now,” says Risoto. Zoyac made sure she was prepared from the beginning, something for which Risoto is grateful. “Being away from home, any help means a lot.”

After she earns her master’s, her plans are uncertain. “As of right now, I have no idea what I want to do when I graduate, either staying in America or going back to Spain,” says Risoto. “The only thing I know for sure is that I am living this experience, which for me is not only an opportunity, but also a privilege, to the maximum. I’m excited to be here and ready to keep gathering good memories.”

MANUELA RESTREPO RAMIREZ took a proactive approach to the



Head Coach Jeff Zoyac and Manuela Restrepo Ramirez

recruiting game when she graduated from high school in Medellin, Colombia, last year. “I recorded some games of me playing with my club and state team and sent them out,” she says. She received many offers, “but Wilmington was the one I liked and felt more comfortable with,” she says.

Although Restrepo Ramirez was totally unfamiliar with Wilmington, she says she “instantly felt comfortable, and I knew it was going to be an incredible experience.”

A Business Management major,

Restrepo Ramirez says, “Academically it has been great, I have always been a good student so adapting to the University wasn’t difficult for me.”

On the field, she earned a starting position and has seen action in every game as a freshman.

“We still have many things to improve together as a team, but the journey we are going through right now is awesome,” she says. “We keep growing every day.”

Director of Athletics **DR. STEFANIE WHITBY** says she is pleased

that the University has attracted so many international student-athletes.

“We hope that our commitment to creating a competitive athletic environment for them and providing a hands-on academic experience will not only result in a university degree, but a lifetime of memories,” says Dr. Whitby. “These student-athletes bring not only an incredible amount of athletic excellence, but they share their culture and traditions with us as well. We are all continuing to learn from each other.” **WU**



Student Titus Mims is a paraeducator at Seaford Central Elementary School.

Filling the Teacher Pipeline

| BY BOB YEARICK |

*WilmU's College of Education
has created innovative solutions to resolve the
statewide teacher shortage.*



WilmU Elementary Education major and paraeducator **TITUS MIMS** stands out as he walks the halls of Seaford (Delaware) Central Elementary School.

One of only three men among the 30-plus teachers and paraeducators at the school, Mims finds that the younger boys often seek him out. “First and foremost, me being a male, not just a Black male, has helped,” he says. “A lot of the younger boys, they really come to me for help. Seeing another male, I guess it makes them feel good about being young men.”



Dr. John Gray



Dr. Rob Rescigno

His experience at Seaford Central, coupled with the fact that he is a 41-year-old husband and father of five who has made a career change to become a teacher, make Mims the embodiment of what the College of Education (COE) hopes to accomplish with an array of innovative and impactful initiatives designed to attract future educators.

Led by Dean **DR. JOHN GRAY**, the COE is deploying those initiatives to tackle not only a statewide teacher shortage, but more specifically the shortage of African American male teachers.

In truth, asserts Dr. Gray, “teacher shortage” is something of a misnomer. “There is no teacher shortage overall, but there is one in certain areas,” he says. He cites Special Education, where there are more than 100 vacancies in Delaware. Science and math are other areas of need.

“Complicating all that is the COVID crisis. Many teachers have said they are going to quit because they can’t take the pressure anymore,” he says. “It’s been a very difficult two years for classroom teachers. They are leaving in large numbers.”

But perhaps the gravest ongoing problem is at the elementary school level, where, Dr. Gray says, “most teachers are middle-class white females, whereas most of the kids in Delaware elementary schools are lower income — in terms of socio-economic level, minority, and males. So there’s a real conflict there.”

Overall, about 14% of Americans are African American, while only 7% of public school teachers are African American, and only 2% of those educators are African American men. That leaves a critical void. According to District Administration, a print and digital media service for K–12 leaders, “Black educators have an incredibly positive, measurable effect on the lives of young Black students. When kids see teachers who look like them, they perform better academically. Seeing themselves reflected in the people they look up to opens their minds to new learning and career possibilities.”

An Aug. 31, 2021, article in *Forbes* stated that African American students in low socio-economic areas have a

higher chance of graduating from high school and attending college if they have had at least one African American teacher. “They are also more likely to be recommended for gifted programs and less likely to be suspended or expelled when an African American teacher is present in their lives,” the article reported.

In the past, Wilmington University, like almost every other institution of higher learning, had no ready solution for this problem. “We’ve had as few as zero African American males studying to be teachers,” says Dr. Gray. “They’re rare, and when they come along, they are snapped up by school districts.”

Now, however, the University has several new ideas



designed to cut the costs and time required to become a teacher, and at least one of them is aimed at minorities: The Promise Grant. “John (Gray) created it,” says **DR. ROB RESCIGNO**, assistant vice president of Academic Affairs and associate professor. “It’s a full scholarship for students of color that includes tuition, books, and fees.”

Mims is one of three students now on the Promise scholarship. “We have two more in the pipeline,” says Dr. Gray. “Five may not seem like a lot, but compared to what we had before, that’s a 500% improvement. We’re hoping the word will spread.”

Promise support personnel includes two recruiters and a mentor. **FRANK HANSON**, a WilmU grad who taught

carpentry and now is assistant principal at St. Georges Technical High School in Middletown, Delaware, is the mentor. The 2020 Teacher of the Year at St. Georges, Hanson grew up in Ghana, where teacher demographics are decidedly different from those in the U.S. All his teachers were Black, and by the time he reached high school, the majority were male.

“I had a good experience in school because every teacher looked like me,” says Hanson. “I enjoyed my schooling. It was easy for me to say, ‘I want to be like that teacher.’”

Because of the pandemic, he meets regularly with the three Promise scholars by Zoom or phone. “I love mentoring them,” Hanson says. “I help make sure they’re on track to



graduate on time. Sometimes it's a struggle because they all have jobs, but I tell them to compartmentalize. I help them get assistance they might require from the University."

Recognizing the need to fill the teaching pipeline, the COE has an aggressive recruiting program led by adjunct faculty member **HAZEL SHOWELL-WALKER**. She tells the WilmU story at high schools throughout the state that are part of the Teacher Academy, which prepares students for careers in elementary and secondary education by offering coursework (for college credit) in and out of the classroom.

Showell-Walker has a compelling narrative when discussing WilmU with aspiring teachers. She usually starts with a few fast facts: More than half of all Delaware educators earned their credentials at WilmU; 12 of the 20 Delaware School District Teachers of the Year for 2020 were Wilmington University graduates; 11 of the last 14 Delaware Teachers of the Year hold WilmU degrees.

She adds that those results emanate from education

preparation programs that are fully accredited, nationally recognized, and state approved.

Ever the passionate ambassador, Showell-Walker declares: "WilmU is the best university in the state."

It's certainly one of the most affordable, and that affordability has been enhanced by several recent innovations, including an offering that reflects the school's commitment to aspiring teachers. WilmU is the *only* university in the United States to offer college credits to high school students who pass the Praxis exams during their senior year.

Praxis exams assess the skills of students in four content areas: social studies, math, science, and literacy.

Says Dr. Rescigno, "If students enroll at WilmU while in high school, we will offer them 19 credits for passing the four exams."

In some circumstances, the tests, which can cost the student hundreds of dollars, present a barrier to an undergraduate degree.



WilmU is the only university in the United States to offer college credits to high school students who pass the Praxis exams during their senior year.



Hazel Showell-Walker



Ashley Wilson

“Standardized exams can be major obstacles for people of color for many reasons,” says Dr. Gray. One problem, is that these students attended poorly staffed and inequitably funded or equipped K–12 schools.

For students who don’t pass the Praxis exams and come to the University, the COE added a Praxis coordinator, adjunct **ASHLEY WILSON**, who creates plans for them.

Dr. Rescigno says it can be emotionally devastating “for someone who has gone through the program and worked really hard and wants to be a teacher, but the one obstacle keeping them from that is a standardized exam.”

Math and science are particular impediments, adds Dr. Gray. “Keep in mind, our students are not typical; many are in their late 20s or early 30s and have not had math since eighth grade. The same is true for science.”

In addition to credits for passing the tests, high school students can earn 20–30 credits through the Dual Enrollment and pathway articulation programs. Dual Enrollment is a partnership between WilmU and more than a dozen high schools throughout the state to deliver on-site course work to eligible students. The University has evaluated select courses in participating high schools and has approved the faculty, syllabi, and textbooks for college credit.

With this head start, a student can graduate in three years or less and begin working, or enroll in a master’s program. Eligible students can also receive a reoccurring scholarship that reduces tuition per credit by 15%, which saves them up to \$7,196 for a bachelor’s degree. Students become eligible by meeting specific criteria, including completing their high school diploma, enrolling at WilmU within a certain time period, and maintaining a minimum GPA.

But the University’s efforts to help COE students don’t end there. WilmU offers other innovations to fast-track students and help them financially.

One of those is the Year-Long Residency. Student teachers can choose from two tracks: the traditional 15-week program or Year-Long Residency, in which they are placed in a classroom with mentor teachers for a full academic year.

The program, taking its model from medical residencies, fully immerses the student teachers in school culture, and they share all responsibilities with the mentor teacher.

First implemented in the 2014–15 academic year, the program is the brainchild of **TYLER WELLS**, assistant professor and program chair of the Office of Clinical Studies. At first, it was funded by small local grants. Then a grant from the National Center for Teacher Residencies brought the program into the national spotlight. Three years ago, the Delaware Department of Education took notice and offered a \$1 million competitive grant, which has been renewed every year since, and is now at \$2 million. WilmU has been receiving the lion’s share of the grant. Last year, the University was awarded \$590,000. This academic year, that figure jumped to \$940,000. The remainder was split among the University of Delaware, Delaware State, and Relay Graduate School of Education, a largely online institution.

Wells emphasizes that the entire amount goes to funding students; the University keeps none of it. Participants are paid \$20,000 or \$25,000, depending on whether they are at a high-needs school. In contrast, those in the 15-week program receive a few thousand dollars.

As a further incentive, the University offers a 50% tuition reduction to year-long residents. Explaining that this applies to the student’s last 24 credits, Dr. Gray says, “This was unheard of, but we made this proposal to our President, **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**, and she said, ‘yes, we need to do this.’”

Finally, once students receive their undergraduate degrees, WilmU has fashioned a creative pathway to their master’s degrees. It involves “bundling” of skills, sometimes referred to as “stacking.”

Dr. Rescigno explains: “After a student graduates, it’s important for him or her to get a master’s, for both certification and pay raises. If the student comes to WilmU for a master’s, the College of Education has created a program that allows bundling of graduate certificates into a customized master’s degree.”

Current teachers, he points out, can certify in high-needs areas such as ESL and Special Ed.

In all, Dr. Rescigno says, “there are 66 combinations — 66 ways to get a master’s degree” through about 16 bundles that include Reading, Autism, Teaching and Learning, Early Childhood and Exceptional Education, Technology, and Leadership.

While growing public school enrollment combined with a dwindling teacher workforce promise to be a challenge throughout America for at least the next decade, in Delaware, Wilmington University is answering that challenge. WilmU’s results-driven, affordable initiatives constitute a continuum of teacher development, from candidate to novice to master teacher, that very well may serve as a model for the rest of the nation. **WU**



| BY DAVID BERNARD | PHOTOS BY SUSAN L. GREGG

The Importance of Cybersecurity



The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and National Security Agency designated WilmU a National Center for Academic Excellence for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity. That's critical, since our digital day-to-day lives depend on the ever-changing discipline.

DR. MARK HUFÉ learned an early lesson about cybersecurity the hard way.

About 17 years ago, he created a website for his daughter that taught her how to build websites. He hosted the site on a server he administered himself. And he discovered that it had been hacked when he received a cease-and-desist order from a multinational bank, which had identified the site as the source of a phishing attack on its user data.

“I’d set the password as my daughter’s name, and an automated dictionary attack cracked it,” recalls Dr. Hufe, now WilmU’s director of Cybersecurity Education and chair of its associate and bachelor’s degrees in Cybersecurity. “That’s what sub-optimal knowledge will do for you.”

The Delaware State Police’s High Tech Crime Unit investigation traced the attack’s origins to Shanghai, China. “Who has jurisdiction over Shanghai? At that point, nobody knew,” says Dr. Hufe. He contacted the bank to explain the hacked website attack. “The guy said, ‘We get about 20 of those a day.’ It’s only gotten worse since then.”

From business transactions and medical records to electronic communications and wireless internet connectivity, our day-to-day lives now depend on what is ultimately a vulnerable system. Especially since the ransomware attacks, data breaches, social engineering scams and other cybercrimes that make big news headlines are just the tip of the iceberg. According to information technology experts, tens of thousands of computer networks are hacked every day, potentially impacting hundreds of millions of people.

“They say there are only two kinds of companies: those that have had their data breached and those that are going to have their data breached,” says Dr. Hufe. It’s one of his favorite sayings about his academic specialty. Another one is this: “When there’s a data breach, that’s not the right time to be exchanging business cards.”

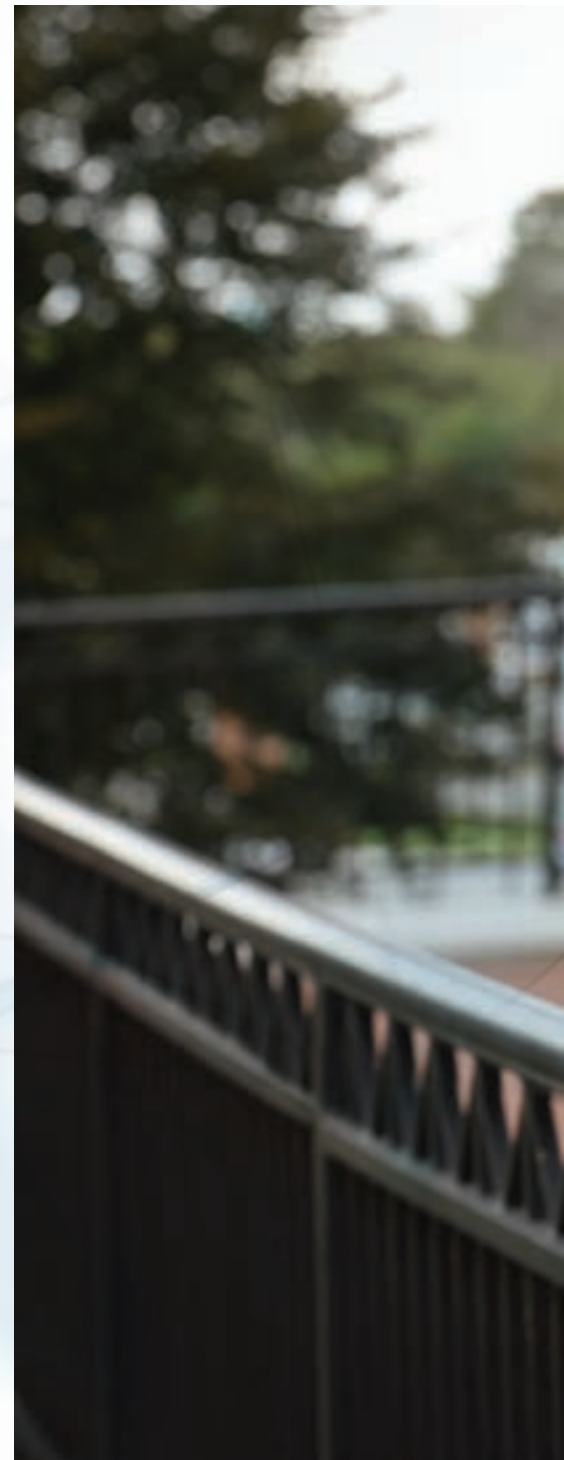
Which is why the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, among other occupational observers, currently ranks cybersecurity among the nation’s fastest-growing career fields. “Cybersecurity is a frontline issue for business,” says Dr. Hufe. “It’s also a matter of national security. There’s a critical need for cybersecurity professionals in corporate America, as well as in government, law enforcement, military, and intelligence. The College of Technology is uniquely qualified to train students, and mid-career professionals, to meet this demand.”

A Short History of Cybersecurity

The first generation of digital computers, developed in the wake of World War II, were room-sized mainframe machines. Access was limited, often by a locked door, to the programmers who were trained in their complex operations, which were not connected to other computers.

By the time men walked on the moon, reductions in the size and cost of computers were leading to their adoption at the world’s largest companies, which soon began to rely on remotely networked computers to conduct their business between different locations. Passwords were added to protect individual accounts. But the networks’ multiple entry points exposed them to the threat, and occasional reality, of unauthorized access. The Cold War thriller *WarGames* (1983) dramatized this liability on the silver screen.

Through the 1970s and ‘80s, university researchers and Advanced Research Projects Agency Network founders studied operating system security and developed automated techniques for identifying computer viruses and vulnerabilities. Today, companies that want to understand their vulnerabilities hire ethical hackers to attack and penetrate their organizations. These “pen



testers” use the same techniques that bona fide cybercriminals use but operate lawfully through written authorizations.

The tsunami of floppy disks and CD-ROMs advertising internet service providers that flooded mailboxes in the mid-1990s kicked off a massive increase in internet and e-mail traffic worldwide. The



Dr. Mark Hufe is WilmU's director of Cybersecurity Education. He calls cybersecurity a frontline business issue and a matter of national security.

widespread availability of high-speed internet access about 10 years later brought even more personal and business data online. As the internet has evolved from computer science research project to household furniture and personal accessory, its security threats and their potential impact have multiplied and diversified.

In response, antivirus programs, firewalls, and other cybersecurity defense tools have also proliferated. While the technicians who assess a network's operational risks and defend its data don't generate revenue for any organization, they're a critically necessary insurance policy against catastrophe and chaos.

Learning to Be Paranoid

“It's so much easier to attack than to defend,” says Dr. Hufe, “to find one vulnerability than to prevent any vulnerability anywhere. That's the challenge in teaching and studying cybersecurity. It changes every year; you're focusing on the attack of the year. Textbooks go out

of edition pretty quickly.”

Dr. Hufe joined the faculty of then-Wilmington College in 2001 after a career as a software developer. A few months before his daughter’s website was hacked, he’d been tasked with revising the curriculum for the Internet and Network Design degree program. Classes in software development and information technology already existed, but information security, which he’d seen trending, wasn’t widely known as a course of academic study. “I asked my senior adjuncts, ‘what do you think? Are there jobs here?’” he recalls. “They said, ‘definitely.’” The website hacking incident was also a motivating factor. “I’ve learned to be paranoid,” he says.

Then-Wilmington College launched its Bachelor of Science in Computer and Network Security (renamed Cybersecurity last year) in 2005.

Six years later, thanks to Dr. Hufe’s efforts, the school and the degree were designated a National Center for Academic Excellence for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and National Security Agency. This stamp of approval acknowledges that the coursework (continually updated to remain on the cutting edge) and faculty (who’ve worked in law enforcement, banks, and other information security hotspots) meet the federal government’s rigorous standards on the subject.

“When I was earning my Doctor of Education degree, we were encouraged to think big,” he says. “National Center for Academic Excellence: that resonates. That’s jobs. That’s what I wanted to see happen. For our students and faculty to be able to put that on their résumés, how cool would that be?”

Possibilities and Purpose

That *would* be pretty cool. Just ask **ROMAN SHERIFF**, deputy chief information security officer for the City of Baltimore, who credits his career in part to a bachelor’s in Computer and Network Security from WilmU in 2010.

“The degree helps first,” he says. “You can build a reputation through your coursework and build a network through the contacts it offers. A degree will get you in the door, if you apply yourself and ask a lot of questions. I learned as much as possible from those I worked with. My mentors at WilmU were very helpful. They were busy, but they took the time for us students.”

As a student, Sheriff was part of a Cyber Wildcats team that competed among 1,153 teams from 56 countries in the U.S. Department of Defense’s Cyber Crime Center Digital Forensics Challenge. The Wildcats took first place in the undergraduate division and third place worldwide.

“There are a lot of open possibilities in cybersecurity,” he says, “for someone who likes technology, who has an investigative mind, who wants to explore why something’s not working, and when something’s happening, why it’s happening.”

REBECCA CHOYNOWSKI works as a senior cloud security architect for the Mitre Corporation, a McLean, Virginia-based research and development nonprofit. In 2013, she was taking community college classes in Maryland when hackers stole the personal data of 110 million customers of a nationwide retailer during the holiday shopping season.

“I thought, this seems like a huge problem that I could be interested in, that I could help with,” says Choynowski. She transferred to WilmU and earned her bachelor’s in Computer and Network Security in 2015.

“In information security, you’re assessing an application both for how it’s actually being used and for all the possible ways it can be exploited,” she says. “That was my main takeaway from the degree program: how can you bend something and break something beyond what its intended purpose is?”

It’s a question that offers new challenges and problems. “It still surprises me how fast technology changes,” says Choynowski. “It can be exhausting.” **WU**



CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION AT WILMU

The College of Technology’s Cybersecurity degree and certificate programs, available 100% online, put career opportunity within reach of students and working adults nationwide.

- The Associate of Science in Cybersecurity introduces the basics of digital defense. Graduates of this two-year program can transfer into WilmU’s Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity to complete the degree in another two years.
- The Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity (formerly called Computer and Network Security) provides a broad foundation in cybersecurity while qualifying its graduates for entry into industry-recognized certification



Roman Sheriff credits WilmU for his success as deputy chief information security officer for the City of Baltimore.

exams. Students can also customize their degrees with a concentration in Digital Forensics and/or five-course undergraduate certificates in Digital Evidence Discovery, Digital Evidence Investigation, and Cloud Practitioner. (An Accelerated Graduate Certificate option for the BSC degree allows undergraduates to take the graduate SCADA certificate toward credit for their undergraduate degrees.)

■ Mid-career professionals can master an in-depth review of security tactics through the Master of Science in Cybersecurity. MS in Cybersecurity candidates can specialize their degrees through concentrations in Cyber Terrorism or SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) Cybersecurity.

■ The Master of Science in Information Systems Technologies' concentration in Information Assurance explores cybersecurity's complex systems from a business perspective, preparing graduates to develop, implement, and protect technological solutions through the use of managerial concepts.

■ The five-course graduate certificate in SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) Cybersecurity focuses on the strategic monitoring and control of the infrastructure and processes behind such critical industries as power generation and transmission, water treatment, transportation, and pipelines.

For more information, visit wilmu.edu/technology.

*Since 2019, Safety Cadets have been
a constant presence on all WilmU campuses.
And they've made a positive impression.*

Safety Cadets: *At Your Service*

| BY BOB YEARICK |



“**T**he best job on campus.”

That’s how **TAFADZISWA “TAFF” BUNU**, a junior majoring in Business Analytics and Finance, describes the University’s Safety Cadet Program.

The program, which originated with a leadership team headed by **DR. JOSEPH AVIOLA**, assistant vice president of Administrative Legal Affairs, was implemented in the fall of 2019. It has a two-fold purpose: to supplement Department of University Safety (DUS) staffing after the school’s private security service was eliminated, and to offer students interested in law enforcement careers an opportunity to work alongside and learn from the school’s 21 constables.

| PHOTOS BY PAUL PATTON |



Safety cadets have several duties, including escorting students, faculty, staff and visitors, and monitoring traffic.



Safety Cadet Tafadziswa "Taff" Bunu is a junior majoring in Business Analytics and Finance.

Since 2019, Safety Cadets, clad in green polo shirts or black jackets with the University logo and tan pants, have been a constant presence on all WilmU campuses. And they've made a positive impression, according to **DENNIS CRAIGHTON**, adjunct instructor and DUS administrative manager.

"The effectiveness of the program can't be overstated," says Craighton. "Cadets are available and trained to respond to the many calls for service, enabling the constable staff to respond to more serious calls that may require a law enforcement presence."

Cadets don't have the authority to arrest anyone, but they have several duties, including: patrolling facilities; responding to calls from and escorting

students, faculty, staff, and visitors; monitoring traffic and assisting with traffic control; securing and opening buildings and classrooms, and working the student identification station.

In addition to an hourly salary, cadets can earn credits through the Work-Integrated Learning program.

Program coordinator **ADAM BRAMS** spent 28 years with the New Castle City Police before retiring as a lieutenant six years ago, when he joined the DUS. Brams, who was in charge of a volunteer program while with New Castle Police, does a 15-minute presentation at First Year Experience seminars to help recruit candidates.

Those who apply must appear before a panel of three or four

constables who pose questions and scenarios to them. "This is a good preparatory experience for them, especially if they're planning on entering the law enforcement field," Brams says. "Oral board panels for law enforcement positions can be grueling and intimidating, and this gives them a snapshot of that process."

Brams worked with the constables to set up the training program, which extends over as many as four days. Topics include first aid, CPR, A.L.I.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Evacuate, Counter), verbal de-escalation, integrated medical response, use of pepper spray, self-defense tactics, and general public safety operations, including the access control and CCTV camera systems.

Lastly, recruits undergo field training, where they're paired with senior cadets and constables and oriented to the daily duties they'll be performing.

Instructors are drawn from the constable staff, most of whom have 25 or more years of experience with agencies such as the Delaware State Police, New Castle County and New Castle City Police, Delaware River and Bay Authority Police, the FBI, and executive security.

Bunu gives the instructors high marks. "We had experienced specialists in each field speak with us," he says. "And it wasn't the usual 'death by Power Point' you often get. It was interactive, role playing, and the integrated medical training was very hands-on."

"My family has a security company in Zimbabwe," he adds, "and I would like to implement all the things I learned here back home."

Senior **MADDIE MCCARTHY** says being a Safety Cadet gave her a better understanding of the subjects covered in her Criminal Justice program. "Being able to have first-hand experience gave clarity to the field advice that my professors had covered in lectures," she says. "It's an amazing addition to my education."

The nine current cadets work



Destiny Bryant and Maddie McCarthy enjoy the camaraderie of being cadets while earning an hourly salary and credits through the Work-Integrated Learning program.

five-hour shifts and cover all campuses. They carry pepper spray, a flashlight, and a radio.

Of the current group, Brams says, “We’re fortunate to have them; they’re really on the ball. And we have a nice mix of students and majors, not just Criminal Justice.”

He believes the students are a better fit than the former private security service. “They’re more invested in the school and the environment, and the age group relates really well to students because they’re peers.”

Craighton says the University community quickly took notice of the cadets. “We started receiving positive comments from students, faculty, staff, and visitors almost immediately,” he says. “Many of the comments related to not only the quick response to calls for service and the professionalism shown by cadets, but also the feeling that the University is committed to providing a safe and secure environment.”

Cadet **DESTINY BRYANT** says the training enabled her to act calmly when she helped Constable **WYATT FORAKER** resolve a medical issue experienced by a staff member at the Brandywine Campus. Foraker later praised Bryant for her professional behavior.

Bryant, who is majoring in Biology with a Forensics concentration, says she has become more alert to any potential incidents on campus, and her training has given her confidence that she can handle those situations calmly.

In addition to on-the-job guidance, the veteran constable corps can provide valuable connections to employment after cadets graduate. In the short life span of the program, three former cadets have been hired by law enforcement agencies.

One of them, **EMILY TODD**, who graduated with a degree in Criminal Justice in May of 2020, is doing often sensitive government

work as a physical security specialist for the Department of the Army at its TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Command) Headquarters at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Noting that she sometimes works with TRADOC’s anti-terrorism officer, Todd says, “Much of my job is classified, but it requires a lot of travel to Army installations all across the country to assess and ensure their physical security measures are up to army regulations and standards.”

She says she was “truly blessed” to have been a Safety Cadet. “I believe that I had a leg up when interviewing for jobs due to the experiences I had from the cadet program.”

Todd gives special credit to the WilmU constables. “I got to work alongside some of the most prestigious law enforcement officers that Delaware was extremely lucky to have,” she says, “and they instilled in me a tremendous amount of knowledge that I am so grateful for.

“They were always willing to share their knowledge and stories of things they experienced throughout their careers, and they were never hesitant to help with any of my school assignments or to provide real world insight to what I was learning in school. Thanks to them, I was able to truly succeed and have a different perspective on what I was learning in my classes.”

In the end, says Brams, the Safety Cadet program is “customer service — a way for the DUS to be more engaged with the University community, especially our students.”

That aspect of the program is extolled by Bryant and Bunu.

“I have gotten to meet so many people on campus while working here,” says Bryant.

Adds Bunu: “You not only get to talk to so many interesting people, you also get to be the hero for some very important and influential people.” **WU**



Opposite page, from left: Maddie McCarthy, Constable Adam Brams, Guidance Gunundu, Frank Lamanna, Destiny Bryant



SPORTS

NICK PAPANICOLAS: COACHING ‘THE BEAUTIFUL GAME’

When **DIMITRIOS** and **MARIA PAPANICOLAS** arrived in the United States from Greece in 1968, their plan was to stay only a few years to help Dimitrios’ brothers with their new restaurant on Kirkwood Highway in Wilmington.

Hundreds of past and present Wilmington University soccer players are thankful that their plan was scrapped.

After a year or so, the couple decided to stay in America. They became restaurateurs themselves, and settled in the Pike Creek area of New Castle County. There, they raised two daughters and one son, Nicholas, who was born in 1973.

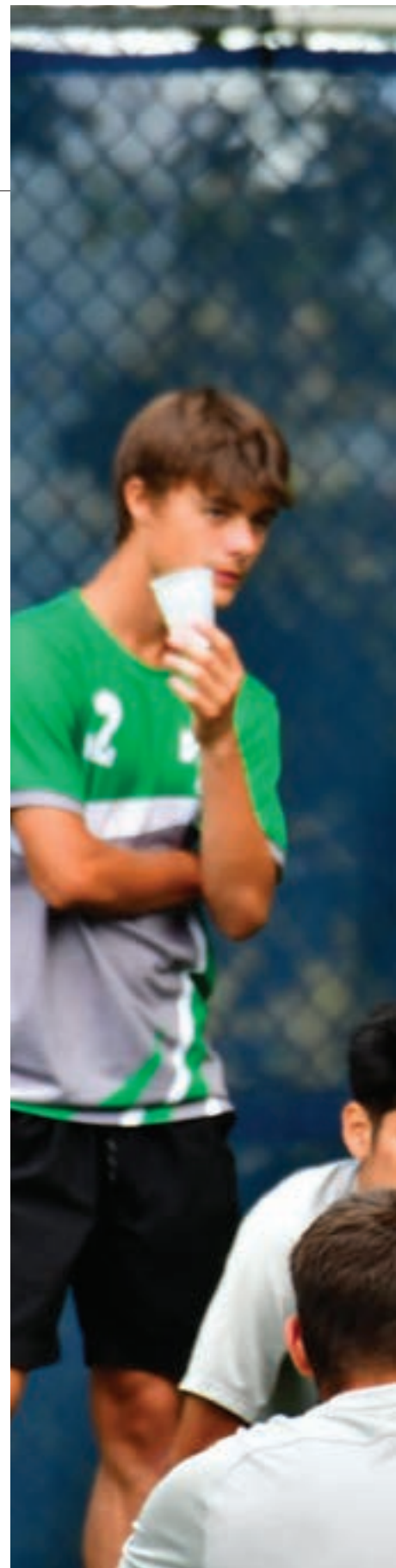
Young **NICK PAPANICOLAS** had a passion for soccer, and he went on to achieve All-State honors and lead the state in scoring as his St. Mark’s High School team won the state championship. His college career was interrupted by a serious foot injury, and he spent four years as an assistant at St. Mark’s before enrolling at Rowan University in 1997. There, Papanicolas became a three-year starter, led the team in scoring his sophomore year, and was captain in his final two years. During his three seasons at the New Jersey school, the Profs earned three NCAA berths and reached the 1998 Final Four.

Papanicolas received a bachelor’s degree in Art Education and went on to earn a master’s in Higher Education Administration at Rowan while serving as graduate assistant from 2000-02. Now fully committed to coaching, he signed on as an assistant at WilmU in 2003, and assumed the head coaching job the following season.

His first couple of years as the leader of the Wildcats were less than successful. The team won just four games in 2004 and five in 2005.

Then good fortune struck. Papanicolas got word of a neighborhood in Southwest Philadelphia, populated mostly by natives of West African countries, that was a spawning ground for skilled soccer players. He drove to Philadelphia and scouted the Public League final four playoffs and an all-star game, where many of those athletes displayed their skills.

“There was a ton of talent there, and I was amazed that I was the only college coach who showed up,” he says.





The program's reputation, the talented international coaching staff, and the school's affordable tuition combine to make WilmU an attractive landing spot for gifted high school soccer players.



Papanicolas tapped into that talent, and his team's fortunes quickly did a 180. "In 2006, we had the fourth best turnaround in the country," he says. "We went from 5 and 12 to 12 and 5. Little by little, the program grew. We had our first All-American, our first conference Player of the Year, our first player to sign a professional contract."

That kind of success attracted attention from the soccer world — emphasis on world.

"Division II soccer is very much international, especially on the men's side," says Papanicolas. "We started making contacts in other countries and bringing in foreign players. Now, in the last five years or so, most of our roster is international. They trust us to get them to the next chapter of their lives, whatever it is."

"Coach Nick" also has recruited a coaching staff with an international flavor: four of his six assistants are from foreign countries and four are WilmU grads. As a result, he says, "We have a very diverse team and a diverse coaching staff. We believe that's an advantage to us."

One of his top assistants is alumnus **ANTHONY ALLISON**, who joined the staff in 2016 after a six-year professional career. A native of Liberia and graduate of Overbrook High School, Allison was one of those first Philadelphia recruits and a primary contributor to the 2006 turnaround

season. Playing as Sargbah Tarpeh, he scorched Wildcat opponents for four years, winning almost every individual honor, including Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference Rookie of the Year, CACC Player of the Year, East Regional Player of the Year and first team All-America.

"Wilmington is a special place," says Allison, "and Nick is a special coach. He was great to play for. Players are comfortable with him. He's always there for them, like a father figure."

As for his duties as an assistant coach, Allison says, "I enjoy mentoring and developing players."

He is one of 11 former players who have gone into professional soccer at some level — a fact that can influence recruits. "Many of them have aspirations of turning pro," Papanicolas says.

The program's reputation, the talented international coaching staff, and the school's affordable tuition combine to make WilmU an attractive landing spot for gifted high school soccer players.

In his 18 seasons as head coach, Papanicolas has accumulated 200 wins. Next year, he will reach 201, which will give him the most wins of any men's soccer coach in conference history. He has done it with a program based on discipline, hard work, and dedication to the game and the classroom.

"We always keep in mind that our players are student-athletes," says Papanicolas, who also works in the

University's Student Life Department. "It's important to balance those two. They develop themselves as people, and soccer is a platform for that. We focus on our craft and helping each player develop physically, mentally, spiritually."

"But don't get me wrong," he adds, "we want to win games."

And win they do. The 2019 season was an especially successful one for the Wildcats. The team led all of NCAA Division II in many offensive categories, including goals (91), assists (76), scoring offense (4.33), shots per game (19.43), shots on goal per game (9.9), and points per game (12.29). And they won their fourth CACC Regular Season Championship, going 10-1-1 in conference play.

The Wildcats also had their first national Division II Player of the Year in **LORNE BICKLEY**, who broke Allison's school and CACC record for goals and points in a season. He also led all of DII in goals and points that season.

Bickley, now playing professionally in Europe, credits the University with giving him "the best four years of my life."

In the U.S., soccer has not achieved the popularity level of football, baseball and basketball. Papanicolas, the father of four young boys, only one of whom is currently playing soccer, understands that.

"It's a cultural thing," he says, noting that the "big three" sports offer more money to players.

But to the rest of the world, soccer is known as "the beautiful game," and Coach Nick certainly views it as such.

"We feel that's the style we play," he says. "It's a passing game, and we play it with a rhythm and a balance where everybody attacks and everybody defends together. We play the game the right way, the way it's supposed to be played." **WU**

—Bob Yearick



KIM HUGGINS-HABBERT: SETTING A HIGH CEILING

KIM HUGGINS-HABBERT has good memories of the days when her women's volleyball team played at the Pratt Student Center. But she's grateful that Wilmington University chose to invest in its state-of-the-art Athletics Complex in Newark, Delaware, which opened in 2012.

This year will mark Huggins-Habbert's 19th as head coach of the women's volleyball team. She began

the same year WilmU joined the NCAA Division II ranks — 2004. In that time, she has won 315 games while losing 248, a .560 winning percentage

She has had the Wildcats in the CACC Tournament in all but five seasons, and they've won 20 or more games eight times during her tenure.

Before joining WilmU, Huggins-Habbert spent 10 years at the helm of the girls' volleyball team at Christiana High School in Newark, Delaware,

her alma mater. She led the Vikings to two Blue Hen Conference titles and an appearance in the Delaware State finals. She was named the Delaware Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association Coach of the Year in 1995. Huggins-Habbert finished her high school coaching career with a record of 113-66.

A versatile athlete at Christiana High, she excelled on the swimming and volleyball teams and participated

“We’re a family, looking out for each other, taking care of each other — that’s just as important as what occurs on the court. If they care for each other, they will play for each other.” —*Kim Huggins-Habbert*



in track and field. She received a partial swimming scholarship to James Madison University, but after enrolling, she decided to give up swimming and join the volleyball team as a walk-on.

“Swimming is not really a team sport,” Huggins-Habbert explains, “and what I fell in love with in volleyball was it’s a team sport through-and-through. My heart just wasn’t in swimming.” In her sophomore year, she scored a partial scholarship from the volleyball program.

After graduating from JMU with a degree in Mathematics and a minor in Secondary Education, she became a teacher and assistant volleyball coach at Brandywine High School in suburban Wilmington, then was recruited by Christiana High to be its head coach in 1993. She continues to work at the school as a guidance counselor, and she enhanced her credentials by earning a master’s in School Counseling in 2000 from then-Wilmington College.

When she took over as Wildcat head coach, Huggins-Habbert found that her biggest challenge was recruiting. “Figuring out how to recruit and where, and what do you do in recruiting, those were the hardest parts of coaching,” she says.

At first, she recruited from the surrounding region — Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, sometimes New York. “Now,” she says, “our

roster comes from all over the country. We even have a Canadian.”

She has learned that team members are key in attracting new athletes.

“Our girls are great at selling the culture of the program and what it’s about to be here and be part of the University,” she says. “One of the things I’ve learned is that kids want to be part of a program where they really feel like they belong, and having my athletes involved in the recruiting process has really helped us over the years.”

“We’re a family,” she adds, “looking out for each other, taking care of each other — that’s just as important as what occurs on the court. If they care for each other, they will play for each other.”

She also makes sure her athletes appreciate the support they receive from the University staff. “I remind them every day about the great facilities we have and how much our school cares about its athletics program,” she says.

Her practices are tough but often fun, too, like when she cranks up “The Electric Slide” or “Cotton-eyed Joe” to turn line dancing into the team’s warm-up routine. “Line dancing teaches muscle memory,” Huggins-Habbert explains, “much like volleyball, where things like approaches, getting to where you need to be, blocking footwork —

all of that is muscle memory. So we thought it would be fun, but it would also build a skill that they can use in the sport.”

“She pushes you,” says **ALEX SIOLOS DELAGOL**, who played for the Wildcats from 2012 to 2016. “She’s intense, very competitive, and she hates to lose, which I love.”

After earning her degree in Sports Management, Delagol served as Huggins-Habbert’s graduate assistant for two years and grew to appreciate her coach’s dedication. “After games, we would go over stats and discuss the game for an hour or two. You could see the passion and commitment it takes to coach at that level.”

Huggins-Habbert also keeps her athletes involved in community outreach activities. They are currently working with Team Impact, a program that pairs children suffering from serious or chronic illnesses with college sports teams.

“We adopted a 13-year-old girl (from Team Impact) in the spring of 2021, and she is with us for the next couple of years,” says the coach. “She comes to practice, games, and team activities that she can make, just like a member of our team. The goal is to help develop positive relationships with our athletes to assist with the ‘full circle of healing’ for the child. The athletes truly have welcomed her with open arms, and I believe it gives our athletes a different perspective on life.”

Huggins-Habbert and her husband are parents of 10- and 12-year-old girls. As for her WilmU “kids,” the coach says, “They are a group of young ladies who have grown and matured and are ready for the next stage of their lives. It’s not just about winning on the court, but off the court as well.” **WU**

—*Bob Yearick*

Hall of Famers: 2011-12 Golf Team

The Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference has inducted the 2011-12 Wilmington University men's golf team into the CACC Hall of Fame.

During a thrilling season that featured numerous team and individual honors, the 2011-12 group won both the Northeast Intercollegiate Golf Tournament, defeating 14 other teams, and the Jay Jennison Memorial Tournament (first among 15 teams by nine strokes). They went on to win the 2012 CACC Championship and 2012 NCAA Atlantic/East Super Regional Tournament. That led to the NCAA Championships, where they finished 17th.

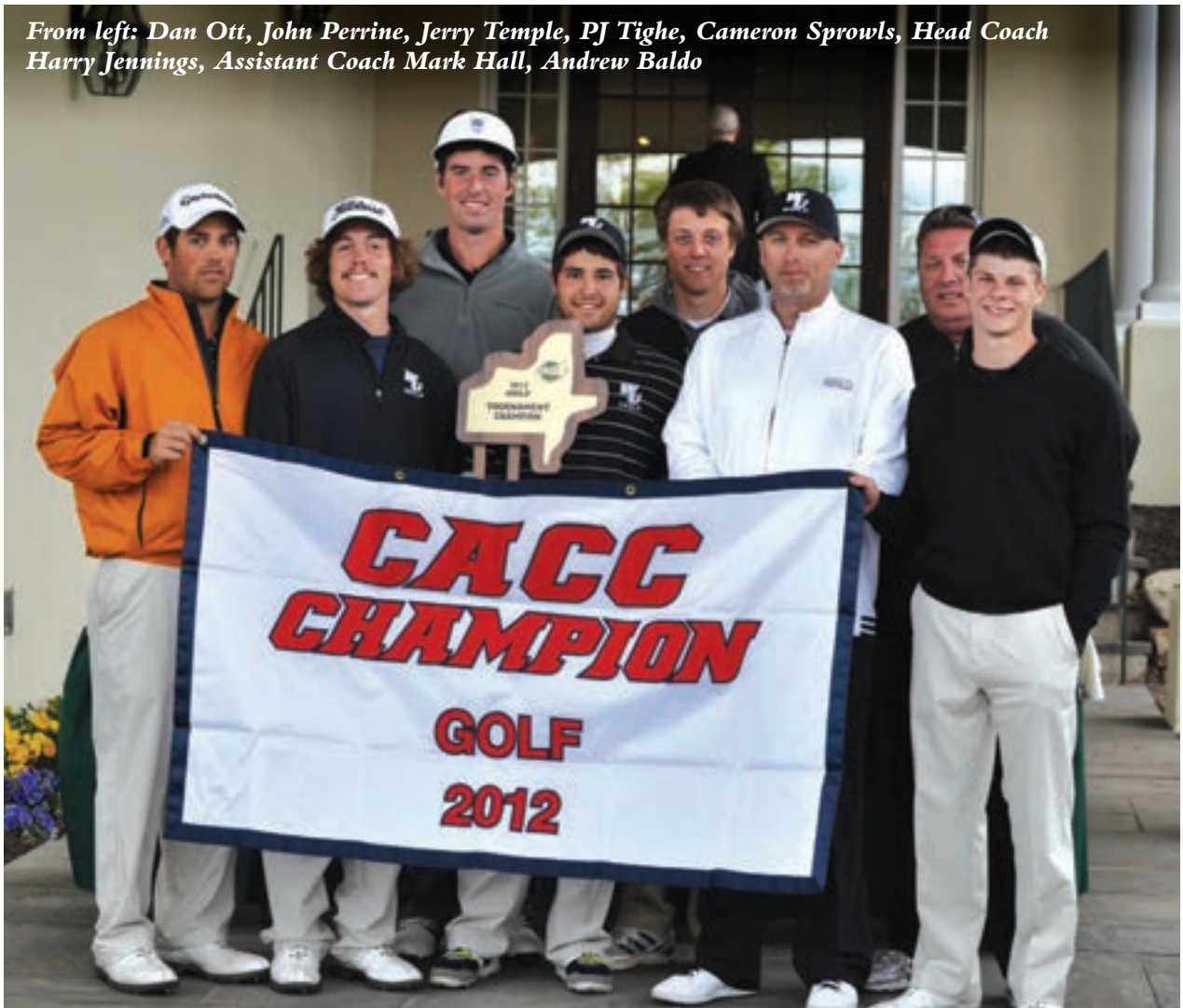
Individual honors went to **DAN OTT**, who was named

the CACC Player of the Year, and was one of four Wildcats to earn all-conference accolades. The others were **PJ TIGHE**, **ANDREW BALDO**, and **SCOTT DAVIDSON**. In addition, Head Coach **HARRY JENNINGS** was named the CACC Coach of the Year.

That was the first of five Coach of the Year honors for Jennings. He stepped down three years ago and is now assisting Coach **MARK HALL**. Jennings remembers the 2011-12 team as "very disciplined."

"They had a great work ethic," he says, "and they were confident. They just went out and did it. It was an easy group to coach. They helped build our reputation around the country." **WU** —*Bob Yearick*

From left: Dan Ott, John Perrine, Jerry Temple, PJ Tighe, Cameron Sprowls, Head Coach Harry Jennings, Assistant Coach Mark Hall, Andrew Baldo



COURTESY OF DAN LAUETTA

ALUMNI

DR. KELLY GRIFFITH: Maryland's Superintendent of the Year by Janice Colvin

Steering the massive ship of a school system through the heaving seas of the last few years, including the pandemic, has required a number of unique skills and abilities that only come from years of experience and training.

For **DR. KELLY GRIFFITH**, Wilmington University alumna and superintendent of Talbot County Schools on Maryland's Mid Shore, this has meant using every ounce of experience gained over 38 years as an educator and leader to keep her ship upright and sailing true, despite teacher and staff shortages, the sudden change to virtual learning, addressing technology gaps and limits, and more.

So, it certainly came as a happy surprise to learn the county's Board of Education members and her colleagues nominated her late last year as Maryland Superintendent of the Year, awarded through the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland. As the winner for Maryland, which has 25 school districts, she is set to represent the state in the National Superintendent of the Year competition in spring of 2022.

Dr. Griffith has been superintendent for nine years. She started as a teacher

in the county in 1988, and continued to move up in leadership positions, first as a teacher and later as an administrator. Her career planning meant earning a doctorate, so she chose WilmU's Educational Leadership and Innovation education program. She also holds a master's in Educational Administration and a bachelor's degree from Salisbury University, where she's an adjunct instructor.

But even holding the top leadership position in the public school district in recent years has not meant leaving her passion behind. Her priorities are still focused on doing what's best for students and how professionals can best serve them.

"It's all about relationships and paying attention to each individual child," she explains. "What are their needs?"

Looking for ways to meet those needs means making changes. For example, Dr. Griffith notes a possible need for greater flexibility in delivering instruction for students who might need to work during the day and learn at night.

"Guess what?" she says. "We can make that work."

The public school system needs to explore changing some practices,

she says. "We need to change with the changing times, and that doesn't always happen in public education."

With so many urgent needs vying for her attention, Dr. Griffith says retention of high school students — specifically reducing dropout rates in her district and increasing college readiness — are high on her list of action items.

"When I got the job as superintendent, we started strategic planning, and our graduation rate was about 85%, and our dropout rate was 10%," she explains. But with several changes, "Now our graduation rate is 96%, and our dropout rate is less than 2%."

These actions largely stem from results gathered during Dr. Griffith's dissertation, a qualitative study on students' perspectives of their readiness for college. For her research, she interviewed students after they had graduated and had not taken a dual enrollment or an AP course, but who had gone on to two- or four-year colleges. She then interviewed them after their freshman years.

Working on the dissertation was "the highlight of the whole program," she says. "The courses were great. I loved my cohort, but when you really



Alumna Dr. Kelly Griffith is focused on retention and increased college readiness.

sit down and talk with students, and you love education as much as I do, and in making a difference, that to me was really a powerful qualitative study.”

Her goal with the study, Dr. Griffith says, “was to find out a bit more about how the public school system could have helped them transition and why they didn’t take college courses.” The

reasons were varied. “A lot of students would say that people didn’t see them as college material, so they weren’t encouraged,” she adds. “Others said they found a mentor in the building, and that mentor helped.” So, using the data, “We’ve tightened up our counseling and our transitioning since then, and did institute some mentorships of our seniors since that study,” she adds.

In the last year-and-a-half during COVID-19 disruptions, Dr. Griffith says the school system made it through those changes in better shape than others elsewhere.

Before the restrictions, the school system had a one-to-one computing initiative, with students receiving laptops to complete schoolwork.

“We had a device for students from

first grade to 12, and our secondary students from sixth grade through 12th grade took their devices home every night. Elementary had one in the classroom,” Dr. Griffith says.

That was a massive hurdle that many school systems couldn’t jump. “We were able to use some of the funds that we got from the federal government to buy devices for kindergarten and pre-K,” she says. “One of the biggest hurdles was connectivity.”

Some families couldn’t afford it, but other challenges were related to

the rural nature of the county and its large digital voids.

“We quickly got together with our local cable companies, and we wrote a grant to get some hotspots so we could get those in place,” she says. The local utility company provided a discount to families, and the district picked up the cable costs.

“I know we shut down March 13, 2020, and we were only going to be closed a week, then two weeks, then three weeks. But we were able to really, truly pivot quickly when it

came to getting our kids set up with getting the devices out, making sure hotspots were getting in the hands of kids, getting people connected.”

Connectivity remains a problem, whether it’s cost or connection. Once the new school year began, the district planned for virtual and in-person learning.

“We found out a third of our students wanted to be virtual,” she says. “We decided the best way to do that for elementary and middle school was to have virtual teachers

CYNTHIA BROWN: A Call to Serve

by David Bernard

CYNTHIA BROWN, RN, co-chairs the WilmU Alumni Association’s New Castle Chapter in order to encourage her fellow graduates to pursue opportunities, no matter their age or level of uncertainty. She knows from experience how interesting and unexpected that pursuit can be.

The year after she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at WilmU in 2014, she took on the role she’s described as her true calling: school nurse at the Charter School of New Castle. “School nursing is a specialty practice,” says Brown, “and it is not just my job, it is my ministry.”

She admits that working in a middle school is not something she’d ever considered before her bachelor’s degree. In fact, nursing is her second career. She’d started as a bank teller for PSFS. “I enjoyed my work,” she says. “I’m a people person.” For 13 years, she worked her way up to the customer service and credit card departments.

During those years, she also trained and served as a combat medic with the U.S. Army Reserve, and eventually completed its Licensed Practical Nursing program. “I always knew I wanted to be a nurse,” says Brown, who left banking for a long-term care facility, where she spent the next 12 years advocating for the needs of her elderly patients. “But I have to say, when I walked into work that

first day, knowing that I had been entrusted with peoples’ lives, it was surreal.”

Brown’s WilmU B.S.N. led her to steady home health aide work, but, she notes, “you have your plans, and the Lord has his plans.” Friends who worked at the Charter School of New Castle arranged an interview for a school nursing job there. “I stumbled across what I was meant to do,” she says. “Every day, when I walk through that door, I know I will touch someone’s life, or they will touch mine. There’s a need for nurses in every school. We don’t just sit in our offices and hand out Band-Aids and aspirin. We’re mental health providers; we’re moms, we do laundry.”

As with her entry into school nursing, Brown hadn’t anticipated playing a part in alumni relations. “As a grad, I didn’t even know about the association,” she says. At the invitation of a friend and former chapter co-chair, the late Pamela Lucas, she began attending its meetings.

The service to others that has guided her through banking, military service, and nursing led Brown to become co-chair herself, along with **ADRIANNE ROBERTS**, in 2021. “For me, it’s a community, connection, the opportunity to give back to the University that helped me along my journey,” she says, “and hopefully to sow opportunity to the other students coming through after me.” **WU**

as opposed to concurrent teaching. We decided which teachers would be virtual teachers and which would be in person.”

This succeeded quite well. “We actually had our students in more days than most counties in the state. And I think it was because we did a lot of planning — very intentional planning with a lot of feedback from the community.”

Dr. Griffith emphasizes that planning is an essential part of the job. A five-year strategic plan has just

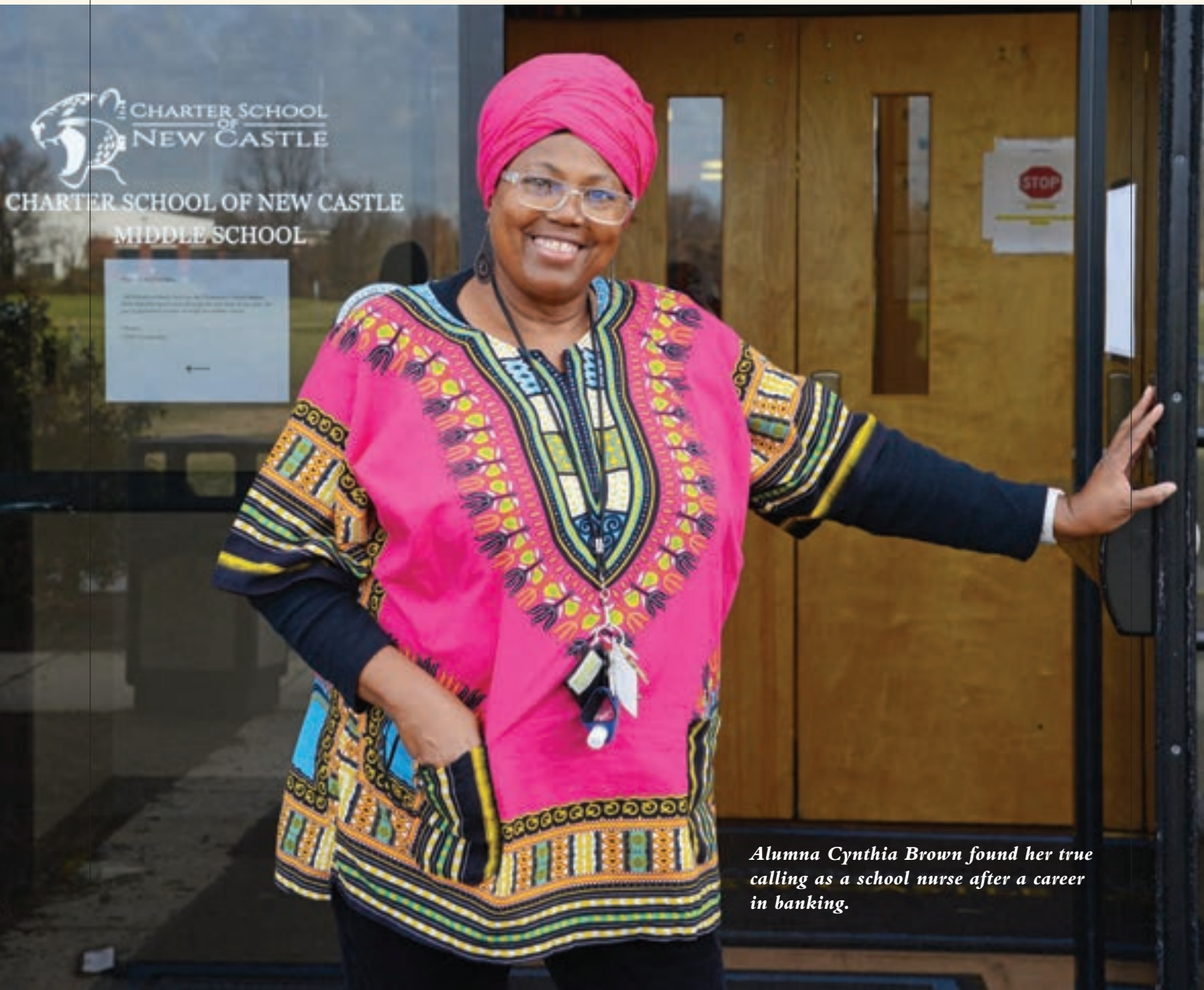
ended, but a new one called Strive for 25 addresses issues like the teacher shortage, new curriculum, expanding career and technology programs, and other needs.

“A big part of “Strive for 25” is going to be thinking differently about how we provide education and opportunities for students,” she explains.

One of her favorite activities is visiting schools and walking the halls, checking in with teachers and substitutes to ask about their day. One day, a little boy asked her, “Dr.

Griffith, what is your job? We see you all the time.”

Griffith replied, “Just like the school principal is in charge of making sure all teachers have what they need and that the buses run on time, just to make sure it runs smoothly, that’s what I do for the whole district. The student looked at me and said, ‘Wow, you must be a millionaire.’ And I said, no, not quite. Then he said, ‘That’s amazing.’ I said, yeah, it is. But it’s also very rewarding because I get to talk to kids like you and find out how you’re doing.” **WU**



Alumna Cynthia Brown found her true calling as a school nurse after a career in banking.

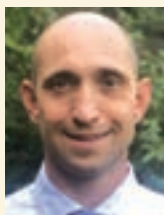
STAY INVOLVED

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.

2004



CRAIG DURIE, M.S.N in Leadership, of Schnecksville, Pennsylvania, gave a TEDx talk about the

need to create access to sub-specialties in rural communities, and published his first book, "Speaking Human: A Journey in Palliative Medicine."



JAHSHA TABRON, M.Ed. in School Leadership and Instruction, of Wilmington, was named

Delaware's 2022 Teacher of the Year by the Delaware Department of Education.

2008



JOHN FISHER-KLEIN, M.S. in Human Services, of Wilmington, was appointed Attic Youth Center's

executive director.

2009



CARL DOLENTE III, M.Ed. in School Leadership, of Franklinville, New Jersey, was named superintendent of

the Cumberland Regional School District.

2010



CAROL BIRNBOHM, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation, of Southampton, New Jersey,

marked her 29th anniversary with the Lenape Regional High School District and began her ninth year as its superintendent. She will continue to lead the district until the 2025–26 school year.

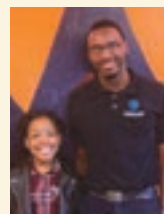
2015



SHAVONNE BRATHWAITE, Ed. D. in Organizational Leadership and Innovation, of New Castle, is

executive director of Mosaic, a national nonprofit healthcare organization. She was honored as one of the "40 Most Empowering Women in Business in Delaware" by Delaware Today magazine.

2016



ANDRE HENRY, B.S. in Business Management, of Chester, Pennsylvania, published his first book, "From

Orphan to Self-made Millionaire: The 10 Irrefutable Laws of Purpose," after being recognized in an article highlighting his journey from an orphan to an accountant who gave back to undervalued communities.

2017



SHAKEMA GEER, B.S. in Communication, of Marlton, New Jersey, is a new board member of the

Boys & Girls Clubs of Gloucester County.

2018



TIERRA M. PRITCHETT, Ed.D. in Organizational Learning, Leadership and Innovation,

was appointed as the deputy commissioner of the Division of Administration, Finance, and Quality for the City of Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services. In this role, she works to provide leadership, vision, and direction for all aspects of the division including fiscal oversight, digital operations, quality, and human resources. In addition, as deputy commissioner, Dr. Pritchett focuses on ensuring that department strategies are proactive, comprehensive, consistent, and reflect DBHIDS' strategic focus, priorities, and values.

2019



TAQUIL FOSTER LEWIS, Ed. D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation, of Camden Wyoming,

Delaware, is the DEI coordinator for the Cape Henlopen School District.



JEFFREY BENSON, MBA in Organizational Leadership, of Seaford, was recognized as a "Top 100

Under 50 Executive Leader" by Diversity MBA Media. The designation represents outstanding achievement in community, leadership and education.

2021



MICAH EDWARDS, M.Ed. in Special Education, of Townsend, was honored by Ford as a

winner of its Freedom Unsung "Teacher Heroes of COVID-19." He was one of 25 K-12 educators recognized for doing extraordinary things for the African American community during the pandemic.



NATALIE DISABATINO, M.S. in Marketing Management, of Wilmington, was honored as an "Under

40 Achiever and Innovator" by Delaware Business Times.



UPDATES



A Call to Work with Children and Families: A New Concentration

Students interested in working with children or families might obtain a B.S. in Psychology with a new concentration in Children and Families. The program provides the opportunity to focus elective

credits on courses that help prepare professionals for this rewarding field. For example, students will identify the roles commonly played by family members and assess the impact of these roles using strength-

based, global, and diversity perspectives. They will also examine models for helping and empowering families, how we influence our environment, and how it impacts us.

Potential employment areas include youth development,



foster care, adoption, child care, marriage and family enrichment, and areas encompassing family science enrichment, family science research, family life education, and family intervention. **WU**

For more information, contact Dr. Kelly Cheeseman, regional chair of Psychology and Organizational Dynamics, at kelly.a.cheeseman@wilmu.edu.

A New Chair

DR. **ELIZABETH “LISA” ADAIR** has been appointed chair of the Clinical Mental Health Program (CMHC), after serving as acting chair. She was instrumental in authoring the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Self-Assessment Study for re-accreditation and is a licensed and practicing counselor.

DR. EDWARD L. GUTHRIE, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, says Dr. Adair

stepped up as a leader in a challenging time for educators. In both the acting and full-time positions, she simultaneously supported the director of CMHC, **DR. DORIS LAUCKNER**, in the daily operation of the program, co-authored the self-study review of the program for re-accreditation, on-boarded two new faculty members, and along with Dr. Lauckner, converted the entire program from a face-to-face, semester-based format to a hybrid modality and block scheduling one.

“This was all done during the pandemic as we were all learning to adjust and serve our students. Her professionalism and dedication to the program and her students serves as an example. We are fortunate to have her,” Dr. Guthrie says. **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida



Elizabeth Adair

PAUL PATTON

Leading with Distinction

College of Health Professions Dean **DR. DENISE WELLS**

received the DAWN 2021–2022 Leadership Award, which is granted to a woman who has excelled in the field of higher education and served with distinction as a role model for rising stars in her organization and beyond. Dr. Wells accepted her award in October, at DAWN’s virtual ceremony that brought together colleagues from neighboring colleges and universities.

DAWN, the acronym for Delaware American Council on Education Women’s Network, grants its Leadership Award to women in higher education who demonstrate progressive leadership within their organizations or have had a demonstrable, positive impact on a department, unit, or university.

“Recognition as a leader in higher education is a proud moment in my professional career,” says Dr. Wells.

“Wilmington University has provided me the platform to encourage others toward achieving their own goals, and my colleagues have always welcomed the enthusiasm I bring to the table to accomplish that feat. I have been blessed to have positive, strong women in my life, starting with my mom and sister. I find joy in paying it forward, empowering others toward becoming the best versions of themselves.”



Dr. Denise Wells

The October event also honored Wilmington University Rising Star Award winner and academic advisor **ASHLEE YOUNANS**, who holds two master’s degrees and is working toward her doctorate. Youmans was selected for her strong work ethic and exemplary student service. She also has served in the Army National Guard.

“We celebrate Dr. Wells’ distinguished career and are

delighted that DAWN has honored and recognized her dedication and talent with this meaningful award,” says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “We also extend our congratulations to Ashlee Youmans, who is deeply committed to serving our students. Both women are role models in the higher education field and exemplary representatives of the Wilmington University community.” **WU** —*Maria Hess*

Alumna Named Rookie Teacher of the Year

VICKI GRABLE, a Summa Cum Laude graduate who completed her Elementary Education program in 2018, was more than a standout student: She was also active on the WilmU cheerleading team, and came to WilmU from her home state of Florida, partly because she hoped to join WilmU's award-winning cheerleading squad. She made the squad, and when she completed her coursework prior to student teaching, WilmU's Clinical Studies team — **TYLER WELLS, THERESA CARTER, KEIRA POTTER, and AMANDA SHENTON** — arranged for Grable to complete her student teaching in the Sunshine State. She so impressed colleagues there that she was hired as a full-time teacher before she even completed her student teaching experience. Recently, Grable was named Rookie Teacher of the year in Eustis, Florida, an award given to an early-career teacher — teachers in their first four years of teaching — who demonstrates outstanding attitudes and skills and can generate high levels of student engagement and academic achievement. **WU** —*John Gray*



Grable, at center, in her Florida classroom

COURTESY OF VICKI GRABLE

An Extraordinary Woman in Business



COURTESY OF ERICA DORSETT

Erica Dorsett

Alumna **ERICA DORSETT** was named one of 40 Top Women in Business by Delaware Today magazine. The 2020 graduate first attended then-Wilmington College in the early 2000s, then returned to complete her bachelor's in Marketing.

"I am so proud of my time at WilmU and actively use the skills I learned in my business," she says.

Co-owner of the Wilmington-based First State Hood & Duct, Dorsett founded the commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning and maintenance company in 2009 with her husband, Clarence Dorsett. The company serves clients in Delaware, Penn-

sylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey.

"I am extremely honored to be named as one of Delaware's Top Women in Business," Dorsett said in a release. "I can honestly say it has been nothing short of the grace of God that our company has been able to become one of the best kitchen exhaust cleaning providers in the country. Surrounding ourselves with great people, putting the customer first, and continuing to educate ourselves over the years have been key components to the success my husband and I have experienced thus far. I am happy to be included among these inspiring and trailblazing women." **WU**



MAY 5

University Events

April 13

YOUR COLLEGE WEBINARS: VACCINATION NATION

WilmU's College of Health Professions presents "Vaccination Nation: Am I Immune?," a webinar on the COVID-19 vaccines as well as the other immunizations necessary to keep the immune system in top shape. 12-1 p.m. online.

Contact donna.j.hardy@wilmu.edu for more information.



April 26-28

VIOLENT CRIME SYMPOSIUM

Open to all members of law enforcement agencies, WilmU's Criminal Justice Institute's first annual Violent Crime Symposium features speakers and resources on the issues and current events affecting the law enforcement field.

Visit wilmucji.com/events/violent-crime-symposium or wilmucji.com for information, costs and registration.



May 10

TRUE CRIME LECTURE SERIES: GERALD CLARK

WilmU's Criminal Justice Institute presents retired FBI agent Gerald Clark, co-author of "Pizza Bomber: The Untold Story of America's Most Shocking Bank Robbery." 5:30-8 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 4727 Concord Pike, Wilmington. Free and open to the public, but registration is required.

Visit wilmucji.com for more information.

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.



Alumni Events

May 5

SCHOLARSHIP GOLF CLASSIC

WilmU's annual golf outing helps to raise funds for student scholarships. Enjoy refreshments, raffles, and a scholarship dinner with silent auction and live music at the Deerfield Golf Club, 507 Thompson Station Rd., Newark.

For more information, contact brandi.d.redding@wilmu.edu or visit wilmu.edu/GolfClassic.

April 21, May 19,
June 16

ALUMNI CHAPTER MEETINGS

Connect, engage, and grow with WilmU. All alumni from the New Castle, Kent, Sussex (Delaware), and New Jersey chapters are invited to join fellow grads on the third Thursday of the month from 6–7 p.m. **Contact donna.j.hardy@wilmu.edu for information on in-person or virtual meeting plans.**

April 19, May 17,
June 21

INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI CHAPTER MEETINGS

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

April 27, May 25,
June 22

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

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

Sept. 13

TRUE CRIME LECTURE SERIES: GARY NOESNER

WilmU's Criminal Justice Institute presents retired FBI agent Gary Noesner, author of "Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator." 5:30–8 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 4727 Concord Pike, Wilmington. Free and open to the public, but registration is required.

Visit wilmu.cji.com for more information.



Admissions Events

Ongoing

WILMU WEBINARS

Meet with staff and faculty at an upcoming virtual open house or attend a 20-to-30-minute information session covering financial aid, undergraduate programs, graduate studies, transferring, and other topics. **View a [schedule of upcoming open houses and webinars](#) and register at wilmu.edu/VisitUs.**



by Maria Hess

We offer these longtime colleagues best wishes in their retirements.

Alfred (Al) DiEmedio

Al DiEmedio joined then-Wilmington College in 2004 as an assistant professor and program coordinator and was promoted in July of 2006 to assistant professor and director in the College of Education. He also served on WilmU's Finance Committee, among other committees. Before WilmU, DiEmedio was a principal at Brandywine High School, Smyrna High School, Alexis I. DuPont High School, and a teacher at several schools, including St. Mark's High School. In addition, he aided numerous professional associations, including the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Jobs for Delaware Graduates, Governor's Commission for Educational Improvement, National Policy Board for Educational Administration, and the Delaware Military Academy. His awards are also numerous, including appreciation accolades from Middle States, New Castle County School Counselors Association, and the Air Force Junior ROTC. For his service in Vietnam in the U.S. Army, DiEmedio earned a Bronze Star.



Peggy Mitchell

Peggy Mitchell began her career at then-Wilmington College in 2004 as a planning specialist and has taught for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She ended her tenure as assistant vice president of Academic Support Services. In that role, she led Academic Advising, Student Success Center, T.C.E./Student Outreach, and CRM Advise operations. Some of her many accomplishments include managing and researching the opening of the Student Success Center, launching an Early Alert Program to support at-risk student populations, and centralizing transfer credit processes. Mitchell also leveraged CRM Advise, and strategic communication and outreach plans via CRM Advise. She co-chaired the multi-phased rollout of WilmU's Guided Pathways Program as well. Mitchell served on multiple committees, as well as state vice president of the Delaware State Chapter P.E.O., a philanthropic educational organization committed to helping women achieve their higher education goals, and as president of the National College Learning Center Association.





Dr. Barbara Sartell

Dr. Barbara Sartell joined Wilmington College in 1992 as an adjunct then became full-time in 1993 in the B.S.N. program. She started teaching in the M.S.N.-L.D.R. program, which she created and chaired, and taught in the M.S.N. Nurse Practitioner program, creating the Adult-Gerontology Specialty focus. Her final position was as a full professor in the D.N.P. program. She has been the advisor to numerous projects, and many of her students have gone on to publish and present their work at the national level. Dr. Sartell led two 14-day medical mission trips with WilmU nursing practitioner student Aminata Conteh, who went with Dr. Sartell on her second trip to Sierra Leone, then opened her own clinic there. Dr. Sartell earned an award from The United States Association of Sierra Leone Healthcare Workers. She graduated recently from the University of New Hampshire and passed the Psychiatric N.P. Boards. She is a consultant in geriatric psychiatry and an independent practitioner in her telehealth internal medicine and psychiatric practice.



Sally Stokes

Sally Stokes was a full-time faculty member for over 26 years and chair of the Accounting program for 20. She also chaired the Faculty Committee and developed the post-bachelor's certificate in Accounting, the master's program in Accounting, and the Accounting Review Certificate to prepare students for the Uniform C.P.A. exam. In addition, Stokes collaborated with the Nehemiah Gateway Community Development Corporation to create the Tax Help Practicum (BAC 190) for students who wished to prepare tax returns for low-income individuals. Thanks to Stokes' contacts as former chair of the Delaware State Board of Accountancy and president of the Delaware State Society of Certified Public Accountants, she was able to work with WilmU's Career Services team to plan yearly "Meet the Firms" recruiting events and the "Panel of Professionals."

NEW AT WILMU



Adjunct Professor and CJJ Co-Director Scott Duffey

The FBI: A Look Behind the Curtain

A new undergraduate elective, **THE FBI: A LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN** (CRJ-345), delves into the inner workings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, says Adjunct Professor **SCOTT DUFFEY**, who is also co-director of WilmU's Criminal Justice Institute.

The FBI, a law enforcement arm of the U.S. government, has 456 offices nationwide and 90 overseas. Students learn about the agency's inception and growth throughout its 110-plus-year history and how it's been depicted in films and books.

"Additionally, we address the many federal violations the FBI has

jurisdiction over and some of its most notable cases in American history," says Duffey. "We provide insight into programs and resources the FBI offers to its law enforcement, community and business partners, and how effective the agency is in combatting terrorism."

Students learn about the FBI's evolution from a leadership standpoint as well, examining the direction of 20 directors — acting and appointed — from Stanley W. Finch (1908) to current Director Christopher Wray, who took the helm in 2017.

"We know that many of our



students are interested in employment with the FBI," says Duffey, "so we talk at length about myriad career paths within the agency." **WU**

To learn more about this course and others in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, visit wilmu.edu/behavioralscience.

Only from
WilmU!

Have You Heard About



Dual-Credit ADVANTAGE™?

Go Further, Faster!

Dual-Credit ADVANTAGE accelerates your education through personalized academic pathways that make the most of your time and tuition dollars. You can earn more credentials faster, and with savings, by using Dual-Credits.



Earn a **CERTIFICATE**
and **DEGREE** simultaneously.



Accelerate into your
NEXT DEGREE seamlessly.



130 WilmU academic
programs feature **Dual-Credit**
ADVANTAGE options.

Learn more today: wilmu.edu/DualCredit

Save Time. Save Tuition. Accelerate Your Education!

WilmU works for you.



WILMINGTON
UNIVERSITY™



WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY
320 N. DUPONT HIGHWAY
NEW CASTLE, DE 19720

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #683
Wilmington DE 19850

TAFADZISWA “TAFF” BUNU,
a Business Analytics and
Finance major, calls WilmU's
Safety Cadet program “the best
job on campus.” He’s not alone,
as you’ll read on page **38**.

