



# AURORA UNIVERSITY

MAGAZINE ————— VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2 — FALL 2019



DISCOVER WHAT MATTERS. AND BUILD YOUR LIFE AROUND IT.

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**President**  
Rebecca L. Sherrick, PhD

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Deborah Maue

**Editor**  
Chris Howes

**Designer**  
Mary Crylen

**Contributing Writers**  
Laura Benn  
Steve McFarland  
Tom McReynolds  
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Christina Young

**Contributing Designers**  
Teresa Drier  
Rabia Mahmood

**Photographers**  
Sam Krueger  
Sylvia Springer

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**About the Cover**  
Joe Dunham exemplified Aurora University’s tradition of academic excellence that makes a true and positive impact on students.



*Rebecca L. Sherrick*  
**REBECCA L. SHERRICK**  
**PRESIDENT**

When the Aurora University family celebrated the many gifts of Professor Joe Dunham last spring, we were reminded of the life-changing impact that great teachers have on students and colleagues. As news of Joe’s passing spread, powerful testimonials to the work of a remarkable teacher filled our social media sites. This summer, the AU community lost another cherished colleague when theatre professor John Curran died following a courageous battle with cancer. We mourn, even as we offer thanks for the powerful presence of such educators in our lives.

In this edition of the magazine, we pay tribute to the tradition of exceptional teaching that is a hallmark of our university. As you read, perhaps you will reflect upon the educators who touched your life, the men and women who dedicated their lives to enriching your own. You may recall first those you met in classrooms. Think a little longer and others may come to mind . . . an inspiring coach or the person who encouraged you to learn from a mistake or the peer who shared a study table. Today, as in the past, great teachers walk our campuses.

Last year’s 125th anniversary celebration concluded with the awarding of distinguished professorships to faculty in accounting, business, music, and natural science. Then in July, we gathered in tribute to another beloved teacher, Dr. Jeanne Norris, during our Coming Home weekend. All of these recognitions were made possible by generous alumni and friends who “paid it forward” in gratitude for their own experiences. Now we launch the effort to raise the funds necessary to create the new endowment that will support establishment of the Joe Dunham Distinguished Professorship in Ethics.

A Northwestern University scholar recently studied the impact that great teachers have on the short-term and long-term success of their students. Not surprisingly, he noted that even more important than the cognitive growth they foster is the development of crucial noncognitive traits and capacities. Yes! This fall, as a new academic year dawned on our campuses, we renewed our individual and shared commitments to holistic student development. We will gauge our own institutional success in the light of our students’ accomplishments. This is what it means to be Authentically AU!

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# AN AURORA UNIVERSITY HALLMARK

Throughout its history, AU has been home to great teachers who have helped countless students learn and grow.



Ethel Tapper



Joe Dunham



Sam Bedrosian



Roald Berg



Eleanore McFarlane

Good teachers change lives. Great teachers change generations. The history of Aurora University is full of examples of both.

AU's great teachers — who also include staff members — have transcended classroom walls, moving beyond simple one-way teaching to true mentoring relationships. Turn back the clock to the 1950s and 1960s and you would see college students visiting the homes of faculty and staff members on Gladstone Avenue and elsewhere in the neighborhood, dining and bonding with one another. Fast forward to the present day and you'll find dedicated teachers who spend countless hours guiding and nurturing students to continuous learning and excellence.

## AND THE SURVEY SAYS...

We turned to Facebook to see which teachers made the biggest impact on our former students. Check the bottom of each page of this issue to see what they said.



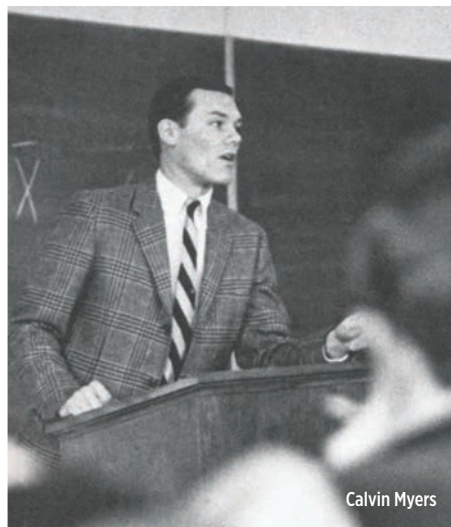


Homer Easley



Ruth VanSickle Ford

“Joe [Dunham] inspired me to reach higher. Not for grades, not for approbation from the teacher but for self-worth, self-mastery. For self-respect. Joe taught me not only that I should — but that I could. It has been a great gift in my life.”  
— Mike Weible '75



Calvin Myers



Jeanne Norris



### A Shining Example

Perhaps the most widely lauded of AU's great teachers is Joe Dunham, who passed away this past spring.

Dunham began his career at Aurora College in 1964, instantly standing out as a remarkable teacher of philosophy and religion. Students throughout the decades created lifelong memories and learned valuable lessons through his courses.

“Joe Dunham was a master teacher who impacted, in many ways, the lives of Aurora University students over the course of his 40-year career,” said Aurora University President Rebecca Sherrick. “His philosophy and ethics courses were popular choices for students. They signed up for a Dunham course recognizing that they would work hard, learn much, and depart from the classroom with a rich store of knowledge.”

In recognition of his work, AU awarded Dunham an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree in 2007. He received numerous other accolades from AU, including two Marcus and Mark H. Trumbo Awards for Excellence in Teaching, the Spirit Award, Academic Advisor of the Year, and the Meritorious Faculty Award.

“Joe's passion for teaching and learning extended well beyond the bounds of our campus,” Sherrick continued. “He counseled and mentored, often officiating at weddings or easing the pain of grieving colleagues, students, and parents. Joe embodied the very best of Aurora College and Aurora University, and the lives of thousands of our graduates are better for his example.”

At Dunham's memorial service earlier this year, former student Mike Weible '75 fondly recalled his time as both challenging and life-altering. In particular, he told the story of the first time he visited with Joe and Ida Dunham. “We watched *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. Joe cracked up at the very sight of Jonathan Winters. In the scene where Winters destroys the gas station, Joe was absolutely breathless with laughter.

“It was the first time I was ever invited to the home of a teacher. It means as much to me today as it did then. To be

accepted, to be treated as an equal — that was a big moment of growth. Joe Dunham knew how to build bridges, how to connect. He did. The evidence is clear.”

Weible summarized, “Joe inspired me to reach higher. Not for grades, not for approbation from the teacher but for self-worth, self-mastery. For self-respect. Joe taught me not only that I should — but that I could. It has been a great gift in my life.”

### Today's Brightest: The Trumbo Award

Each year at Commencement, AU recognizes one remarkable faculty member with the same Trumbo Award that was awarded to Joe Dunham years ago. Established in 1976, the Award recognizes the finest work of Aurora University full-time faculty in their roles as teachers, mentors, and transformative scholars.

Three of the most recent recipients of the Trumbo Award shared their thoughts on what it means to be a great teacher at AU.

“Great teaching is really about making connections with the students such that the instruction is aligned with the students' needs,” said Toby Arquette, dean of the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy and the 2016 Trumbo Award recipient. “Great teachers are mentors who take a deeply personal interest in the mentees they guide through the journey of learning. Great teaching, and subsequently the recognition embodied in the Trumbo Award, is really achieved only in a team. It takes a village to support student learning.”

“I am still completely humbled by the Award,” commented Sarah Radtke, 2017 recipient and chair of athletic training and exercise science, as well as chair of Faculty Senate. “I think I was recognized because I have spent 20 years getting to know my students on a personal level and doing everything in my power to help them succeed. I do this in and out of the classroom every day, in every way.”

Radtke continued, speaking more broadly, “Great teachers never think of themselves as great teachers because it is never about them. It is about the students. They have this undeniable need to be all things for their students.

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“Barbara Strassberg opened my eyes to a whole new world — a diverse and extraordinary world. I changed my minor in sociology to a secondary major so that I could have more classes with her. I had the joy of assisting her in her research. She is an inspiration to all that she touches.”

— Jamie Lynn Henrikson '08

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“It was Ethel Tapper's insistence that all English majors complete two years of French that resulted in my stint in the Army — one of the most significant times of my life.”

— Robert Brining '67



Educators, for sure. But also mentors, motivators, advisers, and confidantes.”

“Great teachers are able to pull, or push, students through a learning experience and provide for students the means to become something they didn’t think possible,” said Jessica Heybach, chair of EdD programs and associate professor of education. She is the most recent recipient of the Trumbo Award, in 2019. “Great teachers recognize their students’ humanity, honor student difference, and work to challenge students to learn new ideas, as well as unlearn lessons from the past.

“The classroom is a great incubator for fostering meaningful relationships with students through inquiry. The give-and-take, call-and-response relationship that exists in my classroom between myself and the students rests on my belief that teaching is not about imparting objective facts but the building up and questioning of one’s subjectivity.”

— Jessica Heybach, Chair of EdD Programs and Associate Professor of Education

“I think I was recognized because teaching is not a job for me, but rather an identity,” she continued. “Teaching — the classroom — is where I am most creative and alive, and I think students sense that. The classroom is a great incubator for fostering meaningful relationships with students through inquiry. The give-and-take, call-and-response relationship that exists in my classroom between myself and the students rests on my belief that teaching is not about imparting objective facts but the building up and questioning of one’s subjectivity.”

From the Field to the Residence Halls

While much emphasis is rightly placed on the teaching and learning that occurs within AU’s academic buildings

and disciplines, the institution also has remarkable staff who nurture student growth, curiosity, and intellect. Some are coaches, some work in student-focused offices, others might be completely behind the scenes. But all share a commitment to students.

Ann Almasi, dean of student life, is one such staff member. “I consider myself an educator in many ways,” she said. “Students learn so much living in the residence halls while sharing spaces with each other. Just the process of learning how to successfully communicate with a roommate involves plenty of out-of-class learning that can easily translate into workplace skills in the future. It’s my role to help facilitate this learning.”

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Rick Kilps was a beloved coach and athletic trainer who left a legacy of students-turned-professionals.

“In my seven years as men’s head soccer coach, we never had a losing season,” he said. “I’m proud of those kids. I tried to make the soccer program like the university overall: family. Faculty would get together to make meals for the team, students would go over to faculty members’ houses, my door was always open. Those teams cared for each other and took care of each other as a result.”

“A great teacher is one who listens to the voices of the students and understands their needs,” said Richard Boniak, assistant academic dean for George Williams College, who works extensively beyond the classroom. “At times, the world and environment change, students begin to process information differently, and a great teacher will adapt and change his or her pedagogy to maximize the learning process.

“When I am involved in clubs or engaging with student workers, there is a different dynamic,” he said, comparing it to his time in the classroom. “Students learn how to be a professional, how to be a good citizen, and how to value life. In this situation, there is informal mentoring, and this allows a student to learn in a different way. For many students, I am their teacher and mentor even after they



Mark Trumbo



Jessica Heybach



Toby Arquette



Sarah Radtke

graduate. Some students contact me after graduation to discuss their career successes and challenges and to discuss future endeavors.”

“It was always academics first,” Kilps emphasized, speaking of his soccer teams. “We had study time on the buses. I talked with the faculty members about how students were doing in class and stepped in to help the students when necessary.”

“Every summer, I have the pleasure of taking part in training the resident assistant staff and the peer adviser staff to prepare them for their role as peer educators,” Almasi explained. “Helping these student leaders realize the potential they have to change the lives of their fellow students is incredibly rewarding and really is an empowering form of education. My team and I work together to educate student leaders on the various resources AU has to offer toward student success, and we teach the student leaders how they can motivate their fellow students to interact with and embrace identities different than their own to create an inclusive community.”

Teaching Together

AU’s history is also full of spouses who enriched students’ lives together. It’s well known that Joe Dunham was just one half of a caring and compassionate couple. His wife, Ida, who has lived in a house adjacent to campus for more than 50 years, was also a tremendous influence on students.

“We had a spare room upstairs we would gladly offer to students. I also regularly had visits from students while I worked in the Registrar’s Office. They would come by for help or to ask a question or just because they needed someone to talk to,” she said. Ida’s home-cooked meals — especially pizza — were bountiful and shared with students and other faculty members, making her and Joe’s home a hub for a variety of student-teacher interactions. In this way, Aurora College students found a second family.

“Together, Joe and Ida welcomed many members of the AC community in their home,” said Sherrick, “offering the kind of warm hospitality that long has been part of the university’s distinctive culture.”

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Hands down, the best professor I had was Byron Stanger. He was the most challenging professor I had, but I learned more in his class than in any other course I took.”

— Jacob Parry ’18

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“I had Jane Davis for numerous science courses, and she always pushed her students to the best of their ability. She was there for her students in and outside the classroom and inspired all of her students to discover what matters and build their life around it.”

— Nichole Mucha ’16





Roger Parolini



Lisa Fredenburgh



Chetna Patel

Like Joe and Ida, Roald and Frances Berg regularly hosted students at their home. They drew on their own experiences as AC students in the 1950s to enliven the student experience for new generations over several decades. Roald was a professor of mathematics and Frances held a variety of administrative positions. But they came together to ensure students were successful in the classroom and prepared for life as adults and citizens.

“Almost every Sunday night there were students at our house,” Frances said. “Our southern fried chicken drew them in. We’d have dinner, play cards, watch *Monty Python*. And during holiday breaks, students couldn’t stay in the dorms and there was no food service on campus, so we’d house a few in our home. So would other faculty members.

“An office visit and a home visit were very different things, and both were important,” she said.

Roald added, “The students felt it was a privilege that the faculty wanted them. A college education is so much more than what goes on in the classroom. What happens outside the classroom is equally important and really makes a difference in attitude and everything else.”

The situation was similar at George Williams College, according to Ed and Mary Langbein. Both are graduates of GWC and served as faculty members and in other administrative capacities. They summarized the spirit of GWC teaching as: “Great teachers love to teach and give

of themselves. Their commitment to the students extends beyond the subject matter. They recognize the diversity in students’ learning styles and employ strategic innovations to assist all learners.”

The Langbeins also cited internship opportunities, the international student body, and the excellent and diverse faculty as defining characteristics of the GWC spirit.

**Ensuring the Future of Great Teaching**

Earlier this year, AU established two new endowed professorships: the Roger Parolini Endowed Professorship of Music and the Keith and Elizabeth Smith Chair in Science and Mathematics. By creating these positions and funding them in perpetuity, AU will ensure that there will always be a place for truly remarkable teachers.

“Great teaching *is* a hallmark of an Aurora University education,” said Sherrick. “The university celebrates this distinctive characteristic in many ways, including the awarding of distinguished professorships to deserving faculty. We have a special place in our hearts for the donors who make such recognition possible and for the faculty and staff who are recipients of such honors.

“As we launch the fundraising effort for the Joe Dunham Distinguished Professorship in Ethics, I look forward to extending this legacy in an important new direction.”

Lisa Fredenburgh, chair of the Music Department and director of choral activities, is the inaugural holder of the Parolini Professorship. She says being recognized in this way is one of the highest honors of her life. “I am hopeful for our future and what we will be able to bring to future generations,” she said.

Reflecting on why she enjoys teaching performance, Fredenburgh said, “The beauty takes the students over, and even the singers who are not quite there are pulled up into the music and a beautiful expressive whole. While we have our separate responses to that moment, the experience is unifying and satisfying both emotionally and intellectually. We see it on each other’s faces and there is no need to talk.”

The inaugural holder of the Smith Chair is Chetna Patel, chair of physical sciences. The recognition “is an honor and deeply humbling,” she said.

“A great teacher inspires; shares enthusiasm for learning new knowledge; enables students to make connections to real life; inspires students to be curious, to appreciate the struggles in the learning process; and provides an environment of asking questions without fear.”

Citing her favorite moments from the learning process, Patel said, “One is when students get their ‘aha!’ moments in the classroom because I took the time and/or risk to approach the subject in a different way. Another moment is when former students email me with their success stories.

It is a wonderful feeling when the academic experience has equipped students with life-changing skills.”

**Only One Thing That Matters**

The Aurora University community has always had a singular focus: its students. Some universities claim to be that way, but these uniquely AU stories of heartfelt outreach, of dedication to teaching, of genuine caring for the young men and women who enter the university’s hallowed halls show that the spirit of AU is inimitable.

Ann Almasi encapsulated the ongoing spirit of great teaching at Aurora University: “Our goals are simple: to help students be successful and pursue doing what they love while fostering their growth in the process.”

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Turn to page 36 for details on how you can help support the new Joe Dunham Distinguished Professorship in Ethics.

**WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...**

“Ken Mull did not give out high grades easily. However, I learned a lot about the subject, how to apply myself, what my passions were, and the world. He took me under his wing and gave me a student job. It wasn’t just a job but another challenge.”

— Kathy Lang ’82

**WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...**

“Stacy Searle-Gulli and Lisa Fredenburgh shaped me as a performer and proved to be incredible supports during good times and bad. They pushed me and all of their students to be better creators, students, and people in general.”

— Joelle Kasprisin ’17, ’18



# STEM Partnership School Turns 5

Children thrive on challenge and absorb knowledge based on their excitement at solving problems. That's the rationale behind the John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School at Aurora University, which was conceived in 2009 thanks to a gift from the Dunham Fund and opened five years ago, in August 2014. In this innovative program, students from third through eighth grade are introduced to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The education they receive in these

topic areas is anything but static. Instead, they are given STEM problems to investigate, using their time and their burgeoning intellect to work through and design solutions to real-world challenges. At the same time, teachers from the students' school districts are on their own educational journey, learning how to better instill in their students a passion for STEM. Hands-on immersion in STEM benefits all.

## WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"David Horn: ecology genius, bird connoisseur. His love for all things science could not be ignored. He taught me to look at the world with a more open perspective."

— Tina Brooks '04

## WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Brienne Giese helped me find my voice and taught me to be confident in myself. She still influences and supports me to this day, and I appreciate her very much for all she's helped me with."

— Whitney Keller '17





The STEM Partnership School has a unique advantage: it was developed in collaboration with not just the AU faculty located a short walk away but also staff from area nonprofit organizations, corporate partners, and the students’ local school districts. The involvement of professionals from these institutions is ongoing, which for the students means access to STEM experts from all of these organizations is constant, significantly enhancing the program’s value. From video conferencing to in-classroom learning to practical labs, students and teachers alike benefit from professional interaction that offers access to

state-of-the-art technology and the latest STEM concepts. Teachers are the vital conduit between the latest STEM discoveries and students. With that in mind, the program is designed so that teachers from local districts augment their pedagogical skills through professional learning in education, math, science, and technology. They then share what they have learned with students and colleagues through outreach opportunities available to them. The STEM Partnership School draws on the full educational capabilities of Aurora University faculty, who pass on to the students their expertise in an age-appropriate

way. In addition, the STEM Partnership School provides an opportunity for AU students to gain hands-on experience: nursing students work as aides in the health office, undergrads supervise children during lunch and recess, and elementary education majors help teachers in the classrooms. Finally, the curriculum reaches beyond STEM, with students also exploring additional AU opportunities, such as art exhibits at the Schingoethe Center, speakers, and theater events. Each year, a variety of extracurricular activities are offered to supplement student learning experiences.

AU undergrads and faculty participate to maximize the benefits for the students. Activity topics have included 3D printing, art, books, chess, drawing, French, math, Spanish, and yearbook. Studies show that U.S. students are falling behind their international peers in terms of STEM knowledge gained and applied, but this new way to think about education has found great success. For five years, the STEM Partnership School has been the locus for methods that help students and teachers regain leadership in STEM.

**WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...**

“Mark Walsh always pushed us to do better and succeed further than his expectations.”  
— Dillon Popovich ’17

**WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...**

“Brenda Barnwell taught me so much, but what stands out the most was how she went above and beyond outside of class time to help me.”  
— Angel Mobley Siegle ’93, ’00





ACADEMICS

2015-2016

2017-2018

78%

82%

STEM School Student Score on PARCC\* Math Test

31%

32%

Illinois State Benchmark on PARCC\* Math Test

71%

71%

STEM School Student Score on PARCC English Language Arts Test

36%

36%

Illinois State Benchmark on PARCC English Language Arts Test

\*State of Illinois' Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

**AU/CAT Framework for Curriculum Design**  
Career Awareness  
Design Process Understanding  
Industry Experiences and Activities  
Interpersonal Attributes

**Themed Concentrations of Units**

Ecosystems and Adaptations

Structure and Function of Organisms

Matter and Energy

Forces and Motion

Geology and Space

Weather, Climate, and Human Impact

FAST FACTS

STEM Partnership School teachers, administrators, and partners, along with Aurora University faculty, are helping to develop curricula for a science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) school being designed for students in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago.

Service opportunities are open to STEM Partnership School students, and they have donated items to AU's Libby's Place food pantry, sent books to troops overseas, and donated supplies to local animal shelters, among other activities.

SUCCESS STORIES

A team of seventh grade students won third place in a multistate region in National Geographic's GeoChallenge competition.

Two teams of students were among 50 national finalists for the Bright Schools Program of the National Science Teachers Association. They were the only two teams from Illinois selected.

For the Coalition of State Bioscience Institutes' STEM Voice Video Competition, a group of sixth graders won regional first place for their video about their love of STEM education.

The school twice received the National PTA School of Excellence Award for leadership in building strong family-school partnerships. It was one of only two Illinois schools to receive the award.

FACILITIES

**Onsite Laboratories and Topics Taught**

**Cabot Microelectronics Chemistry Laboratory**  
» study of materials at the micro and macro scale

**City of Aurora Biology/Field Studies Laboratory**  
» organisms and the environment

**Exelon Energy Laboratory**  
» renewable energy  
» alternative energy  
» energy efficiency  
» conservation of energy

**Kolschowsky Biomedical Life Sciences Laboratory**  
» structure, properties, reactions, and preparation of organic materials

**Manufacturing Laboratory**  
» design  
» production  
» logistics  
» instrumental analysis  
» quality control testing

**Nicor GEARS (Geology, Energy, and Resources Sustainability) Laboratory**  
» sustainable use of resources

**Voris Greenhouse**  
» nature  
» plant structure and growth  
» environmental studies

In addition, the **Tellabs Global Technology Center** provides a wireless learning environment that connects students with scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and other students.

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“André Meeks helped me form a lot of my thoughts about the world and other people. James Kao helped me form a lot of my thoughts about myself and how I see things.”  
— Nicole Hanlon '17

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“Mark Walter challenged me to see the world around me in a different light by utilizing various types of philosophies. He always helped us consider thought-provoking questions and open discussions.”  
— Angi Hatcher '17



Keeping It Real

Think back to the pedagogical tools a teacher most likely used during your middle school years: photos in a textbook, on a poster, or projected onto a screen. How much more intriguing would it have been to see — and even interact with — a 3D model instead?

That’s how sixth grade students at the John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School studied body systems this past school year. With the assistance of an app that presents anatomy through augmented reality, they were able to truly envision organs from all angles and layers in 3D. This type of technology superimposes realistic graphics over real-world visuals, spanning the gap between the actual and the digital to open up possibilities for the students. Instead of photos on a poster, they learned from Merge Cubes, which are physical objects that can be held but that also project augmented reality images.

Staying current on high-tech trends such as augmented reality will prove beneficial, as technology will change dramatically by the time these students enter the work force. In fact, research shows that 65% of the industries that today’s third through eighth graders will work in have not yet been created. Each year, the STEM Partnership School selects a new technology for students to learn.

“Augmented reality is engaging for students,” explained Arin Carter, director of the STEM Partnership School. “With AR, they can interact with 3D images of content they are studying or objects that may not be readily available for them. Since they also learned the science and design behind the technology, they can create their own digital content to share with others. Really, any topic can be taught through AR.”

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“John Dubocq had faith in me. He had no official responsibility to serve as my college counselor, but he guided me through my four years at GWC.”

— Howard Friedman ’66

STRAIGHT FROM the Sources' Mouths

The John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School makes a difference in the lives of its students. In describing their experiences, students often use words like “creativity,” “independence,” and “critical thinking” again and again. But don’t take our word for it. The following remarks were excerpted from graduation speeches presented by STEM Partnership School students.



By Abhinav Bachu

The unique thing about STEM is that it changes our perception. It makes us intuitive, able to think on our own. It bestows upon us the immense gift that is creativity. STEM deviates from the run-of-the-mill school routine and really brings change to our lives and makes us different.

I was able to unlock an explorative component of myself and learn how to discover things on my own. After fourth grade, when I came to the STEM School, I felt I had evolved. This same feeling followed me through fifth grade. These two years were so special to me because they really shaped my later life. As I entered middle school, I really felt the impact of how helpful that learning was.

STEM exposes us to every field of work, whether it’s medical, mechanical, electrical, or environmental. I bet there are many students who have changed their ambitions after learning about a new career here.

STEM did a great job of preparing me for high school. The sheer amount of learning and preparation has been amazing. The level of teaching is so high, it has prepared me for the academic struggles of high school. Even if I struggle a little bit in the beginning stages of high school, I think it will all work out in the end. With all the experience and knowledge that STEM has given me, I should be fine.

STEM has enlightened me in more ways than I ever could have imagined and has accorded a great amount of knowledge, experience, and wisdom to me and my fellow graduates. The lessons my class and I have learned will not only help us in high school but will follow us throughout life and give us the power to make change in the world.



By Katherine Ducoff

Before coming to the STEM School, I was not the biggest fan of science. The fact that nothing is black and white with science, that there are always exceptions, scared me. I was so intimidated by science that I could not see how important it is to our world, nor how fun it could be to learn.

I decided to try it out for a year anyway. During my first few weeks, I was in despair. I wanted to go back to my home school and I missed my friends. My parents asked me to stick it out, and, thankfully, I conceded. If I hadn’t, it would have probably been the greatest mistake of my life. That year, I did at least five times the experiments I had ever done and actually performed my first dissection. (You would think it scary how excited this 10-year-old girl was to cut open a dead fish.)

I made not only new friends here but teammates. We collaborated on videos and presentations, and I soon learned all about the satisfaction and contentment that comes with completing something big, especially when it is accomplished by teamwork.

It’s clear how much I have been changed by STEM. Here, I have been given my own creativity in how I learn with designing experiments or researching any topic I choose. With that freedom, I fell in love with learning. As cheesy as that sounds, it’s true. When I’m learning, I feel as if I’m doing something important, something that could actually make a difference in the world.

As soon as I started to see how what I was learning in STEM was providing me with explanations about why the world is the way it is, I knew that I had found something that would stick with me my entire life. I have also built confidence in my abilities and in my intelligence, something that has shaped my future for the better.



By Josie Ingersoll

When I came to the STEM Partnership School, I was just 10 years old, an incoming 5th grader. I won’t lie: I was a little worried coming in knowing only three kids from my elementary school, but I was quickly welcomed by other students and made some of my best friends that morning on the bus. Those three kids I knew quickly grew into six before I even entered the classroom on my first day.

Looking back, I can tell you I may not remember every math formula, every experiment, every word on the vocab wall, but I will remember walking in on that first day to be welcomed by new faces — faces that would go on to become some of my best friends. I think it’s safe to say that over the years, we have become so much more than classmates. No matter how you look at it, this is a group that’s been through enough state tests, A+ presentations, gym classes, and math homework to last a lifetime.

Carol Burnett once said, “We don’t stop going to school when we graduate.” I’ve thought that over for a while now, wondering what that could even mean. But I’ve come to realize that school is no longer just homework and grades. School has become friends, the relationships we have, and the experiences we’ve shared. Four years is a long time, such a huge part of our lives to be together. We truly do never stop going to school. We’ve made friends, we’ve shared stories, we’ve laughed together, and so much more. I guess what I’m trying to say is, this school has changed my life in the most unexpected ways. This is an experience I could never forget.

A

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Kris Johnson was a teacher who went beyond the classroom to help, sometimes with a paper or test questions, sometimes with a personal issue or problem.”

— Joseph Mysliwicz ’13



How to Egg-cite 1,700+ Students

On Wednesday, April 17, passersby to Aurora University might have been surprised to hear more than 1,700 students start a countdown from Thornton Gymnasium: “5...4...3...2...1!” That’s when staff opened the gym doors and a wave of students ran down the steps of Alumni Hall, eager to find one of three plastic Easter eggs containing the grand prize: free tuition for a year. The Egg-stra Special 125th Birthday Party and Egg Hunt had begun.

On the day of the big Egg Hunt, students were asked to meet in the gymnasium at 12:00 p.m. to enjoy snacks, spend time with faculty and staff, and receive a wristband. At the same time, 500 eggs were hidden in plain sight in outdoor areas around campus. “The wristbands allowed us to keep count of the students, but more important, we cut the wristband off once a student returned to the gym with an egg to claim a prize,” said Tracy Lief, director of university events.

“We wanted to do something exceptional to close out Aurora University’s yearlong 125th birthday party,” said Sarah Russe, vice president for community relations. “Since we were preparing for the Easter holiday, we used the egg hunt as a theme for this event.” The Egg Hunt did indeed cap off a birthday year that began with a tented party on the main quad and, in between, included lots



of cake, balloons, singing, and, of course, reminiscing. The Egg Hunt truly was a celebration for junior health science major Rogelio Martinez Rangel, who was one of the grand prize winners. He works full time at Walgreens as a pharmacy technician to be able to afford tuition and class materials. “This is sometimes really stressful because I have to make time to complete my coursework, even if it requires me to stay up late several days a week,” he said. “The free

tuition will allow me to have a less stressful school year by working only part time. Then I can focus more on my classes.” While only three students were able to win the free tuition, 125 others won large prizes, including a reserved parking space, an HP laptop, an Apple Watch, a 50-inch TV, AirPods, and gift cards. The remaining students walked away with smaller prizes like T-shirts and candy.

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Four Decades of Care




In the early 1970s, Aurora College’s mission statement began with these words: “All that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure...” That description easily could also apply to the profession of nursing. It wouldn’t be until the late 1970s — 1979, to be exact — that the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program started here, nearly a decade after Dr. Irving De Voe, assistant professor of biology, wrote a feasibility study looking into whether an AC nursing program would be viable. This year, Aurora University is commemorating the 40th anniversary of the program’s founding.

Nursing first planted its roots in 1947 with a cooperative agreement guaranteeing that Aurora College would supply nursing students in the nearby Copley Hospital Diploma Program with required courses in chemistry, biology, and the behavioral sciences. In 1979, Copley Hospital returned the favor by pledging to help with the degree startup cost before closing its own Diploma Program after 87 years in existence. That same year,


the Illinois Department of Registration and Education approved the AC program and Dr. Joan Arteberry was named the first chair of the Division of Nursing. On September 4, the program launched with 30 freshmen and 43 registered nurses.

Over the years, the program has had many highlights. One was the John Alexander Nursing Education Center, built on campus in memory of a longtime supporter of Copley Hospital and the nursing profession in general. Another highlight happened in 2006, when the Wisconsin State Board of Nursing granted AU permission to offer the RN-to-BSN completion program at George Williams College.


Today, the AU nursing program is known as one of the most respected in the region, with more than 450 nursing students and some 220 more taking classes to prepare to enter the program. Both campuses feature low- and high-fidelity nursing simulation labs that allow students to practice the skills they will need. The School of Nursing prides itself on preparing a diverse population of professional nurses for ethical practice, transformational leadership, and lifelong learning. The BSN program also prepares students to take the NCLEX-RN, a nationwide examination for the licensing of RNs. Recent graduates have passed the test at a rate of 93%, which is higher than other universities.




**87%**  
Female Nursing Students




**93%**  
AU Nursing Students' First-Time Pass Rate on NCLEX-RN Licensing Examination




**174**  
Nursing Graduates 2018-2019



**135+**  
Clinical Rotations Spring 2019



**50+**  
Clinical Facilities Spring 2019



**830+**  
Student Clinical Placements Spring 2019

You can read about some of the history of the program on new signs located in the School of Nursing hallway in Alumni Hall.

A

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Brian Husby introduced me into the world of special education. His love and passion for teaching and his students were remarkable. His personal experiences have touched so many people and left a huge impact on so many educators.”

— Nicole Marziani '11, '16

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“If it weren’t for John Leask, I never would have graduated magna cum laude. He told me to hang in there. I just kept hearing in my mind what he told me and stuck with it. It was his encouraging words that helped me become less afraid to keep plugging along and not give up.”

— Colleen Brennan O’Neil '98



AU in NYC

While most college courses take place inside a classroom, Aurora University’s Study Beyond program gives students the opportunity to learn outside that setting. Through Study Beyond, they can travel domestically and internationally to apply what they have learned in the classroom during internships, study abroad courses, mission trips, and choir tours. They become immersed in different cultures and environments even as their worldview is challenged.

Recently, seven students enrolled in a humanities course called The Arts & Human Experience traveled to New York City. During their weeklong adventure, they experienced Broadway and Off-Broadway plays, museums, art galleries, and the energetic culture of the City That Never Sleeps.

Theatre and communication double major Julia Petterson ’20 took a leap of faith when she decided to take this May term travel course. It marked her first time in New York City, as well as her first experience traveling without her family.

“As a lover of both the arts and theatre, I felt like I needed to be out of my comfort zone, for once, to truly

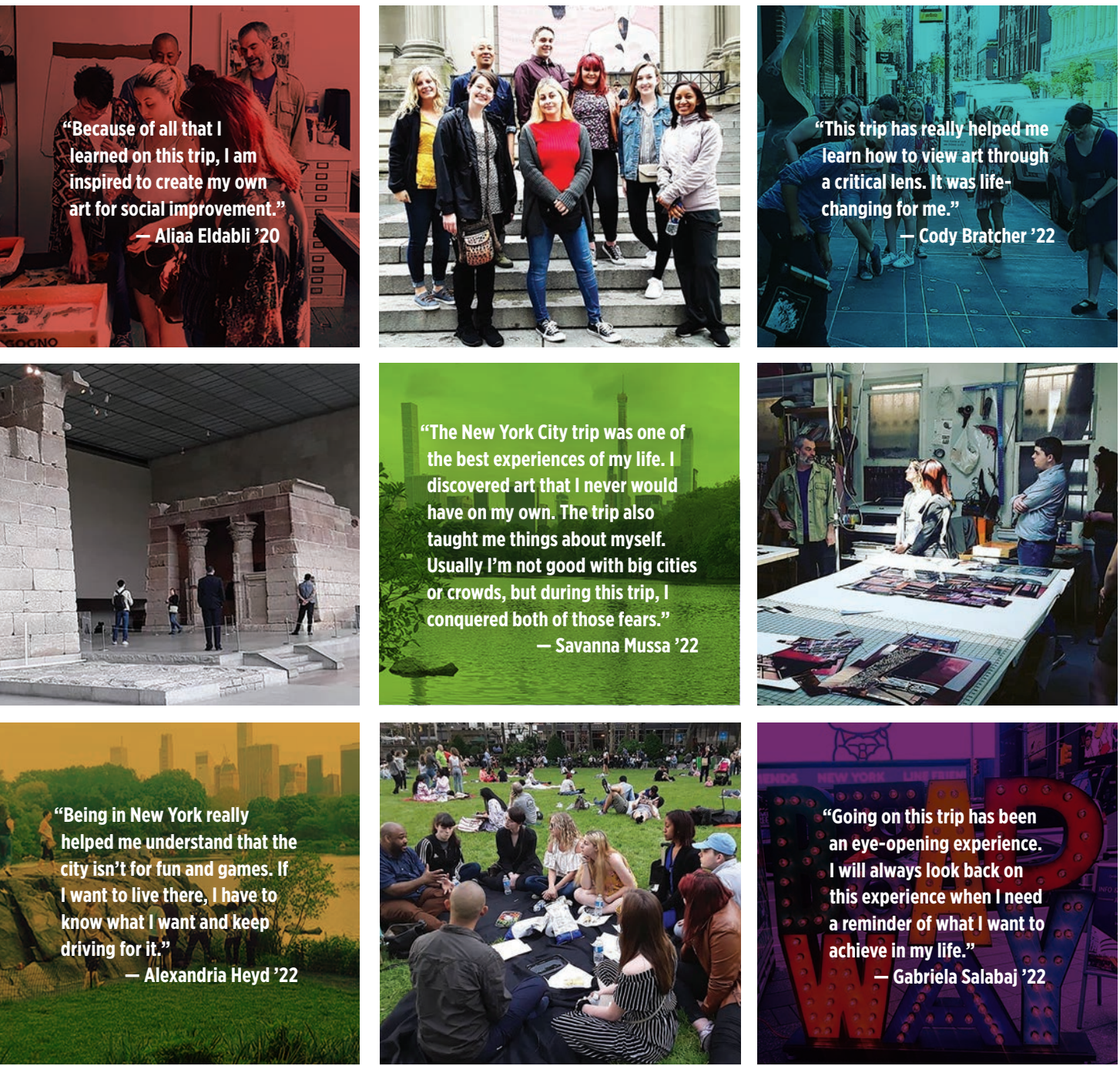
connect with the art I was seeing,” she said. “There’s something about the very nature of art — it doesn’t exist unless you’re looking at it. And while we can look at pictures online or read about their meaning, all of that is enhanced once you’re actually there.”

Petterson notes how vastly different New York’s atmosphere is compared to her quiet corner of the world in Seneca, Illinois. Being engulfed in a fast-paced, deeply creative culture encouraged her to consider ideas and arguments from a different perspective.

“So many of the pieces and performances we saw were directly tied to or influenced by events in the world today and were an attempt by the artist to make sense of the world around us,” she said. “It opened me up to some new points of view and made me, I believe, better understand some of the issues I had already assumed I understood.”

New York’s bustling, contemporary, sometimes daunting environment caught the attention of Julia’s classmates as well. The following represent their thoughts and impressions of such a memorable course.

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“This was my third trip to New York, and I never would have experienced it in this way if I hadn’t taken this class. This class and trip have made me see New York in a new perspective that I never would have.” — Anna Featherstone ’22

Photos courtesy of Stacy Parker Joyce, Anna Featherstone, and Aliaa Eldabli

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Brandon Kooi knew how to push the class so we would go the extra mile in our projects and on assignments. He really helped me prepare for the real world.”

— Adam Johnson '12

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“So many of my professors helped me along the way. The most memorable is Kathleen Turner, who mentored me through the communication program and gave me the opportunity to pursue my passion.”

— Kelsey Kwasniak '17



To the Highest Degree



Universities confer honorary degrees to celebrate the achievements of public figures who embody the values cherished by these institutions. During the 2019 graduate Commencement ceremony at Aurora University on Sunday, May 5, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rita B. Garman received a Doctor of Humane Letters degree, *honoris causa*, in recognition of her commitment

to the law, her tireless efforts on behalf of the community, and her work as leader and trailblazer.

Garman was born in Aurora and graduated as valedictorian of her Oswego High School senior class. At the University of Illinois, she majored in economics and completed her bachelor’s degree in 1965 with highest honors, qualifying for recognition on the institution’s distinctive Bronze Tablet. Law school at the University of Iowa came next, where she earned her Juris Doctor degree with distinction.

After working at the Vermilion County Legal Aid office, Garman served as an assistant state’s attorney in Vermilion County before entering into private practice. Her judicial career began in 1974 and subsequently extended to service in virtually every capacity in the Illinois judiciary: associate judge, circuit judge, presiding circuit judge, appellate justice, presiding appellate justice, Supreme Court justice, and chief justice.

As the 119th chief justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, Garman was the second woman in the history of the State of Illinois to hold the office. Her tenure was characterized by civility, professionalism, and continuous advocacy for helping the citizens of Illinois learn more about their judicial system. Her extraordinary career was

celebrated in bricks and mortar in 2017, when the Vermilion County Courthouse was named in her honor.

For 45 years as an Illinois judge, Garman has embodied the AU core values of integrity, excellence, continuous learning, and citizenship. She has dedicated her life to public service, advocating for fairness and civility in the court system. She has been a proponent of prompt decision-making, ensuring justice for all. She attributes these accomplishments to her strong belief in the power of community, often reciting the John Donne verse that begins “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.”

Garman delivered these remarks during the Commencement ceremony:

*It is an honor and a pleasure to be here today, to help the members of the class of 2019 and their families and friends mark this special milestone.*

*I want to thank President Sherrick, Vice President Russe, the trustees, faculty, and student body for this great honor.*

*An honorary degree is a high honor indeed and is especially valued when given to someone who has a link to the institution. Although I am not an alumna of Aurora University, I was born in Aurora and grew up in nearby Oswego. My roots are here.*

*If I have any wisdom to share with you based on my journey from small town girl to justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, it is that any success I have achieved has been the result of the support of my family, the guidance of several mentors, and my own persistence.*

*My parents taught their daughters, as well as their son, that we could reach any goal with hard work and dedication. My late husband, Gill, and our children also supported and encouraged me at every step along the way.*

*Similarly, no one who is graduating today got here entirely on his or her own. Many of you were encouraged by parents, spouses, or children. You may have had good friends who lifted your spirits when you were discouraged. You were all supported by dedicated professors who invested in your success. This is your opportunity to offer them a round of applause to thank them for their support.*



*Wherever you go from here, find a mentor who will invest in your success by helping you navigate the working world and by teaching you the lessons they learned the hard way. Later, when it is your turn to give back, be a mentor to others.*

*Finally, be persistent. I encountered more than a few obstacles along the way in my career. Indeed, as a new lawyer, I had a hard time finding my first job because no one wanted to hire a woman. But I persisted! When I could not reach a goal directly, I changed course and reached it anyway.*

*You may need to do the same. You must be the source of your own confidence and your own ambition. Obstacles may be in your way, but no one can make you give up on your dreams.*

*These are simple lessons but important ones. These are the lessons that led me to where I stand today: receiving an honorary degree from this fine institution.*

*When I learned that I was to be recognized here today, I did some research into the tradition of awarding honorary degrees. I found that one of the first honorary degrees to be awarded in this country was awarded by Yale University to George Washington in 1871. This information certainly gave me a bit of an ego boost.*

**“Obstacles may be in your way, but no one can make you give up on your dreams.”**

*Then I learned that, in 1996, Kermit the Frog was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Amphibious Letters by Southampton College at Long Island University.*

*I would like to think that my efforts on behalf of the Illinois judicial system and the citizens of this state compare favorably to the good works of the esteemed Mr. Frog!*

*In the end, I would like to leave you with the words of that great early 20th century philosopher, Winnie the Pooh, a bear of very little brain but a very great heart, who said, “You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”*

*Keep these words in mind as you leave here and begin your future. Life is a journey; no one rides for free; and we all reach the same destination in the end. What matters is what we do along the way.*

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WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“One thing Don Phelps said that will always stick with me was, ‘Many get into the social work field because they want to work directly with clients on an individual basis. But one day you’ll realize you can help thousands — even millions — of people through the impact of a change in policy.’”

— Maria Goldstein ’18, ’19

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Marvin Edwards pushed me harder in my doctoral studies than any other professor. He was also the first to congratulate me as I crossed the stage to be hooded.”

— D.J. Skogsberg ’02, ’11



Tissue Connections

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly one in 10 Americans has diabetes, a condition characterized by abnormally high levels of blood glucose. While the medical community has researched the cause of this condition for years, it is still unknown why an excess of glucose — which is nontoxic and, in fact, one of the most common organic compounds in the body — can lead to tissue damage.

Chih-Chiun Chen and Alma Rodriguez Estrada, professors in the Biology Department, are trying to better understand the cellular changes caused by the elevation of glucose associated with diabetes and its connection to the deterioration of tissue. They are doing so with the help of a select group of students enrolled in the Research in Biology course.

Their results indicate that a significant concentration of glucose can change cellular secretion of molecules that help in the response to inflammation and infection. It is already well known that this excess of inflammatory molecules can cause tissue damage, and based on their research, they have satisfied their hypothesis that there is a connection between high levels of glucose and tissue damage.

For this class, the students participate in research to a much



greater degree than is typical in a lab course. They fully execute the experiments, including planning them, growing cells, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting the results to professional meetings and conferences targeted toward undergraduate students.

The students are selected based on their previous course work and their professional aspirations — for example, careers in laboratory research or medicine. They come from a diverse selection of majors, including biology, health science, and nursing.

“Research experiences are very important for students’ professional development,” said Rodriguez. “Through this project, they learn traditional and state-of-the-art laboratory techniques. They also personally experience the scientific research process. This gives them an advantage when they are applying

for admission to graduate or medical schools.”

While students can participate in the project for only two semesters, the research is designed as a long-term study. Each student cohort completes lab work that serves as a stepping stone for the students in subsequent classes.

This research is entering a new phase, during which the scientists and their students will try to prove a link between an overabundance of glucose and other ramifications of diabetes. “Initial results have shown that elevated glucose concentration can suppress cells from fighting bacteria,” said Chen. “This may help explain why there tends to be a reduction in diabetic patients’ ability to fight off bacterial infection, which may also contribute to tissue damage and, in severe cases, limb amputation.”

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Guidance for Graduates

“I got the job!”

These are such powerful words for any person in the job market. For a recent graduate, they mean everything.

Ensuring that Aurora University students experience the thrill of securing a job in their field or acceptance to a graduate program is one objective of the Student Success Initiative, a campuswide effort. AU’s model for student success is student-centered, integrating academic advising with career development through coaching.

Personal outreach to graduates is a central component of the initiative. Last fall, members of AU’s Alumni Relations team spoke with almost 600 of all May 2018 graduates. These calls have shaped the services that are offered to our newest alumni — services that include personal coaching on how to interview and write a résumé and cover letter.

Recent graduates can visit drop-in career services locations in the Institute for Collaboration and Dunham Hall and can also access online resources and meet with a career coach. In addition, the Alumni Relations staff provides recent graduates with a monthly electronic



newsletter that features articles related to the workplace, financial literacy, and healthy habits. Newsletter archives and other resources can be found at [alumni.aurora.edu](http://alumni.aurora.edu).

Now more than ever, recent graduates must be prepared for an ever-changing work environment, which means honing critical thinking and communication skills and a curiosity for learning. AU’s student-centered initiative helps to ensure that these graduates polish these skills on the way to exclaiming, “I got the job!”

A

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Jim Varney was my Honors Program mentor and helped me push my research and thinking around my project.”  
— Siri Nelson ’11

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER inspired ME...

“Ann Young in the Social Work Department challenged us to think outside the box, and the things I learned in her class have stayed with me in my career.”

— Rianna Schmidt ’17



Impact in Facts

Any Aurora University student can tell you in great detail the profound influence the institution has had on his or her life. But zoom out a bit — metaphorically, of course — and take a look around. You’ll find that AU has had an impact elsewhere — namely, the community. Periodically, we stop to assess exactly what this impact is. (To be perfectly honest, we hire an outside firm to do it.) In 2017–2018, AU provided the following benefits.

\$378 MILLION

Contribution to Chicagoland

\$63 MILLION

Contribution to Community of Aurora

\$2.5 MILLION

Contribution to Community of Aurora in Higher Expected Earnings of Students of John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School

\$149 MILLION

Contribution to Kane County

1,186

Jobs Supported (in Chicagoland)

Plus:

In 2017–2018, Aurora University’s George Williams College contributed \$10.9 MILLION to Walworth County, Wisconsin.





## Coaches Focus on Winning Culture

**D**an Ames and Matt Airy are new head coaches at Aurora University, and they both plan to launch the teams under their guidance — men's volleyball for Ames, men's basketball for Airy — to new pinnacles of victory. But they want you to know it's going to take textbooks and life lessons as much as it is drills and weight training to get there. To them, winning is important — don't get them wrong — but what the student-athletes get out of it is just as important, if not more so.

“For me, winning has always been about the relationships involved in competition,” explained Airy. “That’s always been the draw — the chance to build bonds with teammates while creating experiences that are exceptional and educational.”

Prior to coming to AU earlier this year, Airy was the associate head coach at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, his alma mater. There, he was part of a program that saw one of the most remarkable rises in history for a DIII school: eight consecutive winning seasons for a team that, over 25 previous seasons, experienced few wins. Other professional roles have been as lead assistant coach at Bellevue Community College

and director of Together We Can basketball camps for children, all based in Washington state.

Ames, who also began as coach this past spring, had far less distance to travel to his new position. A local native, he grew up in Addison. At the start of his career, he helped build the men's volleyball program at Dominican University, then moved to Lewis University before landing as an assistant head coach for North Central College's men's and women's team. He has also owned the Naperville Volleyball Club and the Pipeline Volleyball Club, with records that have seen teams reach second- and third-place spots in national championships.

In the following conversation, Ames and Airy talk about their hopes for their teams, along with the expectations they have for the student-athletes they coach.

### Q. What drew you to the overall athletics program here at Aurora University?



**Airy:** There are schools where the leaders create a separation between athletics and the educational mission. Winning becomes the be-all and end-all. There's no question about the success of Aurora University and its history of success in athletics. But what is exciting here — and what drew me in the first place — is that everybody, from President Sherrick on down, values winning for the right reasons.



**Ames:** As Matt said, in some places, students go to school to play sports but not to actually go to school, and they're able to get away with that. But it's different here. Ultimately, grades are what matter, not staying eligible to play volleyball.



**Airy:** At the end of the day, victories are not going to define the rest of the student-athletes' lives. What will define their lives is what they learn in pursuit of those victories. The idea that “if we're going to do something, let's try to be great at it for the educational benefit of that pursuit” is written all over this place. That's just been borne out every day since I've been here: pursuing every avenue to be our very best for the benefit of the student-athletes. AU is a place that embraces the lessons of the work.



**Ames:** It's a winning culture. There's a cliché that says if you're second, you're definitely not first. But this is a school that wants to win and do it in the right way. This is a university run by people who care about the student-athletes.

### Q. How do you inspire your athletes to be great students?



**Ames:** I think of these young men on the team as my kids. As such, I would rather them mess up here, around me, than in the real world. If they do

poorly in the classroom, they should man up. They should say, “I didn't do as well as I should have.” I give them the disappointed dad conversation, but I would rather them hear it from me. We talk about it and they learn. Sometimes they hate talking, but that's how we're going to get to the bottom of what caused them to make a poor decision in the classroom. And that's the connection. If you learn to be great off the court, you can easily be great on the court.



**Airy:** As coaches, our job is to get our guys to where they aspire to be. Some of them want to play professionally — but that's not a 40-year career goal. It just never is. We have goals and objectives for them outside of basketball. We're not recruiting anybody here just to play basketball. The idea is to get an education. Athletes choose a place like this — private and student-focused and relationship-driven — because they want to grow. That growth and its impact on getting them to where they want to be when they finish is the fundamental reason we're here as staff. They love basketball. They're passionate about it. So we make an equivalency between their ability to participate in their sport and their academic performance. Our focus is not eligibility. Our focus is on-time graduation, participating in internships, getting them set on career paths that they're excited about or at least exploring. If they're falling short of where they say they want to go, we hold them very accountable to that. If basketball has to be

## WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“I won't ever forget the knowledge Kathy Garrity shared with me. She pushed me to be a better student and teacher.”  
— Ninette Fowler '15


## WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...


“There were so many great professors, but I would not have thought to go to grad school without Ariel Ramirez.”  
— Amanda Luesmann Copeland '14




removed to keep them moving along that path, that’s what we’ll do.

Q. What do you enjoy about coaching?


 **Ames:** If we’re doing it right, our guys feel like they have incredible educational experiences on the court just as much as in the classroom. We want them to learn how to be critical of their successes and failures. There is a real shortfall if the players can’t look at wins critically and figure out what to do better. At the same time, they’re missing the boat if their losses are so damaging that they can’t find anything they’ve done well. The process of being able to get past the emotions of success or failure and figure out how to grow from it — that’s something that translates across the board. The opportunity to build an experience that helps these young men learn skills that they can apply going forward is as high a calling as there can be.

 **Airy:** When we talk about winning, what I’m really thinking about are the journeys that went into the winning. Focusing on the journey and the process, which are within control — as opposed to getting caught up with outcomes — is such an incredible life skill and is such a separator for those who are bound for success and for those who are not. Living a life that’s defined by an outcome, by something that’s intrinsically out of your control to an extent, is a quick route to an unhappy life. Having the opportunity to create those journeys and those opportunities for the students is just a real privilege and incredibly fulfilling for me.

Q. What are your teams’ strengths?


 **Airy:** Given its history in men’s basketball, AU is a place that attracts students who are competitive and who want to win. We’ve got some guys who are really passionate about that and are willing to make some

sacrifices along those lines. Lots of people want to see this become a program at the national level. Our guys are at the forefront of those people. In executing that, there are areas where we need to see growth, and one of those areas involves players having real ownership. How the athletes carry themselves across campus and in the classroom will play into their success. If they’re as concerned with how their actions reflect upon the team as they are about themselves, we’re in business. We have mechanisms that are designed specifically to give them that ownership.


 **Ames:** I would definitely say one strength these volleyball players have is their competitiveness and their desire to be great. Words are not actions, but their words have been positive in saying that they want all those things we’re planning on doing. The players are disciplined, but they’re going to be even more disciplined in areas beyond the sport itself. In my programs in the past, if a school needed something — needed a large number of people — they called us, not only because they knew the task was going to get done the right way but also because

they enjoyed hanging out with our young men. I want my guys to get along with Matt’s guys. I want the volleyball team to be Switzerland, to be that team on campus that gets along with everybody. If you need help with homework, that’s who you’re going to look to. That is the standard I’m hoping to set. With all the transfers coming in, that’s one thing we’ve sold them on. We’ve said, “You are going to be able to have a direct impact on the culture here at AU.” That’s helped get a couple of Division I kids in the door.


Q. How has recruiting been going?


 **Ames:** The transfer world has been exceptionally kind to us so far. What I want this program to be known for is why they’re sending athletes to us. For me, it’s a bit flattering that I’m being told, “I have


this kid who wants to transfer. I’m not going to reach out to anyone else other than you because of the structure of your program, your discipline, and caring more about setting them up for success than volleyball. That’s what this kid needs.” That’s really what I’ve tried to work hard for. It’s going well. We’ve got quite a few commitments.

 **Airy:** One of the attractive elements of this job is the success of AU historically. With 26 winning seasons in a row, it’s a pretty well-known program. Just about everyone is sticking around and excited for the next step forward. We’ve been trying to add a couple of pieces to enhance our group a bit, but the core is here. Most of our attention — specifically mine — has been in building relationships with local high school coaches and club coaches to ensure a great recruiting class for fall 2020. We’re also working with some out-of-region contacts and trying to create a net to catch prospective Aurora recruits across the country.


Q. Where do you see both of your teams down the road?

 **Airy:** From a technical standpoint, there’s going to be a lot to learn. We’re going to play a very different brand of basketball than any teams in the Midwest are right now. Most of those teams are trying to control their field goal percentage number. That’s very traditional. We’re going to play a little bit more of a possession game. We’re going to present more of an extended pressure. We will be disruptive defensively and then also versatile and interchangeable playing up and down.


 **Ames:** I’m looking forward to the future. For me, it’s a new beginning. I know the program is only two years old, but I like the pieces that we have. The recipe is there, now we’ll see how it gets mixed up and put together.


 **Airy:** Everyone wants to talk about wins and losses and outcomes, but if we’re measuring how good our program is, what we should see in a year is

guys with tight huddles, arm in arm. We should look like a group that really likes to be together and has a united focus, even when things aren’t going well. One thing we do in practice and games is chart how many times we huddle up. We emphasize how tight our huddles are. Within five years, we should be able to say that no one in the country looks like they want to play together more. No one in the country plays harder. No one in the country has more ownership over their style of play and their system. No one in the country is more resilient in their pursuit of trying to win. If we are those things, I think we’re going to be a national-level basketball program.

 **Ames:** The first step is always winning a conference, then winning a conference tournament. The third step is getting to that final four. Then comes winning the national championship. It will be a process. We just need to buy into the process and we’ll see what the future holds. I will say that I’m smiling. But as we’ve talked about, off the court is what we are going to care about first through this program.

Q. Is there anything you want alumni to know?

 **Airy:** One thing I want everyone to know is just how grateful I am to be here and how fortunate I feel to be at AU at this time. I’m pinching myself that I’m here at this juncture. It’s a really exciting time to be a part of all this. AU is headed for huge things. And I hope it’s a really exciting time to be an alum. I would love to hear from any basketball alums — or alums in general — who are just passionate about Spartan athletics because if they’re not in the fold, this is the time to get back in.

 **Ames:** These young men are going to do it right. I have no doubt that they’ll be successful. I think we’ve done a good job in the past with the staff we’ve had, but volleyball has become one of the flagship sports. It’s a great day to be a Spartan.

A

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“Laurel Church helped me get past my reluctance to speak in front of groups. The rest, as they say, is history. Thirty years later, I’ve announced innumerable broadcasts and sporting events.”

— Steve Moga ’88

WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

“Kristie Brendel had the biggest heart and influence in my graduate program. I was blessed to have met her my first semester, and I did everything I could to continue my grad program with her help and guidance.”

— Rita Vollmer ’15, ’17



## On Being Elite

During the 2018–2019 school year, athletic achievement met educational success when Aurora University golfer Lauren Anderson '19 and volleyball player Julia Wood '21 were honored with the NCAA's Elite 90 Award, presented to those who have two significant accomplishments on their record: the highest cumulative grade point average among peers playing their sport at multiple institutions *and* outstanding performance in athletic competition. (The requirements for the award include playing at the national level in one of the 90 championships sponsored by the NCAA.) For any institution, one student-athlete achieving Elite 90 status is exceptional. In the 10-year history of the award, however, only 17 other DIII schools have been able to boast about two winners in the same academic year — as now can AU.

For her major in elementary education, with a minor in special education, Wood has earned a 4.0 GPA and has been on the dean's list for her first two years at AU. The athletic accomplishments so early in her time at AU career are many: NACC First Team All-Conference in 2017 and 2018, NACC 2017 Defensive Player of the Year, 2017 Midwest All-Region team, 2017 Midwest Region Freshman of the Year, Gustavus Adolphus Regional All-Tournament Team in 2017, and 2017 Honorable Mention All-American by AVCA.

Still, she was shocked when her name was called during the ceremony announcing the awards. She says a B in her religion class gave her doubts about her chances to win. "When they called my name, my jaw dropped and I froze," she said. "I could not stop smiling. It was such an amazing surprise."

As for Anderson, she was an All-Conference player in 2015, 2016, and 2017 and an AU Scholar-Athlete all four years. In 2018, she was a College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) Academic All-America selection and was just recently named to the 2019 CoSIDA All-District team. Last October, she helped the AU women's golf team qualify for the NCAA DIII Championships by contributing to the winning team score at the NACC Championship.

During her four years at AU, she was an active member of the American Marketing Association chapter, for which she served as the vice president of sports marketing. In 2018, she was the leader of two competition teams that placed as national semifinalists. She maintained a 4.0 GPA during her time at AU and graduated summa cum laude this year. During the ceremony, she received a Gold Ivy Leaf Award, which AU confers for superior academic achievement.

Accepting an Elite 90 Award is nothing new for Anderson, who, incredibly, also won in 2017. "When you are surrounded by the best student-athletes in DIII women's golf, the last thing you think about is winning an award like the NCAA



Elite 90," she said. "Even though I won the award during my sophomore year, I was still very humbled to be chosen this year."

Today, much of Anderson's college experience converges in her position as the marketing coordinator for the Topgolf driving range in Naperville.

Wood, too, has her eye set on a career. After graduation, she hopes to head back to her native Indiana and teach first or second grade — and, of course, coach volleyball. She'll go with the pride of not only having won an Elite 90 Award but also having attended AU. "Being a Spartan is more than just being a student-athlete," she said. "It is being part of a family that has pushed me in the classroom and on the court."

A



## AU Scores Big in Learfield Cup

In Aurora University athletics, the 2018–2019 academic year was an exciting time to be a Spartan. The AU athletic program ended the year with its second highest finish ever — 61st out of more than 420 DIII athletic programs around the United States — in the Learfield Sports Directors' Cup Division III standings. (The only time AU has finished better was at 50th place with 329.10 points in 2014–2015.) And once again, AU was the top Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference (NACC) school in the final standings. It was the seventh consecutive year that AU led the way among NACC programs. AU's was the only program to finish in the top 75

with 299 points. The next school in the conference had 124.50 points in a distant 163rd place.

The Learfield Cup is a comprehensive ranking of intercollegiate athletic departments based on their participation in NCAA Championship events. It was developed as a joint effort between the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) and *USA Today*. Points are awarded based on each institution's finish in up to nine women's and nine men's sports.

The Spartans were represented by women's volleyball with 73 points following the program's first NCAA DIII Championship finals appearance, which placed the Spartans 69th through the fall rankings. In the winter, AU added points with indoor men's and women's track and field and men's basketball in the NCAA DIII

Championships, which accounted for 74 points in the winter rankings. Through the first two standings, AU placed 72nd with 147 points. In the spring, AU exploded to earn 152 points through the participation of women's golf, men's golf, baseball, and men's and women's track and field at NCAA DIII Championship events.

"Our final Learfield Cup ranking is a testament to the hard work and effort put forth by our student-athletes, coaches, and staff on a daily basis," said Director of Athletics Jim Hamad. "We had a very good year and continue with our aggressive plan to succeed in postseason competitions. We strive to offer an exemplary experience for our student-athletes, and postseason play is an integral component of meeting that goal. I am proud of what we have accomplished and even more excited for the bright future of AU athletics."

In 2018–2019, AU had nine teams or individuals compete at the NCAA DIII Championship level. That ties a mark set in the 2014–2015 and 2017–2018 seasons, and five team appearances tie a mark set in the 2009–2010 and 2017–2018 campaigns. AU had six teams (women's golf, women's volleyball, women's indoor track and field, men's golf, men's outdoor track and field, and women's outdoor track and field) win conference championships, while baseball and men's basketball won a conference tournament title and a bid to the NCAA tournament.

A

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Terry Shapiro not only delivered lessons but also took the time to serve as a mentor and asked motivating questions about my life and personal career goals. After graduation, he provided me the opportunity to return to his class as a guest speaker, which continued to be a motivating opportunity."

— Cody Fuerst '14

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Jen Buckley was one of my IDS professors. She took the time to get to know us personally even though we were a mix of majors, most of whom she would never have in class again. I'm thankful to say we are still in contact. Her student relationships gave me such inspiration when I first became a teacher."

— Tamara Allen Hettinger '11, '17



Through North Dakota State University's Pollination Nation experience, **Angelo Anacleto '20** participated in a 10-week research internship studying pollinators using molecular biology, field ecology, and genomics techniques.

After earning degrees in criminal justice and computer science, **Jon Birkey '19** began work as a software analyst with aerospace and defense technology company Northrup-Grumman.

**James Cain**, assistant professor of biology, became a board member of the Plant Based Nutrition Movement, a volunteer, nonprofit coalition of Chicago medical professionals, including physicians and cardiologists from Rush Copley Medical Center, who promote a whole-food, plant-based diet for optimizing health.

**Toussaint Egan '14** completed his Master of Arts in Digital Communication and Media Arts at DePaul University and is a contributing writer at *Paste* magazine.

**Alma Rodriguez Estrada**, associate professor of biology, attended the 9th International Conference on Mushroom Biology and Mushroom Products in Shanghai, China, where she was re-elected as treasurer for the World Society for Mushroom Biology and Mushroom Products.

**Zach Ferris '22** attended a class on the marine and island ecology of the

Bahamas through Shedd Aquarium. As part of the class, students spent nine days aboard Shedd's research vessel, *R/V Coral Reef II*. Ferris studies coral reef chemistry.

**Martin Forward**, professor of history, was invited to a formal dinner at Buckingham Palace. The invitation came from HRH The Princess Royal, a patron of the Woolf Institute, which studies religious tolerance. Forward is a cofounder and trustee of the Institute.

**Sara Gerend**, associate professor of English, was accepted to the National Endowment for the Humanities' Summer Institute at the Newberry Library in Chicago. She attended "Making Modernism: Literature and Culture in Chicago 1893-1955," a study of the city's contribution to the modernist movement.

**Janice Gries**, assistant dean of nursing at George Williams College, was one of 35 nursing faculty chosen to participate in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's "Digital Innovation Bootcamp," during which Apple educators taught techniques for creating digital content for students.

**Jasmine Moore '20** was hired as a faculty associate at Northwestern University's acclaimed National High School Institute, serving as a teaching assistant and assistant director for professional theatre practitioners from across the country.

**Nicole Pieart**, associate director of athletics for student-athlete well-being and senior woman administrator, was one of six women selected from a DIII school across the country for the Women Leaders in College Sports Executive Institute, an organization that helps promote women into leadership positions in college sports.

The Council of Independent Colleges selected **Sarah Radtke**, professor and chair of athletic training, as one of 41 administrators to participate in its 2019-2020 Senior Leadership Academy. Individuals chosen for the yearlong program have been identified as having the potential for more senior leadership positions in independent colleges or universities.

**Alec Tulsy '19** has joined an Interagency Hotshot Crew, an elite group of firefighters that respond to the worst forest fires. The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and other governmental agencies organize these crews.

**Stephanie Whitus**, professor of criminal justice, served as a grant reviewer for the U.S. Department of Justice's Upholding the Rule of Law and Preventing Wrongful Convictions Program, which is committed to protecting the integrity of the criminal justice system and the consistent application of due process for all citizens.



#### Parking Deck

In 2000, Aurora University enrolled fewer than 1,000 full-time students. Today, the university has grown to serve over 6,000 students, with about 2,500 driving to the Aurora campus from surrounding communities each semester. To accommodate this growth in traffic, we are constructing a four-story parking deck on the campus's southwestern corner, with spaces for more than 500 vehicles. Before construction, properties adjacent to the campus were purchased and existing office spaces were relocated. The deck will ease the lives of students when it opens later this year.



#### Roger and Marilyn Parolini Music Center

In August, music students returned to see major construction in process on the Roger and Marilyn Parolini Music Center. Crews worked diligently through the summer to fully renovate and expand the building, adding new rehearsal space and improving the overall structure. The building is scheduled to reopen in October.

The build-out includes 1,090 square feet of new space in the form of an ensemble room with 25-foot ceilings. The room is specially designed to maximize acoustics for both band and vocal performance. Six new acoustically controlled, sound-isolated practice rooms are also now available to students.

"One student can sing in a practice room and another student can practice piano in the room next door. They won't be able to hear each other," said Carmella Moran, vice president for administration.

"The Parolini renovation is a dream come true for the Music Department," said Lisa Fredenburgh, Music Department chair and director of choral activities. "To have a building that was so beautifully intentioned to help students learn music will give us a real boost as we continue to grow."

Other new features include four private faculty offices, a reception area, new humidity controls, and a rebuilt foundation — changing from dirt to much more stable concrete.

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Henry Kronner wanted to ensure he was sending quality social workers out into the field. He helped me see how my past life experiences could benefit me as a social worker."

— Myung Kim '87

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Without Bridgitte Barclay, I wouldn't have the passion for literature and teaching I do now. I loved literature when I started college, but she shaped it into a passion that I didn't even know was possible. She's real, she's relatable, and she's amazing at what she does."

— Sherry Becker '14



# Celebrating Arts and Ideas

## AT AURORA UNIVERSITY

2019-2020 SEASON

### MAIN STAGE SERIES

Every year, AU shines a spotlight on authors, entertainers, and artists engaging the community in the humanities and inviting audiences to explore issues at the forefront of society. Join us for these free events in Crimi Auditorium at AU's main campus.



JON  
MEACHAM  
"The Soul of America"

Monday, September 16, 2019



JOAN  
CURTO  
"Broadway to Big Band"

Saturday, October 5, 2019



ALEX  
KOTLOWITZ  
"An American Summer:  
Emerging from the Gun  
Violence of Our Cities"

Tuesday, November 5, 2019



JACQUELINE  
WOODSON  
"Brown Girl Dreaming"

Tuesday, January 21, 2020



VOCES8  
"Enchanted Isle"

Tuesday, February 25, 2020



JESSIE CLOSE AND  
CALEN PICK  
"Inside the World of  
Mental Illness: From  
Stigma to Acceptance"

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

TO REGISTER, VISIT [AUARTSANDIDEAS.COM](http://AUARTSANDIDEAS.COM) OR CALL 630-844-4924.

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Pamela Wicks always inspired me to push myself further and was even there for me after I graduated and started feeling the pressures of the 'real world.' She was an amazing professor, and I know she will always be there for me."  
— Alyssa Mok '17

## All Steamed Up: The *Robert W.*

**A**mong the many variables that prompted growth of the Geneva Lake area toward the end of the 1800s was the expansion of a Chicago & North Western Railway line from Chicago to Williams Bay in 1888. At water's edge, passengers disembarked the train and boarded steam yachts that transported them to their lakefront destinations. It was not uncommon to see yachts — with names like *Mocking Bird*, *Whitecap*, *Rambler*, *Passaic*, and *Whileaway* — lined up at the docks awaiting their owners. Although many of the steamers were privately owned, commercial vessels served as water taxis and errand boats for visitors.

Enter the *Robert W.*, a steam yacht purchased by the newly formed Western Secretarial Institute in 1884, some two years before founders Robert Weidensall, William Lewis, and Isaac Eddy Brown established a YMCA training camp on the shore of Geneva Lake — what in time would become George Williams College. Rather than rely on one of the commercial steamers, the *Robert W.* was dispatched to bring camp workers and visitors to and from the train station. The 45-foot vessel had been built in Racine, Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, the camp's ownership of the steamer was short-lived. For unknown reasons, the *Robert W.* was sold and taken to Lake Delavan in 1886, where it was destroyed by fire the following year.

**A**



In the late 19th century, travelers could detrain in Williams Bay (top). The *Robert W.* (middle and bottom) was in service for those heading specifically to the Western Secretarial Institute.

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Stephanie Whitus was my favorite and most influential professor. She sparked my love of criminal justice and was always there for anything her students needed."

— Victoria Martin '15



# JOE DUNHAM

## DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ETHICS

Joe Dunham spent more than four decades as a member of the Aurora College and Aurora University community. In so many ways, he embodied all that is good and true about an AU education. Every day in his classes, he guaranteed that vital content in the field of philosophy remained an important part of studies here.

The outpouring of love and respect that followed Joe's death earlier this year was remarkable. Alumni and friends throughout the country shared their memories and appreciation with the university and with the Dunham family.

With the support and encouragement of his wife, Ida, and their family, we have established the Joe Dunham Distinguished Professorship in Ethics in memory of our

colleague, mentor, teacher, and friend. Annual earnings from the endowment will be used to supplement the salary of the teacher and scholar who will serve the university community as the first Joe Dunham Distinguished Professor in Ethics.

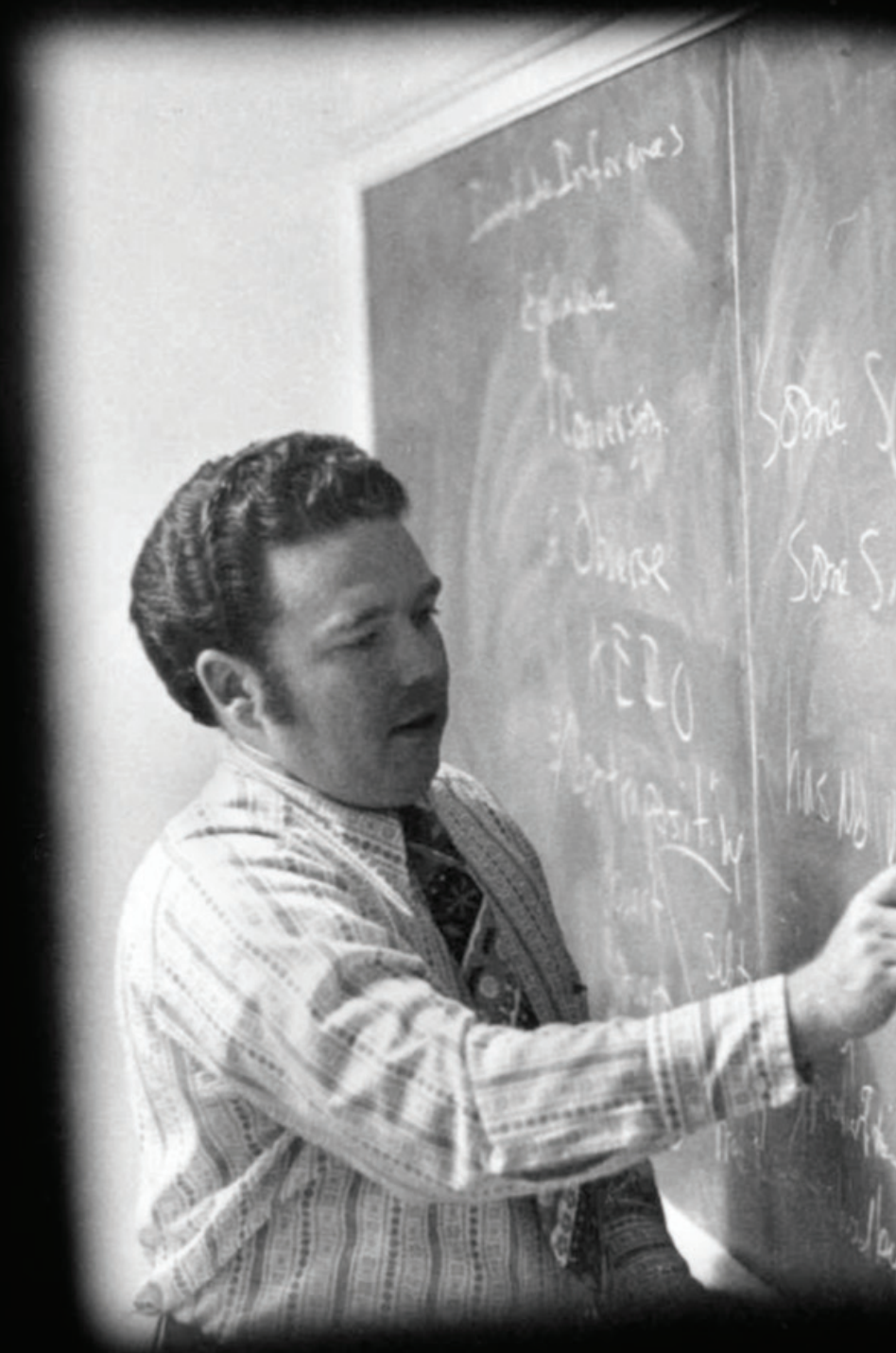
By establishing this new endowed professorship, we honor Joe and his legacy. Now we seek your support for the professorship created in his name. If you would like to help, contact **Vice President for Alumni Relations Teri Tomasziewicz** at **630-844-5511** or **ttomaszk@aurora.edu**. You may also return your gift using the envelope on the opposite page.

A

### WHICH FACULTY MEMBER *inspired* ME...

"Even after 47 years, I still have memories of many members of the faculty. If I had to name names, it would be Moses and Dorothy Crouse. (Mostly because of the fudge!)"

— Chris Beauchamp Shuman '70







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## CONNECT WITH US

Keep in touch! Aurora University is your university, and we want you to stay up-to-date about everything happening around the Aurora University and George Williams College campuses.

