

PROVIDENCE FORUM

UNIVERSITY OF PROVIDENCE MAGAZINE

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HEALING HEARTS EMPOWERING MINDS

Sisters of Providence's Enduring
Impact on Healthcare Education

CRACKING CASES, SHAPING FUTURES

UP's Forensic Science Triumphs

SISTER RITA MUDD

A Timeless Legacy Unveiled

NAVIGATING THE SIDELINES

New Head Coach, J.C. Isakson



As a Sister of Providence and Professor of Art, Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, SP, served the University of Providence for nearly 33 years. Today, her art remains most visible at the Trinitas Chapel at the University of Providence and the Galerie Trinitas Art Museum, which exhibits her most precious works.



Photo By Eric Visocan

The collage of the stained-glass panels comes from the Via Matris window series by Sister Mary Trinitas. The original windows are located in the cloister hall of the University of Providence's Trinitas Chapel.

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By Father Oliver J. Doyle

During the last few weeks of 2023, universities garnered significant attention in national headlines. I speculate that this surge of interest wasn't met with unmitigated delight by university stakeholders – leaders, faculty, staff, alumni, or students. Nonetheless, it presented us with an opportunity to reflect on the university's purpose and potential, and for this, we should be grateful.

Numerous metaphors strive to capture what a university represents or endeavors to portray, and the profound impact a college experience has on its community. We often compare the college experience to a rollercoaster, an ivory tower, a marathon rather than a sprint, a melting pot, a training ground, a laboratory, and a garden, among other comparisons.

While these images have merit, I'm uncertain if they truly ignite the imagination or capture what a faith-based university should look like. To find this vision, we must look elsewhere.

Expressing his vision of church, Pope Francis characterized it as a field hospital, stating, "I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as the field hospital after battle. ... The mission of the church is to heal wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is Father."

Our health science programs strongly focus on healing and tending to wounds, much like the ethos of a field hospital. Here at UP, we are privileged to have dedicated staff, faculty, and students who offer exceptional support and guidance in nurturing ministries of healing.

Yet, I believe Francis' challenge beckons us toward a profound shift in our understanding of what being a university shaped by faith is like.

Our Providence tradition and heritage already offer insights into what this might resemble for us.

"Lumen de Lumine," meaning light from light, a motto from the college founders, implies that wisdom and truth reside not solely in the professionally enlightened, but in all.

As we pledge to "serve the underserved," we envision a space where teachers become learners and learners become teachers. A place where apprentices share their experiences and the experienced become apprentices. A place where followers become leaders and leaders are guided by those they lead.

Such an unconventional setting would certainly be unique. Still, it would help in fulfilling Francis' vision of a university that heals wounds, warms hearts, welcomes all, liberates individuals, and fosters forgiveness.

We, at UP, attempt, albeit imperfectly, to pursue this vision. As Cardinal Robert Elroy of San Diego recently emphasized, "The present calls us to look to the future and engage the young, the marginalized, the alienated with special fervor." Never being content to be elitist, "or recede into being a smaller, purer institution that is unwilling to risk grappling with the world in the light of Gospel."

On behalf of everyone at UP who strives daily to be a 'field hospital' for our students, I express heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing financial, emotional, and spiritual support. Your generosity is deeply valued, and we humbly ask for your continued support.

Fr. Oliver J. Doyle



Continuing the Legacy of the Sisters of Providence UP's School of Health Professions Programs

By Holly Matkin | Photos Provided By The University of Providence

The newly established community of Great Falls was less than a decade old when 39-year-old Mother Mary Julian and four Catholic sisters were sent to the fledgling frontier town by their Mother House in Montreal in the fall of 1892, following the main mission/voyage of Mother Joseph. Montana had become a state just three years earlier, and the area was still generally devoid of the many basic elements found in more settled regions.

Perhaps most notably, the growing community was in dire need of health care.

The harsh winter months were closing in quickly as Mother Mary Julian and the young sisters – all of whom were in their early to mid-twenties – arrived in Great Falls to undertake the formidable task of establishing the town's infirmary.

The 30-by-60-foot, wood-framed structure was unfinished and still under construction when the town's new medical team first set eyes upon it. Despite dismal resources and a lack of supplies, they took on their first patient before the infirmary even had the opportunity to formally open its doors to the community.

"Those who have had the happy experience of starting a mission will easily imagine our situation," a report penned at the time by the

sisters' official chronicler reads. "We had a need of everything, and we had nothing."

If the sisters were daunted by the seemingly insurmountable challenges they faced, they devoted no notable time to dwelling on their own hardships. Instead, they chopped ice off barrels to gather drinking water for their patients, then bundled up and hit the streets, going door-to-door to beg local residents for the supplies they desperately needed to get the infirmary off the ground.

Their tenacity paid off. The church and townspeople rallied around them in the weeks and months that followed, making donations substantial enough to enable the sisters to make 49 calls to the sick, serve 170 meals, and tend to 39 infirmary patients during their first year in town.

Two years later, in 1894, the number of infirmary patients they served soared to 428. The Sisters of Providence founded the Columbus School of Nursing the same year, establishing the first nursing school in the state of Montana while also ushering in an era of education, service, and innovative tools and technologies for subsequent generations of healthcare workers.

Students work together to hone their skills.





Medical Assistant Program Instructor Michelle Albin (right) oversees a classroom project.

The Inception of the University of Providence

The College of Great Falls was established in 1932 with the intention of enabling women from Eastern Montana to receive a Catholic higher education. The junior college was a collaborative effort between the Sisters of Providence and the Order of Saint Ursula, under the direction of the Diocese of Great Falls.

The school became coeducational by 1937 and began offering baccalaureate degrees to its students and Columbus School of Nursing students the following year. When the Ursuline Order withdrew from the college in 1942, the Diocese of Great Falls handed over full sponsorship of the College of Great Falls to the Sisters of Providence.

The sisters soon purchased a section of land south of Great Falls and began plans to construct a new \$3 million, 11-building campus at the site. The project was completed by the fall of 1960, at which point the College of Great Falls formally relocated from the Columbus Hospital to its present-day home.

As the campus expanded, evolved, and flourished in the decades that followed, so did the curriculums, technologies, and educational opportunities the university offered to its students. And while much has changed since Mother Mary Julian and the four Catholic sisters first set foot in Great Falls more than 130 years ago, their core values and dedication to service have continued as the very lifeblood of the University of Providence we know today.

School of Health Professions Overview

The University of Providence's School of Health Professions is a quintessential blend of the university's deep heritage of service and commitment and its forward-focused dedication to equipping students with the skills and tools they need to excel in the healthcare field.

The School of Health Professions provides students with a comprehensive education and an array of degree programs in the healthcare field. The Division of Nursing offers five nursing degree programs, while the Division of Health Professions offers degrees and certifications in ten allied health and advanced health programs. Each of these highly in-demand programs leads to an amazing career opportunity in the healthcare industry. The healthcare industry is the largest industry in the United States, offering a wide range of career opportunities for skilled professionals. By completing one of these programs, students are well-positioned for future success in these dynamic and rewarding fields.



Hands-on learning is central to School of Health Professions programs.



Professor Courtney Moline, MSN, RN, (left) coordinates the program's clinical site in Lewistown.



Monitoring blood pressure and vitals.

Students who graduate from programs in these fields of study often go on to work as, medical assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, or pharmacy technicians. Others launch careers in research, clinical counseling and mental health, health justice, informatics, population and community health, or take on leadership roles in healthcare administration and hospital management.

"The School of Health Professions at the University of Providence offers exceptional education and training to aspiring healthcare professionals," says Dr. Joseph Cameron, Dean of the School of Health Professions. "With a strong commitment to delivering top-notch programs and state-of-the-art facilities, we successfully equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to excel in their chosen career path."

The curriculum was created with a strong focus on the dynamic healthcare needs of both local and global communities.

"The School of Health Professions boasts a unique vision and stands out as a leader in the field of healthcare education," Dr. Cameron says. "Our programs are meticulously crafted to align seamlessly with the prevailing healthcare priorities of the region. Our esteemed graduates exhibit the essential aptitude to collaborate with a diverse array of healthcare professionals, thereby rendering invaluable contributions to the delivery of today's exceptional care model."

Expanding the Definition of a Classroom

A wide variety of motivating factors impact each student's decision on which educational path is best for his or her needs, and not all journeys will mirror one another.



Dr. Joseph Cameron, Dean of Health Professions.

Photo By Eric Visocan

"Some students tell me that becoming a nurse is their way out of poverty and is the way to provide a living for their families," says Dr. Andrea Houser, the university's Associate Dean of Nursing.

Dr. Cameron recalls having spoken with students who shared that their goal was to save lives and that healthcare was their calling. Others said they wanted a career that allowed them to advocate for the well-being and mental health of the underserved.



Dr. Frankie Lyons, Associate Dean of Health Programs.

"Many are drawn to the Catholic mission and the name 'University of Providence' as a sister ministry," adds Dr. Frankie Lyons, Associate Dean of Health Professions. "Others want to enter a clinical practice. Many times, I hear that a family member was sick, and the student became inspired to enter practice after their experiences with the sick loved one."

While some students complete their coursework on campus, others attend online or through a hybrid model.



Dr. Andrea Houser, Associate Dean of Nursing.

"Our nursing programs are not just localized to Montana," Dr. Houser explains. "Our faculty are located all over the country. Nursing students are also located in various locations participating in online course work."

Dr. Lyons says these alternatives to the traditional classroom setting also enable the university to reach students who live in rural areas of Montana and beyond.

"We offer online and hybrid courses with weekend labs and clinicals in the students' communities," she notes. "Cohort models are designed to support student success, and semesters are broken into eight-week terms so students mostly focus on one course at a time."

"Our programs are designed with the working adult students' needs in mind," Dr. Lyons adds.

The university has also implemented simulations to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities in a safe manner.

"Healthcare simulation is widely regarded as a best practice in nursing education," Dr. Cameron says. "It offers numerous benefits for both students and faculty members. By simulating real-life scenarios, students can gain practical experience and develop critical thinking skills in a safe and controlled environment. This prepares them for the challenges they may encounter in the field."

Exposing students to simulations also serves to promote patient safety.

"By simulating various clinical situations, students can learn to identify potential risks and take appropriate precautions," Dr. Cameron explains. "This helps them to become safer and more efficient in their practice."

An Eye to the Future, A Nod to the Past

Despite the technology and innovative modalities for learning currently available to students, the tether to the Sisters of Providence's original mission remains ever-present.



A student hits the books after a day of hands-on learning.

"One of the greatest traditions of the University of Providence is its spirit of compassionate service," Dr. Lyons says. "Service forms the living tradition of the Sisters of Providence. Students in the Health Professions model compassionate service and care, especially to the poor and vulnerable in their daily interactions with the community and patients."

Dr. Houser has a very similar take on the concept.

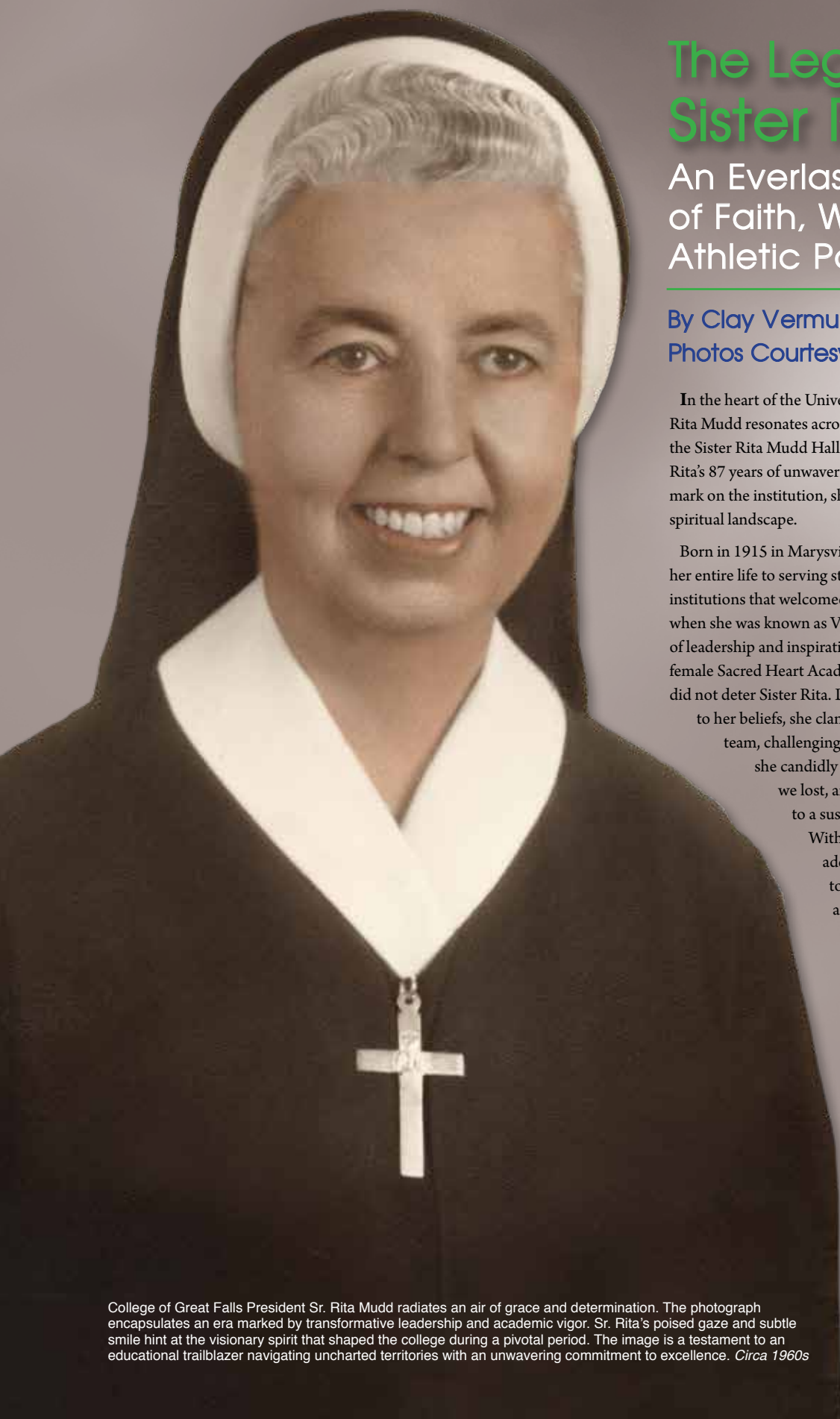
"Caring is the center and heart of the nursing profession," she says. "We continue to impact learners by transferring the caring commitment to the next generation of caregivers."

In addition to building on the past, the university is also making plans for the chapters yet to come.

"We are currently in conversations with Providence Health about the most needed new programs we might consider," Dr. Lyons notes. "Surgical Technology and Medical Imaging are most often mentioned. Strategic plans are still being finalized at this time, but we will be growing!"

Dr. Cameron says the School of Health Professions will continue to expand its current list of program offerings, digital credentials, and workforce certifications.

"We also have plans to increase our offerings in continuing education and dual credit," he adds. 🌿



The Legacy of Sister Rita Mudd

An Everlasting Tapestry of Faith, Wisdom, and Athletic Passion

By Clay Vermulm

Photos Courtesy of Providence Archives

In the heart of the University of Providence, the name Sister Rita Mudd resonates across campus and through the walls of the Sister Rita Mudd Hall. Beyond a mere namesake, Sister Rita's 87 years of unwavering dedication have left an indelible mark on the institution, shaping its educational, athletic, and spiritual landscape.

Born in 1915 in Marysville, Washington, Sister Rita dedicated her entire life to serving students and the fortunate educational institutions that welcomed her expertise. Even in her student days, when she was known as Vera Ellen Mudd, she stood as a beacon of leadership and inspiration among her peers. Attending the all-female Sacred Heart Academy, an institution without sports teams, did not deter Sister Rita. Displaying a steadfast commitment to her beliefs, she clandestinely organized a club basketball team, challenging the norm. In a 1999 Missoulian article, she candidly recounted the consequences: "Well, we lost, and it made the papers," she said, leading to a suspension from school for several days.

With a resilient spirit, Sister Rita humorously added, "Of course, I joined the convent not too long after, so they forgave me!" This anecdote encapsulates her distinctive personality and optimistic outlook on life.

Jack Mudd, Sister Rita's nephew, reflects on her vibrant personality, saying, "She always had such a wonderful sense of humor and personality. She and my father had a wonderful sibling rivalry that lasted throughout their entire lives." This competitive drive, coupled with warmth and humor, defined Sister Rita's impactful life, touching the lives of many.

Embarking on an illustrious journey, Sister Rita gracefully wore the hats of both teacher and administrator throughout her vibrant life. From the corridors of

College of Great Falls President Sr. Rita Mudd radiates an air of grace and determination. The photograph encapsulates an era marked by transformative leadership and academic vigor. Sr. Rita's poised gaze and subtle smile hint at the visionary spirit that shaped the college during a pivotal period. The image is a testament to an educational trailblazer navigating uncharted territories with an unwavering commitment to excellence. *Circa 1960s*



In a poignant gathering, Jack Mudd, Sr. Rita's nephew, shares heartfelt memories and anecdotes with the Sisters of Providence in Spokane, WA, painting a vivid canvas of Sr. Rita Mudd's remarkable life. As laughter mingles with reflections, the bonds of family and faith intertwine, creating a narrative that transcends time. In this candid moment, Jack becomes a storyteller, weaving the threads of Sr. Rita's legacy into the rich tapestry of shared recollections, fostering a sense of connection that echoes the enduring impact of a life well-lived.

St. Francis Xavier School in Missoula (1936-38) to the charming halls of St. John Parish School in Colfax (1938-40), she left an indelible mark. The chapters of her story continued at St. Joseph Academy in Sprague (1940-49) and Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula (1949-52, 54-55), where her commitment to education remained steadfast.

Expanding her horizons, Sister Rita left her mark at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Wallace, Idaho (1952-54), before making a significant contribution to the University of Great Falls (1955-57).

Her journey peaked when she took on the role of the third President of the College of Great Falls from 1960 to 1968. The next phase saw her relocation to Washington, DC, in 1969, collaborating with Monsignor Geno Baroni in the Office for Urban Affairs.



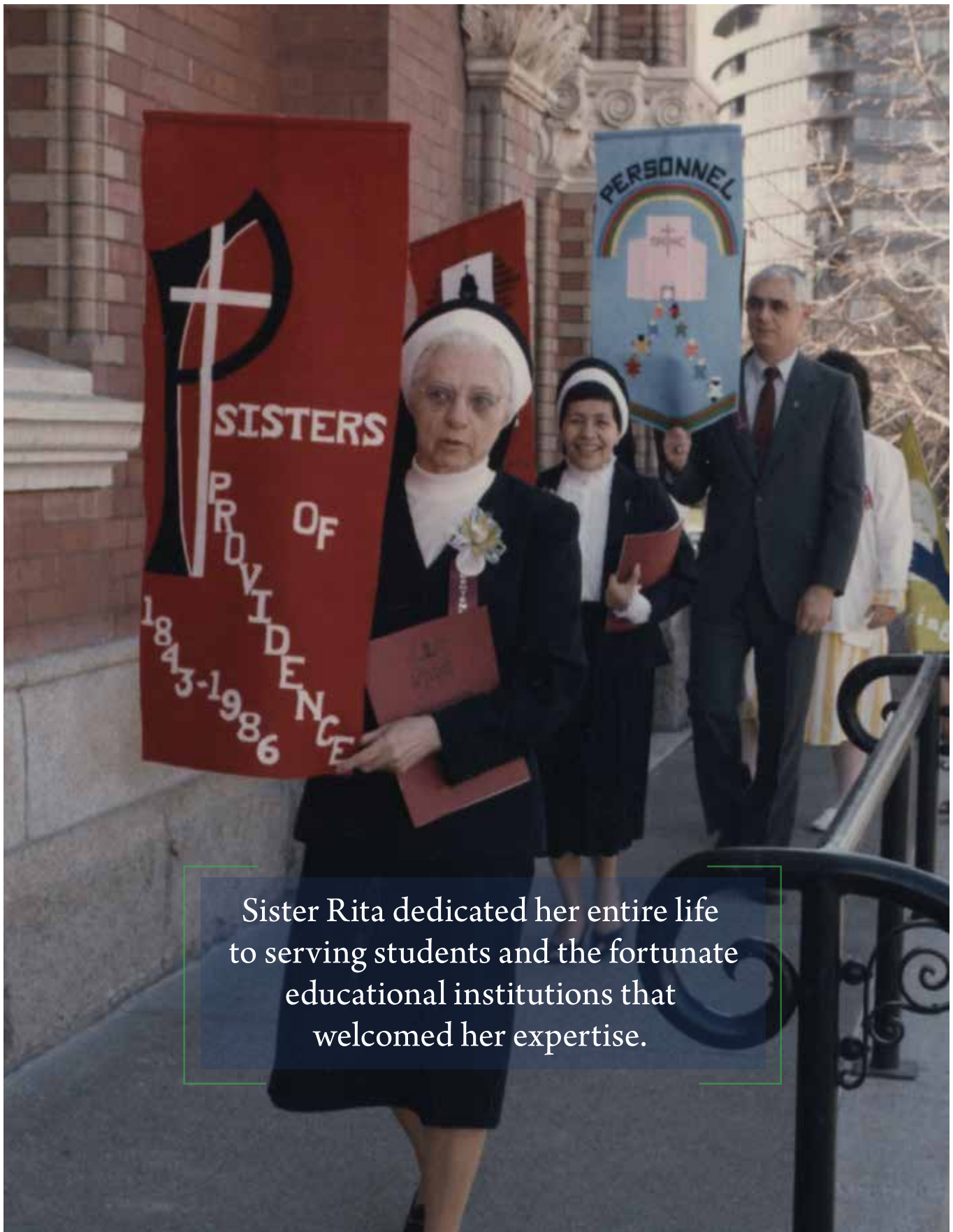
College of Great Falls President Sr. Rita Mudd (seated at far left) orchestrates a scene of academic camaraderie with the vibrant student Sisters of the summer session. Sr. Rita, a guiding force, weaved connections that transcended the formalities of education and fostered a dynamic community of scholars.



Steering the ship of academia with poise and purpose, College of Great Falls President Sr. Rita Mudd leads the room at a President's Council meeting in Great Falls, Montana, circa 1961. As she engages in discussions that shape the educational landscape, her presence stands as a testament to the dynamic spirit propelling the College of Great Falls into a future brimming with educational innovation and forward-thinking vision.

In subsequent years, Sister Rita took on roles like Assistant Director of the Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs in Washington, DC (1971) and Executive Secretary for the National Catechetical Directory sponsored by the US Catholic Conference (1973-1977). Returning to Missoula in 1978, she contributed to Loyola-Sacred Heart High School as Assistant Director of Development, Alumni Director, and Theology Coordinator. Alongside her educational endeavors, Sister Rita extended her influence to the St. Patrick Hospital Foundation Board in Missoula, showcasing her commitment to both education and community service. Her journey, though not flamboyant, painted a picture of dedicated service and quiet excellence.

Sister Rita's most impactful years unfolded during her tenure as the President of the University of Providence, a sentiment echoed by Dr. Steve Webber, who served as student body president during that time. He remarked, "She was always very busy and very involved. She took



Sister Rita dedicated her entire life to serving students and the fortunate educational institutions that welcomed her expertise.

Amidst the open air of Spokane, Washington, circa 1986, Sr. Rita Mudd graces the Sacred Heart Medical Center Centennial mass with her dignified presence. A picture of serenity in motion, she walks in the procession, embodying a century of healing commitment under the vast sky. Each step tells a tale of spirituality and service, blending seamlessly with the natural surroundings as the timeless celebration unfolds.



Having delivered an enlightening speech at the College of Great Falls, John Akar of Sierra Leone engages in a compelling conversation with Sr. Rita Mudd, further enriching the cultural series with their profound insights on global issues and the essence of cross-cultural dialogue.

the College of Great Falls from being in a room at the hospital to being a full-fledged campus that offered a great resource to those who couldn't afford the bigger state schools and private schools."

Dr. Webber highlighted Sister Rita's transformative influence, saying, "She really changed the course of the College with her work, and she made it fun to be here. Most of us were working full-time jobs while we went to school, and while we weren't as big as the state schools, we sure had a great time."

This sentiment resonates through the halls of Providence and the voices of alumni, recognizing Sister Rita's monumental contribution. Her efforts were instrumental in securing a massive donation that enabled the construction of the McLaughlin Center and the revival of collegiate athletic teams on campus.

"She had loved her basketball," mused Jack Mudd. "She attended so many Missoula Loyola games that she was basically their team mascot. There was an interview in the Missoulian a few years back (1999) where the head coach from French Town, Montana, a significant rival to Loyola, said his team not only had to beat their opposing players but also had to compete with The Nun, as well."




In a captivating moment frozen in time, Sr. Rita Mudd (left) and Dorothy Zimny share laughter and stories with the legendary actor Carroll O'Connor at his picturesque home in Missoula, Montana, in 1996. Surrounded by the scenic beauty of Montana, this unlikely trio weaves a tapestry of camaraderie, blending the worlds of spirituality, friendship, and Hollywood charm.

Indeed, Sister Rita's enthusiasm and love for athletics is well documented. She was beloved by the players on her cherished Missoula teams, as was evident in the aforementioned Missoulian article. She said, "When I pray every night, I say, 'Lord, I've been around 85 years, and I don't know what I'll be doing soon. I don't think I'll be in Missoula for my 90th year, but if I have the health, I'd like to see some more games.'" Sister Rita did not make it to her 90th year, but her spirit, love for the game, her students, and the programs she helped create in Missoula and elsewhere will continue to resonate long after her passing.

The University of Providence owes much of its vibrant campus life to Sister Rita's foresight. The 104-acre acquisition she made in 1955 laid the foundation for essential facilities, including sports, theater, music, a chapel, science labs, and a cafeteria. Jack Mudd emphasized Sister Rita's understanding of the importance of curricular activities in student development, saying, "I think that those curricular activities, whether it be sports, music, art, theater—they are absolutely vital to the development of young students, and Sister Rita knew that."



Sister Rita Mudd, an embodiment of grace both in the classroom and on the field, shares a spirited moment with Sacred Heart Academy cheerleaders in this 1990 snapshot—a testament to her unwavering dedication to education and her love for the thrill of sports.

As the University of Providence continues to thrive with a focus on community, small class sizes, and student development, Sister Rita Mudd's enduring influence remains an integral part of its narrative. Her legacy is not just in the buildings that bear her name but in the spirit of faith, education, and athletic enthusiasm that defines the institution she so profoundly shaped. 

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A Heartwarming Presence at the Heart of Learning

Staff Spotlight

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan

In the bustling world of college libraries, where shelves, tables, study rooms, and students often merge into a seamless routine, the University of Providence library stands out as a unique haven for its students. At the core of this welcoming atmosphere is Jean Kronebusch, a seasoned librarian whose career has left an indelible mark on the institution.

"I have been the afternoon and evening librarian for fifteen years," Kronebusch shared. "It has been wonderful. My being the later shift, I get to see all the study halls and different activities in the afternoon when classes and practices are over, and all the students are crowded in here for study."

For Kronebusch, the most rewarding aspect of her job extends beyond day-to-day interactions. It's about witnessing the transformative journey of each student as they progress through their studies, often finding solace in the library in their later years.

"When they come in as freshmen, there are so many opportunities presented by the University to grow into the young adults they are when they graduate," commented Kronebusch. "I love to see that growth through all the study halls and groups that flow through the library on a daily basis."

In Kronebusch's eyes, the mission of the Sisters of Providence unfolds daily through the students she engages with. While many perceive the library as the 'brain' of an educational institution, she sees it as the 'heart.' The vibrant atmosphere and the dedication of students hard at work serve as constant reminders of why she embarked on her career at the school fifteen years ago.

"I had been working outside of Great Falls for a county superintendent," Kronebusch reflected. "I got the opportunity to move into town and start pursuing some other options for work, and I was connected with the school through a friend. I thought, this would be a great way to use my past education degree and be with students."

Recalling an amusing anecdote from her hiring process, Kronebusch remembered a faculty member questioning how her background in elementary education would translate to working with college students. Her response, citing years of teaching in the Shelby prison, led to a collective laugh from the hiring committee. "I think she can handle some college students," they remarked.

"We all got a laugh out of that, but I am glad I had that variety in my teaching experience to really show I was ready to work with any age or type of student."

Kronebusch finds being around young adults incredibly energizing and positive. "You pick up on all the moments they have related to their goals and dreams, and you see them grow into that," she continued. "On top of that, it's just really rewarding to be able to help in any way with that growth and progress. Even if I can only direct someone to the right resource or help organize a study hall, I get to be part of something fantastic and lasting." 🦋

Jean Kronebusch

University of Providence Librarian



A Professor Beyond The Classroom

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan



Entering the upper level of University of Providence's student center, one might expect to witness the usual scenes of students engaged in spirited ping-pong matches. However, what catches many off guard is the sight of Professor Matthew Pietropaoli, a bearded academic, energetically participating in the games and often emerging victorious to the disappointment of his students.

In his year-and-a-half at the University of Providence, Professor Pietropaoli has distinguished himself by extending his teaching beyond the confines of a traditional classroom. He embraces the expansive pedagogical potential of the entire campus, fostering an environment where students not only thrive academically but also actively engage in campus life.

Reflecting on his own undergraduate experiences, Pietropaoli expressed gratitude for a campus culture that valued faculty involvement in student activities. "It was a place where the faculty were very committed to students and student life," he recalled. "I had teachers who were always helping with clubs and outside activities. We would play soccer together or just have interesting conversations; it had an incredibly profound effect on my life, and I think it has certainly influenced how I teach today."

Pietropaoli's teaching style aligns seamlessly with the UP culture. "This school is such a tight-knit community," he remarked. "There are so many chances to build relationships, and each one of those leads to more opportunities and trust in the classroom to have meaningful and productive conversations. I think a lot of that is really just the setting at University of Providence. You see students everywhere, and the student body is small enough that you know them all quickly."

Viewing the campus as a metaphorically larger classroom due to its smaller student body size, Pietropaoli deliberately allows flexibility in his schedule to engage in spontaneous interactions with students that often extend beyond formal class time. His commitment to campus life goes beyond instructional roles; he actively collaborates with staff and faculty, contributing to various committees, leading service trips, coordinating student clubs, and playing a role in service-learning initiatives. In his short time at UP, he has served on three committees, co-led a service immersion trip to Philadelphia, PA, helped coordinate the student Philosophy club, co-coordinated the service-learning educational component on campus, and spent one week during the summer helping with Camp Sky Child. Pietropaoli feels he lives out the mission through his willingness to be involved on campus and outside of it.

"I want to try and get students not only to see that the mission of UP is worth pursuing but to put it into practice myself," Pietropaoli asserted. "The ability to really make oneself of service in a manner that can be life-changing for people is what this mission is all about. I always think of the quote from the Psalms, 'Deep calls to deep.' I think the UP mission allows us as instructors to constantly go deeper and hope students have that same encounter with the true, good, and beautiful in a way that speaks to them as individuals." 🦋

Matt Pietropaoli
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

From Math Maven to Lab Maestro

By Travis Vermulm | Photo By Eric Visocan

Alumni Spotlight

In the heart of the McLaughlin Research Institute, Dr. Moses Leavens meticulously unravels the mysteries of proteins and their profound impact on neurodegenerative diseases. Yet, just beyond the laboratory walls, the University of Providence stands as a silent witness to his transformative higher education journey.

Embarking on this odyssey in 2006 as a math major at the University of Great Falls, fate intervened when the track team's coach departed, altering the course of Leavens' academic trajectory. Chuckling at the twist of destiny, he explains, "When I came back in the Spring of 2008, I realized a lot of the upper-division math classes wouldn't be offered for another few semesters."

Rather than abandoning the math program, Leavens embraced the challenge, ultimately graduating with three degrees, weaving together the threads of mathematics, chemistry, and biology. Reflecting on his time at UGF, he acknowledges the pivotal role of the small class sizes and intimate atmosphere in fostering his academic success.

"The personal environment helped me focus a lot," he notes. "At bigger schools, there can be so many distractions. It was great to be somewhere where I could really focus on my academics and get wired in."


Leavens fondly recalls hours spent in the library and the unwavering support from professors and peers.

"One of my professors told me about the first internship I ever got, and he had connections to help me be accepted," Leavens commented. "Unfortunately, sometimes it is about knowing the right people, and I am thankful I was at a place where those connections were made."

Maintaining ties with the University of Providence, Leavens highlights the impact of one particular professor, Dr. Diane Lund, whose mentorship, letters of recommendation, and connections played a crucial role in his journey. Their paths intersected professionally at Touro University, forming lasting bonds.

While Leavens still cherishes his connections to the University of Providence, his return to Great Falls was motivated by the promising research opportunities at McLaughlin and the desire to be close to family.

"I was at the University of Montana for ten or eleven years for my graduate studies," he reveals. "After that, I started working in Hamilton at a national health lab. My daughter, who is thirteen now, has always been here in Great Falls, so when the position opened at McLaughlin, I knew it was the right place to be."

Dr. Leavens' narrative unfolds as a rich tapestry of education, personal connections, and unyielding dedication. Beyond the confines of academia, his journey is a symphony, resonating with the complexities of neuroscience and leaving an indelible mark on the evolving landscape of research. 



Dr. Moses Leavens's '21
Biomedical Science

THE OLD IN THE NEW

Argo Weekend Returns with Community and Alumni Events

By Travis Vermulm | Photos Courtesy of UP

Early in October, as the weather began transitioning into another season, the University of Providence campus became a bustle of activity. Community members of all ages, CGE, UGF and UP alumni, and students gathered for a weekend of events centered around the return of the old annual tradition of Argo Weekend.



Photo By Eric Visocan

Spearheading the return of this successful event, which took place from October 5th-8th, was UP's Vice President for Advancement, Kylie Carranza. Carranza, an alumnus herself, knew the importance of bringing back the once-popular Argo Weekend and looks forward to it becoming an annual UP staple again.

"The importance of this type of event is really critical for any higher education institution," stated Carranza. "It shows we have a really positive trajectory as an institution. We have a great strategic plan, and a big part of that is making sure our wider community knows they are always a priority."



Doug Hashley and Bill Himmelberg present Judy Van Atta Adams with her 2023 Hall of Fame jacket.

There were many similarities to the Argo Weekends of old in the 2023 planned events. Returning alumni were excited to see the athletic competitions between current students and 'retired' athletes present as they came back to campus. Several friendly alumni vs. current student body games were hosted over the weekend, including basketball, softball, and wrestling.

"It's always a really fun opportunity for those who have graduated to see if they've still got it," continued Carranza. "They get to rejoin the community that was such a big part of their lives even if their competition level has changed."

With the similarities came a few new additions to the Argo Weekend itinerary. Many new events focused on alumni and included UP families, students, staff, and the Great Falls community.



Father Oliver speaks at the 2023 President's Luncheon.

"We really wanted to focus on everyone," Carranza stated. "Not just alumni, but parents, families, and the wider Great Falls community, and make it a community atmosphere reaching beyond the UP family."

The Harvest Family Festival was a new event and very successful. Games and activities were arranged around campus for all ages, along with a beer garden for adults. Student-athletes from the men's and women's wrestling teams ran each game station and alternated out to enjoy the activities themselves.

"It was great to see our students engaging with the kids," Carranza commented. "The more we saw the day progress, the more they went from just helping with the carnival games to actually being excited and participating alongside all the young participants - what powerful memories for those kids!"



Argo students help children with the "Pick a Duck for a Prize" game.



Harvest Family Festival Costume Contest Winners.



Got the chops to win?



Women's Soccer 2023 - Let's Go Argos.



Doug Hashley and Joey Egan recognize 2023 Hall of Fame inductee, Gary Ehnes.

The weekend held many more exciting events beyond sports competitions and carnival games. On Friday, October 6th, there was an alumni kickoff party where UP launched its official beer, the Argonaut Pilsener, brewed locally at the Mighty Mo Brewery. The evening which included appetizers, a bonfire, and s'mores was the social kickoff for the weekend's events.



Karsten Williams enjoys sampling The Argonaut Pilsener at the kick-off party.

The weekend was capped with a very important event on the agenda: return of the Argo Athletics Hall of Fame ceremony that alumni and Argo fans can now look forward to in the coming years.

"On Sunday, we had the Hall of Fame brunch," stated Carranza. "There was a room full of people to see the six inductees, which was amazing. They traveled from all over to be part of that moment for the inductees and their friends and family."



Let's go fishing for a prize!

Gary Ehnes, Ray Ames, Judy Van Atta-Adams, Ross Mosher, Doug Robison, and Kelsey Van Uden were the six former Argonaut athletes and coach inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2023, formally joining a community of incredible competitors who have built the legacy of University of Providence as an athletically competitive institution.



Chase the dream. Seize the win.

As Carranza thought back on the weekend's success, she always returned to the theme of community and just how much an event such as Argo Weekend is never the result of a single person or department.

"This kind of event really takes everybody," she commented. "As we started to discuss and form Argo Weekend, we were thinking about who all the players were that needed to be on board. Really, it came down to everyone. When you think about returning students, you know they want to see their professors, their coaches, their favorite staff members, and all the people who graduated with them and supported them."

As University of Providence continues to pave the way for its future success, its leaders certainly know to find much of the new kept in the heart of the old and in the importance of community. 🦋



Women's Basketball Alumni Game 2023.



Bump, Set, Dominate.



Marin Woomer and Katelyn Marsik, UP Admissions - Become an ARGO Today!



Softball Alumni Game 2023.



Men's Wrestling Exhibition Matches 2023.

Kylie Carranza, Seth Swingley, and Casey Kingsland toast to a shared journey with the newly launched Argonaut Pilsner, a craft beer that embodies the spirit of the University—bringing people back to their roots and fostering connections.



BREWING COMMUNITY

University of Providence's Pilsener Partnership with Mighty Mo Brewing

By Colter Pedersen | Photography By Eric Visocan

Situated in the heart of the community for almost a hundred years, the University of Providence has been a prominent presence. Nevertheless, the institution is currently dedicated to forging an even stronger connection with the local residents. Kylie Carranza, the Vice President of Advancement for the University, emphasizes the objective of integration and aspiring to be a prominent cornerstone within the Great Falls community.

"We've got really competitive athletic teams and great academics. We want to be one of those proud community pillars. We want Great Falls to be associated with the Argos," explains Carranza.

To forge stronger connections, the University turned its gaze to a rather unique collaboration – a partnership with a local brewery. The chosen ally



in this venture is none other than the Mighty Mo Brewing Company, a familiar name in the craft beer scene. Seth Swingley and Casey Kingsland, the co-founders of Mighty Mo, were approached by UP to embark on this collaborative journey.

"We have had a million organizations approach us and say 'hey, let's do a beer just for us,' and it's just so hard to do," remarks Seth Swingley. "But we thought this would be a good partnership to work on and figure out how to do it, and it worked out."

The idea was to create a craft beer that not only represented the University but also appealed to a broad audience. According to Carranza, sharing a cold beverage holds a special place for many, acting as a tool to bring people back to their roots and connect them to the University.



Friends of University of Providence share in the inaugural tasting of the Argonaut Pilsener during an unveiling party at the Mighty Mo.

Casey Kingsland, Brewmaster at Mighty Mo, took charge of crafting the beer's flavor profile. "We wanted something that was light and easy drinking, something that you could drink year round and something that would appeal to the masses," explains Kingsland. The result is the Argonaut Pilsener, a Pilsener-style lager with a crisp and clean taste, featuring a blend of German Noble Hops and Motueka Hops from New Zealand, adding a touch of lime zest and character.

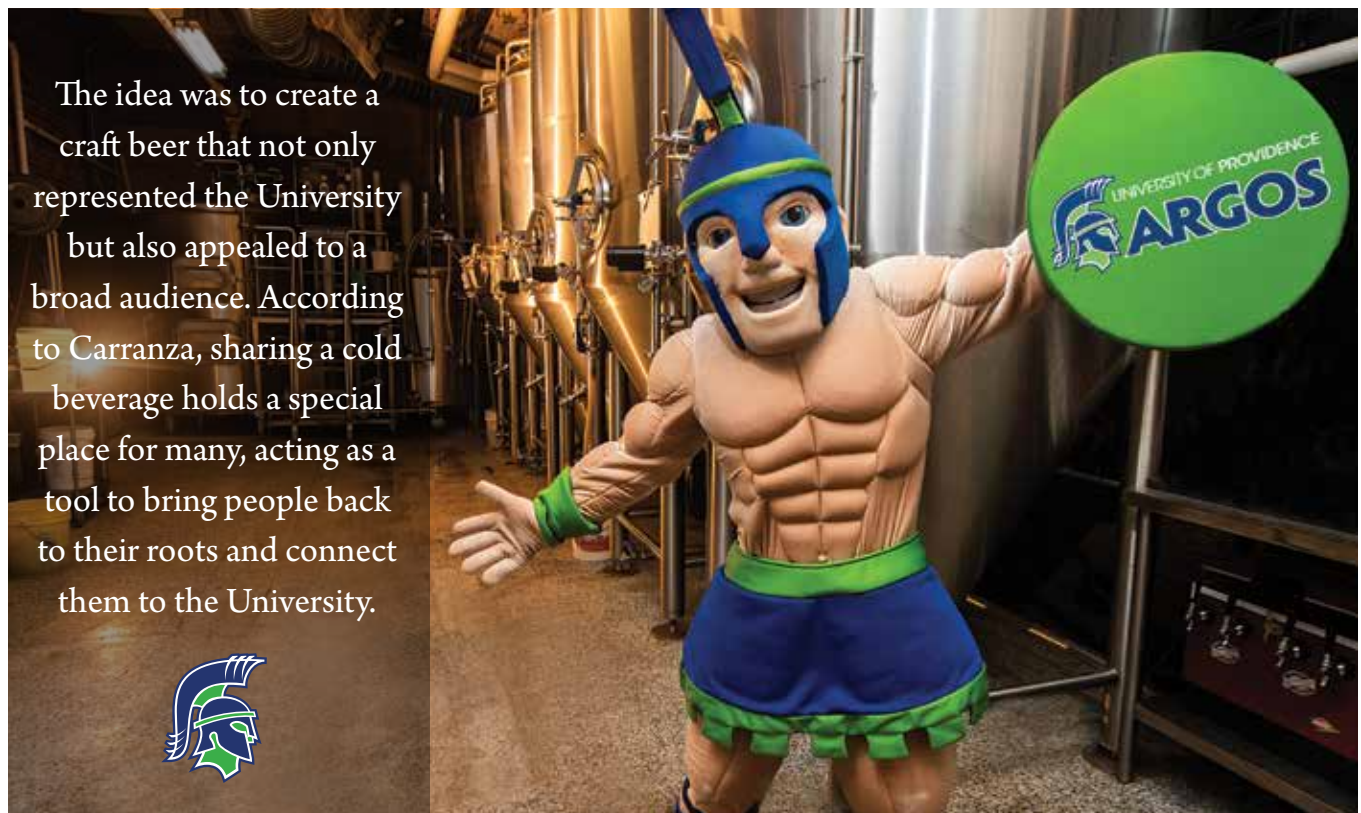
Currently boasting a 5.5% ABV and 21 IBUs, The Argonaut Pilsener has quickly become a favorite at the Mighty Mo taproom, securing a spot among the top 4 best sellers. "It's just a really easy drinking craft beer," notes Swingley.



The beer is now available in about half a dozen locations around town and is a regular staple at most University of Providence events. Carranza expresses the ambition to broaden their reach, ensuring that the Argos become a recognizable presence throughout the Electric City.

"Our strategy is to make sure that when anybody goes out into Great Falls, you are starting to see the Argos, whether that's through beer or gear," states Carranza. "Our goal is to be in the community."

In this collaboration, the University of Providence and Mighty Mo Brewing Company aren't just crafting beer; they are brewing a stronger sense of community in every pour. 🏈



The idea was to create a craft beer that not only represented the University but also appealed to a broad audience. According to Carranza, sharing a cold beverage holds a special place for many, acting as a tool to bring people back to their roots and connect them to the University.



The venerable Argo mascot from the University of Providence strikes a pose against the backdrop of the formidable brewing vats at the esteemed Mighty Mo Brew Company.

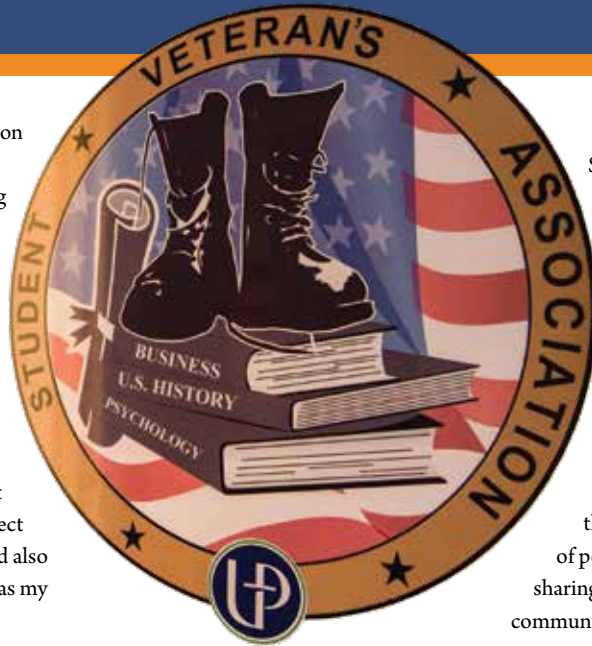
VETERANS' CENTER

Grand Reopening Honoring Our Campus Lifelong Learners

By Heather Bode | Photography By Eric Visocan

Never stop learning. It is a common expression that sounds cliché because the phrase has truth in it. But this drive for lifelong learning is a classic example that has made the Veterans' Center Grand Reopening a reality.

Dr. Deanna Koepke, Associate Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of University-Military Relations, says, "For a long time, I had been interested in learning how to apply for grant money. One of my faculty colleagues offered a grant writing class. So, I thought this was the perfect opportunity to learn how to write grants and also find money for the Veterans' Center. This was my class project."



The Veterans' Center, located inside Sullivan Hall, is a designated space where Veteran students and those making use of the GI Bill can gather. The Veterans' Center consists of two rooms: one smaller room for studying and a larger community space. Having these students attend the University is important. Koepke says, "We hear a lot of people talk about the importance of the military to Great Falls. In addition to what they add to the economy, it's just having the vitality of people from different areas being here and sharing their lives with Great Falls. It makes our community so diverse. We feel the same way



Photo Courtesy of UP

Dr. Joel Bluml addresses the group with Rod Johanson, José Garrigó, and Father Oliver looking on.



Photo Courtesy of UP

The large community space features top quality furnishings from Southwest Contract in Temple, TX.



In searching for grant opportunities, Dr. Deanna Koepke says, "I found the Town Pump Charitable Foundation website. Their focus on the military, education, and community was a perfect match because we combine educational opportunities for the military to create a community at our university."

at the University. It is also good to have students with different life experiences in the classroom because it makes a much richer discussion no matter what subject you are talking about."

The University of Providence realizes the path for military students is unique. They truly are lifelong learners. There are different methods of payment and different schedules, plus the transition from military life to classroom life can be challenging. "We recognize that's something we want to help them bridge," says Koepke, "We want the military students to know how excited we are to have them here!"

Koepke calls the remodeling of the Veterans' Center a "refresh." With the \$7,000 grant awarded from the Town Pump Charitable Foundation, Koepke worked with Brittany Budeski, Chief Operating Officer, and Chet Pietrykowski, Director of Physical Plant, to maximize the money. "The goal was to make it a much more inviting space. Working with an intentional plan, the furniture, décor, and organization is all cohesive now."

On November 10th, the day before Veterans' Day, the University held a Grand Reopening of the Veterans' Center. University of Providence board members, senior leadership, and veteran students were all invited. Campus Minister, Katie Steinke, delivered a blessing of the space and Father Oliver also spoke.

Other speakers that day included Dr. Joel Bluml, Vice President of Student Engagement and Athletics, and Greg Johnson, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

In closing, Koepke reiterates, "The University of Providence benefits so much from the veterans serving in the first place. Then they become our students. Having this place set aside for them is just a downpayment on showing our appreciation to them." 🇺🇸



Seals representing the branches of the armed forces were re-used from the previous space. But now they hold a place of prominence.

EDUCATION AT WORK

Career Services Sets Students on Path To Success

By Holly Matkin | Photography By Eric Visocan

When first-generation college student Grace McKerrow initially met with the University of Providence Career Services office as a freshman just over one year ago, she had no idea she was embarking on a journey rife with opportunity and self-discovery.

What the forensic psychology major did know was that she needed money and that the tools and resources available through the university's Career Services were potentially her ticket to earning a paycheck. Grace was also aware that campus life was far outside her comfort zone. While her family supported her drive and ambition, she had taken on a challenge they had never personally experienced, and they could not offer her the guidance and reassurance she needed at the time.

"My family is super excited about my education," the Great Falls native explains. "I live with my mom and nana, and they are my biggest supporters and are always very proud of me. But it is also really hard being a first-generation student."

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Grace set aside her apprehension and reached out to the Career Services office. She soon found herself in front of program director Rodney Johanson, speaking about her abilities, goals, and plans for the future.

The more they chatted, the more Rodney was able to hone in on which job opportunities had the potential to provide Grace with a forum where she could soar.

"We have a very robust student employment program," he says. "We leverage students' strengths and provide them with resources to explore, pursue, and achieve their career goals. When you look at student employment, you consider their talents and figure out what best fits their natural gifts."

Like all UP students seeking to land a campus job, Grace went through the entire application, interview, and hiring process with the help and guidance of Career Services staff. Before long, she found herself tasked with reorganizing and restructuring the university's Dress for Success boutique – an on-campus shop where students come to find professional attire for job interviews, meetings, office settings, and other special occasions.

The gently-used clothing and accessories featured at the shop are available to students at no charge.

"Alums, faculty, staff – people have been really generous," Rodney says of the inventory. "Some of the items still have tags on them. We have clothing, watches, shoes, jewelry, purses, and it is all arranged in a glass room with window-front space where students can see it all day."





L-R: Rodney Johanson, Grace McKerrrow, and Tarel Rollins-Olson pictured at the ABC Tuesday booth amid the bustling atmosphere of the 'Argo Build a Career Tuesday' affair. The event, orchestrated to connect students with coveted internships and job prospects, plays host to a diverse array of companies and local businesses. This gathering marks a pivotal moment in fostering career pathways on campus.

STYLE UP

Grace used her digital art talents and collaborated with student employees on the university's marketing team to update and rebrand the boutique in a way that reflects the energy and style of the current campus community.

"Grace met with marketing, and they came up with Style UP," Rodney says. "The collaboration really exemplified what can happen when students work together and get to design it all out themselves. They build their skills by practicing them."


"She also has great design talent, so we commissioned her to design our logos," he added. "She's made about 20 different prototypes, six or seven of which we use predominantly."

Grace's vibrant designs are all over campus, adorning t-shirts, buttons, sunglasses, hats, pens, stickers, and a variety of other UP swag. "My logos are on just about everything," Grace laughs.

In addition to having opportunities to exercise her creative freedom, Grace also enjoys interacting with students at Career Services events and at the Style UP boutique.

"I'm able to teach color theory to other students and help them learn how to style themselves based on their goals and what they're trying to achieve," she explains. "Job interviews, a date, whatever important thing they have going on, I get to help them feel good in what they're wearing." She's also become far more active in campus life and no longer feels like she is operating outside her comfort zone.

"It is important to find ways to be involved and interact with your peers, not only for your future career, but just to get through college in general," Grace says. "You spend so much time at school, you have to find a family there."

She says the impact her work has had on the university community has been empowering. "It gives me the confidence to keep doing what I want to do," she explains. "It has enabled me to realize that helping students, in small ways, can make a big difference, and that the things I do now can affect my future and others' futures later on." 

University of Providence Students Present at the Prestigious MURDOCK CONFERENCE

Takeaways and Testimonials from Attending Students and Faculty

By Clay Vermulm | Photography Provided

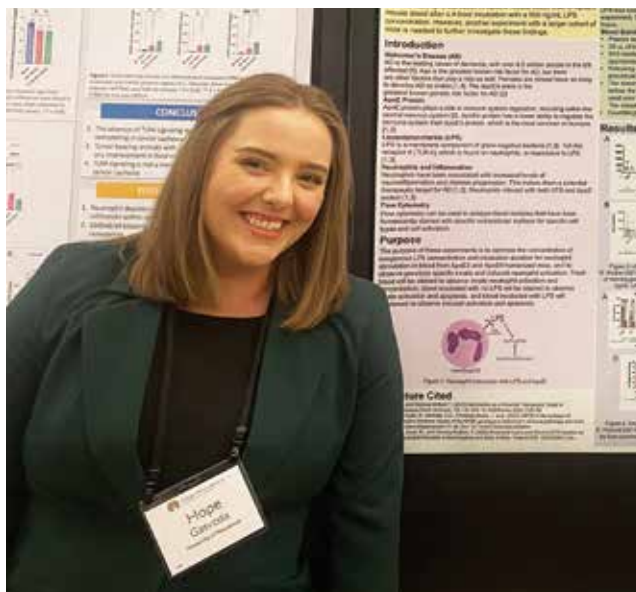
Each fall, the Murdock Trust and a different Northwest private college or university co-host a research conference associated with the Murdock College Science Research Program. The conference focuses on sharing and advancing new knowledge in the natural sciences created or discovered through collaborative faculty-student research.

The University of Providence has a long and positive relationship with the Murdock Trust despite a brief hiatus from attending the conference in 2020 due to Covid-19. Since then, Kylie Carranza (vice president for advancement for UP) and Moses Lee (Vice President of scientific research grants and programming at the Murdock Trust) have put in great effort to revitalize the mutually beneficial relationship between the Trust and the University.



Photo By Eric Visocan

Mykal Gernaat, Head of the UP Forensics Program, emphasizes the crucial connection between students and professionals attending the Murdock Conference. As a mentor to Hope Gasvoda, Gernaat highlights the pivotal role of immersive presentations for aspiring medical school students.



Hope Gasvoda, senior at the University of Providence and research assistant at Hensley-McBain Lab, stands in front of her research presentation materials at the Murdock Conference.

"We, as a University, are trying to be very strategic about our partnerships moving forward, and the Murdock Trust is one of those partnerships that we hold in the highest regard," Carranza stated. "They've supported us financially in scientific research development for years, and this conference is an amazing opportunity for both our students and faculty who attend."

This opportunity has proven valuable to UP students and faculty alike. "It's a great opportunity for students to connect with professionals who understand their research," said Mykal Gernaat, head of the UP forensics program. "My role when I went was as a mentor to Hope Gasvoda. She was aiming to get that intense conference presentation experience, and it was a wonderful opportunity for that. It will also look great on her application to medical school."

"I think this conference is a really good opportunity for people who are doing research, but also for college students in general. It's very

empowering to see people our age conducting this type of research,” said Hope Gasvoda, a senior at the University of Providence and student research assistant at the Hensley-McBain Lab at McLaughlin Research Institute. After graduation from Providence, Hope has aspirations to continue to medical school in pursuit of a forensics pathologist degree, and she already has a great start on doing high-level research with the Hensley-McBain Lab.

“In our lab, we study Alzheimer’s Disease and the connection to ApoE genotype. There has also been found to be a connection between the immune system and Alzheimer’s Disease, so we are investigating the differences in immune response between the ApoE genotypes.” Gasvoda presented this research at the Murdock conference and was very well received by judges and peers alike. She continues that work



Paul Yount, UP Alumni and DNA analyst for Phoenix PD, presented his research on bloodstain pattern analysis at a Murdock conference in Vancouver. The experience opened doors for networking and culminated in the publication of his research in the *Intermountain Journal of the Sciences*.

today in her role as a student research assistant. “Now that we are narrowing down these aspects of the experiments, we will be able to use the newly improved procedures in the future to investigate genotype-specific differences in neutrophil expression more thoroughly,” adds Gasvoda.

Paul Yount, a UP Alumni and current DNA analyst for the City of Phoenix Police Department in Arizona, presented at the conference a few years ago.

“My research was titled Evaluating the Accuracy of Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Using Hemodynamic Factors, and I presented this at the Murdock research symposium as a poster presentation. That year, Professor Diane Lund drove with me all the way to the airport before we flew to Vancouver, Washington. The roads were icy, but she was committed to getting me there. I got to present alongside many intelligent and highly educated students and network among individuals offering jobs or recruiting students for PhD programs. It was a great experience.”

Paul would later publish his research from the conference in the *Intermountain Journal of the Sciences*. If you’d like to read that paper, you can do so at this link: <https://arc.lib.montana.edu/ojs/index.php/IJS/issue/view/45>

“I definitely feel like I’m more prepared for future presentations, thanks to this conference. There are so many different levels of understanding that you have to speak to, but I think the most important thing is to remember that you, as the presenter, know your research best,” Hope elaborated when asked about her most significant takeaway from the conference.

Aside from being great practice for the work and skills required to present and defend research, conferences are great opportunities for networking with peers and establishing connections for future careers and higher education. The Murdock Conference has proven to be a valuable asset to University of Providence and its students, and they look forward to seeing this partnership grow and flourish in the future. 🌱



Capturing moments of intellectual synergy at the Murdock College Science Research Conference, where the pursuit of new knowledge in the natural sciences takes center stage. An exclusive gathering of collaborative faculty-student research, this invitation-only event celebrates speakers and honors outstanding research programs from across the northwest region.

GAME CHANGER

J.C. Isakson's Slam Dunk Debut at the Helm of Providence's Men's Basketball Program

By Travis Vermulm | Photography By Eric Visocan

In a recent interview with J.C. Isakson, the excitement in his voice is palpable as he reflects on the first 13 games of his inaugural season as a head coach. Speaking with Providence Forum, Isakson, who led his team to a 6-6 record before heading into Christmas Break, shares insights into the unique challenges and triumphs of transitioning from assistant coach to the helm of University of Providence's Men's basketball program.

"We have started this year playing everyone, from the defending national champions to the number 5 ranked team in the nation, and, in all that, have come away with some great wins," commented Isakson.

Isakson's coaching journey began at the University of Providence in 2018, where he served as an assistant coach for the men's basketball team. After two seasons with the men's team and a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic, he returned as an assistant coach for the women's team for two additional years. However, in the spring of 2023, Isakson was granted the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream.

"Becoming a head coach has been a goal of mine for the majority of my life," Isakson expressed.

While Isakson always approached his assistant coaching role with the mindset of a head coach, he acknowledges the distinct shift that occurs when transitioning to head coach.

"There is a saying that when you slide over those 18 inches from the assistant seat to the head coaching seat, everything changes, and I think that has proven very true," noted Isakson. "I really compare it to running a small business. You have the vision, and you make the final decisions."

Isakson highlights the evolution in relationships with players during this transition and the need to unite the team towards a common goal.

"Your relationships change with the players. A lot of times as an assistant, you get the 'good guy' role, and though you still have to fit that role sometimes as a head coach, often you have to focus on making the whole team see the goal ahead and know where they fit in that goal," he explained.

As he steps into his inaugural head coaching role, University of Providence Men's Basketball Coach JC Isakson looks forward to leading the Argos this season.



On the sideline, Coach Isakson delivers advice to senior Caleb Currington.



Photo Courtesy of UP

Senior Davien Harris-Williams skillfully outmaneuvers his defender and lays up a bucket for the Argos.

Isakson implemented long-term planning in his first year as head coach, intentionally scheduling challenging opponents at the beginning of the season to ensure his team is prepared for the competition ahead. “I want these guys to be ready for the competition they are going to face. We aren’t going to take easy wins and be less prepared. We are going to make sure we are ready,” emphasized Isakson.

Beyond wins and losses, Isakson stresses a deeper purpose in coaching. “Everyone has a different kind of ministry. This sport and coaching are my ministry,” he said. The coaching staff focuses on helping athletes realize that basketball is a vehicle for life experiences that contribute to their personal growth “and hopefully help form them into good human beings,” adds Coach Isakson.

This coaching philosophy aligns seamlessly with the values of University of Providence, promising a bright outlook for both the institution and its athletes in the future of Isakson’s career. 🏀



Photo Courtesy of UP

Senior Freddy Brown III eyes up the defense before knocking down the three-pointer.



RESURRECTING GLORY

ARGO ATHLETICS IGNITES THE HALL OF FAME TRADITION

By Colter Pedersen | Photography By Paris Bread

If the world of sports teaches us anything, it's that change is the only constant. At the University of Providence, the journey from the College of Great Falls to its current incarnation has been a tale of growth and transformation. This narrative of evolution extends to the athletic programs, with starts, stops, and pauses marking their trajectory. But amidst the shifts, one enduring constant has been the unwavering quality of students and staff.

In 1984, the University established the Hall of Fame to honor those who excelled at the highest level. However, due to a pause in athletic programs, the Hall of Fame lay dormant until 2013 when Bill Himmelberg, the Head Women's Basketball Coach, took up the challenge. The road wasn't without hurdles – a revamp in 2017 and further delays due to Covid – but the spirit remained unbroken.

Enter Dr. Joel Bluml, the Vice President for Student Engagement and Athletics, who, along with Himmelberg and Athletic Director Doug Hashley, reignited the flame for the Hall of Fame. Formalizing the process and seeking nominations from the UP community and alumni, they reinstated the Hall of Fame in collaboration with the UP Advancement Team during Argo Weekend in October 2023, honoring

six exceptional inductees and adding their names to the hallowed ranks of greatness. Gary Ehnes (class of 1996), Ray Ames (class of 2009), Judy Van Atta Adams (class of 1984), Kelsey Van Uden (class of 2013), Ross Mosher (class of 2011), and Doug Robison (class of 1983).

Himmelberg, with the enthusiasm of a coach rallying his team, expressed his commitment to an annual celebration, stating, "Now that we have a good process in place, we expect it to happen every year moving forward." The October ceremony, a triumphant return, laid the foundation for more to come, rekindling the ties between the University and its distinguished alumni.

Amidst the temporal gaps that often separate the inductees, a tapestry of shared narratives weaves its way through their stories. Despite the uniqueness of each individual's journey, common threads emerge—themes of tradition, inclusiveness, the embrace of a familial connection, and a shared aspiration to coach and inspire future coaches resonate time and again. The resonance of these ideals is nothing short of inspiring, showcasing the profound impact of the University on the lives of these remarkable individuals.



DOUG ROBISON

In the echoes of his journey at the College of Great Falls, Doug Robison finds himself immersed in a tapestry of cherished memories. Reflecting on those formative years, Robison speaks with a genuine fondness. "Looking back, it's a cascade of positive memories," he shares. "I received an excellent education, played alongside remarkable basketball teams, and forged enduring connections with coaches and teammates who remain integral to my life. Meeting my wife at the College of Great Falls was the icing on the cake, making those years an unparalleled experience for me."

Graduating in 1983 with a degree in education, Robison embarked on a 40-year journey in the field, teaching across the vast expanse of Montana. "When I left Great Falls, my first teaching job was in Geyser, MT. Then I went to Missoula Loyola for a short period of time, and now, this is my 35th year in Billings public schools."

Basketball has been a linchpin in Doug's life, especially during his junior and senior years at the College of Great Falls. Recalling those formidable teams, he notes, "We had two great teams. We won the Frontier Conference Championship both years. I was fortunate enough to be coached by great coaches, and I was surrounded by great teammates. We had a tremendous amount of talent. We played hard, and we played well together as a team."

A towering figure at 6'7", Doug Robison commanded the court, seamlessly transitioning between the center and forward positions. During his senior year, he left an indelible mark, displaying his prowess with a career-high 20-point game and an impressive five-game streak, where he averaged over 12 points, eight rebounds, and four blocks. Such standout performances rightfully earned him recognition as a Frontier all-conference selection. Transitioning from player to coach, Robison dedicated two decades to molding high school basketball talent at Billings West, amassing an impressive 355 career wins along the way.

Returning to his alma mater for the Hall of Fame ceremony surpassed Robison's expectations. "My wife and I were able to walk through some of our old classrooms and buildings and walk around the campus, reflecting on some of the great memories; it made it a great weekend," he fondly recalls.

Accompanied by his old coach, Steve Aggers, his assistant coach, Fred Schnell, and introduced by teammate Jerry Schmitz, Robison expresses gratitude for the enduring friendships. "He [Jerry Schmitz] and I have remained close personal friends throughout the years, so he was a great choice."

A true testament to his coaching spirit, Doug always redirects the spotlight to others. "I would really like to thank the people who nominated me and those responsible for the weekend itself, the administration and the coaches. It was very well put together, and my wife and I were overwhelmed with the activities," he acknowledges.

Robison acknowledges, "I want to commend Coach Isakson for actively connecting with alumni across the years, ensuring they still feel integral to the program. The anticipation of watching the Argonauts in action this year and beyond is something I eagerly await."



GARY EHNES

To truly grasp the essence of coaching a community, look no further than Gary Ehnes. A native of Great Falls, Ehnes found his coaching calling early in life through the mentorship of Ken Adams. According to Ehnes, "A coach is someone who knows and cares about you ... and he did." Adams, his first coach, recruited him after a memorable incident during tryouts involving a ball and a gopher hole that left Ehnes with a black eye. Undeterred, Ehnes returned the next day, and Adams declared, 'I want that kid!' This marked the commencement of a remarkable 60-year relationship, one that endured until Adams's final moments at the VA hospital, where Ehnes stood by his bedside. For Ehnes, coaching in sports transcends the field – it forges relationships that are not only deep but immensely valuable. The profound bond between coach and athlete, a message he passionately disseminates, remains a cornerstone of Ehnes's coaching philosophy.

For Gary Ehnes, coaching is more than a profession; it's a lifelong commitment to a community. Hailing from Great Falls, Ehnes, a late bloomer in college, found his way back to UGF in 1996 after a 20-year hiatus. His journey, intertwined with the University's resurgence, reflects a deep connection to its success.

Recalling his return in 2004 to start a softball program, Ehnes witnessed the transformation of a struggling institution into a thriving community. The camaraderie among coaches, professors, and visionary leaders like Dr. Eugene McAllister fueled this success. "I had so many wonderful, hardworking coaches and professors. And, of course, we had a visionary leader in Gene McAllister, which, when you put them all together, is the team of a lifetime," reflects Ehnes.

Reflecting on his early years at the University, Ehnes paints a vivid picture of transformation. "When I was first here, you could look across campus any time of day and never see a kid," he recalls. However, by his 5th or 6th year as the softball coach, the scene shifted dramatically. With the ring of the bell, students filled the campus, a tangible sign that a difference was being made in their lives. "We made it! I'm making a difference in these young kids' lives," he triumphantly thought.

During his tenure as the head softball coach at UGF, Ehnes prioritized a philosophy that transcended mere victories. "It was never about winning games, but it was about growing as people," he asserts. He emphasizes the values of responsibility and teamwork, highlighting the inherent lessons in overcoming the fear of failure, particularly poignant in the realm of sports.

Upon relinquishing the reins as head coach, Ehnes faced a crucial decision – entrusting his team to the right successor. His daughter, Joey Egan, answered the call. "I told Joey, you have to feel it. You must want to have these kids and get to know them to make a difference in their lives... and she said, 'OK, I'm doing it,'" Ehnes recounts, underscoring the importance of genuine commitment to coaching.



Former Argo sports stars, joined by loved ones, delight in reuniting and reflecting on their collegiate triumphs at the Hall of Fame Banquet.

The Hall of Fame ceremony became a cherished moment for Ehnes, despite his reluctance towards personal acknowledgments. "I'm a guy that doesn't really like personal acknowledgments, but when I got a chance to talk about the team I was a part of, it was a great vote to me," he confesses. The experience was heightened by the honor of being introduced by President McAllister, a figure he holds in high regard.

While Ehnes achieved success as the athletic director, coaching retained a special place in his heart. "There's a reverence you feel when somebody calls you Coach. It's respect... just when somebody says, 'Hey, Coach!' It's incredible," he reflects, encapsulating the enduring significance of the coaching role in his life.



JUDY VAN ATTA ADAMS

In 1982, after a stint at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, Judy Van Atta Adams made a pivotal move, transferring to the University of Providence (then known as the College of Great Falls). Stepping into a young basketball team without a senior on the roster, Adams found herself surrounded by raw but good talent. "Gosh, we had a lot of talent. Really good girls, just a great group," she fondly recalls. Joining the team fulfilled a childhood dream for Adams. "The College of Great Falls was on my mind since I was a little girl," she says. "My older brother actually played at CGF, so I literally watched him play college basketball; he is quite a few years older. So, when I was little, we used to go to the games, and I would see him play, and it was like, someday I want to do that."

For Adams, being recruited felt like finding her rightful place, both on the court and in the classroom. "I guess that's the whole thing; I really enjoyed the small community," she explains. "You kind of know everybody, and you don't just go to school with young kids; there were adult learners there, and that was a good experience because you get to hear another perspective."

Adams maintains her reign as the all-time leader in career points per game for the Argos, holding a formidable average of 19.7. Her single-season pinnacle sits at an impressive 20.7 points per game. Securing the 10th spot in total points scored with 1,085, Judy's contributions are etched in the annals of UP history. Notably, her inaugural All-American season in 1983-1984 saw her netting 578 points, securing the third-highest position for a single season in UP history.

The Hall of Fame ceremony held a special place in Adams' heart. Reuniting with friends and teammates from her past, she basked in the support of her family, who joined her on the trip. "Wow, was I impressed with what they have done," she expresses. Addressing the current women's team, Adams shared tales of their humble beginnings, driving to games in station wagons that sometimes took ten hours to reach the

destination. “There was no busing, and we didn’t fly anywhere. And the facilities have just changed tremendously. There are just so many great things, and I wanted them to truly understand and appreciate what they have. We didn’t know any better, so I appreciated that I could go to school, be on scholarship, and play basketball. What a great experience,” says Adams.

Her induction into the Hall of Fame was a family affair, with her brother Larry Van Atta and husband Mark doing the honors. “My husband was a former basketball coach at Rocky Mountain College. Basketball has been his life, and he has coached all over, so I thought it was a perfect fit for those two to introduce me,” Judy says.

Bringing back the Hall of Fame meant the world to Adams. She reflects, “It’s just unfortunate because when they stopped the athletics at CGF, which was a year or two after I graduated, I felt like I lost a connection there. I’m just so glad that this whole thing happened. It was a great experience to be honored and reconnecting me with the University.”



RAY AMES

In the realm of hoops, Ray Ames has lived a life defined by passion and a relentless pursuit of excellence. From the courts of Little Rock, Arkansas, to crisscrossing the nation as a player, coach, and now as an NCAA official covering games across the Western Region, basketball has been the driving force for Ames.

Reflecting on his journey, Ames reminisces about his transfer to the University of Providence in 2007, where he delved into the fields of exercise science, kinesiology, and psychology. Success quickly embraced him on the basketball court, but the move to Montana presented a significant challenge. “It was kind of a shell shock getting off the plane and being here — a culture shock as well,” Ames recounts, highlighting the initial adjustments. Yet, the warmth of the University community proved pivotal. “It was good, arriving at a place that you have never been before. I didn’t know a single person here other than my basketball coach,” he adds.

Ames discovered a family atmosphere on campus, forming deep connections with his teammates. “Just the brotherhood that was formed between me and my teammates, you know, a lot of those guys I’m still close with to this day,” he shares. Beyond the team, he commends the inclusive environment for all students, fostering a sense of building something special academically and personally.

His time as an Argonaut was marked by numerous accolades, standing tall as one of 13 Argo basketball players named an NAIA All-American. The 08-09 season saw Ames making history with 622 points, ranking third all-time in Argo Athletics history. He also ranks fifth all-time in single-season rebounds with 264 and eighth in all-time points per game, a 20.7 game average.

Post-graduation, Ames ventured into professional play in Rio de Janeiro before transitioning to coaching, making his mark in Buffalo, New York, and eventually returning to Great Falls. In addition to his basketball endeavors, Ames wears the hat of an independent insurance agent with the Levitt Group.

The pinnacle of recognition came at the Hall of Fame ceremony, where Keithan Greg, both the point guard on his UP team and the best man at his wedding, inducted Ames. “I couldn’t think of a better person to induct me into the Hall of Fame,” he expresses. The moment was surreal, a testament to the hard work invested on and off the court.

Balancing the rigors of officiating games nationwide while catering to local insurance needs, Ames credits his success to a robust support system. “I have a good supporting staff behind me between my job and my family as well, that understands the passion I have for this,” he states. Despite the unexpected turns in his journey from a professional player to an insurance agent, Ames now proudly calls Great Falls home—a place where he’s content to raise his daughters.



The Hall of Fame printed program unveiled a ceremony reigniting a cherished connection between the University of Providence and its distinguished alumni, setting the stage for a future filled with more memorable reunions.



ROSS MOSHER

Hailing from the tranquil town of Augusta, just an hour west of Great Falls, Ross Mosher's roots run deep in the soil where the rolling prairie meets the majestic Rocky Mountain Front. Known for the annual Augusta American Legion Rodeo, this small hamlet played a significant role in shaping Mosher's upbringing. While rodeo held a prominent place in his life, it was the sport of wrestling that would propel him to success, earning him a scholarship with the University of Providence.

The allure of the University's small-town ambiance resonated strongly with Mosher. "Everyone knew everybody, and it just seemed like everyone really got along and clicked well, whether it was wrestling, basketball, volleyball, soccer, all the teams were just one big family," he reminisces. Mosher appreciated the more personal experience offered

by smaller classroom sizes. "The teachers care more, they help more, they understand more. I wasn't the greatest academic person, and that helped me a lot," he adds.

Mosher's passion for wrestling ignited at a young age, sparked by witnessing Caleb Schaefer's National Championship victory during a middle school visit to Great Falls. "I got to watch him win a national championship," recalls Mosher. "I just remember seeing the crowd and that atmosphere, and from then on, I was like, I want that!"

Navigating the wrestling mats of UP, Mosher's journey was nothing short of legendary, securing the prestigious All-American honor for three consecutive years from 2009 to 2011. A powerhouse on the mat, he proudly holds the title for the third-most career wins in Argo history, tallying an impressive 125 victories. Not to be outdone, Mosher's prowess extends to the record books with the 11th most single-season wins, clocking in at an impressive 29. As a senior grappling at 165 lbs, he etched his name in the annals of wrestling glory by clinching the National Championship in Iowa – an iconic moment that stands as a pinnacle in his illustrious career.

Beyond wrestling, Mosher's heart beats for rodeo. A founding member of the rodeo program at UP, he was born and raised into the sport, following in the footsteps of his father, Kent Mosher. Despite his success in rodeo events like the Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals during the summer, wrestling always took precedence.

The Hall of Fame ceremony provided a poignant moment of reflection. "I'm glad they brought back the Alumni Weekend," says Mosher. "I got to see some friends I hadn't seen in years. In high school, you have your friends, but sometimes they drift away. It seems like the college ones are the ones that always seem to last." Impressed with the well-organized event, Mosher chuckles, "It made me feel important, you know."

Currently residing back in Augusta, MT, Mosher tends to the family ranch and has cultivated a talent for photography. Self-taught, he captures captivating images for his website featuring Western people, places, and pursuits. Alongside his passion for the lens, Mosher has been dedicating his time to coaching little kids' wrestling at his hometown youth center for the past four years. His commitment reflects a belief in passing on a winning tradition to the next generation on the wrestling mats.



Former Argo athletes, alongside friends and family, relish in reconnecting and reminiscing about their shared experiences on the court, field, or mat during their university days at the Hall of Fame Banquet.



KELSEY VAN UDEN

When Kelsey Van Uden set foot at the University of Providence, her sights were set on leaving an indelible mark on the volleyball court. Having turned down an offer from another school, Van Uden vividly recalls the moment she committed to UP during a recruiting trip to Great Falls. “I committed that day; It just felt right,” she asserts. “I was looking for an opportunity that would allow me to play 100% of the time.” And that opportunity presented itself at UP.

Navigating the school’s transition in the types of athletes recruited, Van Uden found solace in the small-school heart that still beat strongly. “The school was really in this transition period with the types of athletes we were recruiting at the time, but the school still had a small school heart, and I think that is what drew me there,” she notes. “People wanted to go to the games, they wanted to get close after your classes, and you all knew each other.”

Hailing from southern California to the modestly sized Great Falls area, Van Uden experienced a significant shift. “Montana was a big transition, but I’m glad I did it,” she adds. “To be honest, so many other Californians didn’t even know where Montana was, which was so funny. The transition to such a small city was eye-opening, but I think it was necessary for growth.”

Grow she did, quickly becoming a commanding force for the Argonauts. “Coming in as a freshman, the team was very junior and senior-heavy at the time, and I just had to give it up to the five of them who really set the pace. They demanded a lot of us. It set the standard,” says Kelsey. Alongside her fellow freshmen, she maintained that pace throughout the next four years. “Many of them might say that I was too all in, but I was very determined to be starting that freshman year,” she laughs. “And I’m glad I did because it panned out in my success at the school and set the bar for myself.”

Nominated for All-American as a junior, the motivation fueled her pursuit of the title again as a senior, ultimately earning her the Frontier Conference Player of the Year.

During her four years as an Argo, Van Uden racked up 1,295 kills, 553 digs, and 146 blocks. She holds the record for the most single-season kills at 469 and the second all-time most career kills.

The Hall of Fame ceremony offered a chance for Kelsey to connect with other inductees who were “change-makers for the school.” She expresses, “To be in that class was really awesome. It was just amazing to be a part of it.”

Her introduction speech at the ceremony was delivered by her friend Kila Adams and coach Arunas Duda. Reflecting on the experience, Van Uden says, “It was a cool insight into their point of view of my journey with them at UGF. I loved hearing from them, and then separately, everyone else’s speakers had amazing stories to share about them as individuals. It was a well-thought-out and thoughtful experience that the school put on.”

Currently residing outside San Francisco, Van Uden works with a consulting firm focused on environmental organizational development. Additionally, she has returned to coaching volleyball and is optimistic about a successful season. Coaching at various levels, she is currently guiding a team of 12-year-olds, providing a new and enriching experience.

“I got the travel itch last year, and I’m hoping to make some international travel coming soon,” says Kelsey, looking towards the future. Her aspirations are clear, “I just want to continue to coach and mentor and go on more adventures.” 🦋



CONTINUING THE LEGACY

The hunt for the next round of inductees is already underway, with nominations open from January through February.

“We just really want to encourage nominations,” emphasizes Bluml, echoing the call to celebrate excellence.

As the University of Providence continues its quest for greatness, the Hall of Fame stands as a beacon, honoring the tradition, inclusiveness, and familial bonds that define Argo Athletics.

The stage is set for the next chapter, where the pursuit of excellence is not just a tradition but a legacy.



Attention Argo Alumni and Friends
Now is your chance to nominate someone for the
**2024 ARGO ATHLETICS
HALL OF FAME**



Please Scan

or visit

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdZJil1F3im-tyoKps3lyQvySkTCY7GLBV6ATQbscyMaEt59A/viewform>

for more details and to nominate someone today!

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CLASS NOTES

Living Legacy: Jack Whooley's Reflections on a Life Connected to the University of Providence

From the quiet town of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a letter recently reached Fr. Oliver Doyle, President of University of Providence in Great Falls, MT, carrying sentiments of nostalgia and gratitude. The author, Jack Whooley, a seasoned educator and now a prolific poet in his retirement, shared his reflections on the institution where he once served as faculty. Hailing from County Cork, Ireland, Jack's roots echo a sense of camaraderie expressed with a touch of Irish wit. The letter unfolds as a testament to a life well-lived and deeply connected to the University. Notably, Jack's journey encompasses the loving tribute of two scholarships dedicated to the memory of his wives, Mary Koenig Whooley and Clara Mae Hall Whooley. As we delve into the verses, we catch glimpses of family, love, and an enduring legacy, setting the stage for the poignant expressions he has penned in his retirement years.



Jack Whooley, former UP faculty member from 1954-1966, reflects on a fulfilling life at age 95. Despite battling terminal cancer, he remains remarkably active. Pictured here, Jack fondly recalls his time on the CGF faculty at the age of 26, a testament to a lifetime of wisdom and resilience.

PRIEST

*The priest, ordained as another Christ
Assigned by God to place of dignity
Entrusted with un-bloody sacrifice,
instruction, sacraments, and community*

*Empowered priest, both servant and shepherd
Called not to be served, but to serve others
Works for, awaits, provides for, assists,
protects, counsels Christ's believers*

*The priest, caring for youth, adult, aged
Very diverse groups in community
Respectful interaction and prayer
Needed to maintain effective unity
Roles of servant, shepherd, other Christ
Require humility and sacrifice*

Jack Whooley

CHRIST'S WORK

*(REASON FOR HIS INCARNATION:
OUR CHRISTMAS)*

*Roman rule was ruthless in Jesus' time
Crucifixion common antidote to crime
Christ did not come to counter authority
His higher purpose was to set man free
Love of mankind essential to his mission
Man's waiting ended with Christ's incarnation
He offered man means to a purposeful goal
Love-filled life focused on saving one's soul
Fearing not torture nor brutality
He approached his task with finality
Unconcerned with His own personal loss
Out of love for man, He embraced the wood of the cross*

Jack Whooley

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 to be included in future editions of *Providence Forum*.

Campus Beat



Spending the day with Providence Sponsors and Leadership.



Father Oliver introduces the newest edition of the Providence Forum to the UP community.



Staff and Faculty enjoy a first glance of the latest Providence Forum.



Board of Trustee members, Chris Christiaens and Bethann McGregor enjoy fellowship at the Veterans Center reopening.



Dr. Deanna Koepke celebrates the grand reopening of the remodeled Veterans Center in Sullivan Hall with the UP community.



Forensic Science: Exploring and analyzing evidence in the lab.

Campus Beat



Alumni and Friends Mixer Photo Op with the Johnson family.



Don't Mess with the Argo's!



"We love your Argo Spirit Jacqui, Hannah and Bodiel!"



Future Argo's!



Show your Argo Pride!



Welcome Back to Campus!



Springtime in Montana.



Go get your University of Providence/Argo Gear at SCHEELS today!



Women's Wrestling making a difference in the Community by helping raise funds for Family Promise through Jordayn's Pumpkin's for a Cause. Way to go, Argos!

Campus Beat



Pick up your 2023 UP Commemorative Christmas Ornament at the Argo Store, in-person or online. Limited supplies.



Lessons and Carols is a program that dates back to Cornwall England. It is a combination of 9 readings from sacred scripture and nine carols or songs meant to help the audience get in the spirit of the story of Jesus' birth and a time for prayer.



Dr. Robert Packer, Professor of Psychology, shares his vocal talents at Lessons and Carols 2024.



Kody Diekhans invites the audience to sing along and get into the Christmas spirit.



UP student, Josh Schabert, community member, Allen Simpson, and Dr. Robert Packard bring joy to the UP community through song.



Angelica Brown reads from sacred scripture.



A beautiful scripture in song performed by Genesis Rialmo, Kody Diekhans, and Allan Simpson.



A choir of angelic voices belt out joyous Christmas music bringing holiday cheer!



calendar

February 14, 2024

Ash Wednesday Mass and
Blessing of Ashes, 12:00 PM

February 22, 2024

Summer Registration Begins

February 29 - March 2, 2024

UP hosts NAIA Frontier Basketball
Conference, Four Seasons Arena

March 4 - 8, 2024

Spring Break, No Classes

March 18, 2024

Fall Registration Begins

March 24, 2024

Palm Sunday Mass, 11:00 AM

March 28, 2024

Holy Thursday Mass of the
Lord's Supper, 4:00 PM

March 29, 2024

Commemoration of the Lord's
Passion: Good Friday, 3:00 PM

March 29 - April 1, 2024

Easter Observance, Campus Closed

March 31, 2024

Easter Sunday Mass, 11:00 PM

April 7, 2024

UP Visit Day

April 9, 2024

Table of the King Gala
(Spring Fundraiser)
details coming soon

April 22 - 26, 2024

Final Exams

April 26, 2024

Baccalaureate Mass

April 26, 2024

Senior Dinner

April 27, 2024

Commencement Ceremony

April 29 - August 16, 2024

Summer Semester



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14

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