

WILMU[®]

BRINGING JUSTICE HOME

*Guided by experience and
purpose, Wilmington
University School of Law's
new dean, The Honorable
Jan R. Jurden, is building
a legal community that's
ready to serve.*

Dean Jan R. Jurden

Thank You, Donors

Our donors give because they believe in what
WilmU empowers students to achieve.



“ [I] love the school’s **mission to help adult learners** excel in their careers while **understanding their obligations** to work and children.”

– Dr. Kasey T., B.S.N. '15, Ed.D. '23, **WilmU Donor**



Make your gift today:
wilmu.edu/Giving

View the 2024-2025 Donor Honor Roll: **wilmu.edu/Donors**



“These stories reflect who we are:
a student-centered university driven
by individuals committed to making
a difference.”

—Dr. LaVerne Harmon



Dear Friends,

This issue of WilmU Magazine arrives with stories that reflect the strength of our community and the purpose that drives us.

Our cover story features **THE HONORABLE JAN R. JURDEN**, who now serves as dean of the Wilmington University School of Law. Guided by decades on the bench, her leadership is grounded in service, mentorship, and a belief in the transformative power of the law. Building on an already strong foundation, the School of Law is expanding its reach and deepening its impact, preparing a legal community ready to serve and equipped to lead.

You'll also read about a senior director who extends her commitment to education through global faith-based philanthropy; a doctoral student whose technical brilliance in AV furniture design has unexpectedly led him into marketing; and a recent graduate from Bangladesh who reflects on how Wilmington University shaped his journey through perseverance and gratitude.

In addition, you'll learn about Wilmington University's newest initiative, the Center for Law, Justice and Society, which opened in the spring at our Dover location. And you'll find inspiring updates on our student-athletes, whose dedication and drive continue to elevate our institution on and off the field.

These stories reflect who we are: a student-centered university driven by individuals committed to making a difference. It is a privilege to share the work of students, faculty, administration, alumni, and staff who lead with integrity and compassion.

Enjoy the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "LaVerne Harmon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Dr. LaVerne Harmon

President

President

DR. LAVERNE HARMON

Editor-in-Chief

DR. MARIA HESS

MAGAZINE TEAM

•
Staff Writer/Proofreader
BOB YEARICK

•
University Photographer
SUSAN L. GREGG

•
University Photographer
PAUL PATTON

Writers

VERLIN ALEXANDER III

DR. JANICE COLVIN

PAM GEORGE

DR. MARIA HESS

DENNIS HUFFMAN

ADRIENNE JOHNSON

HON. JAN R. JURDEN (*Ret.*)

DAN LAULETTA

ROB MILLER

CHRIS MOORE

DR. RUTH NORMAN

NICOLE ROMANO

EILEEN SMITH DALLABRIDA

*Have a question,
comment or story idea?*

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

Like us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/
WilmingtonUniversity/

Follow us on Twitter:

@thewilmu

*WilmU Magazine is designed
and published by:*

Today Media Custom Communications

1000 N. West Street, Suite 601

Wilmington, DE 19801

(302) 656-1809

www.todaymediacustom.com

Chairman

ROBERT F. MARTINELLI

Project Manager

KIM FORTUNA

Art Director

RANDY CLARK

Editor

TINA IRGANG

WilmU Magazine is a publication for WilmU students, alumni, staff, faculty, friends, and the Board of Trustees. Produced in-house and distributed twice a year, the magazine has a circulation of over 70,000 and is also available digitally at blog.wilmu.edu/news/magazine-publications. Personal views expressed in articles do not reflect official Wilmington University policies.

CONTENTS



FEATURES

*Behind Dr. Nemeth in the first-floor foyer,
a sign reads, "Go ahead and do things."*

26 COVER STORY

Bringing Justice Home

Guided by experience and purpose, Wilmington University School of Law's new dean, **THE HONORABLE JAN R. JURDEN**, is building a legal community that's ready to serve.

by Maria Hess



Jan R. Jurden

p.26

36

Innovation — Unwired!

A WilmU **DBA STUDENT** sparks smarter design with customer-driven insights.

by Ruth Norman

page
32

A Life of Service

Senior Director of Educational Effectiveness **DR. LUCIA NEMETH** also serves as president of the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, allowing her to blend data-informed leadership in higher education with a lifelong commitment to global, faith-based philanthropy.

by Bob Yearick

PAUL PATTON

p.40



Donte Dockery

ERIC FLORES

p.48



Kyma Fulgence

PAUL PATTON

4 The News

The latest news on Wilmu's faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

40 Sports

DONTE DOCKERY earns a podium finish at the 2025 NCAA Division II Outdoor Championship, by Dan Lauletta; **ERIN HARVEY** named to NCAA Committee; Wildcat softball team earns 2024 Delaware Team of the Year honors; Three basketball alums go pro overseas. Stories by Bob Yearick.

48 Alumni

Retired **GEN. JAMES BENSON** reflects on a lifetime of leadership, by Bob Yearick; TeachZen Founder **KYMA FULGENCE** transforms access to education, by Pam George; and News & Notes, by Verlin Jay Alexander III.

56 Wilmington University School of Law

A profile of law student **XAVIER HURT**, by Dean Jan R. Jurden; The law school receives national recognition at the inaugural Chapman Challenge Trial Competition, by Maria Hess.

60 Center for Law, Justice and Society

Wilmington University's new Center for Law, Justice and Society opens in Dover, strengthening public service education across Delaware; new safety training for constables; a cold case internship program in collaboration with Chester County; a focus on preventing elder abuse and fraud. Stories by Maria Hess.

p.36

Dr. Mohamed Gebril



SUSAN L. GREGG

CONNECT WITH US



Read exclusive stories in our **DIGITAL EDITION.**



Don't forget to connect with Wilmington University on **FACEBOOK.**

THE NEWS

A Life Fully Lived

Remembering Dr. Bonnie Kirkpatrick



This summer, we mourned the loss of our friend and colleague, **DR. BONNIE KIRKPATRICK**, who passed away on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, after privately facing cancer with grace and determination. She continued working through much of her illness, lifting others along the way, never losing her sense of humor, and fighting like a warrior.

Family was Dr. Kirkpatrick's greatest joy. She spoke often and lovingly of her mother, Jean, her son, Kirk, his wife, Madisen, and their two daughters, Elliot and Maeve. Becoming a grandmother was one of her proudest roles — and no one wore that title more glamorously. She also adored her dog, Zeus, and could often be seen walking him briskly throughout North Wilmington, where she lived for many years.

Dr. Kirkpatrick's career at Wilmington University began in 2002 as an adjunct instructor, followed by over two decades of service in academic and administrative leadership roles. She served as an instructional designer, director of online learning and educational technology, and senior director of faculty development. She eventually took on roles as assistant vice president of administrative affairs and, later, as assistant vice president of student enrollment, overseeing

both enrollment and financial services.

"Dr. Kirkpatrick exemplified professionalism, compassion, and resilience," says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. "She led with integrity, treated others with respect, and remained committed to our students and colleagues throughout her career. Her impact will be felt for years to come."

Long before online learning became essential, Dr. Kirkpatrick recognized its promise. A former elementary school teacher with a deep understanding of how students learn, she was recruited to what was then Wilmington College by a former colleague who knew that great teachers make great instructional designers. At a critical moment in the University's growth, she helped lay the groundwork for what would become the Office of Online Learning. Her thoughtful approach to course design, grounded in real classroom experience, played a key role in launching the University's early online offerings.

Later, as assistant vice president, Dr. Kirkpatrick focused on improving the student experience more broadly. She led efforts to streamline services, designing smarter systems and more responsive processes. An innovative course scheduling model she intro-

duced automatically generated new sections based on enrollment trends and capacity, enabling students to access the classes they needed without delay.

She also collaborated with colleagues to establish a team-based support model, ensuring that when students reached out for help, they were served quickly and directly. That student-centered approach became a hallmark of her leadership.

Commencement was another area that Dr. Kirkpatrick reimaged. By coordinating simultaneous ceremonies, she enabled more graduates to invite loved ones to celebrate their achievements. When it came to graduation, she was tireless. She poured her energy, creativity, and heart into every ceremony, ensuring that each one was a celebration worthy of the students and their families. It was not unusual to see Dr. Kirkpatrick racing from one end of the Chase Center on the Riverfront to the other, ensuring that student needs were met and addressing last-minute problems. Caring for students was her true passion. Her ability to think like both an educator and an administrator made her an invaluable force for progress.

Dr. Kirkpatrick had a gift for making people feel seen and valued. Anyone could pop into her office,





Dr. Bonnie Kirkpatrick

where she'd offer a Diet Coke and a listening ear. She decorated every department she led for the holidays, a tradition that stemmed from her years as a teacher. She never missed an opportunity to send a card when someone was promoted or recognized. Her quick wit and the twinkle in her eye were equal parts charm and mischief.

"Dr. Kirkpatrick had a remarkable way of leading without ever needing the spotlight," says Senior Vice

President and Chief Operating Officer **DR. ERIN DIMARCO**. "She made every room feel lighter and every challenge feel more manageable. Whether she was solving problems behind the scenes or making someone laugh, she brought a balance of competence and warmth. We will miss her deeply, not only for what she did but for who she was."

Dr. Kirkpatrick had endured immeasurable loss. She was the youngest of four sisters; three had

passed away from cancer, the other from a stroke. In 2023, when her sister, Karen, passed, she wrote a note to her on her own Facebook page. It said, "To my sister, Karen, there's nothing more beautiful than a life fully lived. May you rest peacefully."

Those words, offered in grief and love, now echo back to Dr. Kirkpatrick.

Her life was full, and so was the love she gave. May she, too, rest peacefully. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

A NEW DEAN: DR. ADRIENNE BEY

Soon after she was appointed dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (COSBS) last April, **DR. ADRIENNE BEY** shared what she called “my story” in her first staff meeting with her COSBS colleagues.

“I have always had a passion for helping people,” she began. “It’s interesting how my journey and all of my experiences have led me to where I am now.”

Indeed, Dr. Bey’s CV is a testament to her qualifications for the job. Her career, as she said in that initial meeting, had touched on virtually everything “being taught in the college — from corrections/criminal justice, prevention/intervention/or treatment, to human services administration and clinical mental health counseling.”

As for legal studies, she pointed out that one of her daughters had graduated from Howard University School of Law and is a law clerk in Washington for a contractor with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), while her other daughter, who has an M.S. in the Administration of Human Services from WilmU and was an Audrey K. Doberstein Leadership Award recipient, is DEI administrator for the Delaware DOJ.

She ended the meeting with a light-hearted cautionary note: “One thing about me is that if you spend enough time with me, I will start treating you like family. Some people embrace this and some people may not be comfortable with it. I get it. Please call



me out if I get too comfortable.”

While her title has the ring of inevitability about it, Dr. Bey says the path her career took wasn’t the result of “a specific plan.”

“Opportunities arose,” she says, “and I went ahead and took advantage of those opportunities.”

“Bloom where you’re planted,” she adds.

There were hints early on that she had an aptitude for connecting with people. At William Penn High School in New Castle, she was voted the senior class superlative “most talkative,” a designation that surprised her a bit.

“I mean, there were about 400 people in my class,” she laughs. “I thought it was funny. Looking back at it now, I guess I’ve had it all my life — the gift of gab.”

She played varsity basketball and was a student council officer. She also had perfect attendance throughout high school, a sure sign that she enjoyed

being around people, especially her classmates. “I was very high on work hard, play hard,” she says. “I am an only child, and that was my peer group, my community.”

In choosing a possible career, Dr. Bey says she felt a calling “to work with children and families, especially children,” and she considered becoming a child psychiatrist, but she wasn’t keen on committing to four years of medical school. So she enrolled as a Psychology major at Temple University. She spent two years there, then transferred to the more affordable University of Delaware for her last two years, graduating in 1990.

Since then, her career has confirmed that she does indeed have “a passion for helping people.”

Dr. Bey spent many years in human services and mental health counseling, mostly working with vulnerable populations. She started as a mental health associate at MeadowWood Behavioral Health Hospital in New Castle, then moved on to Child Protective Services for the State of Delaware, working the second shift and handling emergency situations alongside the New Castle County Police.

Her next job, as a juvenile probation officer and Operation Safe Streets officer, proved frustrating, but it did inspire her to get a master’s degree and, ultimately, her Ph.D.

“We would often send kids out to the Midwest to be ‘rehabilitated,’ but I ended up bringing them back to the



Dr. Adrienne Bey

same environments,” she says. “It was a vicious cycle. I finally got frustrated with the system, and I decided that I needed to get an advanced degree to see if I could impact kids from a policy perspective.” So she enrolled in the master’s in Social Work program at Delaware State University (DSU).

While there, she secured internships with two area prisons. At Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, or Gander Hill Prison, she worked through a grant that was written by one of her DSU professors to offer parenting classes to fathers convicted of felony-level offenses against children.

At Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution, she assisted the prison psychologist with “psych exams and facilitating women’s psycho-educational life-skills groups.”

Two of her professors were so impressed with her work that they urged her to pursue a Ph.D. “I had never thought about it before,” Dr. Bey says, “but with their support, I did it.”

First, though, she had a couple of graduations to attend — her own, and her mother’s.

Dr. Bey was the first member of her family to earn a college degree,

and in 1999, her mother, Sandy Clark, became the second. After working in banking and then children’s services for many years, her mother decided to earn a B.A. in Human Services from Springfield College. She took classes at what was then the school’s satellite campus in downtown Wilmington, but graduation was in Springfield, Massachusetts — on the same day her daughter was to receive a master’s degree from DSU.

Dr. Bey decided to skip the Dover ceremony and instead traveled to Springfield, where she sat in the audience in her cap and gown with her father and family to proudly watch her 52-year-old mother receive her degree.

That fall, Dr. Bey went back to UD to study for a Ph.D. in Human Development & Family Sciences. While working on the degree and raising two daughters with Randy, her husband of 31 years, she took on a number of social services jobs. Among them was working as the coordinator for the federal Weed & Seed Initiative through the Ministry of Caring (in partnership with the District of Delaware’s U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Delaware Criminal Justice Council), and voluntary training of lay counselors at her church (she has a diploma in Biblical Counseling). It was through the latter sessions that she connected with Wilmington University.

“Someone at one of my workshops knew about an adjunct who needed someone to replace her for one class in the school counseling program in the College of Education,” she says. “They referred me, and I taught that one class and then I was hired as an adjunct for additional courses.”

That was 2004, and it marked the beginning of what became a steady climb up the University’s academic ladder.

Two years later, she saw a story in The Wilmington News Journal that piqued her interest. It was about a new Administration of Human Services master's program in the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences at WilmU that was being spearheaded by **DR. LORI SITLER**, then an assistant professor and chair of the University's Government and Public Policy program. Through her stint as a parent educator at CHILd, Inc., Dr. Bey had met Dr. Sitler, who left the University in 2018 to become executive director of CHILd, Inc.

"I contacted Lori and let her know that I was available if she needed any help, and I was hired on a contractual basis to create the internship handbook," says Dr. Bey. That assignment led to an assistant professorship and appointment as the first chair of the AHS master's program. She filled that position for 11½ years, until 2018, when she was named director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).

Dr. Bey brought her usual enthusiasm and creativity to the CTE job. "For seven years," she says, "I had the opportunity to guide professional development opportunities for all faculty, both full-time and adjunct, based on current trends. Recognizing that students bring their full identities to the classroom, we focused on equipping faculty with the skills to create inclusive classroom environments that meet diverse student needs. We covered a wide array of topics, from theory to practice — Artificial Intelligence, Neurodiversity in the Classroom, Faculty Wellness, etc. No training topic was off limits. We also created a pathway for faculty to earn the designation of Change Champion. I was also responsible for facilitating the monthly Chairs Roundtable meetings, and I onboarded new academic chairs. Through CTE,



Dr. Bey was recognized as a 2023 Delaware American Council on Education Women's Network Visionary.

we created an onboarding process that includes monthly peer group meetings and the assignment of a mentor for each chair. The goal is to help chairs get acclimated to the University and its mission, as well as provide support in understanding their job duties for their new role."

While serving as CTE director, Dr. Bey earned a full professorship in 2019 and was recognized as a 2023 Delaware American Council on Education Women's Network Visionary.

She settled quickly into her new job as COSBS dean, meeting one-on-one with the directors, chairs, and staff. She says she wanted to see "what their vision was" for the college, adding that she foresees opportunities in their curriculum and other areas.

"I have ideas about what we can do to position ourselves in 2025 and beyond," she says. "The disciplines taught in our college are ripe for innovation."

In the meantime, she continues with her private consulting business — ABS Empowerment Group. ABS (an acronym formed from the first letter of her name and the names of her children, Brandi and Sabrina) provides counseling services as well

as clinical supervision and mental health technical assistance, nonprofit program development and strategic planning services (including faith-based), motivational seminars, and parent education workshops.

To fulfill these roles, she says, "I have various certifications and a clinical license that I have to keep current, which includes being a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Human Resources Senior Certified Professional. My consulting business provides me the opportunity to keep abreast of current trends in those fields for my license and certification renewals."

In her spare time, Dr. Bey spends time with her grandsons, Clark and Adonis, attends meetings of the WilmU Toastmasters Club (which she founded 10 years ago), plays bingo, and attends soul line dancing classes.

"I do it for exercise," she says. "People invite members of my line dance class to parties to teach line dancing. We get the party started."

The group, she says, "is mostly retired people. I appreciate spending time with people aging in a vital way, living their lives to the fullest."

Then she adds, "I love people. I get energy from people." **WU** —Bob Yearick

Dr. Berke Receives Visionary Award

DR. **DEBRA L. BERKE** is a recipient of this year's Visionary Award from the DAWN ACE (American Council on Education) Women's Network, an honor recognizing women in higher education who are making a meaningful impact in their communities, families, and careers.

"Dr. Berke has earned her recognition and does so much to advance her students, our college, and our institution," said **DR. EDWARD GUTHRIE**, former dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, when Dr. Berke received the award. He has since retired.

Each year, DAWN honors local female leaders for their achievements, leadership, and contributions to higher education. Dr. Berke was recognized at the annual Leadership Summit on the New Castle Campus on March 6.

Dr. Berke, director of Psychology programs and the Center for Prevention Science, also is president-elect of



the National Council on Family Relations Board and a champion for trauma-informed care, which acknowledges the impact of trauma and trains professionals in a variety of fields to promote healing, safety, and trust for individuals who have experienced trauma.

"I am honored to receive this award," says Dr. Berke. "I truly appreciate the acknowledgment of the passion work I have done and continue to do to advance the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities. I look forward to the day that every individual, every family, every organization, every community not only survives but thrives." *WU —Eileen Smith Dallabrida*



Dr. Debra L. Berke



Students hone their skills out in the field.

For Technology Students, It's Lights, Camera, Liftoff

RICHARD EDEVANE, an adjunct professor at the College of Business and Technology, was so impressed by two Wilmington University Advanced Camera and Cinematography students that he hired them to help shoot a real-life, hands-on project for his video production company.

VINCE YAZIDJIAN and **JUSTIN LEWANDOWSKI** traveled with Edevane to Huntsville, Alabama, to make

a video commissioned by Arm & Hammer Baking Soda showing school children launching bottle rockets propelled by baking soda on the company's Rocketship Day.

Yazidjian served as cameraman, capturing kids' delight as their bottle rockets soared into the sky.

"Vince did excellent work in my classes. He has a great eye," says Edevane, founder of Creative Media

Group in New Castle.

Lewandowski served as the production assistant, setting up lights, ensuring batteries were charged, operating small cameras attached to the rocket, and managing luggage and equipment during multiple legs of the trip.

The crew flew from Philadelphia to Charlotte, North Carolina, then transferred to a puddle jumper to



COURTESY OF THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

travel to Huntsville, where they rented a van.

“It was a challenge logistically, making sure everything made it when we changed planes and then went on to the van,” Edevane says. “It was fast and furious, but Justin handled everything beautifully.”

Edevane has been an adjunct at WilmU for over 20 years and has hired students several times to work on small local projects. This is the first time students have gained professional experience on a national project.

Since the Arm & Hammer shoot, he has hired Lewandowski several

times for camera work and plans to bring him in for projects that require production assistance.

“Vince and Justin go the extra mile,” he says.

Serving Nemours

Students and faculty from the College of Business and Technology are sharing their love for gaming with kids undergoing treatment at Nemours Children’s Hospital — and are finding more opportunities to connect with children facing health challenges.

The initiative began when **ROBERT**

PASSARELLI, chair of Animation & 3D and Game Design, sought ways to enhance face-to-face experiences for students and faculty. He brainstormed with **SCOTT SHAW**, Nemours gaming and technology specialist and former Game Design chair at WilmU. (He is an adjunct at WilmU).

Nemours introduced gaming to decrease boredom and anxiety in young patients. For the first visit, Passarelli was joined by **JORDAN ALTIERY**, a student from WilmU’s eSports team, and two adjuncts, **ADAM CAMPBELL** and **JEREMY BREGERMANN**. They soon learned there are multiple ways to interact with children.

“It’s not just video games. There’s a full music room, an art room, a craft room. It’s a fun place where kids can get away from the challenges they are facing,” Passarelli says.

He is in discussions with Nemours on ways to expand the program, such as providing transportation for WilmU students to Nemours. The goal is a monthly two-hour visit to the children’s hospital.

“It’s an activity where students and faculty can help kids and get to know one another at the same time,” Passarelli says. “It’s outreach at its best.” **WU** —*Eileen Smith Dallabrida*



Robert Passarelli

COURTESY OF ROBERT PASSARELLI

From Delaware to the Deep Sea

The Florida Keys are a long way from a state-of-the-art lab in Wilmington, Delaware, but **DR. MILTON MULDROW JR.** hopes his research will help halt the loss of Florida's coral reefs.

Dr. Muldrow joined Wilmington University in 2015, founding the Environmental Science and Biology programs. Today, students can earn a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in Environmental Science. There is an undergraduate degree in Biology, and WilmU added a Chemistry degree in spring 2025. The University also offers certificates in Biotechnology and Forensic Science.

Dr. Muldrow is also an assistant director of the NASA Delaware Space Grant and and director of the Natural Sciences Division at the College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences.

The Baltimore native developed a love of science at a young age. In high school, he completed a project on ethnobotany — the study of the relationship between people and plants — and the use of medicinal herbs in tropical rainforests, which further piqued his interest in science. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Saint Francis University in western Pennsylvania and a Master of Science in Biology from the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

"I have a broad interest in climate change, which is driving the collapse of coral ecosystems around the world," says Dr. Muldrow, who received a Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Public Policy from George Mason University. A trip to the Galapagos sparked his interest in coral, and his

doctoral research focused on the concept of shifting baselines in coral reef conservation.

In his WilmU lab, Dr. Muldrow is using cutting-edge gene-editing technology that makes specific changes to the DNA of a cell or organism. An enzyme cuts the DNA at a particular sequence, and when the cell repairs

genes and proteins."

Warm water puts stress on coral; the Keys have lost nearly 90% of their coral cover over the past 50 years, severely reducing reef biodiversity and coastal resilience. "Sea temperatures over the last several years have been record high," Dr. Muldrow says. "The Florida Keys have seen temperatures of over 100 degrees close to land in the last few years."

Dr. Muldrow doesn't limit his work to Florida. Currently, he's developing a field project to sample environmental DNA (eDNA) — the genetic material shed by organisms — in the Delaware Bay. Moreover, his interest in climate change extends beyond coral reefs. He is the founder of the website PhantomEcology.com. Phantom Ecology reimagines ecological restoration. Instead of recreating historical ecosystems — which is impossible given that degradation occurred before modern research — the mission is to use biotechnology to craft new, resilient ecological systems.

Phantom Ecology produced the YouTube video "Immense Methane Leaks in Antarctica: A Hidden Climate Threat." In 2023, Spanish scientists on an expedition documented towering methane plumes rising from frozen methane hydrate reserves beneath the seabed. The concern: Methane is about 30 times more toxic than carbon dioxide.

Making science more accessible is one of Dr. Muldrow's goals, and he's an enthusiastic advocate for the sciences and STEM careers. The space grant promotes STEM education, research, and workforce development.

"Environmental science has a lot to do with space," he says. "The first planet we care about is ours. NASA



itself, it changes the sequence. On a basic level, it's like changing or deleting a word in a sentence to express a thought more clearly.

CRISPR-Cas9 is the editing tool that removes, adds to, or alters regions of DNA. It could help cure such illnesses as sickle cell disease and cystic fibrosis. It is also a game-changer in agriculture.

Dr. Muldrow's team will use the technology on *Aiptasia*, a genus of sea anemones that's "basically a lab rat for corals," he says. "We're introducing *Aiptasia* to stressful environments and studying the responses of certain



Dr. Milton Muldrow Jr.

touches every major scientific field, from biology to environmental science, physics, and space science. Satellite imagery and sensors help us analyze planet Earth.”

To be sure, all the fields now rely on technology. For instance, Dr. Muldrow and his students use AlphaFold, an AI system developed by DeepMind, a subsidiary of Google.

AlphaFold predicts the 3D structure of proteins from their amino acid sequences. “Without AlphaFold, it would have taken years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to perform our recent work analyzing the *Aiptasia* proteome,” he says.

He encourages all would-be scientists, including his young son, to take advantage of technology.

His WilmU lab has all the bells and whistles, but that’s not the primary benefit of his position.

“The thing I love the most is the ability to form years-long relationships with students to help them build a research portfolio, get funding, make connections, and see them off to a successful job,” he says. “That’s the best part.” **WU** —*Pam George*

TRANSFORMING NURSING EDUCATION TO EMPOWER FUTURE LEADERS



DR. LISA DREWS is helping to shape the future of nursing education and strengthen Wilmington University's College of Health Professions and Natural Sciences (COHPNS). As chair of the RN to BSN and MSN Leadership programs, she leads efforts to equip nurses to support survivors of human trafficking.

Her groundbreaking work led to the creation of the Advanced Nursing Roles Human Trafficking Assignment — a comprehensive resource designed to help nurses care for victims of abuse. This “toolbox” provides clear guidelines for analyzing real-world scenarios, encourages thoughtful reflection on interventions, and fosters open discussions

among nurse leaders. It also emphasizes collaboration with community organizations to enhance care and support.

Recognizing the importance of this work, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing has published her resource, expanding its reach to nursing programs nationwide.

Dr. Drews' resource helps faculty guide students through assignments that deepen their understanding of human trafficking and their roles as nursing leaders. The structured approach encourages students to analyze case studies, reflect on challenges, and apply key principles to their leadership practice.

Students begin by reviewing a human trafficking scenario relevant

to their area of focus — whether they are nurse educators, nurse executives, legal nurse consultants, or public health nurses. This step helps them connect the issue to their specific field and responsibilities.

Throughout the assignment, faculty encourage students to reflect on the complexities of caring for trafficking survivors. They explore the challenges they may face, identify effective interventions, and draw lessons from real-world applications. By fostering this level of critical thinking, faculty help students understand the vital role nursing leadership plays in supporting survivors.

There is a good deal of inter-collegiate collaboration, says Dr. Drews, in terms of the University's commitment to combating human trafficking. “Our faculty is dedicated to working together in the fight against human trafficking through education, advocacy, and awareness,” she says. “Under the leadership of **DR. JOHANNA BISHOP**, whose Human Trafficking Webinar Series and annual conferences have been instrumental in this effort, faculty from the colleges of Health Professions and Natural Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, Technology, Athletics, and community leaders unite to equip students and professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify, prevent, and respond to human trafficking. Through interdisciplinary research, community partnerships, and curriculum integration, we are fostering a collective effort

to combat this global crisis and advocate for justice for survivors.”

A key part of the assignment involves developing a debriefing script using a structured template. Faculty guide students in crafting these scripts with a trauma-informed approach, ensuring their discussions are respectful, supportive, and aligned with best practices.

Students receive feedback on their

scripts, helping them refine their communication strategies and integrate evidence-based research into their work. Faculty also assess their assignments based on adherence to best practices, alignment with their MSN concentration, and principles outlined by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

By the end of the process, students

gain a deeper insight into trauma-informed care and strengthen their ability to lead meaningful conversations and implement effective interventions.

“Dr. Drews’ passion and commitment to improving access to quality care for survivors of human trafficking are commendable,” says COHPNS Dean **DR. AARON SEBACH**. “Her niche in this specialty, coupled with her expertise as a nurse educator, resulted in the development of a practical, evidence-based resource for nurse educators. Dr. Drews’ work is yet another example of innovation cultivated in the COHPNS to support students in caring for patients in an increasingly complex health care system.”

To reinforce key themes, faculty encourage students to share insights across leadership concentrations through online discussions, visual word clouds, or in-person conversations. This collaborative approach helps students recognize broader patterns, deepen their learning, and appreciate the significance of nursing leadership in addressing human trafficking.

“The impact of human trafficking is staggering,” says Dr. Drews. “More than 80% of victims who encounter health care professionals go unrecognized. As nurse leaders, we must integrate human trafficking education into all areas of healthcare to improve identification, intervention, and support for those affected.”

Beyond her work at Wilmington University, Dr. Drews has also contributed to NursingColleges.com, an online guide to the growing nursing field. Her article, “Delaware Nursing Colleges, Degrees & Licenses: Meet the Expert,” highlights nursing education opportunities in the First State.

Dr. Drews’ commitment to education, leadership, and advocacy is making a lasting impact at Wilmington University and across the broader nursing community. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

Dr. Lisa Drews



From Rural Bangladesh to Global Researcher

Sha Md Farid's journey from a humble home to earning a master's degree at Wilmington University is a testament to perseverance, parental sacrifice, and the power of believing in something bigger. He offers an essay.

Sha Md Farid



My name is **SHA MD FARID**. I recently completed my Master of Science in Information Systems Technology (IST), with a concentration in Information Assurance, from Wilmington University.

As an international student, this achievement means more than just a degree — it's the fulfillment of a dream born in a small, humble home in rural Bangladesh. I come from a middle-class family, where studying abroad was never a guaranteed path. It was a hope, a prayer, a sacrifice made by loving parents who gave up their own comforts so their son could chase something bigger.

I was the first in my entire family to travel abroad for education.



I earned my bachelor's in Business Administration from Woosong University in South Korea with distinction. Coming from a business background, transitioning into the world of technology was not easy, but I never gave up. I chose to pursue my MS in IST at Wilmington University, and today, I can proudly say that I have not

only completed my degree with a strong CGPA but also co-authored peer-reviewed research articles in collaboration with scholars from around the world.

This journey was never just about me; it was about proving that no dream is too big, no background too small. Many of my friends hesitate to pursue an IT degree because they come from business or non-technical fields. I want them to know that it's possible. I want parents like mine, who gave everything without ever asking for anything in return, to know that their sacrifices were not in vain.

Every time I see a student's story shared on the Wilmington University Facebook page, I feel inspired. My story is my gift to my parents, telling them, in a language beyond words, that their love and struggle created something beautiful.

Wilmington University didn't just shape my career; it transformed the way I see myself and the world around me. After graduation, it's as if a new light has entered my life. I see opportunities where I once saw barriers, and I feel strength where I once felt uncertainty. This journey has given me hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging that I will cherish forever. I will always be grateful to this University for helping me rise beyond what I ever thought possible. **WU**

Farid completed his studies in May of 2025, earning an M.S. in Information Systems Technology, with a concentration in Information Assurance.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHA MD FARID



Remembering Melissa Jones

MELISSA JONES dedicated 18 years of service to Wilmington University and its library. She began her WilmU career as a part-time affiliate librarian at the Dover campus, later becoming the coordinator of the Dover Learning Commons, and eventually serving as the library's first manager of the Instructional Services and Academic Collaborations team. She loved working in the library — especially with our students. Her calm nature, easy laugh, and genuine compassion put everyone in her presence at ease. She will be remembered fondly for her kindness, her generous spirit, and her unwavering commitment to supporting students and her colleagues. **WU**

—Adrienne Johnson

Keziah and James Finney



RAP, REWIND, REPEAT: LEARNING MATH THROUGH LYRICS

KEZIAH FINNEY, a math teacher and rapper, says there's nothing like catchy hip-hop lyrics to help students master the basics of math.

She and her husband, **JAMES FINNEY**, are the creators of JFinTV® Lyrical

Math, which uses “edutainment” — a mashup of education and entertainment — to engage elementary school students who struggle with numbers.

Both spouses are Wilmington University alums. Keziah earned her master's in Middle-Level Education at

WilmU after receiving a B.S. degree in Biology from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She was named Teacher of the Year at H.B. du Pont Middle School in Wilmington. James holds a bachelor's in Studio Production-Digital Filmmaking and



a master's in Applied Technology in Education.

Proficiency in math has taken on greater urgency as standardized test scores plummeted in the wake of the pandemic, when students took classes online instead of in the classroom. Math scores for the 2023–2024 school year show that only 33% of students in grades three through eight met proficiency standards.

“With Lyrical Math, we can help

students get back on track,” Keziah says.

The concept was born nearly 20 years ago when James was working on his senior project at WilmU. His professors set the bar high, and he was determined to produce a project that was relevant and engaging.

“**MARCEL FRANCK**, an adjunct instructor, had a great influence on me. If my projects were bad, he would tell me straight up and tell me why. I still remember him saying, ‘Nobody is going to hold your hand in the real world, so don’t expect me to in here.’ That tough love was exactly what I needed then to help me become the videographer and editor I am today,” he recalls.

CALVIN HILL, his Studio Production instructor, was a mentor who became a friend. “The first thing I learned from him was how to budget a project. He told me, ‘Mr. Finney, if you don’t have a budget, you don’t have a film.’ He helped cultivate my confidence in directing productions, as well,” he says.

At the time, James was courting Keziah, a teacher and ascendant hip-hop artist, who shared his interest in helping young people. He asked her to star in his five-minute, 20-second video titled “Adding Integers After School.”

As a young teacher, Keziah noticed that students enthusiastically rapped popular hip-hop lyrics in the hall and during lunchtime. But in math class, traditional teaching methods didn’t get her students excited.

“I noticed that students were asking for a bathroom pass at math time, anything to avoid it,” she recalls.

After James completed his senior project, the couple decided to share the video with Keziah’s students, who were about to receive a lesson on integers — the process of finding the sum of two or more positive or negative numbers. She developed a

pre-test and post-test to determine the effectiveness of introducing the concept through hip-hop lyrics. The tests revealed an average increase of 16% in comprehension for 51 students in three different classes. Students who entered the program in the lowest-performing group showed a 67.1% increase in performance.

That success sparked their desire to reach more students through video programs that could be shared with students in a variety of settings, in and out of the classroom. It was a natural fit for Keziah, who began performing as a child singing gospel. Video empowered her to do what she could not do in person — be in several places at once, fulfilling her desire to teach as many math students as possible.

Currently, the Lyrical Math program is taught in 19 elementary schools and seven community centers to help children who are lagging in math to excel. Some students are lacking even the basics of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

“Last year, we worked with fifth graders who had a 28.5% proficiency in math,” Keziah says.

Many students have shown marked improvement with extra help. In one after-school program, 85% of students demonstrated proficiency in division after completing a Lyrical Math course.

Ken Livingston, senior director of student success at United Way of Delaware, says Lyrical Math helps students develop life skills beyond mathematics.

“Their innovative approach not only makes math concepts more relatable and memorable but also builds students’ confidence, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills,” he says. “Fostering a deeper understanding of mathematical principles empowers students to excel academically and prepares them for success.”

Keziah has always been fascinated by

Currently, the Lyrical Math program is taught in 19 elementary schools and seven community centers to help children who are lagging in math to excel.



math, embracing fractions, division, and multiplication as tools that build achievement. Math helps aspiring homeowners save for a down payment and budget for monthly payments. Mastering percentages is essential for savvy shoppers, enabling them to quickly calculate that a \$50 sweater, 30% off, will cost \$35 at checkout.

"I enjoy how math develops critical thinking skills. I love how math prepares you for unpredictable moments in life where math skills are needed," she says. "I like to put students in a position to win."

As the parents of four children, the Finneys are passionate about accessible, practical education. Keziah wrote a catchy rap to teach students the multiples of numbers:

*You know me, I'm at the top of my class
I'm so nice and precise with my math
They wanna hear my twos
They wanna hear my twos
2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24!
Stop. Freeze. Pause.*

*You know me, I'm at the top of my class
I'm so nice and precise with my math
They wanna hear my threes
They wanna hear my threes
3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36!
Stop. Freeze. Pause.*

Keziah believes that a meaningful rap has a lasting impact, providing students with the knowledge they can draw on long after completing the Lyrical Math program. She recalls running into a former student at Walmart, who cheerfully rapped math lyrics he learned in her classroom 15 years ago.

"Music is a powerful recall tool," she says. "Our music is catchy, not corny."

The formal study of mathematics dates to approximately 3000 BC in Mesopotamia, where arithmetic, algebra, and geometry were used to facilitate trade, calculate taxes, and create calendars. Hip-hop's roots are more recent, springing from the Bronx in the 1970s, where African American and Latino youth composed raps to shed light on poverty and racial injustice.

Keziah's rap lyrics are crafted to help students conquer math anxiety by making numbers more relatable and engaging.

"Students who are very confident socially often shrink when they approach math," she says. "Once students become confident, they can learn."

Keziah tells the story of **MICHAELA**,

a student who was so fearful of math that she scored zero on her pre-test.

"She went through the videos and scored 100% just a few weeks later. Her confidence went up so much that she started asking for more digits in her dividend."

Based on Michaela's success, Keziah named her 11-digit division program after her student.

The videos depict children and cartoon characters that students can relate to, featuring six ethnicities to help students connect on a social level.

"It shows the power of building academic excellence in the community. They can see characters that they can relate to in math," she says.

The videos are correlated with math workbooks, where students apply the concepts they have learned. The Finneys believe that making math fun will inspire more kids to embrace numbers, developing proficiency that will benefit them throughout their successful lives.

"Students need that lightbulb moment," says James. "If you are interested in something, you want to excel at it." **WU**

—Eileen Smith Dallabrida

DR. STEFANIE WHITBY Named Among Delaware's Most Influential in Sports

Wilmington University Director of Athletics **DR. STEFANIE WHITBY** has been named one of Delaware's Most Influential People in Sports for 2025 by delawareonline.com.

In a feature by longtime sports reporter Kevin Tresolini, Dr. Whitby was the only woman among the eight honorees who represent high school and college athletics, as well as the state's tourism office.

Now in her eighth season as director of athletics at WilmU, Dr. Whitby oversees 16 NCAA Division II programs — seven men's and nine women's — competing in the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference. She also serves as assistant vice president of alumni relations and development under the Student Affairs Department.

A former Delaware state champion sprinter at Padua Academy in Wilmington, Dr. Whitby went on to compete for Villanova University. Before joining Wilmington University, she coached men's and women's track and field at Temple University, becoming the first woman to lead the men's team.



Dr. Stefanie Whitby

Dr. Whitby's leadership continues to shape the future of collegiate athletics in the state, earning her a place among Delaware's top sports figures. **WU** —Bob Yearick

A Heart That Spoke Volumes

Remembering Jonathan Mallory



Jonathan Mallory

The Wilmington University community mourned the loss of friend and colleague **JONATHAN MALLORY**, who passed away on Monday, July 7, 2025. He served as a student services associate at the Dover campus and was a dedicated member

of the Wilmington University family for 17 years.

Mallory joined Wilmington University in 2008 as a site associate. He went on to serve in several student-focused roles, including regional services associate, engagement counselor, and, most recently, student services associate.

As a Distinguished Toastmaster and former area director for Toastmasters International, he was a gifted communicator and an inspiring leader. He represented the student Toastmasters Club at the Dover location, where he empowered students to find their voices and grow in confidence.

Mallory's warmth and joyful spirit made a lasting impression on everyone he met. He was especially known for his festive energy during the holiday season, wearing cheerful holiday sweaters and organizing campus

events such as Breakfast with Santa and Breakfast with the Easter Bunny, where he happily played both Santa and the Easter Bunny to bring joy to the community. He always ensured that everyone felt welcomed, cared for, and left with a full stomach.

His commitment to students was at the heart of his work. Mallory was a steadfast advocate and source of support for so many, always willing to listen, offer guidance, and go the extra mile to help students succeed. Above all, he held a deep love for his family, which was truly at the heart of his life. His radiant smile and kind spirit will be deeply missed by his colleagues, students, and friends who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside him. **WU**

—Dennis Huffman, Rob Miller,
Chris Moore, Nicole Romano

HONORING ACHIEVEMENT, IN PERSON AGAIN



Above: A proud group of inductees gathered as WilmU hosted its first in-person Sigma Beta Delta ceremony since the pandemic.



EPSILON PI TAU

The College of Technology hosted an induction ceremony for the Delta Lambda Chapter of Epsilon Pi Tau in May. This was its second in-person ceremony since the pandemic, following the first on Feb. 16, 2024. Two additional virtual ceremonies were held in the spring.

A total of 87 students were inducted into the society across three spring ceremonies. The first was a buffet dinner and in-person celebration on the New Castle campus, where 37 students were welcomed. A week later, 41 candidates participated in a virtual ceremony, followed by a final virtual induction for nine students who were unable to attend the earlier events.

Epsilon Pi Tau is the leading international honor society for technology, recognizing academic excellence of students in fields devoted to the study of technology and the preparation of practitioners for the technology professions. **WU**

—Janice Colvin

SIGMA BETA DELTA

In May of 2025, Wilmington University's College of Business hosted its first in-person Sigma Beta Delta induction ceremony since the pandemic. The milestone event brought together students, families, and faculty to celebrate academic achievement in business education.

The college has been a member of Sigma Beta Delta, the international honor society for business, management, and administration, since 1995. Since then, the chapter has welcomed more than 3,800 inductees.

This past spring, 103 students accepted invitations to join the society, with 39 attending the ceremony in person alongside family and friends. More than 120 people gathered for the celebration, which marked a return to the tradition of honoring inductees in person.

College of Business and Technology Dean **DR. ROBIN WEINSTEIN** offered opening remarks, and **DR. KATHY KENNEDY-RATAJACK**, AVP of Academic Affairs and Partnerships & Community Affairs, delivered comments on behalf of the University's Partnership Centers and Academic Divisions (PCAD).

The return of the in-person ceremony served as a meaningful reminder of community, achievement, and resilience in the face of challenges — a tribute to the values of Sigma Beta Delta. **WU** —*Maria Hess*



Below: The Delta Lambda chapter of Epsilon Pi Tau ceremony was March 14, 2025. From left: Susan Gregg, trustee; student Maura Sanders; Dr. Chéryl Wilmore, co-trustee.



THE HARD ROAD TO A DOCTORATE

MIA HARVEY doesn't need to imagine what it's like to be one of her students. She already knows.

"I tell my students, 'I am one of you,'" says Harvey, the program director of Education and Employment Training at West End Neighborhood House in Wilmington. "I've been homeless. I've been on food stamps. I've dropped out of high school. Whatever you've been through, I've probably been through it, too."

Now a doctoral student at Wilmington University, where she also earned her bachelor's and master's degrees, Harvey and her team serve marginalized individuals, many of whom have been impacted by trauma. She emphasizes that their past doesn't define their future.

"Having been in your shoes, I know a lot of the tricks of the trade; I know how to navigate the system," she tells them. "This is just one stage of your journey. It's not defining who you are. I've been through it, and now here I am on the other end — I'm a homeowner, I own vehicles, and I'm stable."

She makes it clear to students that her department is a place of safety and dignity, and she holds her team to a high standard when it comes to interactions with students. "One bad experience can set someone back permanently," she says. "It could stop them from ever seeking help again."

At 37, Harvey speaks candidly

about a childhood shaped by domestic violence and time in foster care. At 17, she became a single mother of two, dropped out of high school, and got her GED through the state of Maryland.

"I dropped out in 11th grade because I was pregnant with my second child," she says. "I was in advanced placement classes in school, and I felt high school was a waste of time. I wanted to work and support my kids."

"I would've loved to have someone like me in my life back then," she says. "That's why I got into this work. I want to give back. If my students say, 'What do you know?,' I can say, 'I've been in your shoes — and it was awful — but I know how to get through.'"

Fueled by determination, she has followed a winding path to professional success and academic achievement. After a false start at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, Maryland, in 2005, she worked two jobs while raising two children. It would be nine years before she was financially comfortable enough to return to college. In 2014, drawn by online programs and affordability, she enrolled at WilmU.

"Even though I never took an in-person class," she says, "when I visited the campus in New Castle, I fell in love with everything about it. And I love online because I'm a super-strong independent learner. So the online module works for me."

She earned her bachelor's in

Psychology in 2018 and a master's in Applied Family Science two years later, utilizing the Dual-Credit ADVANTAGE® program that allows students to take graduate courses while pursuing their undergraduate degree. She's been on the dean's list and is a member of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology. She expects to complete her doctorate next summer.

At home in Wilmington, she's a divorced mother of four. Her two youngest — ages 15 and 16 — attend Brandywine High School. Her older children, now 20 and 21, are forging their paths.

Despite her packed schedule, Harvey carves out time for herself. She hikes, travels, and plays video games, often with her children. A passionate reader, she owns "probably a thousand books."

"Horror is my favorite — Stephen King, always," she says. "I'm impatient, so I like anthology-style horror. I've read all of those anthologies in the local library, so now I'm going to other libraries."

Grant writing is another part of her skill set. She provides consulting services in that area, helping organizations articulate their missions and secure funding.

Her long-term goal is to teach at the college level — ideally at Wilmington University. "I'd love to come full circle and become a professor there," she says. **WU**

—Bob Yearick

WEST END NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE



Mia Harvey

“

I’ve been in
your shoes
— and it was
awful — but I
know how to get
through. —*Mia Harvey*

”

The Honorable Jan R. Jurden

Guided by experience and purpose, Wilmington University School of Law's new dean, **THE HONORABLE JAN R. JURDEN**, is building a legal community that's ready to serve.



Bringing Justice Home

Judge Jan R. Jurden has never been one to shy away from uncharted paths. With a career spanning nearly four decades, she has broken barriers and elevated the legal profession in Delaware. Now, as dean of the Wilmington University School of Law, she is poised to shape the next generation of legal minds with the same purpose and integrity that have defined her journey.

— BY MARIA HESS —

Jurden's résumé speaks volumes — rich with published works that reflect a commitment to justice, public service, and judicial ethics, influencing legal thought well beyond the bench.

But her body of work is only part of what defines her. At the heart of Jurden's journey is a respect for humanity and a drive to serve — qualities imparted long before she stepped into a courtroom. Those values, she says, were instilled in her by her parents. She credits them with shaping her sense of purpose and perspective.

"My father tried to enter World War II before graduating from high school," she says. "Even though he

was an only son and had a disabled father and could've been deferred, he wanted to do it."

Her father, John R. "Jack" Jurden, graduated from Pennsylvania's Allentown High School in 1944 and immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving as a member of the 77th Division in the Pacific during the war. He married Faye Werley in 1952 and, after moving to Wilmington, began a 39-year career as The News Journal's beloved editorial cartoonist — a role that made him a local legend. His work earned a place on the walls of presidents and public officials, including former President Joe Biden. When his daughter, Jan, arrived at the Delaware Legislature for her confirmation hearing, she saw one

of her father's cartoons — depicting the Legislature itself — hanging on the wall. His presence was unmistakable.

So, too, was the quiet strength of her mother, Faye, whom she calls "intrepid." Faye stepped away from professional life to focus on raising Jan and her sister, Jenifer, also a talented cartoonist. Faye, an accomplished pianist, later re-entered the workforce and faced a world unaccustomed to ambitious women. She was denied credit in her name and often found herself the only woman in meetings aside from administrative staff. But she persevered, taking on demanding roles in corporate and nonprofit settings. To her daughters, Faye was a trailblazer — someone who redefined what was possible, regardless of gender.



In 2015, Jurden made history as the first woman to serve as president judge of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware.



PAUL PATTON

“I used to see my mother get ready for work, and I thought she was so brave,” Jurden says. “She went to college at a time when the two acceptable majors for women were music and nursing. She had to learn a lot of skills, and she did.” Faye was a Music major at Moravian College, where she was also president of her senior class.

From her father, Jurden inherited a sense of civic responsibility and the importance of expression; from her mother, she drew grace and determination.

“I was the youngest child of two,” says Jurden. “I was fixated on what they were up to because I was the baby. So, I think I absorbed a lot of courage by watching them both take risks.”

Turning ‘Green’

Jurden entered the army at 17, rising to the rank of sergeant and earning multiple commendations, including the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and Soldier of the Year — three times.

Her deployment was formative, but initially frightening. “Talk about stepping off a cliff,” she says. “I signed up before senior year, made it through basic training, and landed in Germany

for my permanent assignment on New Year’s Eve. It was cold and dark, and they threw me into a room. I was so homesick and scared. I remember thinking, ‘What have I done?’”

The next morning, a soldier who had helped process her noticed she was alone. “He took me around, showed me everything, and became my first friend there.”

Her time in the military cemented her respect for humanity. She had come of age during Delaware’s school desegregation years, when tensions ran high. “There were some ugly incidents during desegregation,” she says. “You had two groups of kids who had never socialized suddenly thrown together in their senior year.”

The army presented a different model. “Everybody was ‘green,’” she says. “It didn’t matter if you were a man or a woman or what race you were. Everyone had the same opportunity, and that felt right to me.”

Although there were few women in her company, the diversity of the unit — soldiers from across the United States and the Philippines — left a lasting impression. “It was a wonderful experience,” she says. “One I never would’ve had if I hadn’t left Wilmington.”

Jurden spent a year in college while stationed overseas, then returned to study at the University of Delaware for another year. She did well, making the dean’s list, “but it was too big,” she says. “I needed a smaller environment after being in the army.”

She transferred to Muhlenberg College in Allentown, drawn by its intimate setting and deep family roots — her parents had both grown up there, and her grandparents had lived there until their passing. Jurden didn’t go home much, instead settling into life as a student-athlete playing varsity field hockey and lacrosse. She graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Political Science.

At Dickinson School of Law, Jurden graduated in the top 10% of her class. There, her leadership, advocacy skills, and academic excellence laid the groundwork for a stunning career.

Where Compassion Meets Law

Jurden’s commitment to justice was shaped in the classroom and through personal experience. “When I was in the army, I watched somebody get abused by their significant other,” she says. “I had no exposure to that until then, and I was horrified and traumatized.”

The experience stayed with her.

After law school, Jurden clerked for Judge Keith B. Quigley, then the president judge for two Pennsylvania counties and the equivalent of a Superior Court judge in Delaware. In 1987, she joined the Wilmington firm Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP as a summer associate. With the firm’s support, she took on pro bono domestic violence cases early on. She became a partner at Young Conaway in 1996 and was appointed to the Delaware Superior Court five years later.

Mental health had always mattered deeply to Jurden, and she can point to the moment that galvanized her resolve: “I’d been on the bench for years,” she says, “and a colleague came in, and he threw this file on my desk, and he was

very frustrated. He said, ‘I don’t know how we expect people to successfully complete a probation when they’ve got an addiction and serious mental health issues.’ I said, ‘I feel the exact same way. We keep seeing the same people.’ It was a revolving door.”

That moment sparked the idea that would ultimately become Delaware’s Mental Health Court — the state’s first felony-level mental health court. She proposed creating a specialized court for individuals with mental health and addiction issues, involving experts, early intervention, tailored treatment plans, ongoing monitoring, and regular court check-ins tied to specific benchmarks, including medication compliance.

Then-President Judge James T. Vaughn Jr. gave her the green light — but with a caveat: she’d have to launch the court without any new resources.

That could’ve been a dealbreaker. But for Jurden, it was a beginning. “This is the story I love,” she says, “because it shows what Delaware is capable of.”

She called then–Attorney General Beau Biden. (He died of brain cancer in 2015.) “He was totally in favor of this,” she says. “And I reached out to the public defender’s office. We sat down at a table and worked out how it would work. We also had the buy-in of both the prosecution and the defense. We got the treatment providers on board. Rita Landgraf was the secretary of the DHSS (Delaware Health and Social Services) at the time. Everybody came together. Before you knew it, we started it.”

Launched in 2008, Delaware’s Mental Health Court has become a lifeline for people with addiction and untreated mental illness, proving that compassion and collaboration can reshape the criminal justice system.

In 2015, Jurden made history as the first woman to serve as president judge of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware. Over the next decade, she expanded access to justice and championed reforms for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges caught up in the system.

When the pandemic hit in 2020,

new concerns emerged. One of the most troubling was a sharp rise in domestic violence. “Strangulation cases went through the roof,” says Jurden. “It was awful: people out of work, in close quarters, nowhere to escape.” (According to *supremecourt.gov*, non-fatal strangulation increases the risk of homicide by 800% at the hands of the same partner.) She served on the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council for several years and remains committed to strengthening early intervention because, without it, the cycle of abuse too often goes unchecked.

These challenges drove Jurden’s work inside and outside the courtroom. She co-founded the Sisters in Success program for incarcerated women, chaired the Criminal Justice Mental Health Special Needs Committee, and served on the Family Justice Center Steering Committee — initiatives grounded in her belief that the justice system must hold people accountable while also helping them heal.

In addition to her judicial work, Jurden has long shared her knowledge



PAUL PATTON



“Dean Jurden’s legal expertise and thoughtful leadership are inspiring our law students, faculty, and staff, and she is enriching the School of Law’s already strong learning environment.” —*Dr. LaVerne Harmon*



in the classroom. She began teaching in 1988 at what was then Wilmington College, where she led courses on Legal and Ethical Issues in Health Care. Over the years, she has taught at Dickinson, Widener University School of Law, and the University of Delaware.

Coming Full Circle

Jurden’s distinguished career has been marked by a long list of honors and recognitions, including induction into the Delaware Women’s Hall of Fame and the Delaware State Bar Association’s Women’s Leadership

Award. Yet what endures most is the impact she’s had as a mentor, supporting others as she was once supported. Whether walking a young lawyer through their first trial or helping shape judicial ethics policy, she has consistently made space for others to thrive, never forgetting those who did the same for her.

As dean of the Wilmington University School of Law, she is bringing her commitment to public service full circle. The school’s mission to provide accessible, real-world legal education aligns with her lifelong focus on justice, empathy, and practical reform. She’s not just building a law

school — she’s cultivating a legal community focused on serving the public and advancing justice where it’s needed most.

“Dean Jurden leads with her heart and mind, and she has the integrity, humility, and commitment to service that we value,” says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “Her legal expertise and thoughtful leadership are inspiring our law students, faculty, and staff, and she is enriching the School of Law’s already strong learning environment.”

Jurden is honored to work alongside President Harmon and the University’s Board of Trustees, whose shared vision

and support have made it possible to turn bold ideas into meaningful progress.

“The longstanding mission of Wilmington University — and the law school — is to teach students and get them out into the community,” Jurden says. “We want to serve the surrounding area by producing students who are ready to go, no matter what profession they choose.”

Accessibility and affordability are key, hence the competitive tuition, she says. “Because it shouldn’t just be people with infinite wealth who get to go to law school.”

WilmU’s law students will be ready to practice law and think like lawyers the moment they graduate, she says, and bar passage is critical. “They need to pass the bar exam. And we’re going to make sure they’re ready to take that test. They’ll be tested in all sorts of different formats. We’ll test them the way the bar will test them.”

She acknowledges that this focus can raise eyebrows. “‘Teaching to the test’ gets a bad name,” she says. “But when I went to law school — and I think this is still true for a lot of schools — you learn the black-letter law, which is the statutes and rules. You spend an awful lot of time talking about one or two cases for weeks. You go through the Socratic method. It’s fascinating, but not all of it is very useful when you get into private practice or public service.”

Instead, WilmU’s School of Law aims to equip students with what Jurden calls “the nuts and bolts.” That means combining deep legal knowledge with rigorous, practical training. “We are offering a great education for people who want to come out ready to do just about anything they put their mind to.”

For her, the law is more than a profession — it’s a guiding force in a democratic society. “It’s the law that is promulgated in a careful democratic process,” she says. “It’s the guiding light. It’s how we live. It’s the norms that are enshrined in our laws, statutes, and regulations. It’s the Constitution

— the document that formed our government, defined how we wanted to be ruled, and established a balance of powers and checks and balances.”

In that system, lawyers play a crucial role. “Lawyers and lawsuits become necessary to make sure the rule of law is followed,” says Jurden. But in Delaware — and across the country — she sees a growing gap. “I’m concerned that we don’t have enough homegrown lawyers who want to stay and open up practices in their communities.”

Delaware is rightly known as a national hub for corporate and commercial law. “We’ve become such a haven, in a good way, for business, given how many Fortune 500 companies are incorporated here and our reputation for excellence in the Court of Chancery,” says Jurden. “But people need good, affordable lawyers, and we want to supply those lawyers.”

That community focus is at the heart of the Wilmington University School of Law. “That’s not our only focus, but it’s a huge one,” she says. “Because there comes a point where, if you have a huge corporate bar, that’s wonderful for the state. But then, what about somebody who has a family court case and wants representation?”

Jurden is concerned about the lack of legal representation in one of the most personal and emotionally charged areas of law. “Over 75% of family court litigants are self-represented,” she says.

The Fairness for All Task Force report from the Delaware Judiciary confirms that figure. “In my way of thinking, they carry the most precious jurisdiction there is: your children, your marriage,” says Jurden. “It’s emotional. And to not have legal representation because you can’t afford it — in a court of that magnitude — is disturbing.”

Individuals attempting to represent themselves must navigate complex legal procedures independently. The courts offer self-help centers, forms, brochures, and hotlines, but those tools don’t make up for the experience

and training a lawyer brings. People recognize the need for legal assistance; many can’t afford it.

“We also need local real estate lawyers — not huge commercial firms, we’ve got that already,” Jurden says. “But we don’t have what you might think of as your local lawyer. There are some smaller firms, which is great. They’re not priced out of the market. But the average citizen can’t afford \$600, \$700, or \$800 an hour for legal representation.”

That’s where WilmU comes in. “We provide legal education that is accessible and affordable,” says Jurden.

“But also, we train lawyers to serve a wide range of clients. They’re going to know the black-letter law. They’re going to have been rigorously tested. They’re going to pass the bar. And they’re going to be ready to go,” she says. “They’ll be confident representing all kinds of people, not just corporations, and they will serve all three Delaware counties. They will take what they learn and apply it to every situation. Our grads will make a difference.”

Jurden feels a sense of renewal when she meets new law students. “I’ve come from 24 years of having a wonderful career as a judge and loving it, though I’ve seen a lot of the horrible things that can happen to people. It wasn’t always uplifting.”

But at Wilmington University, she says, “I’m reminded how much good there is and how much promise there is in the world.”

She had offers from various firms after retiring from the bench. She chose WilmU. Calling this deanship her final professional chapter, she says she feels privileged.

“I hope my journey encourages others to lead with kindness and respect, to work hard, and to help clear the way for those who follow,” Jurden says.

She knows her sense of purpose can be traced back to two special people. “I think if they were here, my guideposts, my mom and dad, would say I’m exactly where I belong.” **WU**

Driven to Serve

Senior Director of Educational Effectiveness **Dr. Lucia Nemeth** also serves as president of the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, allowing her to blend data-informed leadership in higher education with a lifelong commitment to global, faith-based philanthropy.

| BY BOB YEARICK |





efore becoming a leader in higher education and fulfilling a legacy of faith-based philanthropy, **DR. LUCIA NEMETH**, senior director of educational effectiveness, spent a brief period in banking. “It was not a passion-driven choice,” she says.

But, with a father who was a wealth management banker at PNC, the choice was understandable. So, soon after graduating with a degree in English from Haverford College, she took a job at Wilmington Trust. The numbers and balance sheets, however, failed to stir her soul.



Irisbrook, completed in 1928, was the home of William F. Raskob — brother of John Raskob — and his wife, Nell. It has served as the headquarters of the Raskob Foundation since the mid-1970s.



This painting depicts Bob Raskob, former president of the Raskob Foundation.

Amid that brief foray into the financial world, she took a transformative trip to East Africa. Moved by the abject poverty and disease she witnessed in Kenya and Tanzania, she returned to Wilmington with a renewed sense of purpose — one that would lead her to education and service, and reshape not only her career but her calling.

A bicultural upbringing had already influenced Dr. Nemeth’s worldview in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. Her father and her mother, a Chilean-born dentist, cultivated in their three daughters a keen sense of curiosity and global awareness. Education,

service, and achievement run deep in the family. Dr. Nemeth’s older sister is a dermatologist, and her younger sister is an attorney.

“Being raised in a multicultural household had a tremendous impact,” Dr. Nemeth says. Frequent visits to Chile and learning conversational Spanish helped broaden her outlook from an early age.

After graduating from Tower Hill School in Wilmington, she enrolled at Haverford, where she thrived in the small, close-knit community with Quaker values. “Haverford’s focus on ethical leadership, integrity, and respect for others really resonated with

me,” she says. A semester abroad in Ireland further broadened her horizons. “I gained a global perspective and a deeper appreciation for how education can be a tool for empathy and change,” she says.

Today, Dr. Nemeth plays a key role in ensuring that Wilmington University continues to provide meaningful, measurable, and mission-driven outcomes for its students. She brings years of teaching experience to her work, spanning both the College of Business and the College of Arts & Sciences, as well as a passion for creating educational pathways that are both accessible and transformative.



Above: A chandelier graces the grand foyer at Irisbrook. Above, right: “Robinson Remembrances” is a recollection of the lives of Charles and Josephine Robinson. Opposite page: Dr. Nemeth stands in the foundation’s President’s Office, surrounded by family pictures and keepsakes.

Her connection to the University began in 2000, when she enrolled in the MBA program. She was encouraged by Wilmington Trust colleagues who had also chosen WilmU for its flexibility and its support of working professionals. “Having a group of colleagues going through the program with me made it even more rewarding,” she says.

She completed her MBA in 2002, and soon after, with a newfound clarity and conviction, she began studying for a doctorate in education at the University.

“My experience in the MBA program was so positive that I knew WilmU was the right place to pursue my Ed.D.,” she says.

She received her doctorate in 2006. That same year, she married and relocated to Virginia for her husband’s military assignment. But her connection to WilmU remained strong: the University offered her a part-time, remote opportunity in its growing online department. “That flexibility was invaluable,” says Dr. Nemeth. “It also aligned perfectly with my growing interest in technology and online learning.”

Her passion for education ex-

tended to spending time tutoring and teaching students in English as a second language, which provided her with valuable insights into online teaching. “Teaching ESL students helped me realize that individuals learn in a variety of ways,” she says. “My experience forced me to think about different ways to present course material, and I became cognizant of how important it is to remain in constant communication with each student.”

In 2016, she became a full-time assistant professor in the College of Arts and Sciences. Crediting mentors “who nurtured my growth and challenged me to excel,” she says she loves working closely with students.

“It reminds me of why this work matters — especially when I see students who return to school after a long break, juggling work, family, and school. Their determination is deeply inspiring.”

Dr. Nemeth’s current role enables her to bridge the gap between faculty and administrative perspectives. “Having insight into both sides of the academic experience allows my team to support students holistically,” she says.

From academics to data

analysis and student outreach, her office ensures that at-risk students don’t fall through the cracks. Collaboration is key, and she thrives on it. “The chance to build strong partnerships across departments and focus on student persistence is incredibly meaningful to me,” she says.

Her belief in education as a vehicle for change extends well beyond the classroom, thanks mainly to her heritage. She is the great-granddaughter of John J. Raskob and Helena Green Raskob. In 1945, they founded the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, a private, family-led organization dedicated to supporting Catholic missions worldwide. The Foundation has provided grants in over 100 countries, supporting education, health care, humanitarian relief, and various other initiatives.

“The Raskob Foundation is a living legacy rooted in faith, family, and service,” Dr. Nemeth says. “It’s not just about generosity; it’s about building lasting relationships based on trust and mutual respect.”

All Raskob descendants are invited to become members of the

Foundation when they reach 18, and she jumped at the opportunity. She has been committed to it ever since, and last year she was elected president of the Foundation.

All Raskob family members who are involved in the Foundation contribute their time and expertise without compensation, reflecting their commitment to its mission and legacy.

“Being part of a family that has always prioritized stewardship and compassion has helped shape who I am,” she says. “This role allows me to walk alongside organizations that are doing deeply impactful work. We don’t just fund projects;

we accompany people in their mission to serve.”

For Dr. Nemeth, service isn’t an obligation; it’s a way of life. “Participating in charitable work grounds me,” she says. “Whether through philanthropy or mentorship, I view service as an essential expression of who I am.”

Today, she balances her professional and charitable activities with a busy family life. Dr. Nemeth and her husband, Scott, a retired army major who served 26 years, have three children: a 17-year-old son and two daughters, ages 16 and 14. After Scott’s retirement, they settled in Southern Chester

County to be closer to extended family.

Outside of work, Dr. Nemeth enjoys tennis and is learning pickleball, displaying a competitive spirit that also influences her approach to education. She believes that WilmU’s commitment to accessibility, flexibility, and real-world application gives graduates an advantage in their professional endeavors.

“We meet students where they are, and that means understanding and accommodating the complex lives they lead,” she says. “WilmU truly empowers students and supports lifelong learning.” **WU**



Dr. Mohamed Gebril



INNOVATION — UNWIRED!

In the realm of audiovisual (AV) furniture design, **DR. MOHAMED GEBRIL** is a technical guru with several U.S. patents attesting to his expertise. But he never dreamed that he would become a marketing guru as well.

Typically, design engineers have had little direct interaction with customers. Sales negotiated specifications, and then products were designed to meet those requirements. But increasingly, Dr. Gebril wondered if we fully understood what customers wanted and needed.

His employer, Legrand AV (Middle Atlantic Division), supplies AV furniture, including lecterns, side racks, display stands, and collaboration tables, where AV equipment is mounted. A key strategic goal for the company is to acquire new customers.



Accordingly, while Dr. Gebril was taking a marketing course as part of his Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at Wilmington University, a light bulb lit up in his head when he learned about the Jobs-To-Be-Done (JTBD) approach to market research. His epiphany? Marketing is not just about advertising. The true essence of marketing is developing and providing an offering that solves customer problems better than competing products. Dr. Gebril viewed JTBD

as a powerful tool for creating a granular understanding of customer needs, and he was excited about the real-life potential of applying this tool to help his employer grow its market share.

The JTBD process uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to develop a ranking of customer pain points. The process begins by identifying the combination of small tasks a customer needs to complete to accomplish a significant task. For example, for a purchaser to meet



A DBA
STUDENT
SPARKS
SMARTER
DESIGN WITH
CUSTOMER-
DRIVEN
INSIGHTS.

— BY RUTH NORMAN

the organization's AV furniture needs, that person would need to determine the types of furniture available from suppliers, evaluate their characteristics and pricing, select the supplier, prepare the order, pay the invoice, manage the placement of furniture when delivered, and conduct maintenance and repairs. By identifying which of these small jobs are pain points and creating offerings that address these issues, a supplier can gain loyal customers.

Dr. Gebril became passionate about using a JTBD analysis of the AV furniture market as the foundation for his DBA dissertation research. His employer also recognized the potential of utilizing this toolbox to gain a deeper understanding of the customer's voice and agreed to serve as a sponsor for Dr. Gebril's research.

Management expressed interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the needs of AV purchasers in the higher education market. Dr. Gebril consulted with four market-facing personnel and eight higher education purchasers to develop a list of 20 desired outcomes deemed relevant to the purchasing decision. These outcomes ranged from product characteristics to website design, sampling, and delivery issues.

A survey was then sent to higher education furniture purchasers, who were asked to rate the importance and their satisfaction relative to the 20 outcomes. Based on feedback from 28 respondents, Dr. Gebril identified the highest-opportunity pain points, where importance was high and satisfaction was low.

The results were surprising. Rather than the anticipated need for more attractive furniture,

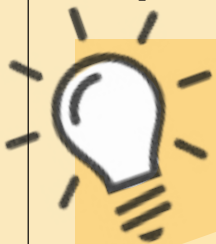
customers revealed that their primary concerns were durability and ergonomic design, which would accommodate all end users comfortably. This information led to a complete rethinking of a planned new product launch. With this new insight, it became clear that the acoustic material was a durability problem. Consequently, the acoustic material was replaced with high-pressure laminate wood material, and the words used to promote the product shifted from attractiveness to enhanced durability.

The new product is in its early launch stage, although one large customer has already planned to place an order and complimented the company for listening to and responding to the needs expressed in the survey. Following this initial success, Dr. Gebril continues to utilize the JTBD toolbox to capture and analyze customers' voices, guiding the development of two additional new products. But the story doesn't stop there.

THE VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

There has also been a shift in the company's culture. Dr. Gebril's team has become a role model for other units, and listening to customers has been endorsed as a 2025 corporate initiative. The new product development vocabulary now extends beyond discussing specifications to inquiring about customer pain points and prioritizing them. To support this corporate refocus, Dr. Gebril is helping train other teams on how to identify and quantify desired outcomes before designing solutions.

"At Middle Atlantic, using the Jobs-To-Be-Done



DR. GEBRIL continues to utilize the JTBD toolbox to capture and analyze customers' voices, guiding the development of two additional new products. But the story doesn't stop there.





Dr. Mohamed Gebril

framework has already made a noticeable difference in how we approach our furniture solutions,” says Paul Dolynchuk, director of product management, Middle Atlantic Products, at Legrand AV. “It has helped us cut through the noise and focus on what our higher education customers are really trying to accomplish, making both our innovation and marketing efforts sharper and more relevant. What’s exciting is that our sister brands have seen the impact and are now applying the same methodology in their own spaces. It’s become a catalyst across Legrand AV for more focused, user-driven design.”

“I am passionate about bridging the gap between academia and real-life business challenges,” says Dr. Gebril. “The DBA program has played a key role in helping me turn theory into practice and leadership. By applying the JTBD framework, we gained deep insights about customer pain points across their holistic journeys, ranging from AV furniture ordering to delivery, maintenance, co-supplier inter-actions, and disposal.” **WU**

Dr. Ruth Norman is a full professor at WilmU’s College of Business and Technology.

SPORTS

DOCKERY SOARS TO HISTORIC **NCAA** PODIUM FINISH

Down to his final jump of the 2025 NCAA Division II Outdoor Track and Field Championships, Wilmington University's **DONTE DOCKERY** catapulted himself onto the podium and finished third overall in the triple jump with a distance of 16.19 meters inside the ThunderBowl on the Colorado State Pueblo campus.

Dockery's final jump moved him from ninth into second place with a handful of final jumps remaining. Washburn's Justin Forde tied Dockery with a jump of 16.19 meters and held the tiebreak over Dockery with his second-best jump of 16.14 meters earlier in the series.

This is the first time a WilmU Wildcat has ever appeared at the

NCAA Championships, let alone made their way onto the podium. The Wilmington track and field program began in the spring of 2018.

The sophomore qualified for the finals after finishing ninth following the first three jumps. He was a part of the first flight, having leaps of 15.22, 15.63, and 15.67. He was third in the first flight with this 15.67-meter jump, but needed to watch 10 more jumpers in the second flight to see if his distance would hold.

Dockery qualified ahead of Chadron State's Chayton Byne and Virginia State's Jahaz Morgan by 0.07 meters, rounding out the final nine jumpers to compete for a medal.

His first two jumps of the finals were 15.01 and 15.53 meters, keeping him in ninth place. But with one final



Left: Donte Dockery with his third-place trophy on the podium at the NCAA Division II National Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Pueblo, Colorado.

Dockery takes flight — soaring toward a historic NCAA podium finish.



jump, Dockery launched himself to a new school record, going over 16 meters for the first time, and found himself in second place overall.

Pittsburg State's Tre Betts won the triple jump National Championship with a jump of 16.46 meters on

his third attempt of the night.

Dockery's third-place finish also gave the Wilmington University track and field team six points at the 2025 NCAA DII Outdoor Track and Field Championships, sitting 18th after Day 2 in Colorado.

Dockery won every triple jump event he entered this year, including the Penn Relays, CACC Championships, and IC4A/ECAC Championships. **WU**

—Dan Lauletta



Ex-Wildcat Hoopsters Chase Their Dreams

Three former Wilmington University basketball players are pursuing professional careers overseas while dealing with foreign languages, local cuisine (rabbit stew with snails, anyone?), and a game that is a bit different from the American version.

The three — **JERMAINE HEAD**, **CALEB MATTHEWS**, and **RANDY RICKARDS** — rank among the best players to emerge from 11th-year Coach **DAN BURKE**'s Wildcat program. They signed professional contracts after graduating and flew off to three distinctly different parts of the world.

"They're making a living doing what they love," says Burke.

Head is playing in Georgia, an Eastern European country on the east coast of the Black Sea, south of Russia and bordering Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. A 6-0 guard, he's on the VSA squad in the Georgia Superleague.

Matthews is in Malta, an island country situated in the Mediterranean Sea between Sicily and North Africa. He's a 6-4 guard/small forward for Gzira Athleta Birkirkara in Malta's BOV Division.

Rickards, a 6-7 forward, is in South America, where in two years he has played for teams in three countries — Peru, Uruguay, and now Chile, where he is on the CD Universidad Católica De Santiago squad in LNB, the country's top league.

Both on and off the court, the ex-

Wildcats seem to have adjusted well to their foreign environments.

Head, the all-time leader in points and assists for WilmU's men's program, says the European game has slightly different rules than the American version, as well as a ball that is somewhat lighter.

"Also, the competition is way better than college," he says, "and the players are way bigger." Head obviously has taken the changes in stride: He was the 2024 league MVP and also the MVP of the finals.

The 28-year-old is one of three Americans on a roster of 13. Teams are limited to four Americans, and only three can be on the court at the same time.

Head says language hasn't been a problem. "Most of the European players speak English, and so does our coach," he says.

The team is headquartered in Tbilisi, a city of 1.2 million, which is almost a third of the country's population. The team provides housing for foreign players, and Head has an apartment across the street from the other Americans on his squad.

He calls the Tbilisi cuisine "pretty good," especially khachapuri, a cheese-filled bread that resembles pizza. "And you can always get regular fast food," he adds. "They have McDonald's, Wendy's, KFC."

Head, who turned pro in 2022, says he's occasionally homesick, but it passes quickly. After the nine-month season,

he returns home in May to Edgewood, Maryland, and reconnects with family and friends. "But after a couple of weeks," he says, "I've seen everybody and I'm ready to go back."

He calls Burke "my guy," adding: "We talk or text almost every day, still. He always checks up on me. It's kind of like a father-son relationship."

His former coach has fond memories of Head. "Jermaine was with us for four years, including his redshirt season, and he had an amazing career," says Burke. "He was a great player. He could do anything — shoot, get to the basket, get a bunch of assists — really an all-around player. Every year he's moved up and now he's at the highest level in Georgia. Whenever he comes home, we're one of his first stops. He comes by to check us out."

Head has a degree in Business Management from WilmU and hopes to become an entrepreneur when his pro career ends. In 2021, he started a clothing line called Chosen 1, a name family and friends called him during his high school years. The athletic apparel includes socks, compression pants and shirts, and hoodies.

Playing some 2,300 miles to the west of Tbilisi, Matthews had what he calls "a really good experience" in his first season in Malta, where tourism is a major industry. "The weather and the country are beautiful, and I got to meet a lot of new people and experience new things," he says.

Sharing the experience was his

wife, Hannah, who is also a WilmU graduate. They were married in June of 2024, soon after he graduated with a degree in Business Management and Marketing.

Matthews has enjoyed sampling the local cuisine, including rabbit and snails, a staple of the Maltese diet. “The food is less processed and healthier for you, since in Europe they have more regulations on what can be used in their foods,” he says.

Like Head, he found that English lived up to its reputation as the international language. “In Malta,” he says, “everybody speaks Maltese, but about 90% of them also speak English, so there wasn’t too much of a language barrier.”

Matthews says the talent on the court is a mixed bag. “The imports from the U.S. were at a higher level than what I played against in college,” he says. “The locals weren’t as athletic, but they were very smart and understood the concept of playing a team game.”

He joined another American, 29-year-old veteran Kurt James, on the Athleta starting five. “In our league,” Matthews says, “there’s no limit of American players that can be on a team, but only two can be on the court at a time.”

Delaware’s 2017–18 Gatorade State Boys Basketball Player of the Year, Matthews guided Smyrna High School to back-to-back DIAA state championship games, and a title in 2017. He enrolled at WilmU in 2020 after a year at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

“My time at Wilmington was filled with lots of injuries and adversity,” he says, “but I was able to battle through and have a pretty successful college career while also meeting a few of my closest friends. Even though



Jermaine Head

“**Jermaine** was with us for four years and he had an amazing career. He was a great player. He could do anything — shoot, get to the basket, get a bunch of assists — really an all-around player.” —Coach Dan Burke

COURTESY OF DAN LAULETTA

Caleb Matthews

“Caleb was probably one of our most resilient guys. He kept coming back from injuries, kept working hard, and ended up having a really good career for us.” —Coach Dan Burke

COURTESY OF DAN LAULETTA

it was difficult and frustrating, I’m very grateful for the experience and everything I learned along the way.”

Burke confirms that self-evaluation. “Caleb was probably one of our most resilient guys,” he says.

“He kept coming back from injuries, kept working hard, and ended up having a really good career for us. He was really competitive, and one of the best shooters we’ve ever had, and he was also a great passer. Guys loved

playing with him because he saw the game so well.”

After basketball, the 25-year-old Matthews hopes to get into coaching or enter the business world.

Unlike Head and Matthews, Rickards has encountered what he calls “a big culture shock,” largely because of the language.

“It’s been crazy,” he says. “In South America you may find like one out of every 10 people speak English. Not even my coach speaks English that well.”

Spanish is the predominant language in Peru, Uruguay, and Chile. “But,” says Rickards, “every country speaks a different version of Spanish. It’s like three different languages. So it’s been a little different, traveling and trying to navigate the city. I either use the Translator app on my phone or the broken Spanish I’ve learned.”

He’s also had to adapt to a different style of basketball. Along with slightly different rules, the South American game is more physical than the U.S. version.

“And,” Rickards adds, “I’m playing 35 to 40 minutes a game and am looked at to score and make plays for the team.”

Despite the challenges, he’s more than holding his own. In Uruguay, he earned Player of the Week honors a few times and was described by one observer as “the best scorer in the league.” In Peru, his team won the 2023 league championship.

“Uruguay has been my favorite country so far because of the team bond I got from them and just the way the club treated me,” Rickards says. “They weren’t a club with a lot of money or financial capabilities, but they made sure that everything was taken care of and I was very comfortable.”

He’s the only American on his current team, but, he says, “They’ve been very welcoming. There are still

days when I wish I could have someone to just be able to relate to, but it's been a good experience, so I don't mind it."

Calling his living situation "very good," Rickards says he has a studio apartment in "a good neighborhood" of Santiago, Chile's capital city of 7 million people.

"The club provides meals for me, but most of the time I cook," he says. "If I don't want to cook I can get fast food, or they have little restaurants near where I live."

Rickards was on WilmU's radar when he graduated from Cape Henlopen High School in 2018, but he made stops at Baltimore City Community College and Miami Dade College before becoming a Wildcat in 2020.

"Being from Delaware and being able to play there, I enjoyed my time at Wilmington," he says. "I built a good bond with Coach Burke and the staff. When I decided that I could have a professional career, Coach **SHAI HENRY** and Coach **ANDREW FEELEY** really helped me change my game there. The summer of my senior year I started working on my ability to shoot threes with them and it's helped me be successful now."

"Randy was too big for guards to guard and way too skilled for big guys to guard, so he was one of the most well-rounded forwards we've ever had," Burke says. "He could dribble, he could shoot, he was ridiculously athletic, and he was a super competitive guy, a warrior."

Rickards earned a degree in Elementary Education (K-6) and plans to become a teacher and perhaps a coach after he's done with pro ball.

Burke and his staff have the knowledge and experience needed to help Wildcat players pursue a professional career. Everyone on the staff played college ball and Feeley had a 15-year international career in



Randy Rickards

Randy was one of the most well-rounded forwards we've ever had. He could dribble, he could shoot, he was ridiculously athletic, and he was a super competitive guy, a warrior." —Coach Burke

COURTESY OF DAN LAULETTA

Japan, Slovenia, France, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and most recently Uruguay.

Looking forward to the 2025–26 season, Burke says, "We have several

main contributors returning. Our young group gained valuable experience and finished the year playing very well. We're expecting that momentum to carry over and lead to a successful season." **WU** —Bob Yearick

ERIN HARVEY

Named to NCAA Committee

Associate Director of Athletics and Senior Woman Administrator **ERIN HARVEY** has been appointed to the NCAA Division II Committee for Legislative Relief.

The committee serves as the final decision-making body for any waiver requests in situations where no other committee, subcommittee, or conference has the authority to act. It grants relief of legislation when extenuating circumstances exist or may determine that relief should not be granted. The committee also may impose conditions when relief

under the legislation is granted. Committee members participate in conference calls as needed and attend meetings at NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis.

Five members, including one member of the Division II Management Council, serve on the committee and are elected to four-year terms, which began at the conclusion of the January 2025 Convention. Harvey's term will run through August 2028. Representatives are appointed based on their knowledge of Division II

rules and regulations (primarily in amateurism, recruiting, transfers, and financial aid), as well as their experience as an administrator in intercollegiate athletics.

Harvey is chair of the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference Senior Woman Administrator Council. She also chairs the CACC Marketing & Promotions Committee and serves on the following groups within the conference: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and Membership Committee. **WU**

—Bob Yearick



Erin Harvey



Several local alumni and current Wilmington University softball players gathered at Riverfront Events at Hyatt Place to accept the 2024 Delaware Sportswriters and Broadcasters Association Team of the Year award.

WILDCAT SOFTBALL NAMED DELAWARE TEAM OF THE YEAR

The record-breaking Wilmington University softball team was named the 2024 Delaware Team of the Year by the Delaware Sportswriters and Broadcasters Association (DSBA).

The 2024 squad set a program record with 46 wins, going 46-16 overall. They won the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference Regular Season, the CACC Tournament Championship, the NCAA Division II East Region I Tournament, and the Division II East Super Regional Series — all for the second year in a row — and advanced to their second straight Division II Softball Championships.

The Wildcats became the first Wilmington program to win a game at an NCAA finals site, defeating Augustana, 5-2, and finishing the World Series with a 1-2 record. They finished ranked No. 5 in the National Fastpitch Coaches Association Poll.

Head Coach **MIKE SHEHORN**, a Delaware native, led the program to back-to-back Division II World Series

appearances with a home-grown team, featuring 12 Delaware student-athletes on the 2024 roster.

“Being that I’m a Delaware guy, born and raised in Kent County and now being up here coaching,” says Shehorn, “this is something that I never even expected. I’ve just seen so many great teams at different levels get that honor.”

This is the first Wilmington University team and the sixth college squad to win the DSBA award since its introduction in 1999. The Wildcats join the 2005 Wesley College NCAA Division III football semifinalists and four University of Delaware teams: the 2003 NCAA Division I-AA champion football team, the 2007 NCAA Tournament Final Four men’s lacrosse team, the 2011 CAA champion men’s soccer team, and the 2016 NCAA title-winning field hockey squad.

The Wildcats were honored during the DSBA’s annual awards luncheon on Presidents Day, Feb. 17, at Riverfront Events on the Wilmington Riverfront. **WU**

—Bob Yearick

ALUMNI



KYMA FULGENCE: Making an Early Impact by Pam George

When **KYMA FULGENCE**'s daughter, Maya, turned 3, the young mother faced a challenge familiar to many parents. "I wanted to go back to work full time, so I started looking for childcare," she says. "I wasn't really happy with some of the places that I visited."

That feeling of dissatisfaction persisted even after she enrolled Maya in a center's program. When Fulgence went to pick her up, she saw children sitting around a table, unengaged. "I say to people all the time that even if a family is low-income or economically struggling, it doesn't

mean they're uneducated or don't care about education," says Fulgence, who had previously attended classes at St. John's University in Queens before relocating to Wilmington in 1998.

Determined to be part of the solution, Fulgence worked at a daycare center, opened a childcare service in



Kyma Fulgence

hard to see children have an excellent childcare experience and know the children in your own neighborhood aren't getting that."

In addition to centers and commercial childcare providers, many families turn to in-home care, either in the child's or the business owner's residence. Maya did well in the latter setting, which inspired Fulgence to open Young Expressions after purchasing a house. She was 29.

While working, Fulgence took classes at Delaware Technical Community College and then received an institutional scholarship from WilmU. It would take her 10 years to complete her degree.

"I had 12 children in my home and could only take like one or two classes a semester," she says. When she had fewer students, she upped the class load. When Young Expressions' enrollment was high, she took only one course or skipped a semester. The adult conversation in class was a treat. "And I loved early education, so it excited me," she says.

In 2015, Fulgence received her diploma. That year, she was working an 80-hour week, she says. She wasn't alone. In the support group she'd founded, other home-based educators echoed her exhaustion. Time off was brief and rare. When she reached a breaking point one summer, her sister-in-law, an educator, stepped in for a month so Fulgence could rest.

Fulgence spent the time in deep reflection. "I was a child who went through a lot of abuse, a lot of poverty," she says. She realized that she had a calling to help young children, but she had to take better care of herself and address her childhood traumas. She began meditating and exercising. Years of holding babies and young children had taken a toll on her back, so she scheduled massage and chiropractic appointments.

In 2016, when Maya was 18, Fulgence made the difficult decision to close her business. There had to be other ways she could make a difference, she says. From 2016 to 2018 — her so-called "hippie years" — Fulgence immersed herself in personal development. She read self-growth books, expanded her meditation practice, and took long, thoughtful walks.

She reentered the field with newfound skills and a fresh outlook, first working in a school and then joining the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood at the University of Delaware as an infant and toddler specialist. She later became the professional development coordinator for family childcare professionals. She was part of the team that created "Shining the Light on You," a wellness program for home-based childcare educators.

With extensive coaching and training experience under her belt,

her home, and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Teaching from Wilmington University. Today, she is the executive director of Teach Zen, the nonprofit that she founded to enhance emotional resilience in young children and the educators who care for them.

Fulgence's journey to "zen" required determination, resilience, and empathy. She began her career with a job at a suburban childcare center. "I saw how quality childcare was supposed to be," she says. "It's





Fulgence founded Teach Zen in 2023. The nonprofit marries her expertise in early childhood education and trauma-informed practices. Its signature program, “One Love, One Heart,” is a five-phase social-emotional learning (SEL) program that uses music, movement, and mindfulness to help children develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve goals. “We work directly with the children in the classroom in

front of the teachers,” Fulgence says. “They can observe and take notes.”

Another initiative, “Nourish and Nurture,” is a partnership between Fulgence and Lanice Wilson, director of Delaware Urban Greens, a nonprofit that seeks to make fresh, organic produce accessible to everyone. Fulgence represents the “nurture” aspect, while Lanice Wilson, who is also the owner of the Juice Joint 2.0, brings the “nourish” element.

“Nourish and Nurture” is a mobile mini-wellness retreat for teams in offices, communities, and schools, including the nine pre-K through ninth-grade schools in the Wilmington Learning Collaborative. It makes sense to bring the program to the schools. Teachers often have multiple jobs inside and outside of school.

Fulgence’s years of experience make her an expert, but she says her WilmU

degree took her to the next level. For instance, when she reentered the field after taking time off, she earned more money than she would have without it, she says. Moreover, her degree was a bonus when it came to interviewing for her positions with the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood.

“My degree adds to my credibility as an SEL technical assistant, early education consultant, and public speaker,” she says. “I’ve been able to present at conferences because of my combination of experience and degree. It all goes hand in hand.”

Still, credentials alone aren’t enough. “You have to have a passion for it,” Fulgence says of working with young children. “It’s something you really, really must want to do.”

Through Teach Zen, she’s extending that passion to educators as well. **WU**





Thank You to Our 2025 SPONSORS

EVENT SPONSOR
Freedom Mechanical, LLC

PRESENTING SPONSOR
EDiS Company

UNIVERSITY SPONSORS
NFP, an Aon Company
Wilmington Trust

DINNER SPONSOR
Delcastle Tennis Center

GOLF CART SPONSORS
CBM Insurance, an Alera Group Company
ShureLine Electrical

HOLE-IN-ONE SPONSOR
Carman Auto Group

BLOODY MARY BAR SPONSORS
Associates International, Inc.
As You Wish Promotions
First State Orthopaedics

RAFFLE SPONSOR
Richards, Layton & Finger

HOLE SPONSORS
Delaware Express
Delaware Today/Today Media
DVL Group, Inc.
Hayman Creative Promotional
Products Agency, Inc.
NextHome Tomorrow Realty — Staci Walls
Padfoot Veterinary Practice
Syntec Water Treatment Excellence
Wor-Wic Community College Foundation, Inc.

SPECIALTY SPONSORS
Breakthru Beverage Group
Canteen Vending
Herr's
Italian Kitchen of Pennsville
Kenny Family Foundation
N.K.S. Distributors, Inc.
Today's Graphics, Inc. (TGI)

Save the date for our next Scholarship Golf Classic.
 **Thursday, May 7, 2026**

GEN. JAMES BENSON: Historic Changing of the Guard

by Bob Yearick

It was Jan. 20, 2025, one day before his official swearing-in, that Delaware Gov.-elect **MATT MEYER** nominated **BRIG. GEN. JAMES BENSON** to be the new adjutant general of the Delaware National Guard. In accepting the nomination, Benson, a Wilmington University alumnus, responded with characteristic humility while noting the profound symbolism of the date.

“I’m not certain if the timing of the press release was intentional for Martin Luther King Day,” he said, “but it’s truly an honor to receive this nomination on such a meaningful day.

“As the first African American to serve as the adjutant general in Delaware, I recognize that I stand on the shoulders of trailblazers like **BRIG. GEN. ERNEST TALBERT**, the first African American general in the Delaware Air National Guard, and **BRIG. GEN. DAVID FLEMING**, the first African American general in the Delaware Army National Guard.”

The AG serves as the principal military advisor to the governor and commands the 122-year-old Delaware National Guard, which includes 1,500 soldiers, 1,100 airmen, and 17 facilities throughout the state. The Guard supports the state in emergency and non-emergency situations, including natural disasters, and enforcement of martial law when local law officials require help. The Guard may also be called into federal service by the president or Congress.

Benson, who was promoted to



major general soon after becoming AG, is the third Wilmington graduate to hold the title. **GEN. FRANK VAVALA** (1984, Business Management) served 18 years in the post, retiring in 2017. He was the first Delaware Guardsman to achieve a four-star rank and one of the few American service members to have risen from private to four-star general.

He was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Carol Timmons, Delaware’s first female adjutant general and the first female general in Delaware National Guard history. Like Vavala, Timmons graduated from Wilmington College in 1984, with a degree in Aviation Management. She also earned a master’s in Management in Public Administration from WilmU in 2013. She retired from the Guard in 2019, and, sadly, passed away the following year.

Benson’s appointment was the culmination of 34 years in the

Delaware Guard, during which he served in various leadership positions, including two overseas assignments — in Iraq and Afghanistan — while gaining valuable experience in strategic military operations, national defense, emergency response, community engagement, and leadership.

His military career began in the navy. After graduating from William Penn High School in New Castle, where he played basketball, ran track and cross country, was a member of the marching band, and served on the student council, Benson went on to the University of Delaware, where he lettered in track all four years.

During his sophomore year at UD, he and a friend decided to join the Navy Reserve and receive tuition assistance through the G.I. Bill while also earning some extra money. After completing basic training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois, he served for 3½ years as a reservist, earning a degree in Economics.

While at UD, Benson was instrumental in founding the Nu Xi chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, one of the oldest predominantly African American Greek-letter organizations in the U.S. With more than 260,000 members and 721 undergraduate and alumni chapters in every state and international chapters in 10 countries, the fraternity sponsors programs centered on community service, social welfare, and academic scholarship.

After mustering out of the navy

as an E-3 seaman, Benson decided to continue his career as a citizen-soldier, but this time as an officer and in a different military branch — the army. In 1991, he enlisted in the Delaware Army National Guard and quickly qualified for Officer Candidate School at the Regional Training Institute in Bethany Beach. He was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in 1992.

In 1998, aware that a master's degree would improve his chances of promotion, he enrolled in the MBA program at WilmU. At the time, he worked in administration for Delaware Technical Community College, recruiting students. "It was ideal for me as a working professional," Benson says. "Wilmington had eight- or 10-week courses, and I could knock out those courses in a shorter length of time versus going to other institutions for 16 weeks. For me, Wilmington was great, and I share that with everyone."

A few years later, he earned another master's in Strategic Studies from the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

During his time in the Delaware Guard, he has been called to active duty three times. The first occurred in 2003 when Benson, by then a captain, moved to Arlington, Virginia, to begin a temporary active duty assignment at the National Guard Bureau's (NGB) Joint Operations Center, which is responsible for planning, coordinating, and integrating all aspects of the Guard's nationwide operations, including responses to emergencies and disasters.

In the army, "temporary" is used loosely, and he spent four years in Virginia. "It started as a six-month assignment, and after that they said, 'We like you, can you stay?' I did, and I got a lot of valuable experience there," he says. "That was the time of Katrina and also the blackout from

Michigan to New York. We would receive data from the various states and feed that data to the National Guard Bureau for their response."

Almost immediately after his duty at NGB, as a newly minted major, he took on the first of his two overseas assignments, joining Operation Iraqi Freedom in Baghdad. There, he served as a staff officer with the 198th Rear Area Operations Center for 14 months. Although it was called a "rear area" operation, his unit definitely "was not in the rear," Benson says. Shouts of "Incoming!" were heard with some frequency.

A few years later, in 2012, he was deployed again, this time as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, to take command of the 198th Expeditionary Signal Battalion in Kandahar, Afghanistan. By then a lieutenant colonel, Benson commanded a battalion of 560 soldiers in five companies — three from Delaware. From April 2012 to June 2014, they were responsible for communications across the entire country.

After returning to Delaware, he continued to climb the military ranks while pursuing a civilian career as an Emergency Management consultant with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Department of Agriculture. With his promotion to brigadier general in January 2021, he became director of the Joint Staff of the Delaware Guard. In May of 2023, he was named assistant adjutant general, a post he held until last January, when he succeeded **MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL BERRY**, who retired after six years as AG.

In nominating Benson, Meyer noted that "he has demonstrated . . . a deep commitment to the well-being of our troops."

That commitment stems from a keen awareness of the role of Guardsmen — civilians whose military

service consists of one weekend drill a month and two weeks of summer camp during the typical six-year enlistment.

"Our soldiers and airmen are out in the world for 28 days a month, and we see them on two," Benson says. "But they're impacted by those 28 days, and they bring that to our two. We have to be understanding in that they're dealing with different things at that time — family, jobs, health situations. So a soldier or airman might not come to drill on that Saturday morning all rosy, and they don't want someone barking at them. We have to have some empathy. Often, all it takes is, 'Hey, everything OK? How's the family?'"

Benson became a full-time soldier when he assumed the AG duties and enjoys its community outreach opportunities. He recently conducted a Read Aloud session at a Wilmington Church, and he spent a day at Wilmington's Conrad High School as part of the Principal for a Day Program, an initiative of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce.

During public appearances, he often points out the benefits offered by the organization he has been part of for over three decades. "The National Guard," he says, "has great family support and wellness services, and those have increased over the past 20 years." They include tuition assistance of up to \$4,500 a year, inexpensive daycare for children during drill weekends, inpatient hospital care, outpatient medical services, financial counseling, and behavioral health services.

While embracing his duties as AG, Benson can't help but marvel at the journey that brought him to that office. "When I think back to my time as an enlisted man — an E-3 — and a junior officer, doing KP or dining hall duty, or polishing brass," he says, "it's almost unbelievable to be wearing two stars. I am truly honored and grateful to serve the state of Delaware and the nation." **WU**

STAY INVOLVED

WITH YOUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP IS FREE!

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



WILMU.EDU/ALUMNI

1992



PAUL CLEMENTS

B.S.N. in Nursing, of New Castle, was named president of the American Academy of Forensic Nursing.



MICHELLE TAYLOR Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership: Learning and Innovation, of Middletown,

celebrated 25 years of service at United Way of Delaware and was recognized as one of the Delaware Business Times' "222 Most Impactful Leaders in Delaware."



JACQUELINE MAINWARING

D.N.P. in Nursing Practice, of Wilmington, was recognized by DANA for

outstanding contributions to the field of nurse anesthesiology.

1994



ALVERNE CHESTERFIELD

M.S. in Public Administration, of Princess Anne, Maryland, was appointed to

the Maryland State Board of Education.



GWYN PARRIS-ATWELL

M.S.N. in Family Nurse Practitioner, of Alloway, New Jersey, received the 2025 New Jersey Emergency Nurses Association Jeanette

Ash Lifetime Achievement Award.

1997



DAWN MUTCHKO

D.N.P. in Family Nurse Practitioner, of Absecon, New Jersey, received the American Association of Nurse Practitioners' 2025

New Jersey award for outstanding contributions.

1998



JAMES BENSON MBA, of Alexandria, VA, was appointed Adjutant General of the Delaware National Guard. (See article on page 52.)

2000



CONSTANCE HASTINGS

M.S. in Community Counseling, of Wilmington, was awarded the 2024 Notable Book Award from the Southern

Christian Writers Conference.

2001



JENNIFER NAUMAN

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, of Milton, was named superintendent of Cape Henlopen School District.

2004



MICHELLE CAREY

M.Ed. in Elementary and Secondary School Counseling, of Denton, Maryland, was named principal of Centreville Elementary School.



STEPHANIE DEROSE

M.Ed. in School Leadership, of Ocean City, New Jersey, was named superintendent of Middle Township Public Schools.



KATHLEEN NEAL

B.S.N. in Nursing, of Wilmington, was named president of the Delaware Nurses Association.

2007



MARTIN MELSON

M.S.N. in Family Nurse Practitioner, of Fruitland, Maryland, was awarded the 2024 New Business of the Year by the Salisbury Area Chamber

of Commerce.



SEBASTIAN HAMILTON

MBA, of Boston, was named vice president and chief pharmacy officer of NeighborHealth.



FRANK RANELLI

Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Innovation, of Medford, New Jersey, was named superintendent of Lower Merion Schools.

2009



KIMBERLY BOGIA
B.S. in Organizational Management, of Wilmington, retired from her position as Clinical Trial Business Manager at Nemours.

2010



DEVON MITCHELL
MBA, of New Castle, serves as board member of Black Women in Aviation.

2011



BRANDY COOPER
M.Ed. in Elementary and Secondary School Counseling, of Felton, Delaware, was named director of human resources for the Lake Forest School District.



ANGELO DIBARTOLO
M.Ed. in Elementary and Secondary School Counseling, of Linwood, New Jersey, was named the 2024-2025 Cape May County Counselor of the County.



CHARLANNE CLYMER
B.S. in Accounting, of Townsend, was appointed as deputy secretary of transportation at DelDOT.

2012



REBECCA FELICIANO
B.S.N., of Ocala, Florida, was honored as Woman of the Month for February 2025 by P.O.W.E.R..

2013



LAUREN BARONE
M.S.N. in Leadership, of Newark, received the DAISY Leader Award for Extraordinary Nurses at Christiana-Care.

2014



KYMA FULGENCE
B.S. in Education Studies, of Wilmington, founded Teach Zen, equipping educators and the community with the

knowledge and skills to support children's emotional needs. (See article on page 48.)

2015



ERNESTINE EPPS
B.S. in Organizational Management, of Newark, was promoted to rank of CW5 for the Delaware National

Guard.



SARA BLUHM
M.S.M. in Management, of Magnolia, was named executive director of Sussex County Land Trust.

2017



HOLLY GRUHLKE
DBA, of South Heart, North Dakota, was named one of Prairie Business Magazine's 2025 Top 25 Women in Business.



BRIANNA LANGSHAW M.S.N. in Leadership, of Townsend, was honored with the DAISY Leader Award for Extraordinary

Nurses.

2019



SALOME THOMAS-EL
Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Innovation, of Garnet Valley, Pennsylvania, released the book, "Meet Their Needs, and They'll Succeed: Transforming Students' Lives Through Positive Relationships."



PATRICIA DEER
M.S.N. in Family Nurse Practitioner, of Lincoln, Delaware, received the Above and Beyond Award at Bayhealth.

2021



JAMES THOMAS
DNP, of Landenberg, Pennsylvania, published an article in the Journal for Pediatric Quality and Safety.

2022



GEMELLE JOHN
M.Ed. in Instruction, of Media, Pennsylvania, was named executive director of Horizons Tower Hill.

2023



VICTOIR CAHOON
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation, of Bear, was named superintendent of the Capital School District.

2024



JON LOOMAN Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership, of Lansing, Michigan, was named vice president of facilities at LAFCU.



TIMOTHY GANDAPERMANA
D.N.P., of Yucaipa, California, received the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses at Dignity Health — St. Bernardine Medical Center.



JARED HAHN B.S. in Criminal Justice, of Lititz, Pennsylvania, was named the Lititz Borough Police Chief.



Wilmington University
School of Law

WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

You Miss Every Shot You Don't Take

Law Student Xavier Hurt's Journey from Brooklyn to Law School

There's an old basketball adage: "You miss every shot you don't take." **XAVIER HURT** is living proof of what can happen when you cast aside your fear of failure and take the shot.

Several years ago, Hurt considered attending law school but was afraid he wouldn't be accepted. Today, he is a rising 3L part-time student at the Wilmington University School of Law, a member of its inaugural class, and a recent recipient of national recognition, earning the award for Best Opening Statement at the Chapman Challenge Competition.

How did he get to this point? The short answer is, he let go of fear. The long answer follows.

Hurt was born and raised in Brooklyn by his mother, **ANN MARIE HURT**. When he was in high school, she taught at a school next to a police precinct, a proximity that would prove pivotal. Ann Marie became friends with an officer and introduced him to her son. The officer informed Hurt about the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), sparking his early interest in the field of criminal justice, particularly law enforcement.

When it came time to apply to college, Hurt chose Delaware State University,

primarily because it housed the first collegiate chapter of NOBLE. (Ann Marie had hoped he'd attend her alma mater, Howard University, but it didn't offer a Criminal Justice major.) DSU turned out to be the right choice. Hurt stepped out of his comfort zone, immersed himself in his coursework, joined the NOBLE chapter, and became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. One lesson from a fraternity brother still resonates:

"Remember your 'why.' If your 'why' is strong enough, it becomes your 'how.'"

After graduating in 2018 with a degree in Criminal Justice, Hurt began working in the fraud unit at Bank of America. Two years later, his path took an unexpected turn when he became fascinated with Tesla's technology. After months of research, he decided to sell Teslas, seeing the role as another kind of investigation. He enjoyed explaining the technology to customers who appreciated his knowledge and warmth.

During the COVID-19 shutdown, Hurt binge-watched shows like NCIS, Law & Order, Criminal Minds, and FBI. He became increasingly intrigued by courtroom strategy. His mother had often said he'd make a great lawyer, both for his communication skills and ability to argue.

When he learned that Wilmington University was opening a law school, he asked Ann Marie for her thoughts. Her immediate response: "Jump out there!"

When he hesitated, noting that the school was new and not yet accredited, she said, "It's WilmU. They have a good reputation." Looking back, Ann Marie says, "I might not have been so encouraging if it wasn't WilmU."

Hurt loved the school's mission, vision, and affordability. He thought it would be exciting to be part of the inaugural class, but he also feared rejection. Then he remembered his mom's advice and the shot he didn't want to miss.

"If I don't apply to WilmU Law, I'm an idiot," he says.

So, he applied and was admitted to Wilmington University in 2023.

Hurt credits Ann Marie for his success. "My mother made me who I am and always had my back," he says, adding that one of her greatest lessons was to be curious.

"Mom made sure I tried things. She taught me not to be afraid and to ask questions," he says.

According to Ann Marie, "Xavier is the epitome of not being afraid to try new things."

Hurt believes that curiosity is his best

trait, one that has served him well in law school. He jokes that it may be genetic: “My mom is very curious and smart,” he says, while Ann Marie calls him “a sponge.”

As an educator for 24 years, Ann Marie worked diligently to expose her son to the world of sports, books, museums, cooking, music, travel, and diverse cultures. She proudly shares that he earned a perfect score on the Regents exam and can write better than she can. “He took it to another level,” she says.

Ann Marie once worried that, as the child of a single parent in Brooklyn, people might underestimate him. But she knew that with his drive and the support of their “village,” he would succeed. Today, she says she can see him becoming a judge.

His biggest challenge in law school? “Finding balance,” he says, without hesitation.

Hurt hadn’t been in school since 2018 and was juggling law school, a full-time job, now at Capital One, and a family. (He has two sons, Kaiden and Kendal.) But he remembered his “why.” As his DSU friends used to say:

“Temporary sacrifice for a lifetime of paradise.”

By his second year, he found his rhythm — getting to the gym after class to work off stress and carving out quality time with his sons. He also discovered a love for trial advocacy and his natural talent. He says he was “beyond shocked” to win Best Opening Statement at the Chapman Challenge, WilmU Law’s first competition.

Now entering his third year, Hurt speaks with gratitude and clarity about what sets Wilmington University School of Law apart. “The professors are phenomenal,” he says. “They are amazing, and I love their experience and their teaching style. I love the student-centered focus and the support system. Everyone — professors, staff, deans — is accessible and supportive.”

Hurt encourages others consider-



Xavier Hurt

ing law school to focus on possibilities, not limitations.

“It’s important to remember that where you are at the moment doesn’t determine where you can go,” he says. “I started in an inner-city neighborhood in Brooklyn and made it here.”

Looking ahead, Hurt plans to graduate from law school and become a member of the Delaware Bar — and

perhaps others. He hopes to give back to the community, pass along the lessons his mother taught him to his two sons, and help them grow into strong, thoughtful men.

He also wants to keep exploring the world through travel, culture, cooking, and fishing.

Where his curiosity will take him next is anyone’s guess — but he’s ready to take the shot. **WU** —Jan Jurden

Law students Xavier Hurt and Genesis Joma represented WilmU on the national stage.



WilmU Law Students Shine in National Trial

The Wilmington University School of Law received national recognition after earning a top award at the inaugural Chapman Challenge Trial Competition held in California. Hosted by the Chapman University Fowler School of Law, the contest brought together 11 teams in a trial advocacy format focused on real-time performance and strategy. Teams litigated a fictional intellectual property case in which a deceased singer's estate claimed a record label used AI to replicate her voice and likeness on a posthumous album.

WilmU law students **XAVIER HURT** and **GENESIS JOMA** represented the School of Law, coached by Associate Professor of Law **VERONICA J. FINKELSTEIN**. They joined forces with two peers from St. Mary's University School of Law in Texas to form a hybrid team — the only one of its kind and the only group competing from outside California.

Facing off against established programs such as UCLA and Pepperdine, the hybrid team held its own throughout the competition. In a standout moment, Wilmington's Hurt was awarded Best Opening Statement of the entire competition, surpassing 47 other students for the honor.

This year marked the University's first entry into trial competitions, and its success signals strong momentum for the School of Law as it continues to grow, Finkelstein says. "Advocacy competitions are an important part of the law school experience. They pro-



*Associate Law Professor
Veronica J. Finkelstein
competed in and later coached
national moot court teams.*

PAUL PATTON

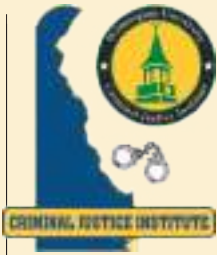
vide an opportunity for law students to take the skills they've learned in the classroom and practice them in a realistic setting that mimics what they'll

experience in practice. Competitions are also a lot of fun, and we had a wonderful time at Chapman, thanks to our excellent teammates from St. Mary's."

She speaks from experience. Finkelstein was a nationally competitive advocate in law school, representing Emory University School of Law in the National Moot Court and Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court competitions. A seasoned litigator and educator, she spent most of her career as an assistant U.S. attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice in Philadelphia before joining Wilmington University full-time. Known for her passion for teaching, Finkelstein brings real-world courtroom experience into the classroom, helping to guide and inspire a new generation of attorneys. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

This year marked the University's first entry into trial competitions, and its success signals strong momentum for the School of Law as it continues to grow.





CENTER FOR LAW, JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

A MODEL FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TRAINING

WILMINGTON
UNIVERSITY'S
NEWEST INITIATIVE, THE
**CENTER FOR LAW,
JUSTICE AND SOCIETY**,
OPENED MAY 1 ON
THE DOVER CAMPUS —
AND IT'S ALREADY
POSITIONED TO MAKE
A MEANINGFUL IMPACT
IN DELAWARE AND
BEYOND.



Col. Melissa Zebley

At its core, the Center for Law, Justice and Society is about preparation. It equips students pursuing careers in law enforcement, forensic science, and legal studies with the tools and training they need to lead with skill and integrity. But its mission goes further. This is also a place for professionals already in the field — police officers, military personnel, and public safety officials — to sharpen their expertise and stay current with evolving standards and practices.

“We are proud to expand our academic offerings in ways that directly support those who serve our com-



Maj. Laura O'Sullivan

munities,” says Wilmington University President **DR. LAVERNE HARMON**. “The Center for Law, Justice and Society reflects our mission to provide practical, career-focused education that empowers students and professionals to make a meaningful difference. It is also led by individuals who have dedicated their lives to public safety — they understand the work, the challenges, and the calling.”

COL. MELISSA ZEBLEY, former superintendent of the Delaware State Police, serves as executive director. A respected leader with advanced training from institutions like the FBI National Academy and Northwestern

University, Zebley also holds a master's degree from Wilmington University. In 2024, she was inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame.

The Center's associate executive director is **MAJ. LAURA O'SULLIVAN**, a 32-year veteran of the New Castle County Police Department, where she

led in patrol, investigations, training, and special operations, including more than a decade as a SWAT team member and commander. Like Zebley, she is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy, holds a graduate degree from WilmU, and brings decades of instructional experience as an adjunct professor.

The Center incorporates the University's Criminal Justice Institute, deepening its partnerships with community organizations. That integration reflects a growing recognition that public service education must be as connected to the community as it is to the classroom. **WU** —*Maria Hess*



Col. Melissa Zebley, right, and Maj. Laura O'Sullivan lead the Center as executive director and associate executive director, respectively.





INTERNS JOIN ACTIVE HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION

The Criminal Justice Institute has launched a pioneering Cold Case Internship Program with the Chester County District Attorney's Office and the Chester County Detective Bureau. This first-of-its-kind initiative gives students the rare opportunity to contribute directly to a specific homicide investigation: an unsolved Pennsylvania case that has remained open for four years. The case details are confidential, but the work is urgent and impactful.

Interns are diving into every facet of the investigation. They're re-examining original police reports, combing through evidence files, revisiting witness accounts, and reviewing earlier suspect profiles to uncover gaps or missed leads. They're analyzing phone data, email records, and social media activity to trace digital patterns that may shed new light on the victim's final days or the suspect's movements.

By examining the victim's background, habits, and relationships, interns gain insight into possible motives and identify individuals with the wherewithal to commit the crime. They also support forensic efforts — reviewing DNA findings, fingerprint evidence, and other lab-based analyses as they become available. As they map out key locations tied to the case, students apply geographic profiling strategies to identify possible links between the crime scene and suspect behavior.

Community engagement is another component of the program. Interns help manage outreach efforts, tapping into tip lines and social media platforms to encourage the public to share information. Interviews with witnesses and family members are being re-evaluated, offering a second look at past conversations and new insights that may have been overlooked.

This meaningful, far-reaching work provides invaluable experience for interns seeking to distinguish themselves in law enforcement. With more than 20,000 unresolved homicide and missing persons cases in the tri-state area — and an estimated 270,000 across the country — it's clear there is no shortage of work to be done.

"Plus, Wilmington University students have the opportunity to transition from an internship in the Cold Case program to a newly formed Cold Case Club," says recently retired CJI Director **DR. RAY CARR**. "Both the internship and the club aim to assist in researching and analyzing unsolved cases, collaborating with law enforcement and forensic experts, and providing students with hands-on experience in criminal investigations. The club will continue to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, ethical research, and public awareness about unsolved crimes."

The program, which is helping to fill a significant gap in resources, is a powerful form of hands-on learning and a meaningful contribution to the pursuit of justice. The initiative combines education with purpose, giving students a chance to make a difference — in their professional journeys and in the lives of families who have longed for truth, closure, and healing. **WU** —*Maria Hess*

THE CJI PARTNERS ON NEW STATEWIDE SAFETY TRAINING FOR CONSTABLES



In a significant step toward enhancing public safety training in Delaware, the Wilmington University Criminal Justice Institute has played a key role in developing a new statewide constable class. The Delaware Active Threat Response course is modeled after the FBI's Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training model. It's designed to prepare law enforcement personnel for active threat scenarios.

The CJI contributed to the planning and curriculum design, ensuring

that the course reflects current best practices in threat response. The program was formally presented to the Delaware Constable Board of Examiners, which voted to incorporate it into the 2025 Constable In-Service training. More than 400 constables across the state are expected to complete the training, marking a broad implementation of this advanced online learning initiative.

The primary goal of this course is relatively simple: to help keep people safe and make sure state-

wide constables can access practical, high-quality training that prepares them for real-world situations they might face.

This collaboration shows the important work that can be done when academia and law enforcement work together with a shared sense of purpose.

It also highlights WilmU's growing role in advancing continuing education and operational readiness for Delaware's law enforcement community. **WU** —Maria Hess

THE WILMU MBA — LEAD WITH: VISION. STRATEGY. IMPACT.

Your MBA is more than a degree — it's your launchpad for leadership. WilmuU's flexible, affordable program rewards your accomplishments and equips you to lead in a changing world.

ACCESSIBLE: No GMAT or GRE required for admission.

CUSTOMIZABLE: A choice of industry-aligned concentrations

EFFICIENT: Start now, finish in as little as 12 months

FLEXIBLE: Online or hybrid formats available.

COST-EFFECTIVE: Credit for your prior experience and certifications

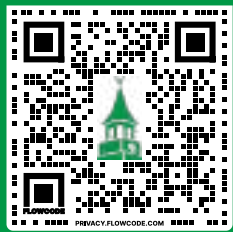
SUPPORTED: Dedicated staff to help you get started

NEW! Executive MBA Options for Professionals With 5+ Years of Experience

- Up to six credits for prior industry experience
- Executive-level forums and discussions
- Complete your MBA in as little as 10 months.

Apply now and take the lead.

go.wilmu.edu/MBA



LEADING WITH INTEGRITY

COL. MELISSA ZEBLEY, former superintendent of the Delaware State Police, now serves as executive director of Wilmington University's new Center for Law, Justice and Society. Together with Associate Executive Director **MAJ. LAURA O'SULLIVAN**, the leaders bring a combined 65 years of public service experience to the University.

Read their story on page 60.

