

THE MAGAZINE OF MISSOURI WESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

MWSU



WINTER 2021

12 On the front lines:
Griffons battling COVID-19



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WINTER 2021

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The MWSU Magazine is a publication of the Marketing and Communications Office for alumni and friends of Missouri Western State University and its predecessor institutions.

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president's PERSPECTIVE

Dear Friends,

As cliché as it is becoming to say, these are unprecedented times, and the fall semester at Missouri Western was no exception. As always, our priority was providing our students with a high-quality education in a safe environment, and thanks to the diligence of everyone in the campus community, we were able to finish out the semester strong and in person.

When we began the semester back in August, some wondered how long we would be able to continue to provide our community with in-person classes and services. Many universities across the country were wondering the same thing – many were not as fortunate and were forced to go all online early on in the semester. But as is typical of the Griffon family, we rose to the challenge for the good of the whole community. By abiding by COVID-19 guidelines, we protected not only ourselves, but our families, fellow Griffons and their families in the St. Joseph community and beyond. Thankfully, this diligence helped keep COVID-19 numbers on campus relatively low.

I am incredibly grateful for everyone in the campus community who has worked tirelessly to provide our students with a high-quality education throughout this new normal. Whether it was moving individual classes fully or partially online, dividing labs in half due to social-distancing measures, or just relocating classes to a space that was less than ideal, our faculty have stepped up to continue providing our students with the education that they need and deserve. I am also grateful for our faculty and staff who have stepped up to keep our campus clean, safe and abiding by local, state and CDC guidelines. Our employees have gone above and beyond to ensure that our campus remains a safe place for everyone each day.



Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy

Our intention is to continue into the spring semester with the same protocols and guidelines which have worked so well for us this fall while incorporating the most recent recommendations and guidelines from health authorities. We will also be prepared to make any mid-semester shifts that are deemed necessary and continue to do what is best for the health, safety and wellbeing of our campus community. I am thankful that we were able to finish the fall semester strong and in person, and optimistic that we will be able to hold the spring semester in a similar manner.

While I look forward to the day when we can consider ourselves in a post-COVID world, as I'm sure many of us do, I am confident that with the help and support of our Griffon family, we can continue to provide our students with the best education possible until then. Thank you for all you are doing to stay connected with and support the university during this trying time. One day, we will all look back and tell the story of the Griffon family coming together to ensure Missouri Western's survival during these unprecedented times.

Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy

Interim President

Missouri Western State University

campus NEWS

Roevers Establish Scholarship

Dr. James (Jim) and Carol Roever recently established an endowed scholarship through the Missouri Western Foundation. Eligible students must be declared business majors who have completed at least 60 hours and have a minimum GPA of 3.5.

“As former Missouri Western employees, we wanted to invest in the institution we love and respect,” said Jim. “Our mutual respect for the Craig School of Business led

us to endow a scholarship to invest in some of its excellent business students.”

Carol was a longtime faculty member and the first Dean of the Craig School of Business. She served in different capacities for 28 years. Jim served as the Vice President for Academic Affairs for 17 years and then as the Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the Missouri Western Foundation. ■

Dr. Jim and Carol Roever



Missouri Western expands A+ Scholarship

Missouri Western will expand its scholarship for A+ certified high school graduates from Missouri. “A+ students are committed to their education and good citizens of their community, and they have a lot to contribute to the vitality of our campus,” said Dr. Melissa Mace, vice president for enrollment management.

Missouri students who are A+ certified have attended a designated high school with a minimum grade point average of 2.5, an attendance record of at

least 95 percent, performed at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, maintained a record of good citizenship by avoiding illegal drug and alcohol use, and achieved a score of proficient or advanced on an end-of-course exam in mathematics.

Those students will receive an A+ scholarship of at least \$500 per year, with additional scholarship amounts earned based on performance on the ACT/SAT (up to \$850 A+ scholarship dollars per academic year). Students

Editor's Note

The Missouri Western Magazine will now be published twice a year, to coincide with the semesters. The winter edition will include activities and information from the previous fall semester, and the fall edition will cover news from the spring semester. The magazine will be sent out electronically to all alumni and friends who provide their email addresses. If you would prefer a printed edition, please email your request to Susan Leslie at sleslie@missouriwestern.edu.

The MWSU Foundation Annual Report has been published on our website at foundation.missouriwestern.edu/financials. The current list of donors and members of our giving societies is also on our website at foundation.missouriwestern.edu/our-donors.

Follow our social media posts and email announcements for campus news between issues.



MWSUAlumni



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Foundation welcomes Chambers as new Assistant Director

Michele Chambers '98 has been named Assistant Director and Financial Officer of the Missouri Western State University Foundation.

After spending the majority of her career with for-profit organizations, Chambers knew she wanted to experience something new, yet familiar. "I liked the idea of working for a nonprofit organization where the goal is focused on improving the quality of life ... it's more personal," Chambers said.

Chambers's goal for her first year in her new position is to understand the processes and history of activities of the Foundation. She wants to familiarize herself with the Foundation's day-to-day operations and its interactions with the institution and community. "Regardless of whether an organization is a for-profit or a not-for-profit, the target is a favorable result at the end of the day's operations," Chambers said.



M. Michele Chambers

Returning to St. Joseph and Missouri Western is like coming home for Chambers. She and her family first moved to St. Joseph in 1987, when her mom received a job opportunity as a professor at Missouri Western. Chambers left St. Joseph for a job opportunity herself in 2009 and is grateful for the chance to return to the area. Missouri Western has been a part of her life since her family first arrived in St. Joseph, and she has a lot of good memories on the

campus and in the classrooms over the years. She believes that working in the Foundation will allow her to ensure others have the same opportunity that she did.

"I have had a number of successes in my career that have come through diligence and hard work, but I would not have had those opportunities without the degrees that I earned at Missouri Western opening those doors initially," said Chambers. She graduated from Missouri Western in 1998 with degrees in marketing and accounting.

Chambers's husband, Scott, is also a St. Joseph native. They have been married 15 years. She has a daughter, Ashley, age 24; and a son, Xavier, age 13. She also has two grandchildren, Brayden, age 4; and Raelynn, age 4 months. During her previous time in the community, she volunteered actively with the local Girl Scouts, St. Joseph Figure Skating Club and Junior Achievement.

Chambers began her duties in October 2020. ■

New leadership for Center for Service, Bond Incubator

In early 2021, Missouri Western's Center for Service and the Kit Bond Science and Technology Incubator both got new leadership.

Kim Sigrist '93 was named director of the Center for Service, which provides students with opportunities to learn and serve by connecting them with volunteer opportunities in the community. Students can earn elective credits for their service.

Sigrist graduated from Missouri Western with a Bachelor of

Science Technology in Business Management/Legal Studies. Since 2015, she has served Missouri Western as administrative assistant in the Department of Athletics, executive associate to the president and executive director of enrollment management.

Sigrist takes over for Dr. Gary Clapp, who was named executive director of the Innovation Stockyard, the public-private partnership that operates the business incubator on Missouri Western's campus. Clapp served

as president and CEO of the Institute for Industrial and Applied Life Sciences from 2006 to 2012, and in that capacity managed the incubator when it opened in 2008. IIALS was renamed Innovation Stockyard in 2015. After some time at a pharmaceutical development and manufacturing organization, Clapp returned to Missouri Western in 2015 as associate professor of chemistry and director of workforce development before taking over the Center for Service in 2020. ■

Family establishes scholarship in father's memory

The Nolds, Chad '93, Shannon, and their son, Nathan '18, are an entrepreneurial family – Chad and Shannon had businesses of their own. It was an easy decision to support their only son, Nathan, when he competed in Missouri Western's applied business ownership class and was awarded a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory in Petaluma, California in 2018.

Relocating to California was a big step for Nathan. Leaving behind the family farm on which he was raised meant leaving his parents a lot of work – what would they do without his extra set of hands? But Chad and Shannon knew they wanted to wholeheartedly support their son's pursuits, even if that meant his relocating halfway across the country.

Nathan looked up to Chad not only as a dad, but as a mentor and life coach. "Many children are close to their parents," said Pam Klaus, director of the Center for Franchise Development, through which the applied business ownership class is run. "Nathan was exceptionally close to his. His parents were around during the [store] transfer. They were obviously very involved in his goals and pursuits."

For this reason and more, Nathan and Shannon chose to honor Chad's memory with the Chad R. Nold Family Scholarship when he passed away in September 2020. They wanted to do something that would help other students while memorializing their loving father and husband.

Two scholarships of \$1,000 each are being offered to two students each year. The first is offered to a high school senior



Shannon Nold and Nathan Nold '18, pictured with a portrait of Chad Nold '93, with Hayden Glaubius, the first recipient of the scholarship, along with Pam Klaus, director of the Center for Franchise Development.

from Andrew or Buchanan County planning to attend Missouri Western's Craig School of Business. The second is offered to a Missouri Western senior interested in entrepreneurship, with preference going to a student pursuing the applied business ownership class.

Nathan and Shannon hope that the scholarships will allow students

to do something they would not otherwise be able to do. They wish to keep Chad's memory alive for the family while being able to help someone else.

"Thank you for giving us a chance to further keep Chad's memory alive," said Shannon and Nathan. "It is incredibly special for us." ■

New VP for Enrollment Management hired

Dr. Melissa Mace began as Missouri Western's Vice President for Enrollment Management in November. Dr. Mace previously served as Assistant Vice President for Enrollment at Maryville University in St. Louis.

"I am honored to be joining the Griffon community," Dr. Mace said. "The value Missouri Western



Dr. Melissa Mace

places on affordable and accessible education is a key reason for my decision to join the University. Missouri Western's role in transformative education through applied learning has the ability to positively impact our students, community, the state of Missouri, and the region.

It makes me proud to be part of something this special." ■

Campus Kudos

Dr. Teddi Deka, honors director and professor of psychology; **Dr. Jennifer Jackson**, assistant professor of communication; and **Dr. Jordan Atkinson**, assistant professor of communication, presented “Building a Better Brand,” designed to facilitate creation of branding kits for use in honors programs to increase consistency in appearance and message, at the National Collegiate Honors Council National Conference. The submission was selected as a feature presentation in the virtual conference. The feature presentation began with a pre-recorded session filmed by **Dr. Robert Nulph**, associate professor of journalism, with contributing photos by students **Chase Merwin** and **Adrienne Boma**, and background research by student **Annaka Kellogg**. Afterward, Deka, Jackson and Atkinson engaged in a live Zoom session with conference attendees.

Courtanie Allwood, **Leo Grantham**, **William McKern**, **Bayley Pickering** and **Katherine Yeacker** earned their silver general studies honors medals upon graduation last fall. Students earning medals complete at least 24 credit hours of honors-designated general studies courses or honors colloquia, which are designed to bridge general studies skills and often involve applied learning experiences.

Jordan Jennings was selected as the 2020 Honors Student of the Year. She has earned her second medal in the honors program for achieving honors in psychology, building upon her general studies honors medal. She is finishing her honors thesis involving criminogenic thinking and parenting styles with **Dr. Jon Mandracchia**, associate professor of psychology. Jennings presented research from one of her psychology classes at the 2020 Alpha Chi National Convention, and she currently serves as the Missouri Western chapter president. She is also a soccer team captain, serves on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee’s Mental Health Task Force and frequently volunteers in the community.

Dr. Shawna Harris, department of communication chair and associate professor, has been named 2020 Honors Faculty of the Year.

Annette Weeks ’87, executive director for the Center for Entrepreneurship, presented to the Multicultural Business Coalition Summit. Highlighting organizations and resource partners providing support and guidance for entrepreneurs of all diversity across the state was the focus of the virtual event. MBC’s mission is to connect, encourage and provide resources for a strong multicultural business ecosystem.

Dr. Dominic DeBrincat, associate professor of history; and **Dr. Adrienne Johnson**, department of education chair and associate professor, were awarded the 2020 Fall Advisor Shout-Out Award.

Dr. David McMahan, professor of communication and first vice president of the National Communication Association, was the primary planner of the Association’s 106th annual convention, as well as chair of the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, the Communication at the Crossroad Series and the NCA welcome and orientation. Dr. McMahan assumed the duties of NCA President following the conclusion of the conference. **Dr. Jordan Atkinson**, assistant professor of communication, presented three papers at the conference. One paper was co-authored by **Joy Deatherage ’20** and current student **Nicole Bilby**. Atkinson also chaired the Top Panel of the Instructional Communication Division, and served on the Convention Committee as the Secretary of the Instructional Communication Division. **Dr. Mei Zhang**, professor of communication, presented a paper and a panel at the conference, as well as chaired the Top Student Papers in Public Address.

Alpha Chi inducted the following students academically ranking in the top ten percent of their junior and senior class: **Brittany Addison**, **Rylee Aggus**, **Tori Barrett**, **Hannah Berry**, **Tennyson Clary**, **Whitney Davidson**, **Jennifer Dorris**, **Cassidy Edson**, **Mackenzie Grantham**, **Jordan Holkesvik**, **Nicole Jackson**, **Madysen Lytton**, **Tanner Merwin**, **Skyler Murphy**, **Madelyn O’Connell**, **Mackenzie O’Neill**, **Grace Slater-Pinnick**, **Callie Smith**, **Julia Stofus**, **Michael Thomson**, **Raechel Tittor**, and **Emily Weese**. Professors receiving Compass Awards as the inductees’ most influential professors were **Drs. Pam Clary**, **Todd Eckdahl**, **Grey Endres**, **Michael Grantham**, **Melinda Kovács**, **Jay Lemanski**, **Jon Mandracchia**, **Natalie Mikita**, **Mark Mills**, **Madeline Rislow**, **Kristen Walton** and **Corey White**.

The American Association of University Women awarded a 2020-21 International Fellowship to **Marlen Munoz Franco**, currently pursuing her M.S. in Chemistry. Recipients will pursue academic work and lead innovative community projects to empower women and girls.

Dr. Jeff Woodford, associate professor of chemistry, has been appointed to the chemistry GRE Exam Committee. As part of his appointment, Dr. Woodford will review the current exam and develop content for the next iteration of the exam.

Twelve social work students were inducted into the Phi Alpha National Honor Society this past fall. This is the highest academic honor a student can receive in social work. The students inducted were **Julia Stolfus**, **Tennyson Clary**, **Beth Crumpler**, **Marissa Jochem**, **Kristin George**, **Karson Keithley**, **Bodie McLin**, **Kaely Smith**, **Carnisha Scott**, **Dariane DeClue**, **Sydney Wuerfele** and **Valerie Hawk**.

Dr. Melinda Kovács, associate professor of political science, and **Our Revolution (Andrea Cole and Derek Evans**, academic advisor) were awarded the 2020 Kelsy Beshears Racial Justice Award by the YWCA St. Joseph and St. Joseph branch of the NAACP.

Undergraduate biology student **Bailee Romaker** was featured in The Wildlife Society’s international newsletter. Bailee conducted research with biology professor **Dr. Julie Jedlicka’s** research team as part of the National Science Foundation grant to investigate the ecosystem services that birds provide to Kenyan coffee growers. Undergraduate **Audrey Lindstead** was also part of the research team.

Dr. Jordan Atkinson, department of communication, along with coauthors **Mary Donato**, Buena Vista University, **Elijah Smith ’18**, and **Gannon Cornley III ’19**, had a research article published in the Iowa Journal of Communication. The paper, “Investigating Relationships between Student Burnout and Classroom Communication Behaviors,” explores the three dimensions of student burnout and their relationships

with student interest, engagement and oral participation. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2019 National Communication Association annual convention. This specific paper started as a class project in Dr. Atkinson’s Organizational Communication (COM 410) class.

“At Arm’s Length: A Rhetoric of Character in Children’s and Young Adult Literature,” a book by **Dr. Mike Cadden**, professor of English, will be published next July by the University Press of Mississippi. Written in accessible language and of interest and use to undergraduates and seasoned critics, “At Arm’s Length” provides a broad analysis of stories for the young child and young adult, in book, film and television. Throughout, Dr. Cadden touches on important topics in children’s literature studies, including the role of safety in children’s media, as well as character in multicultural and diverse literature.

An honors thesis completed as an undergraduate by **McCown Leggett ’18** under the supervision of **Dr. Jon Mandracchia** has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Penal Law and Criminology. The thesis is titled “Examining the Relationship Between Criminogenic Thinking, Differential Identification, Motivation, and Risk-Taking Behavior in Emerging Adults.” Leggett is currently in the counseling psychology doctoral program at Texas Tech University where she is involved in various research projects and clinical experiences. ■

Singing outside the box

How creativity and technology brought the Missouri Western chorale ensemble together

With the constraints of social distancing, students in the otherwise close chorale ensemble group were able to stretch and flex their creativity as they learned to sing together... separately... from their own space.

The virtual choir experience enabled more than 50 students to create music in a unique way. With changes to class participation and the potential for vocal groups to be COVID-19 "super spreaders," Dr. Elise Hepworth, professor and director of choral activities, knew she wanted to find a way to keep her students connected. Through a grant from the Missouri Western Arts Society, she was able to work with a company who specializes in virtual music productions, and the first-ever Griffon Virtual Chorale Performance began to take shape.

During the 16-week semester, students would rehearse and practice, but with no live performances or concerts scheduled, she feared the student experience would feel flat. "I wanted them to have the opportunity for a culminating experience," she said.

"The students were really excited to try something new. No one in the ensemble had participated in a virtual choir. It was all new," Hepworth said. "I think they will be very excited to see the final product," she added as she tried to contain her own

excitement about the project.

It was a very different experience for them all, but enabled them to flex and grow in a positive way. "In a choir, you are making music live with other people around you. With that, one of the benefits is you are able to hear and respond to the people around you," she said. In her words, the virtual experience was like the antithesis of what a choir is. "In a virtual choir, each participant sings by themselves into their earbuds, or into a microphone. Rather than singing with others, they are singing along with a pre-made accompaniment track." Even so, this collaboration came together beautifully.

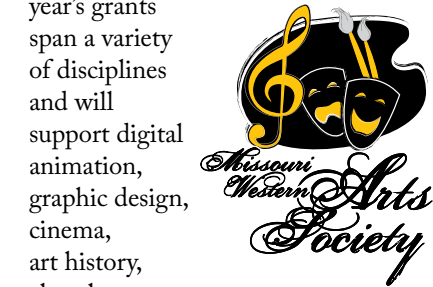
continued on page 20



Students participate in the first-ever Griffon Virtual Chorale Performance.

Thank you Arts Society members

This fall, the Missouri Western Arts Society funded six requests in support of students and faculty in the School of Fine Arts. This year's grants span a variety of disciplines and will support digital animation, graphic design, cinema, art history, chorale, ceramics, sculpture and 3D design students. In addition, a portion of these grants help fund events that are utilized by the public as well as the University.



A particular grant helped fund a Virtual Choir experience for nearly 50 students. Read more about this unique program to the left. ■

GG, GRIFFS

Emerging esports program gains ground

In its inaugural season, the Griffon esports program has quickly grown to four varsity teams, two clubs, and a training room, in addition to the esports stadium which is taking shape in Blum Union.

Esports by definition is a multiplayer game played competitively, and has grown in popularity with esports programs popping up on multiple college and university campuses in recent years.

Esports can serve as an alternative for students not interested in traditional sports, as well as create a community where students can feel involved on campus, make friends and learn how to work as a team.

In addition to the 25 varsity players, the esports program also formed two club teams for any student wanting to spend time training and meeting with students interested in the same video games. Last semester, there were 20 students participating at the club level for the games Super Smash Bros. and Valorant, with a potential Call of Duty club being formed in the near future.

But those participation numbers are just the beginning of the impact felt across campus, as nearly 200 students engaged through the Discord server and by following the esports Twitch stream.

The varsity teams have competed in seven competitions ranging from qualifiers, leagues, to one-day tournaments and racked up an impressive season.

The League of Legends team pulled off a brilliant first season, finishing their league with the second highest ranking. League of Legends is a game where each team has five players focused on the goal of defeating the other team and protecting your team's crystal, and when it's destroyed the other team scores a point. The game is slower-paced and focuses more on strategy with over 140 characters to choose from. Thanks to the team's hard work,

they made it to the championship where they competed all the way to the semifinals before being eliminated.

The Rocket League team, through all their hard work in their league, was invited to an invitational tournament sponsored by Maui Esports. Rocket League is a game resembling soccer but with the catch that you play as a car. Using precise aiming and control of the car is key to this high-speed game. In the tournament the team went undefeated until the final match where they went 1-2.

Fortnite ended their league in the top 25, which qualified them for the championship that took place in December. Fortnite is a game focused on crafting, shooting and strategy where squads compete to be the last man

standing. Coach Konczal explained that unfortunately, due to a technical error on the league's end, one player wasn't able to compete, preventing the team from competing in the championship matches.

Last but not least, the Overwatch team competed in a league as well. Overwatch is a strategic shooter game where teams choose between 32 characters and compete in multiple game modes, whether it be gaining points for defeating other players, capturing the flag, or protecting their moving payload.

Esports Director and Head Coach Christian Konczal explained that the Overwatch season didn't have the greatest start, but he believes the team will be in a good position to start the next season.

"Overwatch did not place very well as they struggled in the beginning of the season but came back with a vengeance towards the end," Konczal said.

Graduate assistant Luke Theis said, "We're proud of everyone who stuck it out with us and are coming back for spring 2021 where we hope to take a step even further with the program." ■

—Josh Pohl, contributor



Student-athletes break academic records (again)

Missouri Western student-athletes extended their active streak to a record-setting sixth-consecutive academic semester, following a highly productive fall 2020 in the classroom. Griffon Athletics has established new highs in major academic benchmarks each semester since spring 2018.

This past fall, a record 255 student-athletes achieved MWSU Academic Honors for posting a semester grade point average of 3.0 or higher. The total shatters the previous high of 217 student-athletes established in fall 2019 and represents 65% of the university's student-athlete population.

The Griffons saw 59 student-athletes earn President's List honors (4.0 GPA), 95 achieve Dean's List status (3.5-3.99 GPA) and 101 named to the Athletic Director's Honor Roll (3.0-3.49 GPA). Each category posted its highest student-athlete count in Missouri Western history.

Griffon women's tennis paced the athletic department with a 3.87 semester team GPA and 3.84 cumulative team GPA. MWSU women's soccer (3.60) and softball (3.53) joined tennis with cumulative team GPAs of 3.5 or higher. In total, 16 of 17 NCAA programs concluded the fall 2020 semester with a cumulative team GPA of 3.0 or higher.

The overall Athletic Department cumulative GPA checked in at 3.21 following the fall 2020 academic semester. ■

Griffon basketball returns; men reclaim national spotlight

The 2020-21 basketball seasons began as scheduled, with MIAA-only contests slated for the season. First-year head coach Will Martin, who took over the program in March after the departure of Sundance Wicks, has guided the Griffon men's return to prominence.

The Griffons, who finished the 2019-20 season with their first winning season in a decade, closed the 2020 calendar year with a 5-1 record, their best

MIAA start in 22 years. The program also earned its first national ranking since 2002, when they debuted at #19 in the NABC Division II poll in mid-December.

The Griffon women, coming off a 21-8 record in 2019-20 in Coach Candi Whitaker's first year at the helm, entered the 2020-21 season with a drastic youth movement and a roster consisting of 12 new players, including six freshmen. ■



Coming spring 2021, we're all back with new beginnings

If 2020 taught us to never take anything for granted, 2021 should provide a follow-up lesson in gratitude.

All Griffon sports programs are slated to return in some form or fashion this spring, including

soccer, volleyball, track, golf, tennis, baseball and softball. 2021 will also mark the debut of the Griffon women's lacrosse program. Missouri Western is the first public institution in the state to field a lacrosse team. ■



MWSU football, cross country make historic returns in COVID-canceled 2020 seasons

With COVID-19 canceling the NCAA fall sports seasons across the country, Missouri Western still found a way to return to the field in 2020. The Griffon football and cross country programs, utilizing strict COVID-19 testing procedures and protocols, were among the first NCAA Division II teams to compete despite the cancellation of their respective conference seasons.

The Griffon men's and women's cross country teams earned the distinction of becoming the first MWSU sports to compete since last March, when they returned to action on October 16 at the Indian Hills Invitational in Centerville, Iowa. The women took the significant first one step further, by winning the team title at the event.

Griffon football made its return on Halloween at Division I FCS Central Arkansas. The matchup

— like all of 2020 — was unique and unprecedented, considering the Griffons entered their season opener against a nationally ranked UCA team that had already played seven games in 2020. The Griffons fell 52-10, but in a year that took so much away, just playing a football game in 2020 was a victory in itself. MWSU played just two games of its abbreviated four-game schedule due to COVID-19 protocols. The cancellation of games became more the norm than the exception across all levels of sports in 2020.

The Griffon soccer and volleyball programs did not compete in the fall, but are slated to return with abbreviated schedules in fall and spring 2021. All fall sports student-athletes will be granted an extra year of eligibility in fall 2021. ■

Students enjoy watch party for football game

Griffon football hit the road for their first game of the season on October 31 against Division I Central Arkansas. Eager to hold a safe event for students, Student Government Association (SGA), Center for Student Involvement and Western Activities Council organized a watch party on the video scoreboard in Spratt Stadium. Students and alumni enjoyed free food

and t-shirts, pumpkin carving, a costume contest and performances from the MWSU Drumline, Missouri Western Dance Company and Elite Cheer Team. Members of the Alumni Board handed out candy and Griffon swag to those in attendance. Even though masks and social distancing were required, fun was had by all! ■



Student-Athlete Advisory Committee recognized nationally

Missouri Western was one of 28 schools nationwide to be named a finalist for the 2021 Division II Award of Excellence, an accolade recognizing initiatives in the past year that exemplify the Division II philosophy, community engagement and student-athlete leadership.

The honor stems from the 2019 "Griffs Giving Gifts" initiative, an annual tradition spearheaded by the Missouri Western Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. The program partners with the St. Joseph AFL-CIO to adopt families who need an extra boost. In 2019, student-athletes raised

and donated a record \$2,000, while adopting more than 50 individuals around the St. Joseph area. It's the third straight year a MWSU SAAC effort has been nominated for the Award of Excellence. ■

Griffons on the front line

During the pandemic, health care workers have stepped up in amazing fashion - working grueling hours and stretching beyond their usual duties. We reached out to some of our awesome alums from across the country to share some of their experiences – personal and professional – from the last year.

"I am so proud of our nurses who work tirelessly and risk their own safety to care for the public."

- Angel Clark '17

Ibi Merritt '18

BSN, RN

Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center, Chula Vista, Calif.

I have been impacted by COVID-19 not just in my work life, but also in my personal life. During the start of the pandemic, my dad passed away from complications of COVID-19. He passed away March 24, 2020 – the second person in San Diego County to pass from COVID-19 and the first at the hospital that I work at. My husband, who is also a nurse, was laid off from his job as a surgical nurse since all non-essential procedures were put on hold.

I have seen my fellow nurses get sick and also infect their families with COVID-19; I have taken care of actively sick COVID-19 patients; I have taken care of patients who are no longer COVID positive but still needing so much rehabilitation just to learn to swallow their own food again.

People dying in the ICU with no family around them will forever be one of the hardest things for me, since my dad died in the ICU on a ventilator, and I was the only one in my family allowed to watch from a small window outside the room.

Jezwah Harris '14

RN, JD, MBA, MSN-C,

BSN, NE-BC, CEN

Hospital Nursing Supervisor, San Francisco Bay area, Calif.

When COVID-19 first hit, I was working as the Manager of Emergency and Trauma Services for a hospital in the Seattle area. The Seattle area was ground-zero for COVID-19 in the United States, and I was only a few miles from the huge nursing home outbreak there. In that position, I was the point-of-contact for public health and emergency medical services in addition to running multiple service lines. I was tasked with preparing for something the like of which we had not seen before. We built out new units and physically expanded the Emergency Department, both by retrofitting an adjacent building and erecting emergency management/disaster temporary infrastructure like we would with a natural disaster.

One of my biggest responsibilities was keeping my employees calm and disseminating new information in a thoughtful way ... these were emergency nurses who are prepared to receive anything that walks through the



door breaking down with worry for themselves, each other, and their families in the midst of often conflicting information.

The nurses that I supervise are the heroes. They are providing the patient care during a pandemic. I just help support them.

Trista Lewis '18

RN, BSN

High Risk Labor and Delivery, Indianapolis, Ind.

I was five-months pregnant when the news really spread and people were told to quarantine, and I was told to not have any patients that were COVID positive.

Early on, we had patients who came in to deliver, and only then did they find out they were COVID positive. Most were asymptomatic, and didn't know they had the virus until they came in to deliver.

The pediatricians recommended the baby be removed from the room to limit exposure. And the mother and baby were kept separate until they went home. And those positive mothers didn't get any visitors. That's hard for a nurse to explain to a new mother that she cannot hold, touch or feed her baby. The policy has changed now, and the benefits of skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding outweigh the risk of exposure.

K.C. Simmons '15

BSN

Pediatric Surgery and Trauma Nurse, Ft. Worth, Texas

COVID-19 has changed the way our hospital is run and the ways of being a nurse. It has been overwhelming at times because we are balancing multiple admissions between surgeries, traumas, renal and GI patients. It has been causing some burnout with a lot of our nurses.

COVID-19 has also changed the way that nursing used to be in my eyes. Wearing masks and eyewear at all times during work has been difficult. Pediatric patients thrive on a nurse's smile and friendly face, and unfortunately they don't get to see that when we enter their room. We now appear scary to some of the younger patients, which makes it difficult to gain their trust at times. I believe policies will be changed forever at our hospital, and things will definitely be looked at differently for a long time.



Continued on next page

Brooke Bernhardt '16
RN, BSN, CCRN
Cardiac Surgery Patient Care
Coordinator, Nashville, Tenn.

In the cardiac surgery world, our care never stops. While the majority of the hospital has been focused on COVID-19, we've worked hard to re-invent our new normal to keep things going. Patients who need open-heart surgery often can't wait. Post-op care has taken on a whole new look as we grasp for resources that have become more limited. We've persevered, adapted, and will continue to hope for brighter days ahead. For now, we will keep doing whatever it takes to keep our patients safe and give them the care they need.



Angel Clark '17
BSN, RN
Clinical Instructor,
Education Coordinator,
Cedar City, Utah/ Mesquite, Nev.

This has been a stressful time for all of us. I understand the need to remain COVID-19 compliant and decrease the risk of transmission, but I also know that before the pandemic, there was an ever-present nursing shortage. We need nurses now, more than ever. The cycle is getting worse. Nursing shortage leads to burnout. Burnout leads to nurses leaving. Nurses leaving increases the shortage ... burnout gets worse. Nurses are leaving at record rates ... and hospitals aren't allowing our student nurses in, so we can't fill the shortage. We're struggling to get new nurses trained, certified and onto hospital floors.

While my "front line" doesn't look like everyone else's, I'm trying my best to keep new nurses coming into the career field and prevent a catastrophic nursing shortage from happening in the near future.



Adrian Akasaki '14
BSN, WCC
VA, Honolulu

I run my own wound clinic, where the majority of my patients are homeless, and they all ride the bus. It is very risky. It can be scary, but I know if I did not see these patients, they run the risk of losing limbs or getting serious infections; however taking proper precautions lessens the risk.



I will say I am lucky to be a nurse and have an essential job. I feel like people are just now realizing the risk we take as nurses every day. I know that we will eventually make it through this, and I can't really complain too much because I do live in paradise.

Abigail Lee '15
RN, BSN
Obstetrics Emergency
Department, Orlando, Fla.

When the pandemic first started in March, many people were afraid to go into emergency departments and our census the first few months was low, as we were not seeing very many cases in Orlando yet. As more places opened up, and cases in the area rose, we also saw an increase in emergency room visits for non-emergent care as people became less afraid of going back to the hospital.

So often before this year, women could have more support people in their room. Now women are having to choose only one support person to stay with them. ... It has turned what used to be an exciting part of growing your family into something that can feel lonely and difficult. As a nurse, we are trying to offer as much support as we can, but the support of someone you just met is not the same as the support of a loved one. Staffing issues can also contribute to the amount of support we are able to give our patients, and these issues have been widespread throughout the pandemic at every level of our hospital.

Kelly Scannell '15
RN, BSN
Resource Pool,
Council Bluffs, Iowa

It has been a tiring year, as well as a rewarding year. I have seen our nurses step up to take more responsibilities and band together as a team to give superior care to every patient. With flu season quickly approaching, we are getting anxious with what will come and how we will adapt. As a health care worker, we know we will make it through this together. We have been trained and taught to withstand difficult situations and trying times. That's just what we do.



Kimberly Chilton '17
RSN, RN
Home Health Nurse
Cameron, Mo.

Health care from a home health perspective has changed significantly and is evolving daily. The best thing we can be is flexible nurses who are diligent in disinfecting everything from one home to the next. The hospital has put restrictions on our personal lives as well to protect our patients as much as possible. This includes limiting our travel and wearing masks even when we're off the clock in public and no mask is required by law.



Linda Gerhardt '88
FNP-BC
St. Joseph, Mo.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, or COVID-19, and resulting pandemic, came at most of us like a tidal wave. For health care workers it was, and continues to be, more like a tsunami. What had been a fairly predictable profession for me in the past, has become, and continues to be, more like a bad dream. Every aspect of the working day has changed, from starting the day with group prayers to removing all reading material out of a waiting room. The staff has had to rethink almost every step of care that is provided to our clients. Safety for all involved, both staff and those we care for, has been, and continues to be, of the utmost priority.

Most of all, I have seen a change in the human spirit. Some have adapted and shown great resilience during the pandemic, and for this I am grateful. Others seem to be worn to a frazzle. Constant use of masks and face shields, hand washing and sanitizing, examination room and equipment cleaning, frequent updates to current practice standards can be daunting. I know that this will pass, and I hope that we are all stronger, kinder human beings because of it. ■



To these Griffs who shared these stories, and all those in health care, thank you.

I miss the days when I could spend quality time with a patient without even the thought of COVID-19.

I miss not having to wear a mask all day.

I miss getting to watch patients walk around the hallways without wearing a mask and smiling with pride as they make strides towards recovery and discharge.

I miss being able to have family members visit my patients because it brings them joy.

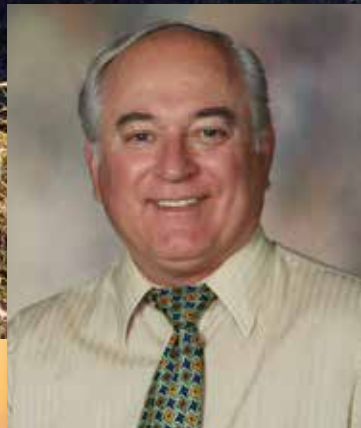
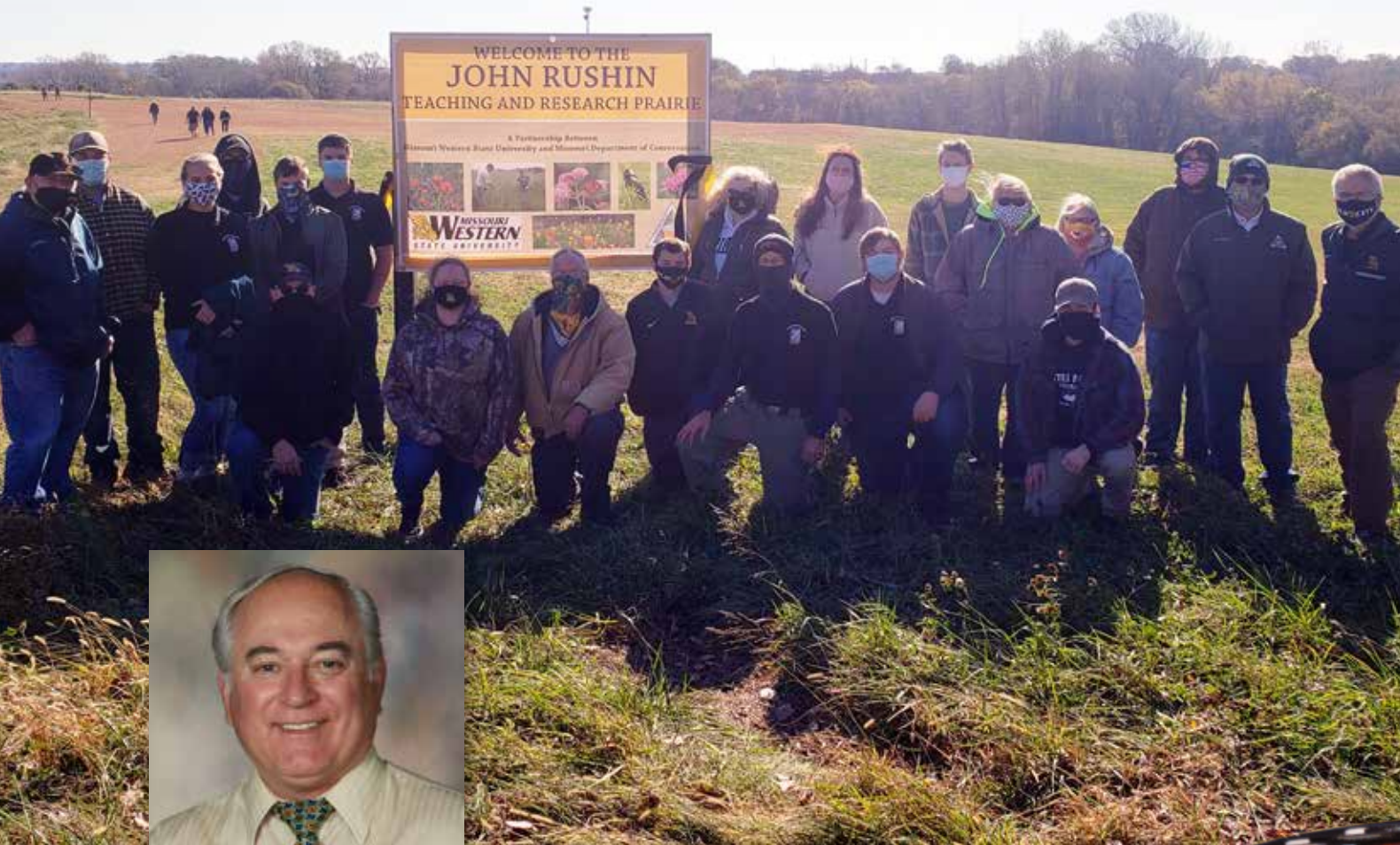
I miss getting a hug from my patients as they discharge home.

I miss not being scared.

I miss the way things used to be."

- K.C. Simmons '15

The Great Prairie of Missouri Western



Dr. John Rushin

Missouri Western is bringing back a piece of ecological history by restoring a small plot of prairie on campus. The John Rushin Teaching and Research Prairie was named after Dr. John Rushin, a biology professor for 33 years. In addition to teaching and working with thousands of students over his career, Dr. Rushin, now retired, also developed the award-winning wildlife conservation program and successfully lobbied to get the Northwest Regional Office of the Department of Conservation on the Missouri Western campus.

"We discussed several possible names for the prairie, but kept coming back to wanting to honor John," said Dr. Mark Mills, chair of the Department of Biology. "His contributions to Missouri Western and this community were numerous and impactful."

The John Rushin Teaching and Research Prairie, located on the east side of campus near 50th and Messanie, will allow students and community members the opportunity to view and experience many different wild species. There are currently about 150 species of prairie plants and plenty of birds, insects and invertebrates.

This prairie is unique to the area and a great opportunity for students at Missouri Western. The prairie is already in use by staff and students for labs such as ecology, animal behavior, plant classes and management strategies.

It is predicted that more than 100 students will be impacted each year by the

inclusion of this prairie resource on campus.

Dr. Rushin plans to continue to help the campus community by adding a learning garden for plants that can be found in the prairie. This will include plant species found in the prairie and plaques describing the plants.

This will allow the St. Joseph community to be involved in learning about the prairie.

The plan to develop a prairie for Missouri Western, included in Missouri Western's Master Plan in 2015, was given to Dr. Mills by a student in 2014. Though there were a few minor setbacks throughout the process, including possible location changes due to other potential land development opportunities, the

original plot of land set in 2015 was the plot that was used to develop the prairie.

It takes around three to four years to start developing a prairie, and it takes around five to ten years to see changes – though a prairie will still not be fully developed in this time. This means that having a prairie on Missouri Western's campus is a long-term process and will be an ongoing one in the years to come.

None of this would have been possible without the help of the Missouri Department of Conservation, especially Jeff Powelson, private land conservationist. The Missouri Department of Conservation helped move special resources to the prairie, including seeds for prairie plants and grasses. Though the prairie is an ongoing work in progress, it will influence the students of Missouri Western and the St. Joseph community far into the future. ■

– William Taylor, contributor



Launched at Missouri Western: True love and an international career in **cybersecurity**

More than 20 years after graduation, Missouri Western continues to play a central role in Frank Luzsicza's '99 family life and global career as a cybersecurity executive and a digital entrepreneur. He and his wife, Amanda (Pedersen) Luzsicza '12, are now giving back to the university where they met and began their careers. Frank is helping MWSU develop an undergraduate cybersecurity program while Amanda is planning to convene more than 100 alumni in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, where they live today.

Frank is an exceptional linguist – he speaks six languages (not including programming languages!) – thanks in part to his international background. Raised in Slovakia, he moved to Seneca, Kansas, as a foreign exchange student at the age of 15. After finishing high school in the United States, he entered Missouri Western to study math and computer science. Susan Hinrichs, Keith Brandt and other professors immediately recognized his talent, inviting him to take advanced courses as a freshman.

“Dr. Brandt challenged me in his advanced calculus courses,” Frank recalled. “It was the right approach to teaching, and I immediately felt that Missouri Western would treat me as an individual student with particular talents and interests rather than just one of 10,000 entries on a spreadsheet.”

The faculty offered Frank much more than academic help. Before his freshman year was over, he learned that his parents were getting divorced – half a world away.

“My professor, Kent Pickett, personally escorted me to the financial aid and housing offices,” he explained. In just a few days, with the professor's help, Frank landed scholarships and a part-time janitorial job in the housing office so he could continue his studies uninterrupted.

He later learned about an internship with the IT helpdesk at Boehringer Ingelheim in St. Joseph. Seizing the opportunity, he expanded his hands-on computer skills. A year later, he landed a part-time internship with Ernst & Young's security practice in Kansas City where he developed cybersecurity software.

At a New Year's Eve party his senior year, Frank met then-freshman Amanda Pedersen. She made a big impression: he asked her out the next day, and they've been together ever since.

Frank continued to work for Ernst & Young until graduation when the firm hired him full time. His talents did not go unnoticed: IBM lured him away a few months later. “Thanks to the flexibility I learned at MWSU and my hands-on experience,” Frank said, “I could progress fast.” In less than three years, he was managing a consulting group as a principal at IBM.

The couple stayed in the St. Joseph area with their son, Chandler, while Amanda earned her degree in social work. In her last semester, IBM offered

Frank an executive position in Poland. They made the move, and Amanda Skyped into classes – long before

remote learning was routine – thanks to professors Pam Clary and Ali Kamali. She completed an internship working with ambassadors, and graduated on time – from Poland. “The Missouri Western mindset was that you can learn anywhere and accomplish anything,” Amanda said.

From Poland, the Luzsiczas moved to Singapore, where Frank ran IBM's Asia Pacific cybersecurity unit and Amanda worked for a tech startup. They returned to Texas in 2016 when Frank took over IBM's North America cybersecurity unit.

Back in the States, they both reconnected with Missouri Western. While the university has a graduate-level cybersecurity program, Frank started work with faculty on a bachelor's program. Cyber threats are growing, he points out, and demand for talent in this field is growing much faster than supply. Missouri Western's emphasis on applied learning would distinguish the program from those at other schools, he believes, and allow graduates to offer more skills to employers. “With practical

experience built into the program, graduates will be prepared to fill analyst roles right out of college.”

And since a lot of cybersecurity work is now done remotely, the Luzsiczas hope that more top graduates will stay in the area after they complete their studies, benefitting the community and also the local economy.

The Luzsiczas now live near Dallas, where Frank serves as the chief executive of Lodestone, an IT security

service provider. The couple says they run into a surprising number of MWSU alumni – they're aware of at least 100 in the area. Before COVID-19 hit, Amanda had been planning to host alumni events, and the couple were looking forward to getting together with everyone in person. They're still networking, but now planning a virtual event instead.

The connections run deep. The Luzsiczas are deeply grateful for everything Missouri Western has provided them – personally, academically and professionally. “The school has been incredibly flexible, helpful and supportive,” Frank said. Amanda believes her professors and fellow students prepared her well for life after graduation.

“We owe them more than we can say,” she added, “and we enjoy giving back to the school whenever possible.” ■



Amanda '12 and Frank '99 Luzsicza



the AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors award scholarships

This fall, thanks to the generosity of MWSU Ambassadors members, supporters and a gift from the W. Fairleigh Enright Family Fund, \$16,825 in scholarships were awarded to 20 nontraditional students.

Through their work to support nontraditional students (aged 25 and older), the Ambassadors award scholarships and mini grants for equipment, supplies and other items necessary to complete coursework.

The group raises funds through Thanksgiving tributes and their annual fundraiser, Night at the Ritz. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 event was canceled, but the group is hopeful they will be able to conduct the event in some form this coming year. To become a member and strengthen the bridge between campus and community, visit griff.vn/bridge. ■

Continued from pg 8

Singing outside the box continued

Not only was the group able to make music, they made lasting memories. And with this special recording, the participants will have a digital memory to carry forward for years to come. “They can look back in 20, 30 years as an adult and see and hear themselves and the MWSU Concert Chorale and remember there were some good things that came out of the pandemic,” Hepworth said. “We were still able to maintain a sense of community and family, which is the hallmark of our program at Missouri Western.”

The production company has edited and assembled all the video and audio. The piece will be released in the next few weeks, and you can have a private

viewing in your own home. Watch the MWSU Foundation Facebook Page for the video link.

In true Griffon spirit, the students seized the opportunity to show their school pride as they donned Missouri Western black and gold for the performance. The video has the potential to be seen around the world, after all.

Meanwhile, in our corner of the globe, classes will resume for the spring semester, and Hepworth and the chorale will keep in tune with each other and the world as best they can. “This has been a beautiful way to preserve a sense of normalcy,” she said. “I think this has brought great joy to the students to have a chance to do something like this.” ■

New carpet in Blum

The first floor of Blum received a facelift with the addition of new carpet. The information center walls were removed previously to make a more open floor plan.



From the Alumni Association President

Dear Fellow Alumni,

Like everyone else, the Missouri Western Alumni Association has learned to adjust to our “new normal” according to COVID-19 protocols. And, like everyone else, we are looking forward to a return to normalcy. What usually is a fall full of activities became a campus in a holding pattern waiting for a chance to host an event. In true Griffon spirit a few events were able to be held.

The first campus event was the delayed Spring 2020 Commencement. After a few delays, Griffon graduates were able to enjoy their well-deserved recognition on Saturday, September 20. Two hundred eight spring 2020 and summer 2020 grads were honored in two socially distanced ceremonies held on Craig Field. We are thankful for all who made this opportunity happen.

Most athletic seasons were canceled or postponed, but through the hard work and determination of our Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics, Dr. Josh Looney, the Griffon football team and the Griffon cross country team were able to hold a few competitions. The Alumni Association took part in a socially distanced Football Watch Party held at Spratt Stadium on Saturday, October 31. Attendees enjoyed watching the livestream of the game as the Griffons took on the University of Central Arkansas. Food, contests, performances and giveaways added to the atmosphere of the afternoon. The Griffon men’s and women’s basketball seasons are currently underway, and even though we all may not be able to be in attendance, we can tune in to follow their competitions. I know many alumni are looking forward to the days when sporting events return to normal. Please watch for information about our spring sports programs and our postponed fall sports that may be competing during the spring.

One of my favorite alumni highlights of the fall is the Annual Alumni Awards Banquet which is held in conjunction with homecoming weekend. This year marked the 38th year of honoring the accomplishments of our alumni. Plans were made to produce a virtual awards ceremony, but like so many other events, those plans pivoted. We were able to gather the award winners in a small gathering on

November 6, and recognized them during halftime of the football game on November 7. This year we recognized Patrick Modlin ’83 as our Distinguished Alumni, Dr. Regan Dodd as the Distinguished Faculty, and Isaac Collins ’11 as the Graduate of the Last Decade. Greg VerMulm ’89, Brett Esely ’01, and Lee Murdock ’10 were honored as Great Griffons by their respective college

and school. Mary Shuman was awarded the Ifert Award for her outstanding service to the university. Student Leadership Awards were presented to Jordan (Jay) Alford ’20, Federica Salmaso ’20 and Merle Phillips ’20. I always leave this awards night impressed and inspired!

In December, the Alumni Board and Foundation Board challenged each other in a Western League for Excellence Rally. Members of the respective boards formed teams and held a friendly competition to see which board could increase membership in the Western League for Excellence. Through these efforts, 235 new

members were recruited. I believe most competitors would agree that Missouri Western is the real winner here with so many new League members. If you find that you are interested in more information about joining the League, please contact the Alumni Office. League for Excellence memberships are available at several different levels starting at \$100 per year. The funds raised through these memberships are unrestricted. These funds are used in a variety of ways, such as helping students with travel expenses when presenting at conferences, matching funds for grants, hosting community enrichment conferences and numerous other ways. Your membership in support of Missouri Western would be appreciated and is a fantastic way to show your alumni support of MWSU.

I know we are all anxiously anticipating a return to normal, but I would like to close by repeating a statement made by Greg VerMulm in his acceptance of the Great Griffon award. Greg stated that he strives to always be “Faithful, Proud and True” in all aspects of his life. What a wonderful sentiment!

Please stay safe and well, Griffon Alumni!

Go Griff’s,

Mary Hausman Workman ’75
President, MWSU Alumni Association



Mary Hausman Workman ’75



Alum business owner values community

Isaac Collins '11 says that since at least high school, he has wanted to run his own business. But also from an early age, he knew that business wasn't just about making money. He describes himself as a "community entrepreneur," owning and operating businesses but also connecting people in a meaningful way.

"Growing up, we didn't have a lot of money, and things weren't handed to us," Collins said. "However, one thing that was given to me freely was love. I have two very amazing parents; there was no shortage of love in our household. We also saw a slew of people who helped us out of our circumstance that we were in, so that was celebrated in my family. Helping other people was celebrated, instead of making money or getting over on the other guy."

Collins, the owner of three Yogurtini frozen yogurt shops and a nonprofit organization

in the Kansas City area, says that sense of community and helping others is fundamental to everything he does.

"My parents told me, if you're going to do something, it needs to be something that's going to help someone else. So that's my philosophy," he said. "I bring that to how I run my businesses – choosing people over profits."

It was also that sense of community that led him to participate in the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020. To Collins, Black Lives Matter isn't a political movement. It's larger than that.

"I do believe in a just society that holds equality and justice to a high standard," he said. "This isn't radical stuff that I'm talking about; I'm just saying 'all opportunities for all people.'"

Collins said he's engaged in bringing awareness through

continued on next page

"My parents told me, if you're going to do something, it needs to be something that's going to help someone else. So that's my philosophy. I bring that to how I run my businesses – choosing people over profits."

Isaac Collins, Sr. and Sonja Collins enjoy the football game with their son, Isaac '11, and Isaac's wife, Rachel.



Collins played football while at MWSU.



protests, marches and contacting government officials. He's also been working to get people registered to vote – "marginalized communities aren't being heard because they aren't voting." He says one of the most rewarding things he's been involved in has been working with three partners to lead a monthly diversity and inclusion seminar on Zoom.

While some business owners might be reluctant to speak out for fear of alienating potential customers by rocking the boat, Collins said it was important to him to raise awareness.

"As a black man, I am still looked at like I am black first, before I am a business owner," he said. "If you aren't black, you may not understand or see that, but that's my experience. If I am not in my business, I get treated very differently."

Which is not to say that his status as a business owner doesn't have its advantages. Collins says his voice is heard when others may not be.

"I'm fighting for people who don't have a voice to fight for themselves," he said. "And luckily, I've had success where I'm at a lot of these tables, and when I speak, people listen to me. That's been an amazing thing, to be able to be heard in this time."

That success was not overnight. After completing his football career and graduating from the Craig School of Business in December 2011, Collins moved almost immediately into the entrepreneur phase of his life. He was offered a \$40,000 a year salary out of college, but chose instead to run the Rocky Mountain



Then & now

Collins's first franchise was a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory store in Williamsburg, Iowa, awarded to him in 2012. He now owns three Yogurtini frozen yogurt shops and a nonprofit organization in the Kansas City area.



Chocolate Factory store in St. Joseph. At the same time, he was enrolled in the Applied Entrepreneurship class that gave him the chance to own his own store. In 2012, he was awarded a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory store in Williamsburg, Iowa.

Collins said he faltered out of the gate, but ultimately succeeded simply because he stuck with it.

"You don't fail until you quit, so I just kept learning, learning,

learning," he said, reading books and leaning on mentors like Steve Craig, the benefactor who helped create the applied entrepreneurship program. "It took a couple of years before I would call myself a decent entrepreneur, and now eight-and-a-half years later I think that I'm great. And not great as in, hey, I'm making a ton of money, but great in the sense that I am an entrepreneur of character and integrity and perseverance because of those hard times I faced in year one." ■



Pictured at the Alumni Awards event held in November are, from left: Mary Workman '75, Alumni Association president; Isaac Collins '11, GOLD Award; Brett Esely '01, Great Griffon Award – Professional Studies; Pat Modlin '88, Distinguished Alumni Award; Dr. Regan Dodd, Distinguished Faculty Award; Greg VerMulm '89, Great Griffon Award – Craig School of Business and Technology; Mary Shuman, Iffert Award for Service to the University.

Alumni Award winners recognized

The Alumni Association's 2020 Alumni Award winners were honored during special events in November. The first of two events was a reception held at downtown St. Joseph venue Room 108. Several award recipients and Alumni Board members were in attendance. Mary Workman '75, Alumni Board president, presented awards to the honorees, a video introducing each of the winners was shown, and Dr. Josh Looney, interim vice president for University Advancement and MWSU Foundation executive director, spoke briefly following the video.

The second event honoring the Alumni Award winners took place the following day during the home

football game against Pittsburgh State. The award recipients were recognized during the game's halftime. All were in attendance except for the Student Leadership Award winners.

To view the full list of award recipients, visit missouriwestern.edu/alumni. To view the video that premiered at the reception, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfTU9rvxXO8>. ■



Interim Vice President for University Advancement and Executive Director, MWSU Foundation, Dr. Josh Looney, speaking after video presentation.

Alumni Association Awards nominations open

2021 Alumni Awards Nomination

Deadline: April 2, 2021

All of the Missouri Western State University Alumni Awards are awarded to nominees through a rigorous selection process and selected by the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

All recipients of the Alumni Awards and their accomplishments are intended to reflect the values, excellence and integrity of Missouri Western State University.

Distinguished Alumni Award

The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest award given to an alumnus/alumna.

The Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes living alumni for their career/professional achievements; civic contributions within their local community, state or nation; service to Missouri Western State University, and other qualities which elicit pride from others who attended a Missouri Western State University Institution. This award is given to an alumni with a difference of at least eleven (11) years between attendance and nomination.

Distinguished Faculty Award

The Distinguished Faculty Award is given to a current faculty member in recognition of one's lasting influences on students, excellence in teaching, professional/career accomplishments and professional and ethical standards.

Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD) Award

The GOLD Award recognizes those early in their career who have had outstanding achievements and accomplishments.

The award is based upon professional and educational achievements, community activities, honors and awards received and other noteworthy items of merit since graduation.

The nominee must have received his or her initial degree from Missouri Western State University within ten years of June 1 of the year of recognition.

Great Griffon Awards

The Great Griffon Awards recognize alumni from each college and school who exhibit outstanding contributions to the workforce, society or the University.

Nominees do not have to currently work in the area in which they studied and can be recognized for career achievement, service to local communities, state or nations, or the University.

Herb '35 and Peggy Iffert award for Outstanding Service to the University

The Iffert Award recognizes an alumnus/alumna, retiree or other friend of the University who has shown outstanding and continuous commitment to Missouri Western State University's mission, vision and legacy.

This award recognizes one's service as a positive liaison between the University and the region of Northwest Missouri, as well as consistent dedication to the advancement and preservation of Missouri Western State University.

Student Leadership Awards

The Alumni Student Leadership Awards recognize graduating students (December or May of the current academic year) who have made a significant impact on the life of the University during their tenure through leadership, volunteerism or humanitarianism.

The Alumni Student Leadership Awards include:

Graduating Senior of the Year
Clifford Hughes '55 Award
International Student of the Year

For more information and nomination forms, please go to griff.vn/awards. ■

CORRECTION

Last issue's list of Alumni Board presidents (Happy 50th anniversary to the Alumni Association!) inadvertently left out several past presidents: Barbara Morgan, William Zimmerman, Jill Miller, Kendall Misemer, Bob Berger, Tim Rooney and Susan Pettigrew.

1960s

Wayne Chandlee '61 presented Toronto Raptors coach Nick Nurse with his award for NBA Coach of the Year. Wayne was Nick's high school basketball coach, and coached the Raptors in their pre-season camp in Vancouver last year.

1970s

Dr. Greg Seals '78, associate professor at College of Staten Island/ City University of New York, was awarded the 2020 John Dewey Society Outstanding Achievement Award for his book "Teachable Moments and the Science of Education" (Routledge, 2019).

1980s



U.S. Navy Commander Derek Ashlock '88 assumed command of Fighter Squadron

One One One (VFC-111) on Nov. 13, 2020 at a ceremony at Naval Air Station Key West, Florida. Commander Ashlock is a graduate of the Naval Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) Adversary class and has been awarded the Air Medal for combat operations as well as numerous other personal and unit awards. He is married to Susan (Janorschke) Ashlock '86 and they have one son.

1990s

James Bryan '91 was recently appointed as the Chief of Police in Bentley, Kansas.



Brian Mills '93, a certified hand therapist at the University of Kansas Health System, began

serving as president of the Kansas Occupational Therapy Association in April 2019. He is married to Melissa (Velasquez) Mills '96, and one of their three children currently attends Missouri Western.

Lt. Col. Jason Horn '95 was promoted to Commander of the Medical Group of the 139th Airlift Wing of the Air National Guard, St. Joseph, Missouri.

2000s



Laura (Williams) Tyler '07 successfully defended her dissertation in November. Her

qualitative study examined how student trauma affects educators, specifically the secondary traumatic stress that results.

Mark. B. Hamilton, retired English faculty member, has published "OYO, The Beautiful River: an environmental narrative in two parts," a book-length sequence of lyric narratives written from a journey down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Cairo, Illinois, in a 15-foot rowing dory.

Autumn (Greear) Haeker '08

was elected president of the Mesilla Valley Concert Band in Las Cruces, N.M. Autumn and her husband David have been members since 2010. The Mesilla Valley Concert Band has been in existence since 1987 and is one of the premier concert bands in the state of N.M.

Traci (Haug) Howell '08

has published two children's books, "Gus' Big Adventure" and "Rudy." She is also currently expanding her virtual assistant business, Victory Assistants, found at victoryassistants.com.

2010s



Aubry (White) Carpenter '14 and her husband, Teddy, announce the birth of their son, Malcolm,

born Dec. 1, 2020.

Brittnie Morgan '15 was recognized in the St. Joseph News-Press 20 Who Count: 2020 for her work when the south side of St. Joseph experienced flooding last summer. Brittnie is a social worker at Hosea Elementary School. ■

In Memoriam

We remember those who have passed away. If you want to include someone in this listing, please call (816) 271-5676, mail the information to MWSU Magazine, Missouri Western State University, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507, or email magazine@missouriwestern.edu.

Sam Abarr '86, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 14, 2020

Jerry Ashlock '58, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 17, 2020

Marilou Barnett '76, St. Joseph, Missouri, Oct. 15, 2020

Clara "Patti" Burri '55, St. Joseph, Missouri, Sept. 23, 2020

Brian Carson '93, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 21, 2020

Laurie Farrell '13, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 16, 2020

Dr. Virgil Freeman '70, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 4, 2020

Amanda Frye '13, St. Joseph, Missouri, Nov. 17, 2020

Ronnie Herndon '71, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 17, 2020

Susan Ide '83, Easton, Missouri, Jan. 1, 2021

Kathleen "Kathy" Kelder '97, Country Club, Missouri, Jan. 11, 2021

Judith Kennedy '83, Plattsburg, Missouri, Jan. 5, 2021

Donald Krull '97, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 25, 2020

Ruth Leonard '61, Blue Springs, Missouri, Dec. 29, 2020

Daniel Linebaugh '56, Stewartsville, Missouri, Dec. 21, 2020

Sharon Lohmeyer '68 and '01, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 13, 2020

Jacqueline "Jackii" Mays '83, Cameron, Missouri, Dec. 3, 2020

Linda McBride '08, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 29, 2020

Michael Moyer '70, Country Club, Missouri, Dec. 17, 2020

Chad Nold '93, St. Joseph, Missouri, Sept. 20, 2020

Phillip O'Konski '65, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 18, 2020

Linda Perry '60, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 6, 2020

Lisa Przybylski '88, St. Joseph, Missouri, Sept. 14, 2020

Stephen Robbs '15, St. Joseph, Missouri, Oct. 5, 2020

James Root '72, St. Joseph, Missouri, Sept. 21, 2020

Stacie J. (Wells) Root '94, St. Joseph, Missouri, Sept. 3, 2020

Mildred "Millie" Schwader '49, Gower, Missouri, Jan. 16, 2021

Herman Seufert Jr. '48, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 15, 2020

Robert Simpson '51, St. Joseph, Missouri, Dec. 14, 2020

Rex Sowell '73, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 10, 2020

Douglas Spratt '84, Sanford, Florida, Jan. 4, 2021

Margaret "Peggy" Stanton '97, Troy, Kansas, Jan. 4, 2021

Loah Stollard, St. Joseph, Missouri, Foundation Board member, Dec. 26, 2020

Naomi Taylor, St. Joseph, Missouri, Jan. 9, 2021

Frank Thomas, St. Joseph, Missouri, professor emeritus of music, Nov. 22, 2020

Pauline White '09, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 10, 2020 ■

A new look around campus



Military Center ribbon cutting

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson and Maj. Gen. Levon Cumpton, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard, participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Center for Military and Veterans Services on campus in November. The new Center provides military-connected students with a space and dedicated staff to help them navigate the challenges that are unique to their journey.



CEAHL ribbon cutting

The Center for Excellence in Applied Healthcare Learning (CEAHL) was completed in spring 2020 with funding assistance from Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development's MoExcels Initiative and private support from Mosaic Life Care, Mosaic Life Care Auxiliary, the Missouri Western State University Foundation and the Mosaic Life Care Foundation.

Esports arena

Interest in esports has exploded nationally and internationally, and the Missouri Western campus is no exception. The new esports arena, located in the old bookstore space in Blum Union, is being transformed, and the new space is scheduled to open in the spring 2021 semester. The new program, launched in fall 2020, is getting a dedicated arena in Blum Union, and student-athletes have already received new jerseys. *See page 9 for full article.*



New bookstore location

The new Barnes and Noble Bookstore location, on the ground floor of the south entrance of the Hearnes Center, opened for the fall 2020 semester. The campus bookstore continues to offer course materials, school supplies, technology, spirit wear and more.



Looking back – JGM Building

The following caption was pulled from the 2001 Griffon Yearbook

“The new addition creates a fresh, scenic look on campus. The JGM wasn’t the only addition to the campus, the Student Union was also remodeled.”

Shown here on the right, the new JGM building was featured in the 2001 yearbook.

The Janet Gorman Murphy Academic Building, now known as Murphy Hall, was named in honor of the former college president. Nearly 20 years after initial construction, Murphy Hall saw additional renovations with the addition of the Center for Excellence in Applied Healthcare Learning (CEAHL), created through MoExcels grant funding. ■

