

# PROVIDENCE FORUM

UNIVERSITY OF PROVIDENCE MAGAZINE

Volume 01 | Issue 02 • 2023

## 89th COMMENCEMENT

Celebrating and Honoring  
Our 2023 Graduates

FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR  
DR. KATRINA STARK

Adventurous Spirit  
with Academic Passion

SISTER  
PROVIDENCIA

Indomitable Leader and  
Community Activist

PROVIDENCE MISSION  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Developing Leaders for  
Challenging Times

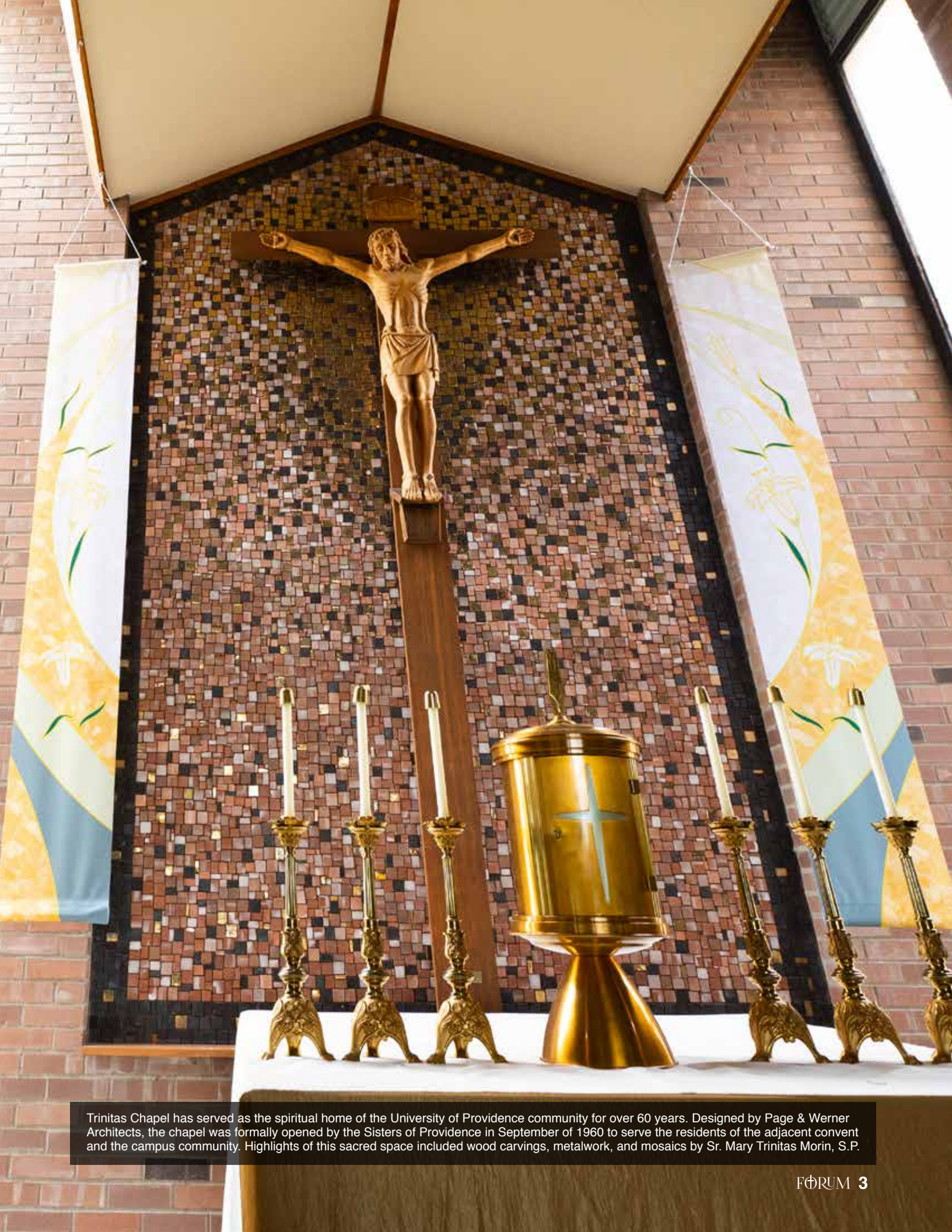




As an expression of the teaching mission of Jesus Christ, the mission of the University of Providence is to provide students with the opportunity to obtain a liberal education for living and for making a living.

Photo By Eric Visocan





Trinitas Chapel has served as the spiritual home of the University of Providence community for over 60 years. Designed by Page & Werner Architects, the chapel was formally opened by the Sisters of Providence in September of 1960 to serve the residents of the adjacent convent and the campus community. Highlights of this sacred space included wood carvings, metalwork, and mosaics by Sr. Mary Trinitas Morin, S.P.





# PROV DENCE MATTERS

This podcast highlights the achievements of faculty and staff at the University of Providence and how the mission of the university informs, inspires, and motivates their work.

---

You can access the podcast either through Apple Podcasts or Spotify by searching: **Providence Matters**.

"Our Mission through Campus Safety – An interview with Matt Grunenwald"

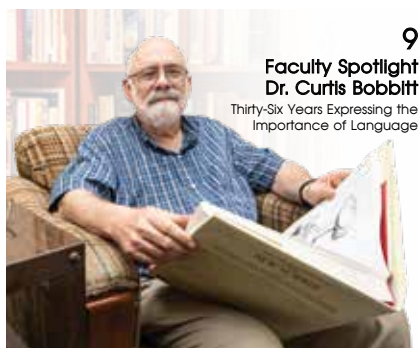
"The Impact of Service Learning – An interview with Matt Petropoli"

"Serving our Mission Through Coaching – An Interview with Bill Himmelberg"



# IN THIS ISSUE

## CONTENTS



**9**  
**Faculty Spotlight**  
**Dr. Curtis Bobbitt**  
Thirty-Six Years Expressing the  
Importance of Language



**7**  
**Celebrate, Congratulate,  
Let the Bell Chime**  
University of Providence Commencement



**32**  
**A Legacy of Attentive Coaching**  
Arunas Duda and the University of  
Providence Volleyball Team

- 13 Providence Progress**  
Three UP Employees Earn Degrees While Working Full Time
- 16 The Providence Mission Leadership Institute**  
Distinctive Leaders for Extraordinary Times
- 23 Alumni Spotlight | Twila Croft**  
Inspiration from the Sisters of Providence Fosters  
a Lifelong Dedication
- 24 Sister Providencia**  
A Force that Changed Lives
- 28 Fulbright Scholar Dr. Katrina Stark**  
Visiting Taiwan – Experiencing Sameness & Differences
- 36 Campus Beat**  
Happenings at The University of Providence
- 39 Board of Directors**  
Bold Leaders, Bright Minds



### President

Fr. Oliver Doyle

### Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs

Matt Redinger

### Chief Financial Officer (Interim)

Ron Dorn

### Mission Integration Officer

Active Search

### Chief Operating Officer

Brittany Budeski

### Vice President for Enrollment Management

Mackenzie Stick

### Vice President for Student

### Engagement & Athletics

Joel Bluml

### Vice President for Advancement (Interim)

Kylie Carranza

### Managing Editor

Hayley Lenington-Leray - Winston Publishing

### Creative Director

Ted Stuff - Winston Publishing

### Contributing Writers

Ellen Baumler, Kay Bjork, Nancy Jordan,  
Travis Vermulm, '19, Karen Sanders '80

### Contributing Photographers

Ivette Barrera (UP), Blackwall Agency,  
Christina Dawidowicz (UP),  
Providence Archives - Seattle,  
Eric Visocan – Burnt Image Photography, LLC

Opinions expressed in the *Providence Forum* do not  
necessarily reflect the views of the University of Providence,  
Great Falls, Montana, or the Sisters of Providence.

### We Want to Hear From You!

Share what is happening in your life and  
career. Submit your personal milestones at:



### University of Providence

c/o Melissa Bluml

### Director of Advancement Communications and Engagement

1301 20th Street South • Great Falls, MT 59405  
406-791-5295 • melissa.bluml@uprovidence.edu



### Cover: Blackwall Agency

A group of new UP graduates celebrates after the  
commencement ceremony on April 29, 2023.

©Copyright 2023, University of Providence.  
All publication rights reserved.

[www.uprovidence.edu](http://www.uprovidence.edu)





## Welcome to the Dog Days of Summer

The ancient Greeks named July and August after the star system known colloquially as the Dog Star. They connected this star's return to the night sky with heat, drought, sudden thunderstorms, lethargy, fever, mad dogs, and bad luck.

Nat King Cole captured the sense of the dog days of summer when he sang, *"Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer Those days of soda and pretzels and beer."*

Soda, pretzels, and beer aside, these days at the University of Providence are anything but lazy, hazy, or crazy.

We are busy preparing for the new semester and are excited to launch some new initiatives that will help strengthen our sustainability and increase our student enrollment.

We are looking forward with excited anticipation to welcoming the first cohort of traditional, on-campus nursing students. At the time of going to print, the numbers interested and applying for the Vander-Werff program give us confidence that we will meet our target.

As we scale up this program and others to meet the demands of health care providers, we look forward to developing relationships with hospitals and healthcare systems across the state and nation.

In this edition, you will read about the Providence Mission Leadership Certificate Program. I was honored to represent UP when the participants met for their final session in March. Dougal Hewitt, chief mission and sponsorship officer, synthesized the program at our last gathering as a "Pilgrimage of Discovery."

A pilgrim is one who travels to a sacred site or a foreign place for work. The most sacred place too infrequently visited is, of course, our own spiritual home. Today we easily travel to the other side of the world. Yet, the strains and stresses of contemporary living make a trip to our spiritual heart seem too far and dangerous for us to take. It was, therefore, inspiring to find the participants of this program so grateful for the opportunity to travel to their sacred core, to visit and relax in their most sacred home. This speaks so loudly of the commitment of Providence, one of the largest healthcare systems in the US, to provide mission formation to their leaders, present and future.

We look forward to welcoming the second cohort in this program later in the Fall.

Summers at UP are a time of farewells and welcomes. Ave Atque Vale, hail, and farewell was made popular by the Romans when greeting heroes and heroines during ceremonial visits and departures.

So, we salute those members of our community, including the graduation class of '23 and those who have retired or left UP, to embrace the next chapter of their careers. Thank you for your commitment to our community, students, and mission.

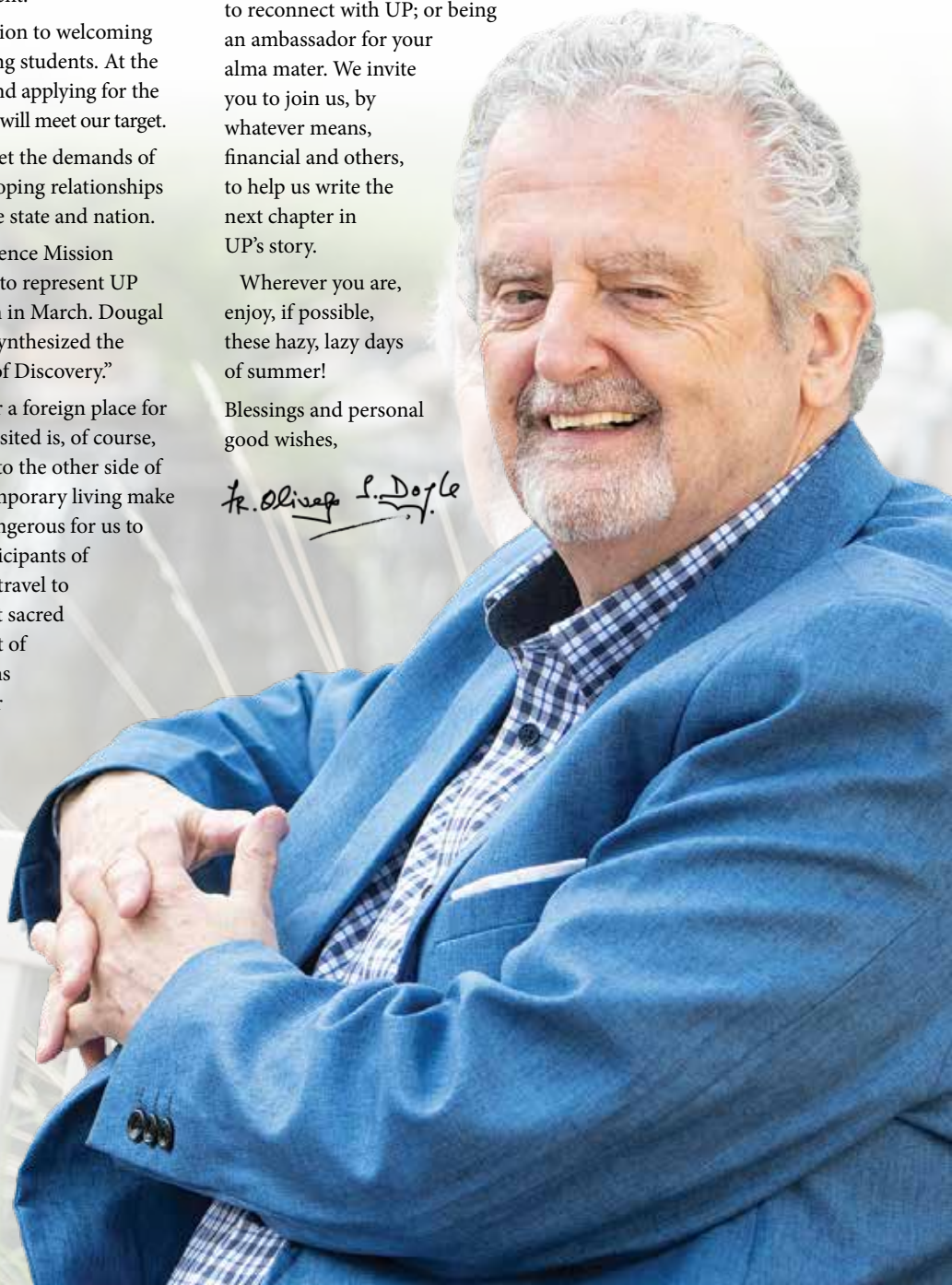
Likewise, we welcome those joining us. New beginnings are never easy and are rarely achieved without some degree of nervousness. Hopefully, you will find many here who can calm your anxieties and ease your transition into our community. Thank you for agreeing to serve.

All we do at UP, be it summer or winter, the only two seasons experienced in Montana, some say, is helped greatly by your encouragement. Your expressions of support in the form of financial donations are always needed and are gratefully received. Thank you! Other acts of support and encouragement include sharing the story of your time at UP, UGF, or the CGF; joining us for alum events; encouraging your friends from those days to reconnect with UP; or being an ambassador for your alma mater. We invite you to join us, by whatever means, financial and others, to help us write the next chapter in UP's story.

Wherever you are, enjoy, if possible, these hazy, lazy days of summer!

Blessings and personal good wishes,

*Fr. Oliver J. Doyle*





# Celebrate, Congratulate, Let the Bell Chime



## University of Providence Commencement

By Karen McGeorge Sanders | Photos Courtesy of Blackwall Agency



Heritage, tradition, and academic excellence ushered in the commencement ceremonies at the University of Providence, now in its 90th academic year. As the graduates of the class of 2023—uniquely prepared as veterans of a global pandemic—stood ready to find their places in the world, university president Father Oliver Doyle eloquently reminded them that through it all, “You have been here for a reason.”

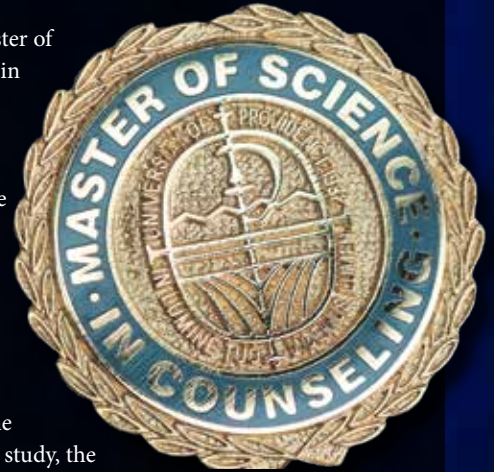
The two-day celebration of the University of Providence’s graduates and their achievements began on Friday morning, April 28, with the pinning ceremony for those finishing their Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The rigorous program requires graduating students to pass the National Counselor Exam (NCE), which entails 3,000 clinical hours, consisting of 1,000 hours of counseling practice with another 2,000 hours of supervised work.

Traditionally, upon entering the University of Providence, freshman ring the bell when entering to signal a commitment to live as a contributing member of the university community. When seniors graduate, they ring the bell once more as a signal of accomplishment and success.





A newly designed Master of Science in Counseling Pin was given to each of the graduates. The pin pays homage to both the University of Providence and the Sisters of Providence, who, in 1892, started an educational program focused on healthcare and education. While graduation highlights the completion of academic study, the pinning ceremony marks the important transition from student to nurse.



The pinning ceremony dates to the 12th century when knights who cared for the sick were given a Maltese cross to wear. Today's pinning ceremony has similar ties to an award given to legendary nurse Florence Nightingale.

She was recognized for her tireless work during the Crimean War and was awarded the Red Cross of St. George in the 1860s. Florence continued the honor by presenting her brightest students with

a medal of  
after, the

excellence. Shortly  
Nightingale School  
of Nursing at St. Thomas

Hospital in  
London gave

a similar medal  
with a Maltese Cross

to all nurses completing

its program. The practice of pinning became standard practice throughout the United States by 1916, recognizing educated women who were competent to serve as a nurse to provide healthcare to society. Every school of nursing designs and awards its own custom-designed pin.

The University of Providence designed its pins with a gold U and P set into the center of a dark blue background, with the straight lines of U and P combining to form a cross.

Baccalaureate Mass, a celebration of academic achievements, personal sacrifices, and the mentors who helped along the way, followed on Friday afternoon at 4 p.m. This tradition signals the end of the academic year and the last time the student will be an undergraduate. The university, grounded in Roman Catholicism, welcomes students of all faiths into its fold and offers this special mass to all its graduating seniors, their friends, and families. It is a time for blessings and celebrations as the graduates say goodbye to their college years and begin to put their education and experiences to work for good in the world.



In 1857, the Sisters of Providence, under the direction of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, founded the first of many Providence schools in the American West.

Rooted in a desire to bring young people to an experience of Christ, the

Sisters of Providence called their students to the pursuit of knowledge, while building in each a sense of obligation to be of compassionate service to others.

At the end of each academic year, the sisters would celebrate the achievement of their graduates by thanking God for the gift of each student and presenting each with a gold pin depicting the crest of their Providence school. Today, the University of Providence continues this nearly 170-year-old tradition.





Father Oliver Doyle, Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel and Deacon Dr. Thomas Miller.

The culmination of commencement events came with music, pageantry, and prayer on Saturday, April 29, at 10 a.m. at the McLaughlin Memorial Center Gymnasium. The traditional strains of *Pomp and Circumstance*, played by the university's brass ensemble, accompanied the long line of 260 graduates as they filed into the McLaughlin Center. The graduates represented a tradition stretching back to 1932 and the founding of the Great Falls Normal College when the first graduating class in 1935 included eight women. From these beginnings as a nursing school and teacher preparatory institution, to the liberal arts College of Great Falls, and now the University of Providence, today's graduates earned widely ranging degrees from nursing to business administration to criminal justice. From its origin, the Sisters of Providence and their service-oriented mission have been central as the university strives not only to educate but also to offer life-changing experiences and self-fulfillment.

As the ceremony got underway, Nicholas Estrada, Interim Mission Integration Officer, and Campus Minister, gave the invocation. He commended the graduates for their strength in weathering not only late nights and term papers, but also the transitions to and from online learning during the pandemic. Thanking God for the perseverance and determination that brought the graduates thus far, he predicted that these gifts "...will surely lead them ever forward into the next adventure of their lives."

Dr. Matthew Redinger, Provost, and Terry Cosgrove, Chair of the Board of Trustees, offered their congratulations. Dr. Redinger reminded graduates, "Each of you has brought the others along, none have done it alone." Cosgrove recalled the school's beginnings in training nurses and teachers 90 years ago and expressed his excitement over the new four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.



Excited graduates stand as they receive their blessing from Bishop Michael Warfel.





Timothy MacGowan, University of Providence Senior IS Technician, receives his bachelor's degree in University Studies.



Graduates celebrate their success after commencement.

Father Doyle then took the podium. He had followed the class of 2023 with special interest since his own tenure as university president began when the graduates began their freshman year in 2019. Father Doyle expressed his faith in the success of each graduate and the strong belief that each would make the world a better place. He encouraged the graduates by voicing confidence in the future: "I seek no backward voyage across the sea of time, but I will press forward, for I believe that God intends the present to be better than the past, and the future to be much, much better than the present."

Dr. Tom Miller, class of 1977, and Susan Miller, class of 1978, shared the commencement address. The married couple told a story of a young boy peeking at a nun in a grocery store. The nun finally caught up with the child and greeted him. Staring at her habit, the boy asked, "What are you made for?" That question became the heart of their message, asking graduates to consider "what they are made for" as they put college behind them and begin new adventures.

The Millers retraced their journey that began at the College of Great Falls and came full circle back to Great Falls where Dr. Miller is now on the faculty of the new Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine. The pair recounted how they were born thousands of miles apart and met at the College of Great Falls. Former biology professor Father Francis McInnis married them in the University's Trinitas Chapel. The couple traveled the country as Tom pursued



degrees in medicine, public health and served in the Air Force. Susan took care of the family, provided a welcoming home, and volunteered in the community at every duty station and place they called home, a job every military spouse understands.

The University of Providence presented the Millers with the Distinguished Alumni Award. They became the first husband and wife to be so honored. Presenting the award, Kylie Carranza, interim Vice President for Advancement, praised them, noting that "...they have fulfilled the mission of the University, to live and make a living."

Benefactor and former student Ric Oberholz received the Manus Dei Award for his generous donation of 1.5 million dollars toward the expansion of the university's nursing program. It will allow a traditional four-year nursing program on campus and fund building updates and technology upgrades. Oberholz was lovingly raised by the Sisters of Providence in the St. Thomas community. This is his way of thanking them. He rededicated the Manus Dei Award back to the Sisters of Providence, and it will be displayed on the University of Providence campus.

Since 1966, the University of Providence has honored a graduating senior with the Outstanding Student Leadership Award. Nomination requires a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, a minimum of 48 credits earned from the University of Providence, and the demonstration of leadership. Among sixteen candidates nominated for the award, Tristan Lewis won the honor. Tristan admitted he was not a public speaker and so pre-recorded his remarks. He spoke of his struggles as a student, and following Dr. Redinger's earlier remark that no student accomplished graduation alone, acknowledged the help he received from dorm mates, other students, and faculty. He praised the University of Providence for its encouragement and role in his education, advising his fellow students not to hesitate, but to meet new hurdles head on: "Take a deep breath and just go for it."

## 2022-2023 Finalists For Outstanding Student Leadership Award

The Outstanding Student Leadership Award began at the University of Providence in 1966. Students can be nominated by staff and faculty members and must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above, have earned at least 48 credits from the University of Providence, and have shown leadership on or off campus.

Sebastian Bartos Baldares	Jonah Marke Johnson
Landon Wynn Bowden	CassiRae D. Kopsa
Liam J. Carvalho	Tristan Lewis
Bailey Ann Christensen	Ira Jean Barlaan Navarro
Jocelyn Rae Figueredo	MaryMargaret Christine Pratt
Ashley La-akea Gooman	Joel Matthew Samayoa
Brianna Howerton	Rosarin Bhutarak Varela
Patrick Daniel Isaacson	Taylor C. Ward

## 2022-2023 Outstanding Achievement by a Student In a Major

Yearly, the University of Providence recognizes one graduating student in each major who is deemed outstanding by the faculty in his or her discipline. Criteria can include factors such as work quality, classroom and program contributions, and academic merit.

### Accounting

Ira Jean Barlaan Navarro

### Biology

Connor M. Murgel

### Business Administration

Tristan Lewis

### Computer Science

Joshua Lee Reeves

### Criminal Justice

CassiRae D. Kopsa

### Exercise Science

Cooper Robert Page

### Forensic Science, Chemistry Track

Arial Brook Van Daele

### Healthcare Administration

Caroline Pearle Lucille Coraggio

### Legal and Paralegal Studies

Naasson Levar Sorrells Sr.

### M.S. Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Brittn Lindsey Ida Grey

### Master of Healthcare Administration

Brett Victor Daniel

### M.S. Infection Prevention & Epidemiology

Heather Marie Pieratt

### M.S. Organizational Leadership

Jillian C. Ehnot

### M.S. Sports Management

Taylor Nichole Mathews

### Mathematics

Nash Nelson Grafe

### Nursing

Brianna Howerton

### Psychology

Angelica Mae Sletten

### Sports Management

Landon Wynn Bowden





Opportunities don't happen, you create them.



Dr. Sarah Spangler, faculty chair and Professor of ILC and Theology, carries the university's mace, used to lead the academic procession at commencement and other special ceremonial occasions, signifying the importance of the event and the conformation of the academic process.

Tristan was not alone in experiencing extra help from caring professors. His story prompted others in the audience to recall the caring acts of university faculty. Stories of actions beyond expectations quietly began to circulate. One such incident, for example, involved a student who had problems reading due to low vision. Professors discovered the problem, recorded the reading material, and gave the individual oral exams.

College expands students' horizons not just academically, but by interacting with fellow students from diverse places and backgrounds. While many graduates were from western states, others came from east of the Mississippi River, and there were graduates from other countries including Canada, New Zealand, Spain, Japan, and Norway.

Some graduates wore special cords around their necks representing additional honors or details about them. A gold cord symbolizes academic honors; a red, white, and blue cord denotes a veteran of military service; and an emerald cord identifies the individual as a graduate of a Providence Formation Program.

The years of challenging work ended as graduates walked across the stage to receive their degrees. Each filed by singly with one exception. This graduate, accompanied by a small child, served as a reminder that earning a degree is a challenge with benefits that reach more than just the graduate. As the festive mood filled the Center, it was difficult to tell who was more jubilant in celebrating these accomplishments: the friends and family supporting them, their teachers, or the graduates themselves.

Finally, the ringing of the bell is always the final event before graduates, family, and friends scatter for their personal celebrations. Tradition holds that when a freshman enters the University of Providence, the ringing of the bell signals a commitment to be a contributing member of the university community. The ringing of the bell upon graduation is the final act that symbolizes the success of that commitment. As commencement ended, the bell tolled its final time, and the University of Providence sent its graduates into the world to be contributing members of global society. 🌍



# Providence Progress:

## Three UP Employees Earn Degrees While Working Full Time

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan

Working full-time for a large organization such as the University of Providence is difficult enough for most employees. Fulfilling those work duties while dedicating time to continuing education is even more daunting. That challenge didn't stop three University of Providence employees from graduating with various degrees this spring. Dena Thares, Timothy MacGowan, and Jillian Ehnot all found their way to the Commencement stage alongside the many students they have helped throughout the four-year journey.

"It was certainly a struggle," commented Dena Thares, UP's senior student accounts specialist and mailroom manager. "The time commitment alone can be tough. You are allowed to take two classes a semester for free so spacing that out takes some time."

Thares started her higher education studies in 2011, challenging herself with classes every semester while working full-time. During those 12 years, she worked with a variety of teachers and students from varying backgrounds. She says one of the most important lessons she regards highly from her studies at UP is being more open-minded to different situations she may not fully understand.

"Being taught by different professors and being with students in the classroom has actually made me more aware of life outside of the work here. I have been able to learn more about the way people live and where they came from, and it has really been valuable."

Timothy MacGowan, a Senior IS Technician for Providence, has worked in different studies for years and has been an employee of UP for 21 years.

"There have been many catalogs, professors, and areas of study I have been in over the years. I have really been challenged," stated MacGowan.

MacGowan graduated this spring with a University Studies degree and felt his 200-plus credits of varying higher education programs have been worth every minute.

"I have had to deal with a lot of struggles while going through these various programs, and to have the degree at the end encompassing all that work has been fantastic."

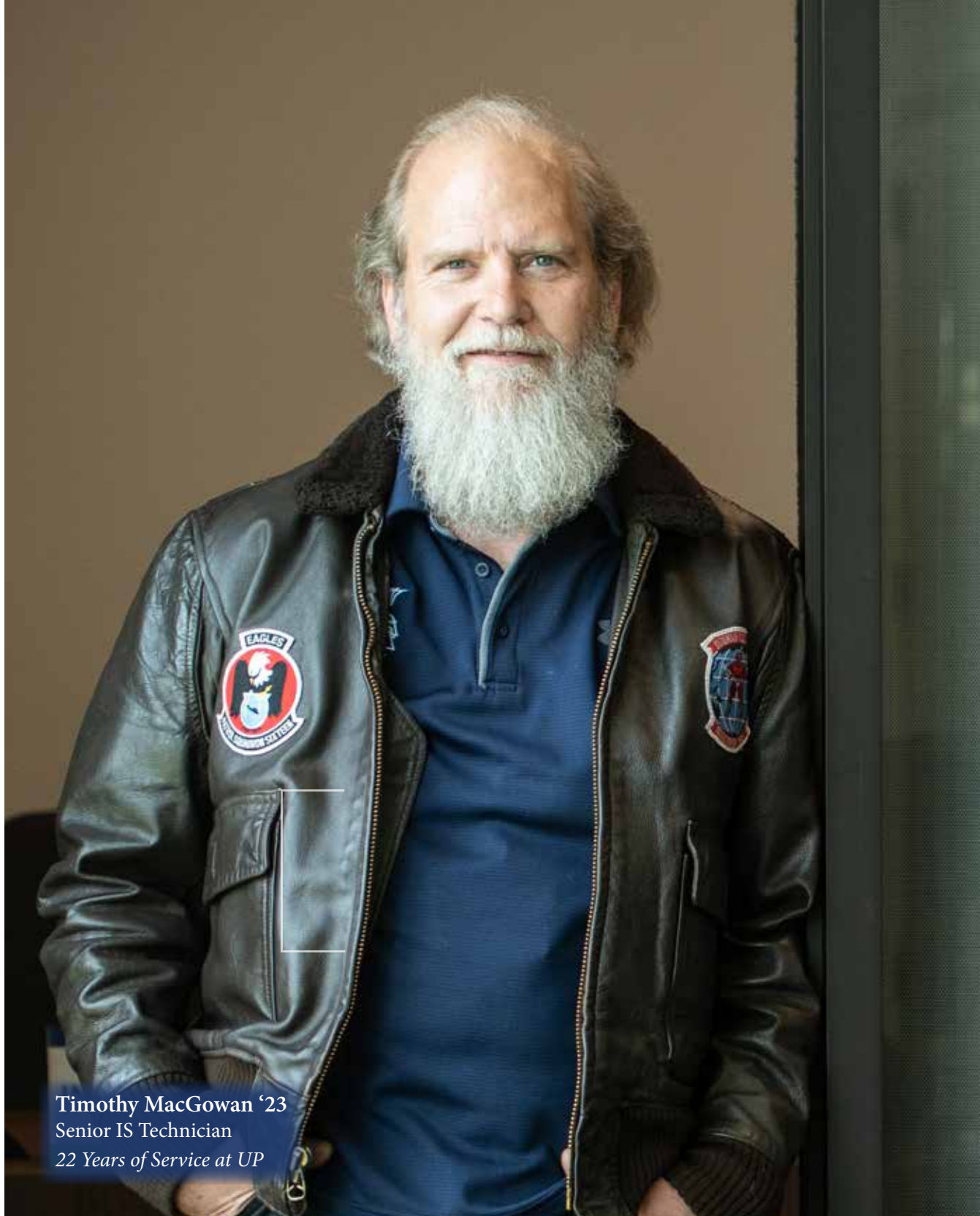
MacGowan's journey through higher education began as a promise to his mother. His diploma will forever be a symbol of a promise fulfilled.

Jillian Ehnot found a different entry point into the studies at the University of Providence. Ehnot graduated from the Masters of Organizational Leadership program to improve her skill set as the Finance Controller of UP.



Jillian Ehnot '23  
Finance Controller  
*4 1/2 Years of Service at UP*





**Timothy MacGowan '23**  
Senior IS Technician  
*22 Years of Service at UP*

“The skills that are coming out of that program were directly related to my current position and could be applied immediately to my work here.”

Ehnot says working through her classes was a bit of a struggle as she was familiar with many of the students’ names from the financial office and knew facets of the University’s organizational structure that her fellow students were unaware of.

“I think it was helpful in discussions sometimes. Many of our discussions were centered around our current employers, and mine was one everyone was familiar with, but not everyone had the understanding of how universities function.”

All three graduates praised their programs and educators, citing many inspiring professors like Katrina Stark, Lyndon Marshall, and Deb Kottel. Another common praise from Ehnot,

MacGowan, and Thares was for the support they received from their different departments.

“Normally, I don’t celebrate these things,” MacGowan stated, “but all the people in IS were so supportive and threw me a little celebration.”

MacGowan proudly pulled out a small, bearded doll adorned with a graduation cap and gown the IS department had gifted him and said, “If this isn’t the spitting image of me, I don’t know what is.”

Thares and Ehnot agree upon how supportive the UP community was during their continuing education journeys. All three graduates were recognized for their accomplishments during the staff and faculty awards ceremony at the end of the semester. When each of their names was called, their department tables erupted in cheers and loud affirmations of their success.

“It was fun to walk with all the students,” commented Thares, “more fun than I thought it would be. I got to sit in the graduating student section with my work study and celebrate with him as he also received his degree.”

The Sisters of Providence established their school in Great Falls, Montana, to bring educational opportunities to the people of northwestern Montana. Their legacy

continues through the various students of UP, some of whom are employees of the University using their working opportunities as a means to access continuing education. This utilization is a realization of the Sisters’ promise to provide a helpful learning environment for all.

“I think for many positions at the University, the skills are very relatable, even outside of finance and business,” said Ehnot. “For many people working for a larger organization, it is a valuable education, and I would suggest anyone learn these skills that can be so universally utilized.”

Whether employed at UP for a short or a long time, the three graduating employees expressed a similar sentiment. If an opportunity for continuing education presents itself, take it. Even more valuable is that opportunity’s tie to a rich tradition of outreach.

“Things change, but are still with the tradition of the University,” MacGowan commented regarding the University’s growth through the years he has been employed. “I think I have been here for so long because this place teaches me how to do things right, and it constantly shows me that some people in this world really do care.”



**Dena Thares '23**  
Senior Student Accounts Specialist/ Mail Room Manager  
13 Years of Service at UP



# The Providence Mission Leadership Institute: Distinctive Leaders for Extraordinary Times

By Nancy Jordan, Ed. D. | Photos Courtesy of Mission Leadership Institute



The Seattle Pod celebration included Mass with Archbishop Etienne, words of support from Dr. Rod Hochman and other Providence dignitaries.





Health care and education are two industries profoundly impacted by the global pandemic, and both require strategic, inventive thinking to prepare an emerging workforce to thrive in an unknown future. Thanks to a dynamic partnership between the University of Providence and the Providence Health System, the Mission Leadership Institute was launched to form leaders who respond to unprecedented challenges with courageous curiosity and compassionate care for self and others, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

Nearly 250 Providence caregivers (employees) recently completed this 18-month program, many earning a 12-credit graduate certificate in Mission Leadership with emphasis on Mission-Centered or Mission Integration Leadership for those discerning a vocation in the field.







Sr. Maggie Pastro, SP, congratulates a proud graduate.

Providence President and CEO Rod Hochman, M.D., and Dougal Hewitt, executive vice president, chief mission and sponsorship officer, envisioned an experience of learning for rising leaders intentionally focused on Mission and values.

“The words Mission Leadership Institute say it all. Now, more than ever, we need leaders who are grounded in a strong sense of Mission. This is core to everything we do,” says Dr. Hochman.

The partnership between the University of Providence and Providence Health System was integral to program success. Key collaborators throughout the development, delivery, and assessment phases from the University include President Fr.

Oliver Doyle; Deanna Koepke, Ph.D.,  
associate professor of sociology;  
Matthew Redinger, Ph.D.,



Fr. Doyle delivers Sr. Rosa her certificate with joy and appreciation.

provost/vice president for academic affairs; David Gides, Ph.D., associate professor of theology; Ashley Koepke, associate registrar, ‘12; James Gretch, director of distance learning; and Christopher Nelson, distance learning education specialist/school of health professions academic administrator. Key collaborators from Providence include Dougal Hewitt, Martin Schreiber, Ed.D, MLI vice president; Nancy Jordan, Ed.D., MLI associate vice president; and Crystal Hasan, MLI senior program manager. The work group honored the legacies of Providence’s founding congregations, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange and the Sisters of Providence, by listening to God’s Providence, responding to the needs of the times, and maintaining a steadfast focus on developing an expansive and formative program that honors the traditions of two very important ministries of the Catholic Church, health care and education.

“The Mission Leadership Institute Certificate program, offered through the University of Providence, is a wonderful expression of how the sisters’ vocational ‘why’ of caring for the underserved is continuing to shape contemporary caregivers, staff, and leaders who now share in responsibility for the Mission,” offers Fr. Doyle.



Forest bathing provided participants with a sensory experience of smell to build awareness of their surroundings.

The institute’s curriculum and instruction blend adult learning strategies with higher education best practices. Course descriptions and learning outcomes are based on the essential elements of Catholic health care and Catholic social teaching, comprising a unique, formative, scholarly, and accredited program distinctive in health care and education ministries. A signature assignment marks the documentation of self-discovery through a multi-sensory, multiple-modality, and whole-person pedagogy.

The Mission Leadership Institute e-portfolio captures each student’s formative, in-action, and summative experience each session and serves as a snapshot of takeaways and a resource for Mission-centered leadership.



Through cooking, the sense of taste was nurtured, enhancing whole-person sensory awareness.

Learning opportunities also included group conversations, personal reflection, guided meditation, and hands-on experiences focused on engaging the senses. Sensory integration is a key trait for Mission-centered leaders who must adopt and demonstrate authentic and complete presence to understand, influence, and care for others.

Participants were offered words of wisdom from industry thought leaders, including:

- Carolyn Woo, Ph.D., former Catholic Relief Services CEO
- Chris Lowney, CommonSpirit Health board co-chair
- Ira Byock, M.D., Providence Institute for Human Caring founder
- Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, Catholic Health Association of the United States President and CEO



The sense of sound was animated through sound bathing, growing the leadership call to listen.

- Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Catholic Charities USA President and CEO
- Mary Anne Sladich-Lantz, former Providence senior vice president of mission and formation. (University of Providence alumna and honorary doctorate recipient)

A website with resources offers an extension of the sessions, organized by theme. It includes the institute's podcast featuring guests such as Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., Homeboy Industries founder,

and Alexis Valdez, poet and contributor to Pope Frances' 2020 book, *Let Us Dream*. Spotify playlists curated specifically for the institute by Fort Smith Symphony Conductor, John Jeter, provide participants with a valuable pathway into the sense of sound.

Tara Vinson, 2019 University of Providence alumna (M.S. Organizational Leadership) and Providence Mission Leadership Institute graduate noted that the program "helped me develop both personally and professionally. It was a well-constructed and intentional program for leaders in our system. As a Mission-centered leader, one of the largest takeaways for me was to be a kind and good person and do the best for the most." Tara highlighted these specific learnings:

- Seek first to understand versus judgment.
- Be a voice for those who can't speak for themselves.
- Work each day to solve divisiveness.
- Lead with dignity and recognize your inherent dignity.
- Always rise above.
- Ground yourself in strength and courage of your worth.




Formation of the heart, mind, and body included many opportunities to reflect.

The recent celebration of the first cohort marks one exciting milestone on this ongoing journey of Mission-centered leadership development. Fr. Oliver was among many attendees gathered to honor the graduates.

"The enthusiasm and commitment of those who participated in this program were so evident at their 'Arrive' celebration in March. It was inspiring and humbling to experience the heartbeat of Blessed Emilie in these days," said Fr. Oliver.

Planning is underway to welcome the second cohort in November 2023. Participants will have the expanded opportunity to earn the certificate of completion, the graduate certificate, or the newly arranged undergraduate certificate. The collaboration between the University of Providence and Providence has provided an exciting opportunity to develop leaders who significantly contribute to the health system's vision of health for a better world.

Dr. Hochman affirms the program's impact: "The Mission Leadership Institute will continue to evolve and improve, and Providence will be committed to the formation of our leaders into perpetuity. That's what is so exciting." 



# A Career of Intentional Care

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan



**Brad Beffert, LAT, ATC**

Assistant A.D. Student Athlete Wellness & Risk Management/Head Athletic Trainer

When Brad Beffert first arrived at the University of Great Falls in 2001, he found a campus transitioning from commuter students of non-traditional age to a very athletically focused traditional four-year institution. Brad was excited to join this growing community and help form the new student-athletes. After 22 years of dedication to University of Great Falls and University of Providence, he is still assisting student-athletes to excel at their sport and their lives.

Brad originally applied for a hospital position in Billings. The hiring committee went in a different direction, but the human resources representative asked if he would be willing to have her forward his resume to Great Falls. He has been working as a UP athletic trainer ever since. In 2016 he also took on the responsibility of assistant athletic director.

"I basically am in charge of the fitness center and the athletic training department," says Beffert. "My responsibilities really boil down to making sure our student-athletes are safe and taken care of."

Beffert takes these responsibilities very seriously, noting that more than just physical recovery is at the heart of his training. He says one of his job's most rewarding aspects is building trust and caring for the many athletes at UP. Beffert builds trust through genuinely caring for each student-athlete and working to make it standard across his department.

"I have always liked that this institution cares about its student-athletes as more than just athletes," says Brad. "I saw a lot of my classmates go to Division 1 schools, and many of them were not treated well. Everyone who comes to our training room knows they are more than just an athlete; they know to dedicate a lot of focus on their academics and extracurriculars."

Beffert is always intentional about checking in on life with his athletes. A meeting with his athletic trainers will undoubtedly involve the recovery aspect of athletic training, but athletes will be met with questions such as: 'How are classes going?' or 'How is the family?'

Brad credits his work ethic and management style to adopting the University of Providence Mission. The Sisters of Providence are a driving force for his constant care for the 'whole person.' He also recognizes the benefits of such practices. Beffert says being injured can 'be frustrating and often emotional,' but it can be a time for self-reflection and analysis. Brad and his staff of athletic trainers work hard to ensure this reflective time is genuinely spent on a full recovery for each student.

"It makes me proud to work here. I know the people we send out into the world have an understanding of what it means to be human, the hardships and the rewards." 🏀



# Thirty-Six Years Expressing the Importance of Language

## Faculty Spotlight

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan

Most who have walked the campus of University of Providence know where to find Dr. Curtis Bobbitt. Entering the professor's office, one is greeted by a bookshelf loaded with literature of all genres and subjects. His collection of tomes is a testament to years of dedication to the institution, but his start here was not a guarantee of such longevity.

Dr. Bobbitt found himself at the College of Great Falls in 1987. He received an invitation for a one-summer teaching contract with the potential of lengthening into a full academic year.

"The opportunity sounded appealing to me," said Dr. Bobbitt. "I had never been to Montana, and after a geographic hunt, I decided it would be a great opportunity."

He grew up in the Midwest and was never fond of the humidity in his hometown region. He always dreamt of teaching somewhere in the northern parts of the country. When this opportunity presented itself, the timing was perfect to see what the area had to offer for a future career.

Since that first summer, Dr. Bobbitt has witnessed two institutional name changes from the College of Great Falls to University of Great Falls to its current title, University of Providence.

His position at UP is not the only surprise in Dr. Bobbitt's life. His original undergraduate study goal was in a much


different field. He always figured he would study chemistry or mathematics, noting those were his favorite subjects in high school. When he got to Bethany College in West Virginia, he was invited to join a once-a-week, non-credit literature course taught by the strict department chair of Bethany's English department.

"There were about twenty of us who joined that course," Dr. Bobbitt recalled. "I think by the end, there were only three of us left."

This class changed his evaluation of what a literature course could be. Focusing on the texts and intentional dedication to close-reading gave Dr. Bobbitt a new passion for literary analysis. He changed his course of study and, years later, would find himself defending his dissertation for a Ph.D. in English.

The flexibility in materials he is allowed to teach from keeps his passion for teaching aflame. Dr. Bobbitt points to his iconic bookshelf overflowing with books and explains how often he rotates material based on interests that might speak to particular students. The introduction of new topics coupled with his expertise in more traditional literary subjects is an academic approach his students jump on board with, even the ones not interested in English studies.

"I want every student to leave my classes thinking, there was something in this class that was entertaining, or I could use for my job, or was beneficial to my growth," says Dr. Bobbitt. "Language has something for everyone, and my goal is to help students find that."



Dr. Curtis W. Bobbitt  
Professor of English



# Recent Graduate Exemplifies the Diverse Learning Experience UP Offers

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Ivette Barrera



**Ashley Gooman**  
Class of 2023

A regular schedule for any student-athlete might look something like this: morning practice, class, lunch, class, evening practice, homework, rest. Follow that sequence of events and one would already be at a full day. Still, many University of Providence students like recent graduate Ashley Gooman find a way to make even more out of their college experience.

Gooman transferred to University of Providence in the Spring of 2021 after attending Midland University in Omaha, Neb., for nearly two years. She sought an institution that offered more biology research opportunities while providing a space to continue as a collegiate wrestler. When coach Matt Atwood, her Midland coach, took a position at UP, Gooman saw a chance to make a change in her life.

"The location was a big seller to me," Gooman said. "I wasn't the biggest fan of Nebraska, and I knew that Montana offered a lot of the nature that I wanted to see. I was also drawn to the different opportunities they had for me as a biology major. UP also seemed to have good connections with the McLaughlin Research Institute and the local hospitals in Great Falls."

A month after arriving at UP, Gooman was already working as a student assistant in the McLaughlin Research Institutes' animal testing lab. She connected with the director of career services, Rod Johanson, who helped successfully land the position.

Ashley quickly climbed the ranks in academics and on the mat for the women's wrestling team. By the end of her time at UP, Gooman would finish her wrestling career as a two-time NAIA All-American and one of three Argo wrestlers invited to the Olympic training center to practice with the best women's wrestlers nationwide.

"Wrestling has always been a part of my life," said Gooman. "I am very thankful to my parents and family for supporting me so I could keep competing during college."

In addition to working at McLaughlin, holding a high academic standing, and competing on the women's wrestling team, Gooman also worked as a resident assistant for the housing department, worked a student job in campus ministry, and co-founded the pre-med club.

"I think the hardest parts of balancing the workload were made so much easier by the amazing friends and supportive people I met," said Gooman. "I felt prepared for a lot of the academic stress and was used to the wrestling stress, but I would not have made it through the other amazing experiences without the friends I had."

Gooman continued to express gratitude for the many supportive friends, staff, and faculty members at UP. She says the most challenging part of leaving was wanting to "Bring all the people home with me because I will miss them so much."

Gooman plans to attend medical school and use the lessons learned at University of Providence to improve lives in the world. 🌍





**Twila Croft**  
Retired Director of Academic Success  
Class of 1995

## Inspiration from the Sisters of Providence Fosters a Lifelong Dedication

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan

Twila Croft retired as director of the academic success center after thirty-two years of service with the University of Providence. Over the course of her time at the university, Twila earned an associate degree in human services, a bachelor's degree in human services in-depth, and a master's degree in information systems with a focus in counseling – all accolades received from the very institution she served as an employee.

Croft says a driving force behind her dedication to University of Providence stemmed from her close relationship with the Sisters of Providence.

“They really took me under their wing,” says Croft. “I was going through a very tough time in my life, and they made a genuine effort to help me through it and help me grow. I’m not Catholic myself, but they took me in as if I were one of their own.”

Twila’s aunt worked at the University, then the College of Great Falls, when she first started as a front desk clerk in the admissions office. She recalls the difficulty in landing the position due to a rigid typing test, but it wasn’t long before she found herself working alongside the staff and faculty of CGF. She quickly realized that the school was a place she could grow in her work while earning different degrees to further her career goals.

“I realized I could get my degree, and my kids could get their degrees; it really seemed like a place that would continue to welcome me as long as I wanted,” Twila said.

Croft says she felt the same then as she did the day she retired. Whether CGF or UP, she felt safe, welcome, and valued. She remembers the moment she received her first paycheck of 800 dollars.

“I thought I was rich,” Croft chuckled. “My paycheck definitely changed throughout the years, but the feeling of being valued stayed very much the same.”

When the position of director of academic success opened, Twila felt she was called to something the sisters had fostered in her from the beginning. She wanted to pass along their caring and welcoming mission to students at UP. Twila accepted the promotion and helped build the academic success center into what it is today.

“I don’t want to put myself at the same level as the sisters,” Twila stated. “But I really just wanted to mentor people the way they mentored me. There was such a presence they brought that really exemplified their mission.”

In retirement, Croft said she doesn’t always miss the work, but she always misses the camaraderie, the students, and the relationships she formed at UP. As someone who lived the mission of the sisters and taught directly from them, Croft continues to look back on her time at the school with the hope that “People step back sometimes and see what they are truly doing and how amazing it can be.”





# Sister Providencia: A Force that Changed Lives

By Ellen Baumler

Photos Courtesy of Providence Archives

Service is the founding principle of the Sisters of Providence who came to St. Ignatius Mission in 1864 to help wherever there was need. The University of Providence mirrors the heritage of its founding sisters and there have been standout examples. Sister Providencia Tolan is one individual whose indomitable spirit and community activism continues to inspire.

From 1948 to 1974, with a break to earn her master's in 1951, Sister Providencia advocated and lobbied on behalf of First Nations people. Politicians, community leaders, and tribal elders came to respect her as the nation's foremost expert on the economic plight of Indigenous people. It was not an easy path, but one that the sister traveled with conviction.

Born Denise Hortense Tolan in Anaconda in 1909, she grew up in California dreaming of one day returning to Montana to kneel with the Sisters of Providence at St. Ignatius Mission. Taking her professional vows as a sister of Providence in 1930, Sister Providencia taught elementary school in several states, including Idaho. On the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, she organized several women's craft guilds and displayed their handiwork at the 1939 San Francisco World Fair. In 1941, she exhibited handicrafts of nine Pacific Northwestern tribes in the Indian Affairs Committee Room at the US Capitol, earning high praise from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

As Sister Providencia earned her bachelor's degree in sociology from the College of Great Falls in 1944, the federal government was on the cusp of radical policy changes affecting the nation's poverty-stricken Indian reservations. Believing that Indigenous people would be better off relocating to urban areas where there were jobs, the federal Termination Era began when Congress signed House Resolution No. 108 in 1953. Removal to urban settings, however, meant separation from family units and a devastating loss of culture.

Sister Providencia joined the College of Great Falls staff in 1948, dousing her dream of service at St. Ignatius and the Flathead Reservation. But she quickly realized that abject poverty was not confined to reservations. Dire conditions among First Nations people extended to urban communities like Great Falls.

Likely influenced by her

Sister Providencia, pictured here in the 1950s, immersed her students in the work on Hill 57. Her legacy of service lives on at the University of Providence.





Miss Indian America and Sister Providencia ride in a Great Falls parade in 1970, the year that President Richard Nixon ended termination policies.

father, Representative John Tolan of California, who championed impoverished Dust Bowl migrants in the 1930s, Sister Providencia saw a similar need among displaced Native Americans.

Sister Providencia hounded local businesses and potential donors who found it hard to say no. Her work paid off in 1950 when temperatures fell to fifty below zero. Ice on the Blackfeet Reservation left people stranded and starving. The dynamic sister gathered supplies and organized life flights. Her efforts earned the college a Golden Rule Award from Montana's Mutual Broadcasting System.

With her master's degree in sociology from Catholic University in Washington, DC, Sister Providencia returned to the college staff as a lecturer in sociology. She reconnected with Native friends, many living on Hill 57 northwest of Great Falls. The hill was one of several local impoverished settlements of "landless" Chippewa Cree, Métis, Little Shell, and off-reservation Native Americans who eked out a poor subsistence. A lack of plumbing and running water left residents, especially babies, susceptible to diseases. There was no firewood for fuel on the barren hill; many were cold and hungry, and living conditions in the tiny shanties were dire. There were no medical, social, or city services. Fewer than half of its one hundred children attended school. They had neither coats nor boots and feared the other children's ridicule of their patched and mismatched clothing. While reservations were under federal funding, off-reservation settlements like Hill 57 were not. Neither city, state, nor federal agencies claimed responsibility.

Sister Providencia recruited her students to compile Hill 57 statistics and compare findings to other similar settlements. Their excellent reports revealed the critical role reservations played in maintaining family, culture, and heritage. They sent copies to Montana's Democratic politicians—Lee Metcalf, Mike Mansfield, and



Sister Providencia helps children get ready for an encampment on Hill 57.



Hill 57 in Great Falls became the national symbol of abject poverty among off-reservation settlements.





Sister Providencia exhibited handicrafts of nine Pacific Northwestern tribes in the Indian Affairs Committee Room at the US Capitol in 1941. Shown here with her parents, Rep. John and Alma Tolan, her effort won high praise from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.



Denise Hortense Tolan, born in Anaconda in 1909, sat for her portrait in 1927. Although she grew up in California, she dreamed of returning to St. Ignatius, Montana, as a Sister of Providence.

James E. Murray—as ammunition against federal termination. Most First Nations people opposed this idea but lacked leadership and a voice to protest. Through her work with Montana’s tribes, Sister Providencia gradually helped leaders emerge to speak for themselves.

Sister Providencia immersed her students in the plight of Hill 57, taking them there to experience conditions firsthand. Students delivered food, clothing, firewood, and hauled water as part of their classwork. As head of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine unit at the college, Sister Providencia groomed her students to teach Saturday religion classes and tutor the children who could not read.

Some thought Sister Providencia was pushy and brash and did not approve of her methods. But others saw her in a different light. She encouraged the children to go to school and counseled them to never give up. Sometimes she even hitched up her habit and chased them down, rounding them up for classes. The children on Hill 57 loved her. One recalled, “When she was near, I could close my eyes and feel the aura that she gave off around her—I could feel her smile.”

With the sisters’ support at the College, Sister Providencia energized the once-indifferent Great Falls community, organizing lectures and seminars





Hill 57 residents in front of their shanty solemnly posed with Sister Providencia in the 1960s.

about this forgotten population, often addressing racism and termination policies. She lobbied for federal aid and improvements to settlements like Hill 57. In 1955, she received the National Merit Award from the National Congress of American Indians and was adopted into several tribes. The Crow named her “Woman Who Does Good Things for Indians.”

Sister Providencia convinced Robert McCormick to come to Hill 57 to film the documentary “The American Stranger,” revealing the government’s neglect of Native citizens. Airing on NBC in November 1958, Sister persuaded the network to make copies. The rebroadcast elicited thousands of replies faulting government negligence.

By the 1960s, Sister Providencia’s effective networking and keen understanding of politics had served the cause well. She acted as intermediary between Montana’s politicians and local groups, worked with Montana’s Inter-Tribal Board, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, the National Congress of American Indians, and served as consultant to six of Montana’s seven reservations. Metcalf called her



Sister Providencia encouraged the children of Hill 57 to attend school; sometimes she even hiked up her habit and chased them down.

a “sparkplug and a catalyst;” Murray saw her as the spokesperson for Indian welfare. Most important, she brought First Nations’ issues to the Great Falls campus and activated her students to become leaders themselves who walked in solidarity with the disenfranchised.

The federal termination policies ended in 1970 under President Richard Nixon. The “landless” Little Shell Tribe, many of whom were once residents of the shanties of Hill 57, gained federal recognition in 2019 and purchased Hill 57 in 2021. Sister Providencia, who passed away in 1989, did not live to see this victory. However, having brought national attention to Hill 57 as a symbol of urban poverty, Sister Providencia would be pleased to see its transformation.

Continuing Sister Providencia’s spirited activism, University of Providence faculty and students have embarked upon a new expression of service. Service outreach minister Travis Vermulm and faculty members Drs. Matthew Pietropaoli and Sarah Spangler recently prepared four students for the first Service Immersion Trip. Like Sister Providencia’s students before them, they aimed not to just volunteer, but pledged to serve the underserved.



A member of the Crow Tribe’s Whistling Water Clan greets Sister Providencia.

Establishing contacts through Villanova University—a Catholic Augustinian community dedicated to service and Vermulm’s alma mater—students studied the target Philadelphia community. Their five-day trip included removing pews to clear a basement meeting place for Alcoholics Anonymous, teaching evening English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to first-time English speakers, painting a playground, and serving meals to the needy. Each day ended with student-led reflections. Further assessments once back at campus completed the course. The new Sister Providencia Service Learning Center aims for two immersion trips annually.

Among many sisters whose legacies interweave with contemporary campus traditions, Sister Providencia was a champion who drew in students, communities, tribal leaders, and politicians. University President Father Oliver Doyle stresses that she was not a lone crusader, but one of many sisters whose varied accomplishments echo today’s academic goals: to step in where service is needed and, in so doing, shape students into compassionate world citizens. 🌱



# Fulbright Scholar Dr. Katrina Stark

## Visiting Taiwan – Experiencing Sameness & Differences

By Kay Bjork | Photos Courtesy of Katrina Stark

University of Providence Professor Katrina Stark has a varied and colorful background that clearly reveals an adventurous spirit. In addition to a doctorate in business administration, she has a bachelor degree in art. She was a college fencing athlete and today she plays and referees ice hockey. She operated a calligraphy studio and was a Girl Scout professional. She has mentored student-run businesses that resulted in an entrepreneurship course. She has served as chair of the UP faculty and volunteers for the AWANA program at church. And now she adds one more accomplishment to this impressive list – Fulbright Scholar.

The Fulbright Program offers international and cultural exchange programs in more than 160 countries across the globe. The highly selective program sponsors approximately 800 U.S. scholars and 900 scholars from a variety of other countries participating each year to build skills and connections, gain valuable international insights and to share their experiences with students and colleagues.

Stark has traveled to many corners of the world including to Taiwan, but the trip to Taiwan in March 2023 was different because she says, “I got to go on a Fulbright. I was honored and thrilled that they honored the award that was delayed by Covid-19 for three years.”

She says that when she arrived she received the warmest welcome from her Taiwanese hosts who said, “We have waited three years to meet you.”

She visited five cities and 22 universities during her two weeks in Taiwan, which was a bit of a whirlwind. The challenge was easily met by Stark, while in her 60s, has the energy and enthusiasm of a young college student.

She found the Taiwanese to be gracious and engaging. She says, “They really wanted to interact.” Stark says that even though she doesn’t know Mandarin Chinese (primarily used in Taiwan) she could get along, because many Taiwanese speak fluent English and translators were also provided. She said that figuring out how to communicate without knowing the language (or having access to Google Translate) is just one of the valuable lessons that can be learned from travel.

Through the university visits she noticed differences in educational styles.

For example in the U.S. a student must have a bachelor’s degree before entering law school while in Taiwan, the college student goes straight into law school. She said teachers were proud to share that they received their doctorates at an American university because that is what is preferred. She observed that many of the colleges were deeply immersed in AI, robotics and provided areas with 3D printers for students use.

Dr. Katrina Stark, UP professor of business administration, was a Fulbright Scholar in March 2023, visiting in Taiwan.





In spite of a tight schedule, she also found time to enjoy the culture and beauty of Taiwan. She says, "It is an incredible country." It was originally named Formosa by Portuguese sailors in 1542, which meant, "beautiful island."

Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall is a beautiful monument that was flanked by bright red flowers while Stark was there in March.



An emphasis on education has lifted Taiwan to the top of global education rankings in recent years. There are 149 universities, colleges and junior colleges in the small country of Taiwan. They are one of the world's leading producers of information and communication technology with programs to nurture startups and support academic research. They also have a goal to be bilingual with an increased public proficiency in English by 2030.

During Stark's two-week visit, both hosts and guests shared presentations, facility tours were given, and she met with university presidents and other representatives to learn ways to network and collaborate.



A typical Taiwan breakfast was buns, dumplings, noodles, and steamed vegetables.

In spite of a tight schedule, she also found time to enjoy the culture and beauty of Taiwan. She says, "It is an incredible country." It was originally named Formosa by Portuguese sailors in 1542, which meant, "beautiful island." Rugged mountains on the east meet rolling plains on the west where most of the population lives.

Besides its scenic beauty, Stark enjoyed its colorful cultural aspects by taking neighborhood walks and visiting street markets. She



Dog statues like this are found outside many of Taiwan's buildings and temples. Often found in pairs, they are a feng shui symbol for protection.



It is the lunar year of the rabbit in 2023 so rabbit figures like this were everywhere.



Katrina loves Taiwan, as she displayed while pinpointing the location with a heart while in the library at National Chi Nan University in Nantou.

describes the sounds and sights, "I make a point to listen carefully to what is around me using situational awareness, without headphones or buds... hearing birds with different songs, the swish of a broom on a storefront, the greeting of another stroller's greeting, "Ni hao, good morning" with a slight bow and the universal sound of laughing children going to school."

She enjoyed the mysterious aroma of local spices used in food being prepared in the street markets and restaurants. The food was a highlight for Stark, who will try anything. One of her favorites was the pork bun and she tried sea cucumber, ocean eel and snails served on mashed potatoes for the first time. She admits with a laugh, "I won't eat eel again."

As an artist she appreciated the textiles of the many different indigenous tribes and the 1000-year old treasures she saw in museums. She loved when their hosts would say, "When you come back" because that is something she hopes to do, either as a teacher or a tourist.

For now she is focused on how she can get UP students to Taiwan. That might include medical students who would benefit from some of the medical technology in Taiwan or students who could complete their practicum teaching English. She is also exploring ways to do exchanges with Taiwan students.

She says, "Seeing the world outside the U.S. certainly can and should give a person an appreciation of the U.S and how to navigate life outside of what you know... Yes, there are scary things in the world, but there can be scary things right on your street or even in your head. There are certainly, in my experiences, far more good people in the world than not and that experience our sameness. "

Different, but the same is an aspect that Stark seems to have a knack at discovering. Probably because, even though she is a teacher, she never stops learning. 🌿



# CLASS NOTES



*"My time and experience at Providence were priceless for how it developed myself as a business professional. The small university platform forced each student to develop relationships with literally everyone tied to the university. Therefore, you were able to learn how to adapt to different ways of life. Learning from your peers as you develop these relationships is the most undervalued part of a smaller university. You are forced to grow socially with fellow classmates that come from various backgrounds. As a student, you quickly learn that it's not what you know, but more importantly, it's who you know."*

*"These are the key attributes within the business world. Nobody cares about what type of degree you received or where you finished in your class. They want to know if you can build relationships with your peers that will allow you to grow their business. As Katrina Stark once said, "People buy from people they like." Take full advantage of a smaller university platform, and don't undervalue the things you will learn from the experience."*

**Kyle Tschetter** | Class of 2015

*"The University of Providence and Great Falls, Montana, both had profound impacts on who I am today, both as a creative professional and as a human being. Without the lessons I learned, the tribulations through which I suffered, and the community I built there, I would not be living my dream of writing full-time. Writing for the UP magazine would be an excellent way for me to give back to a community and institution that has given me so much, and I would be absolutely thrilled to have that opportunity."*

**Clay Vermulm** | Class of 2015



*"University of Providence alleviated my fears of returning to school after many years. The program, courses, professors, and staff enabled me to be successful in completing my education. My professional and personal life was enriched throughout my journey."*

**Caroline Coraggio** | Class of 2023

*"My time at University of Providence was outstanding. Being part of a close-knit community where everyone knew each other created a unique sense of camaraderie. The experience fostered great opportunities professionally and forged many lifelong friendships."*

**Eric Hinebauch** | Class of 2011



The University of Providence Alumni and Advancement Team loves receiving your news and updated information. Please submit your news and updates by emailing Melissa Bluml, Director of Advancement Communications and Engagement, at [melissa.bluml@uprovidence.edu](mailto:melissa.bluml@uprovidence.edu) to be included in future editions of *Providence Forum*.



# A Legacy of Attentive Coaching: Arunas Duda and the University of Providence Volleyball Team

By Travis Vermulm | Photos By Eric Visocan

It is early Fall season in the McLaughlin Gymnasium on University of Providence's campus, and a buzz of activity can be heard from inside. The bleachers are packed with students and fans watching one of UP's oldest and most entertaining teams on the athletic lineup, women's volleyball.

Pacing the sideline is Head Coach Arunas Duda. He is animated, watching every move of his and the opposing team, marking his clipboard with substitution suggestions and changes in strategy. Anyone watching can spot the deep-seated passion Duda has for the sport – a passion that has led University of Providence's volleyball team for the past 20 years.

"It's kind of a funny story of how I came here," Coach Duda chuckled. "The [University of Providence] athletic director at the time of my hiring went to Santa Clara, my alma mater, and the head Men's Basketball coach at the time, Jeff Young, used to date a woman I was coaching with at Southern California. They [University of Providence] were bringing the program back, and the athletic director reached out to Santa Clara, Young reached out to the Southern California coach, and both places suggested me."

Those two fateful phone conversations brought Coach Duda to Great Falls, Montana, where he has remained for 20 consecutive seasons. When he joined the program as head coach, it was just over a year old, giving him a clean slate to build a team with his goals in mind. Since that first season, Duda has enjoyed incredible success.

"I mean, the chance to be 24 years old, be your own boss, and start your own program --basically, it was an amazing opportunity!"

Duda has posted multiple winning seasons, most recently a five-year winning streak from 2017-2021, culminating in a dominating 2021 season with a conference record of 10-0. When asked about his most significant accomplishment in his 20 years of coaching, Duda doesn't zero in on games won or trophies collected. His answer reveals the more profound lessons behind his team's success.

"The biggest successes are sometimes the phone call you get five years later. It's that, 'Hey coach, I know I was a pain in the side, but I'm coaching my own team now, and I get what you are saying.' Those have been my biggest achievements, and they don't always come immediately, Duda explained."





Much of Duda's coaching philosophy is reflected in the University he has made his home. Duda commends UP for the community feeling it fosters.



Bump, Set, Spike!

Duda's passion on the sideline is immediately evident when talking about his team. Despite long hours of watching film, designing season-long practice schedules, dealing with individual issues arising each season, and raising a family of his own, Duda developed a uniquely thoughtful style of play and a successful team management system.

"It stems from my Jesuit education and educating the whole person," he stated. "That is something we push here. We have students outside our offices studying all semester long, we have helped students who need counseling find counseling. It really is one of those things we take seriously."



2023 University of Providence Volleyball Team.

Duda's ability to form meaningful relationships with his players is reflected in his current assistant coaching staff, Kelsey Shaver and Sacha Simmons, both former players of Duda. They bring familiarity with his goals to the team and provide valuable insight to Duda.

"My assistant coaches are very knowledgeable about the sport and passionate about building relationships with these athletes and trying to advance them," said Duda.

Duda praises both assistants for their ability to transition from athlete to coach and a genuine commitment to the same end-result style of coaching Duda implements with his teams.

"I realized my end-result style was different than how I was coached," Duda mused. "I wanted to be invited to their weddings. I want to be in their lives beyond just athletic accomplishments. Having my own family has helped me form that perspective from when I started here as a 24-year-old, and I am incredibly thankful for how it has made my coaching experience better."

Much of Duda's coaching philosophy is reflected in the University he has made his home. Duda commends UP for the community feeling it fosters.

"I had opportunities to move on, but what stuck with me was the opportunity to work so closely with student athletes every single day," Duda said.

Like any journey, Duda has worked through struggles in his career. His main struggle is the large roster of athletes. He says connecting with each of his athletes is essential but can be difficult when there are 30 students on a single team.

"You have so many student-athletes to care about," he stated. "And I don't say that as a huge negative. The struggle is you can't spend the attention and time on every one of them that you want."

Through success and struggle, Duda runs a tight relationship-building ship on and off the court. He continues integrating himself into the many activities at University of Providence and reaches out to the community of Great Falls for any opportunity. Through all of his success, it is clear from his team and his personal life that Duda values building family and fostering personal relationships.

Duda is and will always be a towering figure, an establishment icon, and a symbol of pride at University of Providence. "Here, we are part of our athletes' lives, and they are really a big part of ours," said Duda. 🦋



THE UNIVERSITY OF PROVIDENCE

2023

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME



**NOMINATIONS OPEN NOW!**

The University of Providence is pleased to announce we are seeking nominations for the Athletic Hall of Fame. The Athletic Hall of Fame recognizes individuals whose athletic achievements are noteworthy and deserving of recognition.



**...and make your nomination**

# Campus Beat

## A Trip to Showdown



Jason hits the slopes!



Argos at Showdown.



Showdown Ski Trip 2023.

## Baccalaureate Mass



Celebrating our annual Baccalaureate Mass with the Class of 2023.

## Campus Ministry Trip 2023



Noah Schmidt, MaryMargaret Pratt, Stainslav Struthers, Genesis Rialmo, Tessa Gorchesky (taking photo), Ian Joshua Shabert, Angelica Brown, Nicolas Estrada.



# Campus Beat

## Student Activities & Events



Argo Intramural Volleyball 2023.



Let the games begin.



Champs.

## Senior Sendoff at Newberry



Senior Concert Night at the Newberry.



MaryMargaret Pratt, Ashley Gooman, Jocelyn Figueredo, Joji Miner-Ho, Dr. Joel Bluml and Ian Bechtel

## Commencement



Ric Oberholz receives the Manus Dei Award, Hand of God, is the highest honor at the University of Providence.



Brookiyn Harn celebrates her success!

# Campus Beat

## Senior Outstanding Student Award Dinner



Ariel Van Daele (R) receives the Outstanding Student Award in Forensic Science awarded by Mykal Gernaat (L).



Senior and Student Government President, Taylor Ward, delivers the Student Government President Address.



Dr. Mary Amick (L) awards the Outstanding Student Award in Healthcare Administration to Caroline Coraggio (R).

## UP in Bloom 2023



University of Providence hosted a social event on campus to celebrate the many supporters of the university for its 90th year anniversary. Guests included alumni, donors, faculty, staff, Board members, Great Falls leaders, and business owners.



## Calendar

- July 15, 2023 • Hall of Fame Nominations Due
- July 31, 2023 • Hall of Fame Nomination Questionnaires Due
- August 1, 2023 • Hall of Fame Selection Process Begins
- August 1, 2023 • UP Day at the Montana State Fair
- August 15, 2023 • Chamber Business-4-Breakfast in UC, 7am-9am
- August 17, 2023 • UP will sponsor the Montana Multicultural Fair
- August 19-23, 2023 • New Student Orientation
- Mid August 2023 • Hall of Fame Nominee Notifications
- August 22, 2023 • Convocation
- August 22/23, 2023 • UP Night at the Voyagers
- August 28, 2023 • Classes for the Fall semester begin
- August 30, 2023 • Mass of the Holy Spirit
- September 21, 2023 • Great Falls Chamber Anniversary Celebration
- October 5-8, 2023 • Argo Weekend
- October 19, 2023 • Chamber Business After Hours in UC, 4pm-6pm
- January 8, 2024 • Classes for the Spring semester begin



# University of Providence Board Members



**Carol Bronson**



**Dexter Busby**



**Chris Christiaens, '62**



**Maria J. Christiaens, '85**



**Edward F. Coghlan, '72**  
Advancement  
Committee Chair



**Terry Cosgrove, '69**  
Board Chair  
Executive Committee Chair



**Fr. Oliver J. Doyle**  
UP President



**Bishop Jeffrey M. Fleming**  
Coadjutor Bishop  
Ex-Officio



**Bryan Fox, '85**



**Tom Heir**  
Board Vice Chair  
Finance Committee Chair



**Michelle Hill**  
Faculty Representative



**Eric Hinebauch, '11**



**Brad Livingston, '90**



**Sr. Rosaile Locati, SP**



**Elizabeth A. McGregor**



**Tom Moore**  
GFPS Superintendent  
Ex-Officio



**Sheryl Vacca**  
Audit & Risk Chair



**Stuart VanHorn '82**



**Bishop Michael Warfel**  
Great Falls-Billings Bishop  
Ex-Officio



**Rose Whitney**  
Providence Liaison



**Roger Witt (Emeritus)**



**Curtis Yarlott**



**Cari Yturri, '21**  
Mission Committee Chair



# TRADITIONAL BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING

The University of Providence's traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program (BSN) is a four-year, on-campus nursing program designed to prepare students for a career in nursing. The traditional BSN program immerses students in a didactic learning experience through a foundational education in liberal arts, curated nursing courses, and enhanced skills training through a new state-of-the-art, on-campus simulation lab designed to elevate nursing students' clinical nursing skills.

## ON-CAMPUS LEARNING

Experience the benefits of on-campus learning with fully in-person lectures, labs and simulations taught by UP's dedicated faculty and experienced nurse clinicians.

## TRADITIONAL COLLEGE PATH

Grow personally, professionally, and spiritually with a four-year degree. Get to know yourself and others better with four years of learning and exploring campus.

