



AURORA UNIVERSITY

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DISCOVER WHAT MATTERS. AND BUILD YOUR LIFE AROUND IT.

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About the Cover
In poet Robert Frost’s well-known poem “The Road Not Taken,” a traveler explains where two paths diverged, he took the road less traveled by and that made all the difference. As spring blooms outside Eckhart Hall, the poem is a reminder that we at Aurora University find meaning and purpose by discovering and following our own paths.



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PRESIDENT’S LETTER

We assembled this edition of the *Aurora University Magazine* before the full impact of the COVID-19 emergency became apparent. Today, as I write this letter, our campuses are closed and our curriculum has moved online. This is the time of year when our days usually are filled with recitals, presentations, ball games, concerts, research symposia, preparations for commencement and banquets. Not this year. Like so many across America, we are adapting. We are thinking about the greater good and teaching new skills, albeit familiar values. If there ever was a moment to “discover what matters,” it is this one.

Years ago, I noted that both the Aurora University and George Williams College seals reflected the power of education to illuminate. One displayed a torch and the other a lamp, symbolic testimonies to the light of knowledge. Even in this difficult time, we continue to teach and to learn. Though it is too early to tell for sure, my hope is that this interval will have important benefits. Remote instruction requires the students to take more responsibility for their own growth. Faculty members continue to share good reports about the overall educational experience. I hear the same from many AU and GWC students.

A few weeks from now, I will mark the 20th anniversary of my arrival at Aurora University. For the most part, my goal is to keep attention focused on other members of our institutional family in publications. On this occasion, however, I made an exception. Colleagues in University Communications prepared a long list of questions, and I spent many hours at the kitchen table crafting answers. I even invited a photographer to the house to take some new photos. Each time we were ready, my dog Tango would bound into the frame to join me. Finally, we took some posed pictures of the two of us together on the staircase, and he was satisfied.

With all of this work behind us, we spent a little time contemplating the right cover photo for the spring magazine. We had two options — a commencement-ready shot of our Spartan (now on the inside cover) or a photo of Eckhart Hall with a garden in the foreground. I selected the latter for the cover since it is the pathway I’ve walked every day for the last two decades. Both portend all that is wonderful about our university. This year, commencement will come a little later than usual due to the health emergency. But graduate we will. Another procession of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral students will celebrate with family and friends, walk across the stage and take their places as citizens, family members and leaders. Our garden will bloom.

As has been the case for so many decades on our campuses in Wisconsin and Illinois, we will turn from saying goodbye to welcoming a new cohort of students arriving to begin their studies. Summer will give way to fall and a new academic year will dawn. And so we will renew our university and continue to keep the promises we make to each new generation. Depressions, recessions, world wars, and now a pandemic will test our resolve, strengthen our character and challenge our ingenuity. So is life. The flame of knowledge may flicker momentarily, but it will not be dimmed. We will believe tomorrow, as we did yesterday and today, in the “transformative power of learning.” Be well.

A
Rebecca L. Sherrick

REBECCA L. SHERRICK
PRESIDENT



20/20 VISION

On her 20th anniversary as Aurora University president, Dr. Rebecca L. Sherrick talks about her first impressions of the university, what it means to take the road less traveled, and the exciting initiatives ahead for AU.

Was higher education always your calling?

Yes. I grew up in a small town with a courthouse square and a college. I loved stopping by our family drugstore after school. My dad and grandfather alternated between the prescription room and the soda fountain, which was a very popular “hangout” for students and faculty from the college. Campus activities were the center of community life. As children, we loved to try to sneak into the gym or to play in the end zone at half time or to eat in the dining hall with a favorite babysitter. There was even a two-headed stuffed calf in the college museum. What could be better? And then, when I was about 10, the college relocated to a larger community. I remember the sadness that enveloped the town as best friends moved away and the campus emptied. In retrospect, the entire experience created for me the impression that there is something truly magical about a college. I still believe this, by the way.

2000

- » Rebecca L. Sherrick, PhD, inaugurated as president of AU, first woman to hold the office since the institution’s 1893 founding
- » Doctor of Education degree established, marking the first doctoral program in AU history



2001

- » *Music by the Lake* summer music festival revived at GWC*
- » Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action created

*George Williams College

2002

- » Mug Café remodeled, renamed Spartan Spot
- » Wilkinson Hall renovated
- » Construction begins on addition to Jenks Hall



2003

- » Winston Paul Lodge constructed at GWC with lodging, classrooms, meeting/office space
- » Oak and Hickory residential halls constructed at GWC

Why did you come to AU 20 years ago?

I taught history for 10 years at a small university in Wisconsin, then served as a senior administrator for another decade. When I saw the position announcement for the AU presidency, I knew already a little about the institution. One of my favorite colleagues was an Aurora College graduate who sometimes spoke with fondness of her undergraduate years. I knew also of the George Williams College campus in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, near Lake Geneva and its historic connection to the YMCA, and was intrigued by the idea of helping to cement the merger of the two institutions. During the search process, I grew even more interested. As I listened closely to the perspectives of trustees, faculty, staff, and alumni, I learned of their shared affection for students. Speakers sometimes differed when it came to other questions, but all cared deeply about the welfare of students and helping them realize their full potential. I do too.

“Often new presidents are asked to share a vision for the future. I actually understand the role a little differently. I believe the work of a leader is to give voice to the beliefs and aspirations already present within the group.”

What is your vision for AU? Has it changed since you arrived here?

Often new presidents are asked to share a vision for the future. I actually understand the role a little differently. I believe the work of a leader is to give voice to the beliefs and aspirations already present within the group. Two decades ago, the merger between Aurora and George Williams was still new, and it wasn't clear how the two schools would mesh. There were other questions too.

Some hoped to emphasize traditional undergraduate learning and others believed that the future called for focusing increased attention on the needs of adults and graduate students. As a newcomer, I saw an opportunity to draw upon both perspectives to create a vibrant new identity for the university.

I arrived on campus just in time to begin preparations for a reaccreditation visit by a team from the Higher Learning Commission. The first step in such a process is to review vital institutional documents, such as the Mission Statement. Our conversations about this project were rich and wide-ranging. The language that emerged from this discussion gave voice to our shared belief that education changes lives for the better. Later, the HLC representatives joined us on campus and the group's chair inquired about the Mission Statement. The AU faculty and staff stood and recited the statement from memory. My hope is that we will continue — day by day — to become a better version of ourselves as we cherish our distinctive strengths and traditions and extend them into the future.

Sometimes, when you talk about the university's future, you refer to a poem by Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken.” The traveler in the poem comes to a crossroads in the woods and takes the road less traveled, saying, “that has made all the difference.” Why does that poem resonate with you and with your vision for AU?

I do like to read Robert Frost, sometimes with a side of Carl Sandburg. I am drawn to the powerful imagery in their work, especially renderings of the rural scenes that

were such a part of my childhood. I spent many Sunday afternoons in the back seat of my grandparents' big black Oldsmobile as we drove down gravel and dirt roads on our way to a relative's home. The roads were largely unmarked and unnamed. I always wondered how they knew where to turn. So I have a particular affection for the narrator who contemplates a crossroad. Critics interpret the decision in the poem in a number of ways, of course. I read Frost through the lens of childhood.

So how does this relate to AU? Often in higher education, we play “follow the leader,” emulating better-known institutions. We follow worn and familiar paths. Clayton Christensen, a recently deceased professor at Harvard Business School, wrote about this tendency in his work on higher education. He advocated for “disruptive innovations,” strategies that create new markets and value networks. Eventually, Christensen concluded, these innovations have the potential to displace existing forms, products, and alliances. In other words, when we take the road less traveled, we are at liberty to do things differently. At AU, we chose such a strategy two decades ago when we set our tuition well below that of peers.

Is this what you sometimes call the “value proposition?”

Yes, although increasingly I think of our strategy as a “value and values proposition.” At AU, we believe that it is possible to offer students a high-quality education at an affordable price. We place a high priority on managing the university carefully in order to sustain this commitment. Several years ago, we had an opportunity to draw upon this value system in a different circumstance. A political deadlock in Illinois threatened the availability of scholarship dollars for the state's neediest students. Colleges and universities responded to this crisis in different ways. Some expected students to cover the gap in state dollars themselves. A few

even announced that they would withhold the diplomas of students with outstanding bills.

It was a frightening period for Illinois students and families, and likely it will take time before this unhappy memory fades. We chose a less-traveled road at Aurora University. As the news from Springfield grew more worrisome, our campus communities rallied to help AU students. Faculty and staff agreed to a salary freeze. Moreover, they consented to suspend their retirement benefits so that the university could target as many dollars as possible to assisting students. It was extraordinary. Then, when the crisis passed, the Board of Trustees invested in a generous lump sum restoration of the retirement benefit. I've never been so grateful to work at Aurora University.

You just mentioned the Board of Trustees. Can you talk about the role trustees play in the life of the university?

Of course. Our Board of Trustees, like the faculty and staff, demonstrate their commitment to fulfillment of our mission every day. For years, trustees were viewed primarily as fiduciaries focused on maintaining the bottom line and increasing generational equity. Now they are as responsible for student learning outcomes as they are for the balance sheet. As president, my job is to act in behalf of our trustees on campus. I've been honored to work with and learn from our board members, especially the four wonderful chairs. Our trustees have a strong interest in institutional strategy, the broad direction AU will pursue over the years ahead. Ultimately, they are student advocates, taking care to ensure that the university fulfills its promises to students. Their favorite occasion is commencement, where they process with the faculty, sit in the front row, and enjoy every minute of our graduates' success.

2004

- » Music Center named for Roger and Marilyn Parolini in celebration of their 50 years of service to AU

2005

- » Perry Theatre renovated



2006

- » AU joins newly formed Northern Athletics Conference, later renamed the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference (NACC)
- » Undergraduate program expands with new focus on arts, religion, special education
- » *Celebrating Arts and Ideas* debuts with free community cultural events
- » Institute for Collaboration opens



2007

- » Crouse Center for Student Success created
- » Men's basketball hosts NCAA DIII regional championship tournament
- » Beasley Campus Center at GWC renovated with dining hall, offices, study space

2008

- » *Music by the Lake* summer festival moves into the newly built Ferro Pavilion at GWC
- » Football/soccer field renovated, renamed Vago Field
- » Former GWC Dean Sandra Alcorn publishes “Strong Roots: A Group Memoir of George Williams College”
- » Meyer Hall renovation at GWC adds faculty offices, classrooms, computer lab



2009

- » Woodstock Center opens in Woodstock, Illinois
- » First cohort of AU Honors Program students graduates

These are complicated times for higher education. The public is concerned about escalating costs and the heavy burden of student debt. Some question whether tuition is a good investment. How is AU positioned for the future?

We have a wonderful tradition at AU of welcoming new populations of students to higher education. When the soldiers came home from World War II, our predecessors in Aurora responded with an innovative evening schedule that allowed veterans to combine study with work and family responsibilities. George Williams College relied upon its YMCA network to recruit international students, well ahead of peer institutions. In many ways, these examples have inspired current strategies. At AU, we try to recognize external trends and be proactive. Currently, our student demographics reflect those of the nation as a whole. Over a third of our undergraduates are Latinx. This capacity to welcome new populations to higher education bodes well for our future.

Your latest initiative is to bring college-capable students on the autism spectrum to study at AU. Only a few higher education institutions have created such a path for students with autism. Tell us about your plans and why AU believes it is so important to pursue this initiative now.

According to government sources, 1 in every 59 infants born in the United States eventually will have an autism spectrum diagnosis. Many of these children will mature as college-capable students who have much to share on campus and in the workplace. At AU, we are responding to this information with a three-part agenda. First, we are committed to readying all of our students for leadership and success in tomorrow's increasingly diverse work environment. Second, we hope to welcome college-capable undergrads on the spectrum to our campuses and to



support them in attainment of their educational aspirations. Next, we want to prepare bachelor's- and advanced-degree recipients to work with individuals on the spectrum and their families. As we fulfill these institutional goals, we may also have a chance to provide additional programs and resources to hometown communities.

We've been quietly working on this agenda for five years. Already, the university has a number of academic programs in support disciplines. Our new autism studies curriculum is ready for introduction next year. A program director will join us this spring. Plans call for offering our first summer transitional program in 2021 as we provide the resources and information that students and their families need to frame their college plans. AU piloted such a program several years ago in collaboration with peers from a college on the East Coast that specializes in serving neurodiverse students. Now we are ready to take the next steps.

Our journey already has been inspirational. A year ago, we began to share our plans with elected officials and business and community leaders throughout the Chicago area. Each time, we heard a familiar refrain. Individuals responded by sharing their own hopes for a favorite niece or grandson or child. These powerful emotional exchanges only deepened our resolve to do this work. And we have some wonderful new friends for AU as a result — from

leaders at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange to artists from the Joffrey Ballet. As one of my favorite faculty friends says, "We've got this!"

You've also created a new path to a college degree at GWC for students who didn't perform well academically in high school — students who may have battled physical or mental health issues or had family challenges.

A year ago, we were talking about building enrollment at George Williams when our Wisconsin faculty and staff shared an exciting idea. After reflecting upon the success stories that unfold each year at GWC, they proposed a new program designed to serve students who didn't perform well academically in high school. Here's an example. Imagine a high school student who plays many roles in his or her home and consequently graduates from high school with a mixed academic record. On the surface, this student might not be admissible to college ... until a personal interview reveals the full story about the family crisis that occurred several years earlier. Approximately 20 students with such experiences enrolled last fall in Wisconsin. Almost all are making good academic progress. In fact, several appear ready to enter our highly competitive nursing program. This is work that our world needs — and we do it very well!

And the Woodstock Center? What is happening there?

To date, we have focused on providing adult degree completion and advanced degree programming to McHenry County residents from our enrollment center just off the historic square in Woodstock, Illinois. This year, for example, we are implementing innovative new teacher education strategies in the area — thanks to a successful grant. Now we are discussing the introduction of undergraduate degree options. I think we will continue to grow in McHenry County, a location that sits partway between Aurora and Williams Bay.

There is another important initiative underway at AU. We have heard in the news media and higher education circles for years that the writing skills of American students are lacking. Can you talk about the new writing initiative being planned for AU?

Our vice president for academic affairs and his faculty colleagues are hard at work on a university-wide effort to improve student writing. Last July, as we began to talk with Board of Trustees members about this issue, they encouraged us to do more. Not long ago, I learned more about the educational strategies we will employ throughout the university. It is promising and important work.

The arts are important to you. The *Music by the Lake*, *Sundays at 4*, and *Celebrating Arts and Ideas* programs are crucial community outreach initiatives. Can you talk about this?

I feel a story coming on. My little hometown was filled with music. For several years before my brother and sisters were born, our family lived next door to the chair of the college's music department and his wife. On Saturday mornings, I went to their house to watch cartoons ... with the sound turned off. They provided their own musical

2010

- » Hamlin Welcome Center at GWC dedicated
- » Letourneau Opus 119 pipe organ installed at Crimi Auditorium
- » Alumni Hall expanded with a new annex for nursing and social work programs



2011

- » Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action moves into new home
- » Men's lacrosse added

2012

- » AU celebrates 100 years in Aurora, after moving from its birthplace in Mendota, Illinois
- » Mabel Cratty Building at GWC renovated
- » Men's hockey added

2013

- » Centennial Hall, AU's sixth residence hall, opens
- » Women's lacrosse added
- » AU Online launches
- » Rita Yerkes and Wilma Miranda publish "Enduring Vision: From an Encampment to a Distinctive College," a history of GWC



2014

- » John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School opens
- » Alternative Spring Break student volunteer program launches
- » *Sundays at 4* cultural series established at GWC

2015

- » Thornton Gym renovated with new bleachers, Hall of Fame mezzanine
- » Hill Welcome Center built, housing Ethel Tapper Recital Hall and Schingoethe Center
- » Chaplaincy Endowment created
- » Libby's Place food pantry, Spartan Attic clothes closet open
- » Women's bowling added



accompaniment. Even after the college moved, music remained important. My parents insisted that all four of us take piano and instrumental lessons. Voice too. In the summers, the community came together to stage popular musicals. To this day, I can still recite much of the libretto from “The Music Man” by heart.

I admire artistry and creativity. Moreover, I think our world desperately needs more beauty. It’s been a joy to experience the return of music and theatre to AU. Our faculty is gifted, and our students are enthusiastic learners.

Each year, we welcome outstanding performers and speakers to our campuses. Last spring, when the Joffrey Ballet made its first appearance on the Aurora campus, little girls in tutus filled the Crimi lobby. On other occasions, speakers draw audiences interested in history or science or current events. The roster of visitors to our campuses is amazing. And I am thrilled that we offer these programs free of charge, a gift to our students and to our hometowns.

Speaking of thrills, doesn’t this summer mark the 20th anniversary of *Music by the Lake*?

Absolutely! Twenty years ago, we dreamed of reviving a beloved Geneva Lake tradition from the 1950s and 1960s. And so we took a deep breath, pitched a tent, and invited the lake community to a festival weekend at George Williams. Our new tent, a gift from the Allyn Family Foundation, sat on exactly the same spot occupied by the historic auditorium that GWC alumni will remember. Eventually we outgrew the tent and built the current Ferro

Pavilion. Each summer, the moonlight dances across the lake as our audience members share memorable moments together. This summer, we look forward to reprising a few favorites and introducing a number of new artists to the lake community. I think of *Music by the Lake* as our own special version of “Brigadoon,” the mysterious Scottish village that appears through the mist for one day every century.

And Tango, how does he feel about *Music by the Lake*?

Well, to be honest, he usually sleeps through each concert.

Tango and I have a room at George Williams, where we stay when on the Wisconsin campus. Of course, he absolutely loves both campuses. Still, he gets really special treatment at GWC. The path between our room and the door to the dining hall is well-worn. He particularly likes a piece of bacon or two with

his dog food. Maybe we should explain that Tango is my 12-year-old wheaten terrier. Thanks for asking.

You have often said that AU is a private school with a very public agenda. Can you explain what you mean by that?

The first obligation of a college or university is to fulfill its promises to students. This is always our highest priority at Aurora University. Sometimes, we have special opportunities to help our students and the larger community. Here’s a quick example: A number of years ago, we learned that juvenile crime rates were increasing between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. in Aurora. We saw a chance to help by developing a citywide after-school program. Elementary and middle school students, AU undergraduates, and the community as a whole benefited.

“I admire artistry and creativity. Moreover, I think our world desperately needs more beauty. It’s been a joy to experience the return of music and theatre to AU.”



Our own students gained valuable work experience. Their younger counterparts enjoyed educational and recreational activities between the time when the school day ended and when their parents arrived home, and the crime rate among participating populations declined.

Perhaps the most visible example of our commitment to public engagement is the John C. Dunham STEM Partnership School. Students from four public school districts attend grades 3-8 in the STEM School, which is located on our Aurora campus. Partners from the government, nonprofits, education, and business came together to craft the school’s distinctive real-time curricular framework. Now they work with classroom teachers from our collaborating school districts to deliver a truly exceptional educational experience. The evidence is

remarkable as our STEM School students consistently surpass by a large margin the scores of peers in Illinois. Now we regularly share professional development and learning insights with others. In Chicago, a similar effort, modeled upon our own, is underway in the North Lawndale neighborhood.

The STEM School story is remarkable. What else about AU might surprise people?

Late each spring, we welcome incoming freshmen and their parents for an orientation program called AU4U. As I interact with parents, many tell me how pleased they are to have their children coming to AU. They comment on our evident dedication to students. Frequently they mention also the beauty of the campus and the attention to detail apparent in all we do. I hear something else too. Parents tell me how pleased they are to hear faculty and staff speak with a single voice. This is true in Aurora and it is true at George Williams too. And, as we begin to welcome undergraduates to the Woodstock Center, I am confident we will hear the same message. It is this selfless spirit that I find so powerful and compelling.

We will draw from this deep reservoir in the years ahead. I see a bright and vibrant future for our university as we reach out to welcome more students, faculty, and staff to our campuses over the next decade. Our work is singular, focused completely on the needs of our students. We find empowerment in affirming the potential of each Aurora University student to lead a full and meaningful life and make a positive difference in the lives of others. When we claim our mission as “an inclusive community dedicated to the transformative power of learning,” we renew historic promises and take hold of our future.

A

2016

- » Spartan Hideaway coffee shop opens
- » All-American room created in Alumni Hall, recognizing student-athletes
- » Music program performs AU’s first fully staged opera, “Dido and Aeneas”
- » Lancaster Court unveiled at Thornton Gymnasium
- » Junior Mentoring Program created
- » Lowrey Hall at GWC renovated, includes Scott Library
- » GWC graduates first class of traditional undergraduates

2017

- » Spartan Athletic Park opens
- » Women’s hockey, men’s volleyball added
- » Discover What Matters course created for all freshmen
- » Michael J. Birck Collaboration Center for Innovation opens
- » Labyrinth created outside Wackerlin Center, a Class of ’67 gift
- » Smithsonian Institution awards Schingoethe Center affiliate status
- » Roger Parolini Endowed Professorship in Music created
- » GWC introduces nursing program, opens Simms Family Nursing Center

2018

- » AU celebrates 125th anniversary
- » Study Beyond Endowment created
- » Women’s volleyball places sixth in NCAA DIII national rankings
- » Plus One fast-track graduate degree programs introduced
- » Samuel Bedrosian Softball Stadium opens
- » New chapel and scripture garden unveiled at GWC
- » *Music by the Lake* hosts 100th concert, featuring Three Dog Night
- » Super Bowl champion Don Beebe named head football coach

2019

- » Spartan football team wins 2019 NACC championship
- » Center for Student Success expands across campus
- » Four-story parking garage built
- » Parolini Music Center renovated and expanded
- » Joe Dunham Endowment in Ethics established
- » Jeanne Norris Garden opens at GWC
- » Pathways to Discovery program launches at GWC



COACH BEEBE USHERS IN A NEW ERA FOR AU FOOTBALL

In his inaugural season, the former Super Bowl champion led the Spartans to their first NCAA playoff in a decade.

Ever since he was a child, Don Beebe has been going with family members on a two-week fishing trip in June to Minnesota. Over the years, this annual excursion has grown to 54 immediate and extended family members. It is this strong sense of tradition and family values the former NFL wide receiver and Super Bowl champion is bringing to Aurora University as he launches a new era for Spartan football.

In his inaugural season as head football coach, Beebe led the Spartans to the 2019 Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference (NACC) championship with a perfect 7-0 record. The team went on to participate in the NCAA Division III playoffs for the first time in more than a decade.

"Family is very important to me, and our football players needed to know that we're family," said Beebe, 55, a native of Aurora who has four children, two of whom currently attend AU. "We support each other, and I believe this has helped our success this past season."

When Beebe arrived at AU in late 2018 after 14 years of coaching football at Aurora Christian High School, he had one goal for the Spartans from a football standpoint: to win the national

championship. But his No. 1 goal as a coach has been to cultivate discipline, character, and a never-give-up attitude among the young athletes.

"When I got here and took the podium for the first time and stood in front of the guys, I told them, 'I'm not looking for average. I don't care what you look like. I don't even so much care about your athletic ability. What I care about is: Are you all in?'" Beebe said.

Beebe quickly realized that he had to adjust the mindset of the team. The players wanted to advance and do well, but didn't see themselves winning national titles.

"They just never thought those thoughts," Beebe said. "We had to change to a positive mentality."

A positive attitude was just the beginning. If the Spartans wanted to be the best, they would have to train harder than anyone else. Beebe doubled off-season training sessions, from three times a week to six. Through countless practices, Bible studies, and workouts, the team started to come together.

"Sports, especially football, are played on emotions," Beebe said. "When you invest more time and effort, it's harder to give up."



Head Coach Don Beebe was named NACC Coach of the Year.



Quarterback Gavin Zimbelman was the NACC Offensive Player of the Year and a finalist for the Gagliardi Trophy.



A HISTORY OF AU FOOTBALL

1900: The first documented AU football game takes place at Mendota College, in Mendota, Illinois. Mendota College later moves to Aurora and is renamed Aurora University.

1912: The football squad schedules a season of games against local high schools and colleges.

1929: The football team takes the name the Spartans. The newly christened team has a season record of four wins and three losses.

1952: Except for breaks during World Wars I and II, the football tradition continues until 1952, when the program is disbanded.

1985: AU reinstates football and hires Jim Scott as head coach to rebuild the program. A year later, the Spartans play their first game in over 30 years. Within two years, Scott leads the team to five consecutive winning seasons.

1992: The Spartans go undefeated, with a perfect 9-0 season, and become the first Chicagoland team ever to participate in the NCAA Division III football playoffs.

1998: AU joins the Illini-Badger Football Conference and wins the first three conference championships, in 1998, 1999, and 2000.

2000: The Spartans earn a spot in the NCAA DIII playoffs for the second time.

2008: AU football joins the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference and wins the inaugural NACC football championship.

2018: Former NFL wide receiver and Super Bowl champion Don Beebe is hired as head coach.

2019: The Spartans win the NACC championship for the first time in more than a decade.

**“The coach said if we believe in ourselves, we can achieve anything — and we did.”
— Quarterback Gavin Zimbelman**

The 2019 season also marked the ascension of quarterback Gavin Zimbelman, a junior from Manteno, Illinois, majoring in Sport Management and Business Administration. He was named an Academic All-American. And he earned a spot as one of five finalists for the 2019 Gagliardi Trophy, the premier individual award in NCAA DIII football, recognizing excellence in athletics, academics, and community service.

“I don’t think Gavin realized just how good he really was. Once he had this confidence, his whole demeanor changed and this confidence spread to the rest of the team,” Beebe said.

Zimbelman, for his part, said he was surprised at how well the team played this season, calling it a turnaround year.

“We came out and shocked ourselves on just how good everything was going,” Zimbelman said. “The coach said if we believe in ourselves, we can achieve anything — and we did.”

Beebe, for his part, spent nine years in the NFL, mostly with the Buffalo Bills. He played in six Super Bowl games, winning one. But it was his strong work ethic and drive that made him famous.

In one of the most memorable clutch plays in Super Bowl history, Beebe, a Buffalo Bill at the time, relentlessly chased a Dallas Cowboys defensive tackle down the field. The overconfident Cowboy held the ball away from his body and began to dance, celebrating the touchdown one yard before he crossed the goal line, only to be shocked when Beebe came from behind and knocked the ball out of his hand to prevent the score.

Winning Means Finding Players with Character

“Hiring Beebe has raised the ceiling for recruiting and AU’s drive to compete on a national level,” said Jim Hamad, assistant vice president of student life and director of athletics at AU. “While we are thrilled to have an NFL veteran coach our student-athletes, it’s Don’s mentorship on and off the field that is most exciting.”

Before taking the head coach job at AU, Beebe was watching film of an AU game against Lakeland University and noticed how one player — No. 19 — was on the sidelines jumping up and down, cheering for the team. That player was

then-freshman Halen Miller from Gonzales, Louisiana, majoring in Exercise Science.

“He never played one down, and I noticed that,” said Beebe. “I didn’t really notice who was scoring touchdowns. I was just noticing No. 19. I always look for character. I want to know character. I can win with guys like that.”

Conner Nordmeyer, a sophomore from Lindenhurst, Illinois, who is in the Pre-Physical Therapy program, decided to attend AU after meeting Beebe.

“The coach recruits on more than just football ability; he recruits heavily on character,” said defensive back Nordmeyer. “He is big on grades, and wants the team to have a 3.0 average. And he doesn’t want people talking smack and wants us to respect each other on and off the field.”

The hard work paid off when the Spartans came together for the 2019 season opener at Spartan Athletic Park this past September. Beebe unleashed a powerhouse team that scored a 50-40 win over St. Norbert College, at the time ranked 25th nationally in preseason DIII football.

By the time the 2019 season ended, the Spartans catapulted into the top 25 DIII football programs nationwide with an overall 9-2 record. And Beebe became the first AU head coach to earn the D3football.com North Region Coach of the Year Award.

“I knew the first day we met that this team was hungry,” said Beebe. “And then to see the process of their hard work in the off-season. They were motivated.”

As excited as the team and coach were during this season, there was a special group of spectators who also reveled in the Spartans’ success: namely, the parents of the players.

“My son told me he never had such fun playing football,” said Mildred Palmer, whose son, Grant Palmer, a Business Administration major and senior from Arlington Heights, Illinois, plays on the offensive line. “This year, practice was super organized, with no wasted effort, no long transitions, and no screaming or yelling. Instead, there was music, and laughter, and dancing on the field.”

Zimbelman’s mother, Annette, agreed. “Coach Beebe challenges and inspires his players to not be average thinkers and to dream big. That way of thinking has filtered down to parents, students, alumni, and the entire Spartan community.”








Beebe and his team will return to action in the 2020 season on Saturday, Sept. 5, when they travel to Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

“Success breeds success,” Beebe noted. “The team will be even more driven for the 2020 season.”



FOOTBALL TEAM RECORDS *BROKEN IN 2019*

The 2019 Spartan football season was a remarkable, record-setting campaign. The Spartans concluded the season with a school-record-tying nine wins with a 9-2 overall record, the program’s fifth NCAA playoff appearance, and the seventh conference championship with a perfect 7-0 record. The AU offense ranked among the best NCAA Division III teams in seven categories. And the Spartans set a total of seven new team season records.*

 Attempts 443 (2019) 330 (2010)	 Completions 287 (2019) 189 (2012)	 Touchdown Passes 57 (2019) 29 (2012)	 Points Scored 541 (2019) 374 (2013)
 Passing Yards 3,627 (2019) 2,520 (2010)	 Yards per Game 392 (2019) 252 (2010)	 Average Points per Game 49 (2019) 39 (2001)	*Records as of 1986, when AU re-established the football program.



Spartans Roundup

The **men's soccer** team finished the 2019 season with a 13-5-1 overall record. Spartan sophomore defender David Cahue was named the 2019 Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference Defensive Player of the Year. Head soccer coach Ryan Lakin was selected as the 2019 NACC Coach of the Year.

The **women's golf** team captured the NACC title with a 27-stroke victory in the three-day conference championship tournament. Head coach Justin Wyeth was selected as the 2019 NACC Coach of the Year.

Despite dropping a closely played five-set final conference match, the **women's volleyball** team was able to lay claim to the NACC championship (as cochampions). The team then returned to the NCAA Division III Women's Volleyball Championship playoffs for the third straight season. Individual postseason accolades included the American Volleyball Coaches Association naming freshman outside hitter Sydnei Avery as Midwest Region Freshman of the Year. She also earned First-Team All-Region honors along with junior libero Julia Wood.

The **women's hockey** team set a new school record for wins with its 17-10 overall record while going 11-5 in the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association. The season also

marked the team's first appearance in the Slaats Cup playoffs since the Spartan women's hockey program was introduced three years ago.

The **men's hockey** team made a second consecutive appearance in the NCHA Harris Cup playoffs. The Spartans finished the season 12-9-6 overall and 8-6-6 in the NCHA.

Heading into the spring season, **men's golf** led the NACC championship by 26 strokes. All five AU golfers were in the top nine individual scorers, led by freshman Scott Boyajian and senior Noah Hogue, in the No. 1 and No. 2 slots, respectively. AU was ranked nationally in the top 25 polls for Golfstat and Bushnell Golfweek.

A



AU Spartan Lindgren Wins Gold with US Men's National Ice Hockey Team at 2019 Deaflympics

Anders Lindgren, a nursing student and junior at Aurora University, experienced the thrill of winning gold this past winter.

The 20-year-old hockey player from St. Anne, Illinois, skated as a member of the US Men's National Deaf Ice Hockey Team that defeated Canada to win gold at the 19th Winter Deaflympics, held this past December in Valtellina-Valchiavenna, Italy. The competition was organized by the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf and sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee.

A member of the AU men's hockey team, Lindgren was one of seven rookies added to Team USA. He finished second on Team USA, with 4 goals and 4 assists for a total of 8 points.

"Ever since I was young, I have dreamed of making this team," said Lindgren. "Stepping out onto the ice with a USA jersey on was such a proud moment for me. The AU

nursing school professors were so understanding about me going to the tournament. My AU coach was also a huge help. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't still be playing. He was extremely supportive. This experience was such a blessing."

Hockey teams from Canada, Finland, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United States competed at the 2019 games. The US team beat Finland, Kazakhstan, and Russia in round-robin play. In the gold-medal game against Canada, the US team took a decisive lead in the second period, going up 4-1. The game ended with a final score of USA 7, Canada 3.

"In addition to being one of the hardest workers on the team, you never see Anders without a smile," said Team USA head coach Joe Gotfryd. "We look forward to having Anders as part of future international teams."

Team USA operates under the guidelines of USA Hockey and the USA Deaf Sports Federation, with



Photo courtesy of Linda Isenbarger

primary responsibility to organize the team resting with American Hearing Impaired Hockey Association's Stan Mikita Hockey School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

A

Chicago Bulls Share Career Tips on Sport Management

Aurora University students visited the United Center in Chicago in November to attend academic panels on the business of sports and athletic training, and then watched the NBA's Chicago Bulls take on the Milwaukee Bucks. Before the game, students met with Bulls front-office staff for some firsthand career advice. The students talked to Bulls staff

working in marketing, ticket sales, corporate communications, business analytics, digital and corporate partnerships, and performance health. The trip was organized by the AU Human Performance Club and the Spartan Athletic Training Students Organization.

A



Photo courtesy of the Chicago Bulls



Investing in Student-Athletes

At Aurora University, we firmly believe that intercollegiate athletics should promote character development and enhance the integrity of higher education.

The AU Athletics program is guided by three goals for every Spartan: academic achievement, social responsibility, and athletic success. We know if the Spartans accomplish those goals, they will have a valuable experience as students and be prepared to contribute to a civil society upon graduation.

Over the past year, nearly half of our student-athletes had a 3.25 GPA or higher, and 60 student-athletes had a 4.0 GPA. On the field, AU swept the NACC All-Sports Awards for 2019 for both men and women, a tribute to our program's excellence across

all sports. And we had our second-highest finish ever in the coveted Learfield Directors' Cup.

The Spartans continue to win championships, excel in the classroom, and complete thousands of community service hours yearly. The philosophy all starts with finding hard-working, high-character athletes and coaches.

"We have 24 sports at AU, but we are one team," said Jim Hamad, assistant vice president of student life and director of athletics at AU. "With more than 600 student-athletes, we are one big family, looking out for each other and cheering on each other's successes."



"Sports, especially football, are played on emotions. When you invest more time and effort, it's harder to give up."

— Head Football Coach Don Beebe



Become a Founding Member of the Quarterback Club

You can help Aurora University student-athletes succeed by investing in the Quarterback Club, a newly created fund that strives to provide AU Athletics with the resources to stay competitive in Division III sports. Gifts to the Quarterback Club will allow the university to provide much-needed improvements to locker rooms, weight rooms, and training facilities for all Spartan teams. Your gift will also allow the Spartan football team to build on its record-breaking winning season. Unrestricted gifts for general athletics will have the greatest impact, but if you have a favorite sport, you can designate your gift for the area of athletics that means the most to you.

By becoming a founding member of the Quarterback Club, based on your level of giving, you will receive:

- » Weekly call with Head Football Coach Don Beebe during the 2020 fall season, along with sideline passes for all home football games
- » AU letterman jacket
- » Invitation to breakfast with coaches and athletes across Spartan sports for the 2020-21 season

Your generosity helps to prepare AU student-athletes for success. We are grateful for every gift that helps us carry out our mission. You are an important part of the AU team.

You may make your gift by returning the envelope below. For more information, contact Meg Howes, vice president for development, at [630-844-5256](tel:630-844-5256) or mhowes@aurora.edu.



In My Office

AU faculty talk about their favorite objects and why they are meaningful.



Before **Jane Davis, professor of biology and chair of human-animal studies**, became an educator, her world revolved

around horses. When she was a teenager, she convinced her parents to buy her a horse. She always loved horses, and eventually became an equine veterinarian. Her parents, both teachers, didn't share her passion for horses and failed to understand her choice of profession, yet they supported her decision. That's why the onyx horse in Davis' office has such sweet meaning. Her parents bought it for her while they were on vacation in Mexico. "While caring for horses wasn't what they dreamed for me professionally, they still encouraged me," she said. In the end, Davis did become a teacher, and today finds herself in a role where, like her parents before her, she can support her students and inspire them to pursue their dreams.



There's a good reason that **Sarah Radtke** displays a bit of green and gold in her office. Growing up on a dairy farm in Green Bay, Wisconsin, she often dreamed of becoming an athletic trainer for the Packers. But when she was young, there were no women athletic trainers in the NFL. (The league hired its first full-time female athletic trainer in 2002.) So Radtke pursued a different passion: athletic training education. Today, as **professor and chair of athletic training**, Radtke encourages students to believe that anything is possible. She keeps a Green Bay Packers Lego athletic training cart on her bookshelf as a reminder of how far women have come in the past two decades. And while she's not working in the NFL herself, she's helping to broaden the possibilities for her students, including a new generation of female athletic trainers.



It wouldn't be a stretch for **Chris Wells '07, '18, chair and associate professor of parks and recreational leadership**, to tell his students that his other office is underwater. As a

research diver, he spends a lot of time in lakes and oceans. He has some impressive tools that help him plan for such excursions, including the remotely operated vehicle on display in his campus office. The yellow device, which includes a camera, helps Wells introduce students to the wide range of possible career opportunities in the field of parks and recreation. He has used his ROV to research shipwrecks, examine eroding shorelines of parks, and assess the trash at the bottom of lakes. Wells is also empowering students to lead activities that add meaning to their lives. In March, a group of AU students traveled to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to help restore damaged coral reefs. Other students hosted a STEM exhibit at a local museum. Others are working on internship experiences in public policy advocacy and field research. For Wells, teaching and learning go beyond the walls of a classroom. It's about exploring the world.



Sometimes art, in its simplest form, can have incredible meaning. That's why **James Kao, associate professor of art**, has kept one particular red vase in his office for the past several years. It's not that the vase itself is artistically significant. (It is a mass-produced vase that one may find at any discount store.) It's the story behind the vase that makes it special. The vase reminds him of artist Barbara Rossi, his former teacher who became his colleague and close friend. Rossi attended a dinner celebration in memory of the artist Ray Yoshida. Kao wasn't there, but Rossi was, so after the dinner, Rossi took the red vase centerpiece off of the table where she sat — and she gave it to Kao. "It was such a sweet little gesture," said Kao. "She wanted me to have something special from that evening. It reminds me not only of Yoshida, but of Barbara's kindness, particularity, and quiet irreverence."



Stepping into the office of **Denise Hatcher, professor of Spanish and chair of foreign languages**, students find plenty of inspiration for traveling outside the US. Hatcher's office is filled with art she has been gifted from students and friends from their trips to countries such as Spain, Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, and Chile. But it is her first souvenir she cherishes most: a colorful papier-mâché parrot she bought when she was a foreign-exchange student in Mexico. The bird has since become the caretaker of name badges from the many national and international conferences Hatcher has presented at and attended. Those badges and the parrot often catch the eye of curious students, creating an opening to talk about the value of studying abroad. "I remind students that they are only in college once — without a mortgage, an established career, a spouse, or children," she said. "They should pursue a travel study opportunity before they have all the things that will take them away from it. And if they do take advantage of such an experience, I hope to visit their office one day and have a conversation about their favorite souvenir."



Mark Walter, associate professor of philosophy, understands that sometimes he needs to be creative to spark a student's interest in philosophy. His office door is covered with posters of famous authors, athletes, and pop culture figures who majored in philosophy. And on his window sill sits an array of Japanese figurines, which Walter refers to as "guardian spirits." The small characters reflect his longstanding interest in Japan and the respect and care its people have for handiwork and objects. "Because they are somewhat unusual and strange, these pieces ignite conversations with students about other cultures, travel, and opportunities for exploration in the Chicagoland area," said Walter. "I like to think also they invite students to consider how other cultures engage with the world."



Whenever **education professor Jerald "Jay" Thomas '87** signs his name or writes a note, he reflects on his grandfather's vintage Parker 51 fountain pen and the family collection of ink bottles and ink wells. The items represent three generations of Thomases who have graduated from and taught at AU. (In fact, there has been a Thomas on campus every year since 1947.) Thomas, the son of former physical education instructor **Jerald "Jerry" Thomas Sr. '65**, was raised in Spartan Terrace, where AU's Vago Field now stands. A picture of his grandfather, the Rev. **Ronald P. Thomas Sr. '54**, former dean of men and professor of religion, hangs near his desk. The elder Thomas was a B-29 Superfortress navigator during World War II. Due to the aircraft's pressurized cabin, Thomas used the only pen that wouldn't explode in flight, the Parker 51. He would eventually sign his students' diplomas with it in the 1960s. More than 40 Thomas family members have attended AU. Thomas joked, "I suppose when I retire one day, I'll simply donate my office to the university archives."



A toy dinosaur collection in an English professor's office would probably take most by surprise. However, **Bridgitte Barclay's** students would understand. As **associate professor and chair of English**, Barclay has incorporated many day trips to the Field Museum into her courses. The visits include working in the archives and researching dioramas for classes such as Environmental Literature. There is always a little fun involved too. To remember each visit, she often stops by the Mold-A-Rama vending machine to purchase a souvenir dinosaur to display in her office, where she imagines each one serving as a protector of her vast assortment of books.



Jacqueline Woodson on How Slow Reading Leads to Great Writing

Books are powerful. No one knows that better than Jacqueline Woodson, the nationally renowned, award-winning author of more than two dozen books for children and young adults.

“Books give us a strength and a clarity that we don’t get in a lot of other places,” said Woodson, who grew up in two very different American places — South Carolina and New York City.

For the past 14 years, Aurora University has invited authors at the pinnacle of their careers to campus as part of the university’s *Celebrating Arts and Ideas* series. The events are free and open to the public and, whenever possible, are preceded by an educational session with AU students.

In January, Woodson spent an hour with students from AU and local middle and high schools before she took the main stage. She talked about her acclaimed memoir “Brown Girl Dreaming,” her writing process, and why she has such a deep respect for young people. Gerald Butters, chair and professor of history, moderated the student session. Here are a few highlights:

Q: How do you write for children?

A: I have a deep respect for young people. I have a deep respect for my own adolescence. Because of that, I can’t imagine writing something didactic. I never sit down to write because I want to teach. I sit down to write because I have all these questions that I have to figure out.

Q: Where do your story ideas come from?

A: There is a saying I heard a long time ago: If you survive kindergarten, you have enough to write about for the rest of your life. And I believe that. I think things happen to us every single day that seem ordinary, but aren’t. For me, you wake up in the morning and the place you live is very different from the place someone else lives, and it matters just as much.

Q: Why is reading so essential if you want to be a writer?

A: One thing about me is I am a very, very, very, very slow reader. And I’ve always been a slow reader. I’ve had to read things over and over again to completely understand them. I didn’t know until I was an adult that this is how you learn to write — by reading slowly, by deeply engaging in the text, by copying the way other writers write, by reading things



again and again. When people tell me, “I read your book in one day,” I tell them to go back and read it again. It took me three years to write that!

Q: How do you know when you’re done with a book?

A: As a writer, you ask yourself: What does the character want and how are they going to get it? That’s the whole hero’s journey. I never know where a story is going or what it’s trying to say. But you put two people in a room and you have character, you have setting, you have conflict the minute they start talking, and your story is on its way.

Q: What do you do when you finish a book?

A: I take a break from the book, and I don’t read it again until I get my first good review. And then I’ll go back and read it cover to cover. I never let my editors send me any bad reviews, and for all you writers, I encourage this. If you only get good reviews, you think you’re amazing. Also, with bad reviews, there’s nothing you can do. You’ve written the book. You can’t rewrite it because someone didn’t like it. It’s not going to help your next book, because you’ve already written this book and grown from it. So I encourage you not to read bad reviews.

Q: Do you carry your characters with you even after the book is done?

A: Every single character I’ve ever written is still a part of me. There is still the “Brown Girl Dreaming” inside of me, and she’ll always be there.

A

Music Students Attend Voces8 Master Class, Take the Stage

The British vocal ensemble Voces8 is passionate about music education.

Before the acclaimed unaccompanied chamber choir performed its “Enchanted Isle” concert in February as part of AU’s *Celebrating Arts and Ideas* series, AU students got a chance to participate in a master class on the Voces8 Method.

Paul Smith, education director and a founding member of Voces8, hosted working sessions at Crimi Auditorium with the **AU Chorale**, the **AU Chamber Choir**, and several choirs invited from the surrounding community. The Voces8 Method is a tool designed to help music teachers enhance student development in numeracy, literacy, and linguistics, while also developing self-confidence and teamwork.

“The singers were treated to coaching and ensemble techniques by one of the premier choirs in the world today,” said Lisa Fredenburgh, chair and associate professor of music and director of choral activities. “The method helped each choir achieve a more varied texture and expression. It was an intensely educational experience.”

The students received coaching in ensemble techniques, including a lesson on the color palette available to singers. Smith encouraged singers to change their color as they sang in order to create an exciting experience for the listener.

At the end of the class, the AU Chamber Choir joined Voces8 on stage at the Crimi Auditorium on Feb. 25 to perform Smith’s meditative setting of the traditional sacred text “Nunc Dimittis.”

“The song we performed was unlike anything I’ve sung before,” said music theatre senior and AU Chamber Choir member Lea Wantuch. “It’s a quiet and introspective piece. It was awesome after we ended the song to hear the audience sigh afterward. That’s the best part of the piece.”



Wantuch said the Voces8 master class not only taught her a different style of singing, but it also allowed her to experience what it would be like as a professional singer to learn a new approach to a song and perform it right away.

“As performers, it’s a hard thing to do — to take information that someone else is giving you and translate it, keeping an open mind and focusing,” said Wantuch.

The master class pushed the students to new heights as they continue to expand their performance experiences.

A

‘eARTh tones’ Exhibit to Debut at Schingoethe

The **Schingoethe Center** at Aurora University will debut a new exhibition this fall titled “eARTh tones” that addresses a range of environmental concerns challenging the world we live in. The exhibit, which debuts Sept. 1, will present artists’ creative responses to critical issues affecting our planet, as well as works that raise awareness about sustainable solutions already in practice. Schingoethe Center Director **Natasha Ritsma** is curating the show, which will spotlight Chicago-area and nationally recognized artists. The exhibit will run through Feb. 26, 2021, and feature photography, paintings, prints, sculptures, and multimedia installations.

Home at Last

Rebecca Einhaus never imagined she could afford college. And then she found AU.



Having moved at least 10 times before she was a teenager, Rebecca Einhaus ’18, ’19, found what she always longed for during her first visit to Aurora University — a sense of home. It was not an easy path to AU, but it was one inspired by the generosity of nonprofit agencies that helped lift her family out of hard times. The daughter of a single mom who struggled to make ends meet, Einhaus found that she and her family were often homeless and even spent an extended time living in a domestic violence shelter when she was younger.

“My father left us when I was very young, and shortly thereafter my mother entered another relationship with a man who was violent,” she recalled. “For years, I either experienced or witnessed physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. But area nonprofits helped my family break away from that cycle, enabling me to prepare for a positive educational journey.”

The support of nonprofit agencies influenced Einhaus’ calling. “I want to do what I can to make others’ lives better,” she said. “Attending AU allowed me to fulfill my passion to serve others and provided the foundation to help me achieve my goals.”

Einhaus’ AU experience started when she toured the campus as a high school student. She always thought she wanted to attend a large state school, but once she visited AU, she fell in love with the personable feel of the campus. She decided to apply. Not only was she accepted, but she was also awarded the Aurora University James E. Crimi Presidential Scholarship all four years and received a generous financial aid package. She also received a scholarship from the American Legion. That meant a lot to Einhaus, who worked 40 hours a week while attending college full time.

It was also supportive faculty who played a large role in her success. In addition to school and a job, Einhaus balanced internships during her four years in college. She was able to do this because she had regular conversations with her professors about her responsibilities in and out of the classroom. They not only supported her schedule and priorities; they worked together to ensure she could meet the expectations of her classes.



When Campus Becomes Community

That line of communication started early during Einhaus’ freshman year, when three of her family members died. She credits understanding professors for helping her get through this challenging time. “I quickly learned that my professors were there for me,” she said. “As I talked to them about my struggles, they got to know me better, and meaningful conversations with them about my future soon followed.”

One of those discussions led to the decision to become a double major. Einhaus started at AU as a political science major. However, during a conversation with Amir St. Clair, executive director of the Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action, she expressed an interest in working for a social services agency. St. Clair encouraged her to pursue the leadership studies major with a nonprofit leadership concentration. She did, and with the help of an AU advisor, she created an academic plan that ensured she would graduate in four years.

“I always liked history and fell in love with government and politics, so it was natural for me to be a political science major,” she said. “But the world of nonprofits had always been in the back of my mind.”

Einhaus views politics and nonprofits as complementary. She says that being able to understand how systems work will be beneficial to her career. She also looks forward to applying her political science knowledge to advocacy work at the local, state, and national levels.

“I want to do what I can to make others’ lives better. Attending AU allowed me to fulfill my passion to serve others and provided the foundation to help me achieve my goals.”

While Einhaus understands now how her education and university experiences have helped shape her future, she had plenty of questions when she first arrived at AU. Like many new students, she found that it took some time to adjust to college life. However, she soon learned that the more activities she was exposed to, the more she enjoyed her college experience. She met new friends and became more comfortable opening up to new opportunities.

She also began to realize that becoming involved on campus — outside of the classroom — provided experiences that would help her better serve others going forward. InterVarsity exposed her to different religions and provided a comfortable setting for conversations about faith and diverse viewpoints. The Leadership Education and Development program taught her how to move organizations forward. Einhaus was so inspired by campus activities that she started the Political Science Club to help connect what she was learning in her classes to current events.

Her passion for being involved extended into the community as well. Under the individual guidance of three professors, she secured internships with local nonprofit organizations. Her first internship was with Fox Valley United Way, which solidified her desire to work in a nonprofit setting. She also interned at Hesed House — the second largest homeless shelter in Illinois, located in Aurora, and one of the organizations from which she received services as a child. That internship led to a summer job through AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), which she describes as a domestic Peace Corps.

Today, Einhaus has a full-time job at Hesed House as a development associate, a position fulfilling her dream of working with a social service agency. There she oversees internal and external fundraising events for the organization, a role that includes donor relations and event marketing. “It’s definitely been rewarding to help community members connect with different services,” she said. “I feel like I’m giving back to the same organization that gave me so much as a young child.”

Not only did Einhaus graduate with a bachelor’s degree in spring 2018, but she was also part of the first cohort of AU’s **Master of Public Administration Plus One** program. This program, which launched just as she completed her undergraduate studies, allowed her to earn a graduate degree in one year.

Her graduate student experience is now having a positive influence on her career. “I can see all of my hard work paying off in my job,” she said. “By applying what I learned as a student and an intern, including practical skills like budgeting and communicating, I have been given a promotion with more responsibilities. Looking back, I’m also proud that I helped establish a program that will hopefully benefit many future students. Earning my master’s has shown me that I really can accomplish anything with dedication and the right attitude.”

That’s a powerful realization from someone who wasn’t always certain about her future. For Einhaus, the decision to attend college stemmed from wanting to create a better life for herself. She reached her goal and is now working to improve the lives of those in her community.

“I hope my ability to succeed at AU, to graduate on time, and to pursue a master’s degree shows other people like me — who maybe grew up without a lot of money and resources or struggled in other ways — that they can do it too,” said Einhaus. “No one has to be stuck in a bad situation. Work hard, seek opportunities on campus, and you will have a similar story to share.”

A

AU Nursing Student Discovers Leadership Skills as Head of State Association



Q: Why do you think AU has such a good reputation for its nursing program?

A: The amount of support students receive from their peers, including older students, and the nursing faculty really makes the program distinctive. At AU, students always have a helping hand to guide them through school. The professors often work one-on-one with their students to help them to succeed, to be the best versions of themselves, and to become great nurses.

Q: What are your responsibilities as president of SNAI?

A: I run the monthly meetings, and I represent SNAI at events, including at the National Student Nurses' Association convention and conferences. I provide support to the members and make sure that everyone has opportunities to participate in our activities. I also work to ensure there is a healthy balance for members between association work and school responsibilities.

Q: What is the biggest issue currently facing student nurses in Illinois?

A: We are in the process of educating lawmakers about the benefits of Illinois becoming a compact state. Currently, if nurses earn their license from Illinois and want to work in a different state, they need to take the NCLEX-RN exam in that respective state. (The NCLEX-RN is the national examination for the licensing of registered nurses.) We'd like to change that so that students who live in Illinois but want to work in states like Wisconsin and Indiana can do so without hurdles.

Q: How do you think your board experience will benefit you in the future?

A: Being in a leadership position demonstrates to potential employers that I am willing to be more involved within their organization. Doing so not only makes a difference in caring for patients, but it helps improve the working environment for health care providers.

Q: What advice do you have for future and current AU nursing students about getting involved?

A: Don't be afraid to go for something you don't think you are good at. You might underestimate yourself and realize how much of a leader you can be.

A

Ever since high school, Alexis Hodges has been passionate about becoming a nurse. But the Aurora University senior nursing student never dreamed she would be leading a statewide association of 1,576 student nurses.

That changed last fall when Hodges was named president of the Student Nurses Association of Illinois. Her term, which continues through October 2021, marks the fourth consecutive year that AU nursing students have served on the SNAI board of directors.

Hodges recently reflected on her service on the SNAI board and her experience as an AU nursing student.

Q: What led to your interest in serving on the board of SNAI?

A: Growing up shy, I never saw myself being active in such an organization. I didn't think I could overcome being my quiet self. Yet, it was time for a change. I am finding a new self and breaking out of my shell.

Q: How has your AU experience prepared you for leadership on the state level?

A: Being so involved at AU has empowered me to take on new challenges. Not only am I actively involved in nursing, but music has been a huge part of my life. It helps me relieve my stress and be myself. Without the music program at AU, I don't think I would be able to stay true to the demands of nursing leadership and appreciate all it brings to me.

Nursing School Dean Jan Strom Elected to AACN Board



Jan Strom, dean of Aurora University's School of Nursing, has been elected to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Board of Directors.

Strom will serve a two-year term as a board member at large. She began her term on March 23. The votes for board members were cast by more than half of all member deans from the nation's nursing schools with baccalaureate and higher degree programs.

The AACN, based in Washington D.C., is the national voice for academic nursing, representing 840 schools of nursing nationwide. It establishes quality standards for nursing education and influences the nursing profession to improve health care.

"It is an honor to have been elected to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Board of Directors," said Strom. "I look forward to serving as a board member at large while representing Aurora University on the national level."

Strom has been dean of AU's nursing school since 2017, where she has overseen the expansion of the nursing program beyond AU's main campus in Aurora, Illinois, to the George Williams College campus in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. She has worked with the nursing faculty to ensure that the program prepares a diverse population of professional nurses for ethical practice, transformational leadership, and lifelong learning. She has also worked with the local communities to establish nursing advisory councils at both campuses.

Before coming to AU, Strom held top academic nursing roles at Northern Illinois University and at Elmhurst College. Her work in the community extends to serving in several leadership capacities with the Illinois Association of Colleges of Nursing — including as president and chair from 2016 to 2018 — and on the Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital Medical Ethics Committee.

A dedicated member of the AACN community, Strom has served on the government affairs and membership committees, and as a state grassroots liaison and a lead presenter at new deans mentor sessions.

Strom also serves as a member of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education's Accreditation Review Committee and is an accreditation site visitor and team leader.

AU Expands Lineup of Plus One Programs



AU has ambitious plans to expand its lineup of Plus One programs, a fast track to getting a graduate degree in just one year. The program began in 2018 with the Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration

degrees. Enrollment rose from 33 students the first year to 53 students in 2019. In 2020, the program will expand to include the MS in Exercise Science, the MS in Criminal Justice, and the MS in Digital Marketing and Design. AU is also offering a five-year track to completing a BS in Exercise Science and MS in Athletic Training.

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Pathways to Discovery at George Williams College

For students who show potential to succeed in college and beyond, but whose academic record falls short of Aurora University requirements, AU introduced the Pathways to Discovery Program at the George Williams College campus in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. The purpose of this innovative new program is to help motivated students develop the blend of skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary to earn a college degree. The first cohort of 17 students began in fall 2019. Students work closely with faculty and staff dedicated to their success. They live on campus, earn academic credits, and have the opportunity to transfer to one of AU's other campuses or to another four-year institution to complete their bachelor's degree.

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Julie Adams, associate professor of biology, launched the new Environmental Studies and Sustainability major in fall 2019 and is working with the enrollment department, faculty, and staff to ensure student success in this new venture.

Bridgitte Barclay, associate professor of English and chair of the English department, had her article on women and science fiction accepted to *Unbound: A Journal of Digital Scholarship*, a new journal hosted by the University of North Texas Libraries.

Gerald Butters, professor and chair of history, edited a recent volume of *The Journal of Popular Culture* and spent the summer on the set of Oscar-winning screenwriter and director Kevin Willmott's new film "The 24th." Butters is writing a book on Willmott that will be published by Wayne State University Press in 2021.

Chih-Chiun (CJ) Chen, assistant professor of biology, is scheduled to attend the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions national conference in New Orleans in June. He led the charge to purchase four SynDaver lifelike synthetic human arms for use in anatomy and physiology instruction. Chen and assistant professor of biology **Todd Roach** are updating the anatomy and physiology curriculum to better align with Human Anatomy and Physiology Society standards.

Sara Elliott, associate professor of English, served as the faculty advisor for *Elysian*, AU's literary magazine, and launched the first digital edition, making the publication available for recruitment and for portfolios.

Jonathan K. Fernand, assistant professor of applied behavior analysis, presented at the Minnesota Northland

Association for Behavior Analysis annual conference. He is also providing pro bono consulting services to Autism Compassion Africa in Ghana.

Jessica Heybach Vivirito, associate professor of education and chair of the Doctor of Education program, published the textbook, "Making Sense of Race in Education: Practices for Change in Difficult Times."

Kris Johnson, assistant professor of therapeutic recreation, is serving as president-elect for the Illinois Recreation Therapy Association for 2019-20. She also helped to reshape the ILRTA 2019 conference to focus more on career opportunities for students.

Sarah C. Mead Jasperse, assistant professor of applied behavior analysis, was appointed to the board of editors for the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, considered the premier peer-reviewed academic journal in the field.

Jennifer L. Metz, assistant professor of sport management and chair of sport management, had her research, "Sport MOMsumers: A Modern Reexamination of the Role That Mothers Play in Their Family's Professional Sport Consumption," published in the *Journal of Applied Sport Management*.

Katie Reifurth, assistant professor of sport management, had her research paper, "Creating Fans from Scratch: A Qualitative Analysis of Child Consumer Brand Perceptions of a New Sport Team," published in the *Journal of Sport Management Review*.

Alma Rodriguez Estrada, associate professor of biology, attended the Genomics Education Partnership new faculty training workshop in St. Louis and used that experience to build a research project for students in the

upper-level Molecular Biology course and for an independent study for spring 2020.

Stacy Searle, associate professor of theatre and chair of theatre, was selected as an adjudicator for the Southeastern Theatre Conference New Play Contest. She also taught two master classes, Laban Movement Analysis and Auditioning for Musical Theatre, at the University of Alabama Opera Theatre.

Mark Soderstrom, associate professor of history, traveled to Moscow last fall to present his research at the National Research University Higher School of Economics' international conference, "Regions of Imperial Russia: Identities, Representations, Meanings." He was also a fellow at the National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Aubrey Southall, assistant professor of education and chair of the secondary education and ESL/Bilingual Education departments, presented her research on the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center social studies classroom at the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum in Birmingham, Alabama, and at the National Council for the Social Studies conference in Austin, Texas.

Christopher Wells, chair and associate professor of parks and recreation leadership, assisted the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency by conducting an underwater survey in Geneva Lake to determine the extent to which the invasive plant starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) has spread throughout the lake. He also served as faculty advisor to a group of student volunteers to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to help restore coral reefs as part of AU's Alternative Spring Break.



Lewis Auditorium | 1928



Allyn Pavilion | 2003



Ferro Pavilion | 2019

The Hills Are Alive: *Music by the Lake* Turns 20

On a warm summer evening in August 2018, Three Dog Night brought their concert to a close with a raucous version of "Joy to the World." As the last notes of that classic song drifted across the audience, *Music by the Lake* celebrated a momentous occasion, for that night marked the 100th concert since the festival was revived in 2001.

Music by the Lake was once a mainstay of the Geneva Lake community, spanning 19 seasons from 1951 until 1969. Major talents of that era performed in Lewis Auditorium, including Isaac Stern, Doc Severinsen, and John Denver. Sadly, rising costs forced the series to end after the 1969 season. It was not until 2001 that Aurora University President Dr. Rebecca L. Sherrick, intrigued by the possibility of the college and community coming together around a cultural program, conceived the idea that *Music by the Lake* should once again be a lake tradition. "That first summer was a little scary," recalled Sherrick. "We weren't sure if anyone would come." Her fears soon turned to delight. "Three hundred people turned out," said Sherrick, "and we had a party."

Building upon the legacy of the original series, and with generous financial support from the community, the festival continues to bring the best in live entertainment to perform on the shores of Geneva Lake each summer. First in the Allyn Pavilion and now on the Ferro Pavilion stage — occupying the same footprint as Lewis Auditorium decades ago — Grammy, Emmy, and Tony Award winners; members of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; and Broadway's favorite performers have entertained tens of thousands. Audiences have rocked with Cheap Trick, waltzed with the Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra, traveled to the Age of Aquarius with The 5th Dimension, and sung along to "Edelweiss" with the Chicago Philharmonic.

Now in its 20th year, *Music by the Lake* is scheduled to begin its upcoming season this summer. Scheduled artists include county/folk duo The Bacon Brothers, pop/rock favorite Air Supply, award-winning singer and actress Kristin Chenoweth, a return visit from a cappella group Straight No Chaser, and Irish tenor Ronan Tynan with the Chicago Philharmonic, among others. Summer really does sound better at *Music by the Lake*!

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347 S. Gladstone Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506-4892



Save the Dates

**COMING HOME**
July 10-12, 2020

**HOMECOMING**
October 9-11, 2020

