

# GONZAGA

THE MAGAZINE OF GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2026

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*for* Solutions





THE MAGAZINE OF  
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2026

Vol. 15 No. 1

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## Biodiversity & Resiliency

“Human health and well-being are intimately tied to surface freshwater availability and quality,” says Professor Betsy Bancroft, whose biology and environmental studies students have been wading the waters at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge near Cheney, Washington.

Will waters with greater species diversity be more resilient than areas with limited species diversity and individual variation? Students like David Nguyen ('27) are trying to answer that question by testing the effects of changing conditions on freshwater ecosystems, using technology and biological theory with observational, experimental and modeling approaches.

See more photos: [gonzaga.edu/Turnbull](http://gonzaga.edu/Turnbull)



Gonzaga students also help with curriculum development for K-12 schools and the production of bilingual children's books that highlight Pacific Northwest freshwater ecosystems.



Be part of exciting discoveries with a gift to support student research.

### On the cover and this page:

David Nguyen ('27, biology) participates in research at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge  
Photos by Zack Berlat ('11)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Website  
[gonzaga.edu/magazine](http://gonzaga.edu/magazine)

Gonzaga Magazine is an opportunity for alumni, parents and friends to stay connected to one another and to the University's Mission. We are dedicated to building community with our readers through authentic storytelling and beautiful images. This publication is our gift to you. If you would like to help offset the costs, please consider a donation to the Fund for Gonzaga at [gonzaga.edu/givenow](http://gonzaga.edu/givenow).

The opinions expressed do not always represent the views of the administration, but are intended to foster open dialogue and lifelong learning in the Jesuit tradition.

Have a response to a story?  
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### GONZAGA AROUND THE WORLD

We recently visited our son in his freshman year at Gonzaga University, and it allowed us to appreciate and validate firsthand the strong sense of community and commitment to a holistic education. We're from Ecuador, and we're thrilled to see more of Gonzaga in the world and more of the world at Gonzaga. Without a doubt, it's a special place where unforgettable memories are forged.

**Alfredo Escobar**

I just finished reading the Winter 2026 issue of Gonzaga Magazine. It was very interesting reading about the new president and the enthusiasm she is bringing to campus. I wanted to share a recent Gonzaga encounter. My wife and I were dining in a restaurant in Napier, New Zealand. The waiter, a native New Zealander, saw my GU hat and responded with questions about the basketball team and their season. Although thousands of miles away, he follows Gonzaga basketball and we chatted a bit.

Here's a photo of myself sharing my Gonzaga cap with a lizard sculpture in Pukeita Park near New Plymouth, New Zealand.

**Larry Bennett ('72)**

*[Editor's Reply: There's nothing quite like finding Zag connections wherever you go in the world. I recently spent about a month in India, and one day I exited my hotel at the end of a dead-end street in the small northern town of Dharamshala and there was Gonzaga Trustee Emeritus Ed Taylor ('82, '83 M.A.). What a surprise that was! I'm still jealous he got to meet the Dalai Lama and I did not.]*

Send in your surprise GU global connection! [gonzaga.edu/editor](http://gonzaga.edu/editor)

## Missing the Post-It Notes

Every magazine has a masthead, listing who's in charge and who took photos and did the design and proofreading for errors. (Raise your hand if you actually read that section: It probably means you've been on a publication crew, too!)

In Gonzaga Magazine, the list of proofreaders changes a bit from year to year, but some names have remained. Rol Herriges ('57) was one of them.

Well into his 90s, Rol was mentally sharp, attuned to the occurrences of the day, quick-witted and friendly, and had a deep chuckle that shook his shoulders.

A retired TV journalist, Rol loved being his alma mater's publication copyeditor, saying it might be the best job he ever had. He pored over our proofs from his home in a local assisted-living facility and insisted on reviewing his edits in person, page by page. Usually, he drove himself to campus to sit at my desk; in more recent years, I'd go to his place instead, and we'd enjoy a great visit before he showed me his Post-It note collection of comments.

Try as we may to tell Gonzaga's stories creatively and clearly without repetition, there are just certain words that make their way into almost every story, and sometimes multiple times.

"Seven 'collaborates' or 'collaborations' in one issue? Really?" he'd almost growl.

He knew exactly how many there were, because he tallied them up on those famous yellow squares he stuck to the pages.

His other pet peeves included the misuse of "myriad" and "legacy." He was as quick to say which stories he did not like as he was to tap on a page and say, "Great story."

When Rol turned 95 last June, Gonzaga Magazine's core writer-editor crew took him to Jack and Dan's for a little celebration, and shortly afterward, I decided we needed to do a story on him and few others of his generation who are still actively engaged in their trades. Dale Goodwin



Left, front to back: Thea Skokan, Kate Vanskike, Dan Nailen  
Right, front to back: Tom Miller, Rol Herriges†, Dale Goodwin

interviewed him in January and we were making plans to photograph him as the consummate businessman in one of his classic patched-elbow, wool jackets.

But Rol's Maker had other plans, and on Jan. 24, his pen and Post-It notes found their eternal rest.

So, if you start counting "collaborations" in this issue and find there are too many to be reasonable, it just might be that I left them in on purpose. If Rol is reading from Heaven, these will give him something to growl about.

Much love to you, Rol.

Kate Vanskike ('22 M.A.)  
Editor



### CONNECT WITH US

#### Is it time to update your records?

Have you moved, changed names or marital status, or prefer to receive GU publications differently? Please let us know! [gonzaga.edu/update](https://gonzaga.edu/update)

Phone: 800-463-6925, option 4

#### Want to share your family or career updates?

Submit weddings, births/adoptions, promotions and accolades here: [gonzaga.edu/alumninews](https://gonzaga.edu/alumninews)



# FORGING *Forward*



This past fall, I was honored to be introduced to you all by way of this incredible publication. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to our colleagues in Marketing & Communications who produce this piece each season. The stories found in these pages are

a way to update you on the goings on here at GU, share stories of success, achievement and fortitude through some of the most challenging times in the space of higher ed, and a small way to express appreciation for your ongoing support and belief in the Mission.

This May concludes my first official academic year as a part of the Zag family, and I can say with certainty that all of the expectations I set over a year ago of what this journey could be have been far surpassed. From the first day my family set foot in Spokane we felt immediately embraced (both figuratively and literally – you Zags sure do love to hug) with the warmth of this Jesuit, Catholic community. You are the living embodiment of accompaniment: walking alongside – not in front of, not behind – each other, leading the way toward a better and brighter future.

## *Holding Tight to the Value of Higher Ed*

Headlines in the space of higher education are a bit contradictive to the welcome I received here at

Gonzaga. It seems that every day, universities must continue to prove their value, their worth, to the world. For decades, the demographic cliff (a substantial reduction in the number of college-age students mainly due to the sharp drop in birth rates linked to the 2008 recession) seemed so far off, and yet it is now in our face. Inflation and economic challenges have required tuition rates to increase exponentially, especially at private institutions like ours that do not benefit from state and federal funding resources. And let's not forget the pressures placed on institutions of higher ed by the political and societal pressure – many of which are largely out of our control, no matter how much we would like to think otherwise.

This lack of control makes these issues feel heavy and at times can seem insurmountable and leave us demanding for more. But in true Zag fashion, Gonzaga isn't shying away or settling for less.

## *We are Forging Forward*

As you'll see in the pages ahead, one of the first strategies important for me to support was harnessing the power of partnerships. Whether locally in Spokane or with companies serving the nation and the world, providing students with strong pipelines to careers is an integral part of showing the value of higher education. Fortunately, Gonzaga's connections are already strong, and growing stronger all the time.



**Find an upcoming event near you:  
» [gonzaga.edu/ForgingForward](http://gonzaga.edu/ForgingForward)**

This is thanks to the incredible Zag network of alumni, parents, fans, friends and supporters. I have heard how the University has kept the Zag spirit alive all around the globe. It has been an honor to represent our institution and a privilege to meet many Zags throughout these travels to share in conversation about the impact Gonzaga has, and will continue to have, in the world.

Through an event series called “Forging Forward,” discussions in many regions across the country always had one thing in common: A shared love for this community held dear by many. Zags are a very special group – they dream big, remain curious and never settle for less than great.

More than 85 Zag alumni and friends came together in Washington, D.C. at the historical DACOR Bacon House (a huge thank you to Ambassador Abelardo Valdez for access to the beautiful space). The Bay Area gathering in February brought together more than 130 Zags on Santa Clara’s campus, and by the time of publication, similar events took place in Portland, Las Vegas, Seattle and Bellevue. All were eager to hear a bold vision for Gonzaga’s future.

Part of that future is deeper engagement of Zag Nation to encourage applications and enrollment at GU. So with great zest, attendees took time to handwrite postcards of congratulations to students who have been accepted to attend GU this fall. It is never too early to make sure potential new Zags are welcomed to the family heartily.

### *Ready to Thrive*

The stories others have shared show how the love for this place is unmatched, immeasurable and a reflection of our ability to forge forward, continuing to believe in the power of education even in trying times.

As president, my charge is to help our institution not just survive, but thrive, amid challenges both seen and unseen. In a polarized and frightened world, Jesuit institutions are places of encounter, dialogue and reconciliation. This mission belongs to us all. It belongs to alums who carry these values into their careers; to the parents and caregivers who trust us to be their child’s home away from home; to faculty and staff who walk with our students along their journeys. It also belongs to Gonzaga’s benefactors, fans and friends all around the world whose support allows the University to do what it was meant to do: Educate people the world needs most.

My deepest thanks go to you all for the warm welcome and continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Katia Passerini, Ph.D.  
President

## Making Headlines

In case you missed it, here are several newsworthy moments from the last several months:

- **Gerard Centioli ('76), Jaylene Howard ('02) and Alejandro Olayo-Mendez, S.J.**, joined the Gonzaga Board of Trustees in 2026, and **Kris Snow ('82)** rotated off after nearly 10 years of service.
- A \$1 million federal grant award supports advanced science and engineering research in the School of Engineering and Applied Science.
- GU is one of 15 universities selected to participate in the Catholic Education Network to Enact and Resource Synodality (CENTERS), an effort led by Loyola University Chicago and supported by a \$10 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.
- The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education awarded GU its gold rating in STARS – the sustainability tracking, assessment and rating system that measures across academics, engagement, operations, planning and administration, and innovation and stewardship.

**Stay in the know:** Subscribe to receive Gonzaga's monthly e-newsletter: [gonzaga.edu/news](http://gonzaga.edu/news)



**Carnegie  
has selected  
Gonzaga  
for the 2026  
Community  
Engagement  
classification.**

Proud to be 1 of just 277 colleges nationwide to achieve this recognition.



Dean Allen and several Zags with President Passerini at McKinstry

## Innovative Workforce Solutions & Pathways to Jobs

A quickly growing number of connections local and regional business leaders is making it easy for Gonzaga grads to gain real-world experience in their chosen fields and be ready for industry work upon graduation.

**McKinstry**, a clean-energy developer headed by Dean Allen offers student scholarships, senior design projects in the School of Engineering and Applied Science as well as the McKinstry Fellows research program for students in health sciences. Through a closer partnership with Gonzaga, McKinstry's model provides students with unparalleled access to relevant experience while also addressing needs in Washington's clean-energy and infrastructure sectors.

"McKinstry's investment expands opportunity while aligning academic excellence with workforce needs, demonstrating how higher education and employers can work together to strengthen regional competitiveness and serve the common good," said Gonzaga President Katia Passerini.

**Hotstart Thermal Management**, led by Terry Judge ('87), is also opening doors to more Gonzaga students to gain experience and enter the workforce with confidence.

"One of the best things about being a new president is having the opportunity to visit the places where our alumni choose to launch their careers and pay it forward," Passerini noted after visiting the Spokane plant.

"The impact of the work that our alumni do to grow not only our Spokane entrepreneurial ecosystem but the entire network of clients and suppliers across the world is an amazing example of a thriving Washington state manufacturing and service sector," she said.



President Passerini and Terry Judge of Hotstart

**See page 26** to read about strong connections for Zags at **Microsoft**.



Senior Jack Kashork accompanied President Passerini to Olympia to advocate for restoration of scholarship funds for Washington students

- Changes in federal funding terminated seven AmeriCorps (later reinstated) and two CivicSpark positions in the 2024-25 cycle
- \$48 million in funding for the tech hub was rescinded, delaying advancement of a critical workforce development partnership
- Washington state enacted legislation requiring retail sales tax on certain services effective Oct. 1, 2025, that will significantly impact some programs and departments, adding increased pressure on departmental budgets
- Significant changes to student loans pose major concerns, particularly for graduate students

### *Accountability to Gainful Employment*

H.R. 1 (known as the “One Big Beautiful Bill”) passed into law in 2026 and established a new higher education program-level accountability framework based on student earnings four years post-completion. It takes effect July 1, 2026, and the Department of Education has modeled the framework for programs with currently available earnings data, which make up about a quarter of all programs nationally. All Gonzaga programs evaluated passed the review. A summary report of Gonzaga is available from the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

### *Taking Action Together*

Each of those examples has come with its own set of challenges and complications. In February, President Katia Passerini and John Sklut, liaison for external and government affairs, were in Washington D.C. during a very active time for the federal government and an important time for discussions on higher education. Students and faculty members offered testimonies during the hearings related to funding and status of programs.

When the state reduced Washington College Grant funding for students attending private, not-for-profit institutions (beginning fall 2026), Gonzaga employees, parents and friends joined in advocacy efforts to share just how important it is to restore this financial aid.

Working together in this way, everyone can help to ensure students continue enjoy the outcomes of a Gonzaga education.

» **Be informed:** [gonzaga.edu/news](https://gonzaga.edu/news)

## What’s the Status?

### *Impacts of federal, state funding decisions over the last year*

The beginning of 2025 brought a number of federal decisions that impacted federal, state and local funding that, in turn, affected higher education. Gonzaga quickly put into place a Federal/State Response Team with experts across campus who engage regularly with colleagues from other universities and with state and national agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes for Gonzaga’s enrollment, retention, research and more. This team stays abreast of proposals that go before legislative groups and decision-making bodies, and continually advises GU’s administration – and the Board of Trustees – on matters that need advocacy at local, state and national levels.

Here are the specific impacts Gonzaga has navigated over the last year (as of March 1, 2026).

- The loss of \$20 million in grants from the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, NOAA and Environmental Protection Agency resulted in the termination of seven research projects led by GU faculty

# Building the University

By Dale Goodwin ('86 M.A.T.)

**Chuck Murphy ('73)** has been around long enough to see the GU Wall go up, most of the buildings standing on campus take shape and the landscape beautified in spectacular ways.

He's seen five presidents, hundreds of faculty members and staff come and go, Gonzaga receive status as one of the top 100 nationally rated universities in the country and the men's basketball team make 27 straight appearances in the NCAA tournament.

He has had a hand in all of it for most of the past 57 years.

He came to Gonzaga as a freshman in 1969 when men were trying to look like the Beatles with long hair, paisley shirts and bell-bottom trousers. He graduated with a degree in accounting in 1973 when Gonzaga's summer payroll was being guaranteed by Trustee Harry Magnuson because of poor past fiscal management. Murphy returned to his alma mater in 1978 as controller under the watchful eye of new President Bernard Coughlin, S.J., to begin this 48-year string of service to the University and its students.

"Looking back on the things I worked on, my focus was always on, 'How can we be better for our students next year, and the year after that,'" says Murphy, who was promoted in 1985 to vice president for finance, and moved to chief strategy officer in 2018, making way for his protégé, Joe Smith, to assume the role of chief finance officer.

"I always felt a great deal of gratitude to Father Coughlin for taking a chance on a 34-year-old controller when he promoted me to vice president," Murphy says. In much the same way, Murphy knew Smith was ready to succeed

him, and convinced then-president Thayne McCulloh to make the change. "Joe is a very talented individual, with good technical and people skills, a combination you don't always see in people from the financial realm."

One of Murphy's greatest points of satisfaction is hiring the quality people he added to his team: controllers like Rick Jones, Deena Presnell and Smith, and working with direct reports in athletics and plant and construction services, areas he oversaw.

Murphy came to GU as a finance guy, but he enjoyed a breadth of projects.

"The Martin Centre Fieldhouse, the Rudolf Fitness Center and the artificial-turf-covered Mulligan Field hold a very special place in my heart because they impact students every day," Murphy says.

With all the good projects that lifted the student body, the toughest project Murphy had to deal with was the March 2006 fire that destroyed a three-quarters-built Kennedy Apartment complex. But in part because Murphy had fostered such endearing relationships with the construction industry in Spokane, contractors were able to rebuild the upper-division housing complex before school started in September 2007.

Looking back, Murphy sees the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center (2019) and Stevens Center for tennis and golf (2013) as the two easiest projects he worked on to date. "It's much easier when a project is fully donor funded before we break ground, and both those projects were just that."

## Dreams to Believe In

The Spokane native and Gonzaga Prep alum has helped drive campus planning knowing that, “the toughest part is finding the resources to make it happen.”

“Every project we have undertaken began with a dream,” Murphy explains.

He remembers the McCarthy Athletic Center (2004), which was GU’s most expensive project at the time, getting a big boost from the McCarthy family, who settled on a donation amount for the lead gift over a ham sandwich in President Father Robert Spitzer’s office. Phil McCarthy would later say, tongue in cheek, “That was the most expensive ham sandwich I ever had.”

Murphy continues, “In the beginning, we had just enough money for the public spaces – the building structure, bleachers and the court. Money needed to be raised for locker rooms, training center, concession stands, banners to hang, scoreboards and many other things.” Murphy worked with Athletic Directors Mike Roth and Chris Standiford on fundraising, and on revenue-generating plans through ticket sales, media rights and special promotions to make it all come together.

“I look back on projects over the past 40 years, and those buildings and campus improvements still seem new to me. But Jepson Center (1984) is 42 years old. Foley Center (1992) is nearly 35 years old. And to me, no building has had a larger impact on student life and community building than the John J. Hemmingson Center,” Murphy says.

“It demonstrates President McCulloh’s genius in combining occupants in academics, food service, Mission and a full range of student life functions,” Murphy says. “A vibrant mix of activities gives the building its life. It has become the center of our campus. Historically, our largest undergraduate enrollments were achieved after Hemmingson opened in 2015. Eleven years later it is still a beautiful building.”

“We have always punched higher than our weight class,” Murphy smiles. “We are looking to the future and how we can continue to improve what we offer to our students and consider what benefactors might be interested in supporting.”

One of those possibilities is a Welcome Center where prospective students and their parents, alumni families and benefactors can gather for a unique Gonzaga experience. The master plan also includes additional student housing along the outside boundaries of the academic core of campus.



Chuck Murphy in the early 1980s

“When I think of all this university has accomplished, I see the efforts of so many,” Murphy says: “While some folks by the nature of their jobs are directly visible, I’ve always been happy to be one of those guys pulling the oar. I’m blessed to be a part of teams who have contributed so much to the lives of others.”

Assessing Murphy’s efforts over the years, alumnus Ed Taylor (’82), Gonzaga trustee emeritus, says, “I’ve been coming to Gonzaga for 40 years. The buildings are nicer and the city has grown up around campus – but the soul of Gonzaga remains unchanged. You feel it the moment you arrive: the Jesuit, Catholic mission quietly guiding everything, students brimming with curiosity and promise, faculty and staff devoted to shaping lives with care and integrity. Chuck is a big part of all that is good about Gonzaga.

“But yes, DeSmet Hall still looks like it could use a good updating. No change there.”

## Honoring a Legacy, Crafting a Future

Gonzaga University officially opened and named the Patrick Ferro Center for Materials Research in February, marking a new chapter for interdisciplinary research, industry partnership and innovation in the Inland Northwest.

Located in the Bollier Center for Integrated Science and Engineering, the newly completed laboratory is not just a physical space, but a tool for community building, experiential learning and workforce development, said Acting Center Director Harman Khare. “It represents a paradigm change in how we see, use, understand and develop novel materials and technologies here at Gonzaga and in our communities.”



Pat Ferro†

Patrick “Pat” Ferro was a mechanical engineering professor (2009-2024) known for his deep expertise in materials science, mentorship of students and collaborative spirit. He passed away in 2024. School of Engineering and Applied Science Interim Dean Jennifer Shepherd called the naming “the perfect tribute” to Ferro’s commitment to students, interdisciplinary discovery, and to the Jesuit belief that knowledge must serve the common good.

Thanks go to these generous donors for their support: John and Joan Bollier family; John Hemmingson; Pearson Family Innovation Fund; and Reed Family Foundation.



February ribbon cutting for the Ferro Center for Materials Research

## The Future of AI is Human

*AI is here to stay, so the question is not whether to use it, but how.*

With insights from across the academic disciplines and technology departments on campus – including the Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology – Gonzaga is helping students use AI responsibly, ethically and fully aligned with Jesuit ideals. How might AI be an instrument for human flourishing? How might it aid in service to communities?

» **Learn more about AI through a Jesuit lens: [gonzaga.edu/ai](https://gonzaga.edu/ai)**



## When in Rome

During 25 years teaching history at Gonzaga, Andrew Goldman has sought to bring the world of the ancient Mediterranean to life for students. He's done that through study-abroad programs, archaeological digs and even virtual reality technology in the classroom. But this year, Goldman had the opportunity of a lifetime: an academic year as the Professor-in-Charge of the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome, the premier U.S. undergraduate study-abroad program for ancient history, archaeology, and the classical languages. The program is near to his heart: He studied there as an undergraduate.

For the past semester, Goldman, his three colleagues and their students have moved out of the classroom and into the ancient world itself, traveling from site to site and from museum to museum in Pompeii, Herculaneum, Ephesus, Troy and Rome. Three days a week, they set out to explore the cities built by the Romans, the houses in which they lived and the tombs in which they interred their dead. Lectures, exercises and exams were all offline; their tools were notebooks, sketch paper and digital recording.

“There is a common perception that Rome is well-explored and well-known through its gladiators and emperors, its coins, statues and ruins. Little could be further from the truth,” says Goldman. “Each passing year, as new archaeological sites are explored and new facts emerge, we are forced constantly to reassess – sometimes radically – what we know about the peoples and cultures of our collective human past.”



Goldman (third from left) with students in Rome

*“Each passing year, as new archaeological sites are explored and new facts emerge, we are forced constantly to reassess – sometimes radically – what we know about the peoples and cultures of our collective human past.”*

- ANDREW GOLDMAN

When Goldman returns to GU's campus this fall, he looks forward to bringing back with him new perspectives on the ancient world, and to make ancient peoples and cultures more alive and relevant to the world today.



The Trojan Horse of Troy is a highlight for many who visit the ancient city



# ROOM FOR MORE

New space aims to meet needs for more anesthesia providers

L to R: Julie Wolter, Gonzaga School of Health Sciences; Scot Pettey, Gonzaga/Providence; Dan Getz, Providence; Susan Stacey, Providence

Training for nurse anesthetists began at Gonzaga in 1977 through a partnership with Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center to offer a Master of Anesthesia Education – the only such training available in Washington. In 2015, the program progressed to the doctoral level, offering the Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP).

The DNAP has grown from a cohort of just 10 students per year to the current 28 students accepted in the first-year cohort. In fall 2025, 475 qualified professionals applied for those 28 spots.

With continued growth in this highly competitive program, additional space is necessary. This spring, Gonzaga transformed more than 8,700 square feet of previously undeveloped space in the Health Partnership Building on Spokane Falls Boulevard, the home of the UW School of Medicine - Gonzaga Health Partnership. Completion is on track to welcome the summer 2026 cohort of DNAP students. This is made possible with the support of McKinstry's Dean Allen and the Emerald Initiative, which owns the facility.



Certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) are advanced-practice nurses who provide expert care before, during and after surgical, obstetric and pain-management procedures

For Providence, growing anesthesia education is part of the organization’s workforce development initiatives – “not just for today, but for the future,” says Susan Stacey, chief executive for Providence Inland Northwest. “This partnership has a long history of growing anesthesia providers for our whole region, and we believe investing in its continued growth is really important to the future of patient care across Eastern Washington.”

Dan Getz, chief medical officer for Providence Inland Northwest, says there just aren’t enough anesthesia providers, so the training of nurse anesthetists has been essential, not only for the larger urban hospitals, but especially in rural communities with smaller critical access hospitals. Additionally, the role of CRNAs reduces the cost of anesthesia care.

Gonzaga’s School of Health Sciences Dean Julie Wolter notes, “As the only certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNA) program in Washington and one of very few in the West, we serve a critical health need, and this partnership and building expansion will allow us to continue to grow and serve the region.”

“By sharing space in the Health Partnership, students also have opportunities for mentorship with medical students and both Gonzaga and UW faculty,” says Mia Bertagnolli, interim provost. “We are also pleased to be able to provide a Jesuit education for even more students who want to pursue careers in health care.”

# #27

## IN THE COUNTRY

for “**Best Nursing-Anesthesia Schools**”  
by U.S. News and World Report’s 2026  
Best Grad Schools rankings.

### EXPANDING HEALTH IMPACT

The School of Health Sciences has added new majors like public health to longstanding programs in nursing and human physiology.

[gonzaga.edu/DiscoverSHS](http://gonzaga.edu/DiscoverSHS)

### DID YOU KNOW?

The University of Washington - Gonzaga University Health Partnership celebrates **10 years** of transforming medical education and research in Eastern Washington.

[gonzaga.edu/HealthPartnership](http://gonzaga.edu/HealthPartnership)



Thanks to permissions from Bob Warner to access Thompson Creek from his private property, civil engineering students have been working with The Lands Council to restore this stream, thus improving water quality in Newman Lake. Here, participants observe the first step of creating a beaver dam analog: setting pine posts across the creek.

# Busy as Beavers

Engineering faculty, students design projects that protect and revitalize streams following the examples set by beavers

Story by Kate Vanskike ('22 M.A.)

Photos by Zack Berlat ('11)

Washington state has nearly 74,000 miles of rivers or streams, many of which flow into or out of lakes. There are 76 lakes within 50 miles of Spokane, some feeding the Spokane River, which connects to the Columbia River, right on out to the Pacific Ocean.

So, if an engineer in water resources wants to work in an area with plenty of access to field studies, you could say the Inland Northwest is a great place to be.

It definitely suits **Sue Niezgoda**, a civil engineer who had a stint at the highly regarded Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Indiana where she met fellow engineering professor, the late Pat Ferro. After he moved to Gonzaga and encouraged her to do the same, she joined him in the Gonzaga School of Engineering and Applied Science.

For 10 of her 15 years here, Niezgoda has partnered with The Lands Council – a local nonprofit that protects and revitalizes Inland Northwest forests, water and wildlife – in stream restoration work.

The Lands Council, for its part in stream restoration, previously used live beavers to guide small tributaries where they were most needed to return a waterway to freedom. But that meant securing beavers and taking care of them before setting them loose in a new territory. Watching the beavers up close and working alongside them to learn from their ways was gratifying, but determining how to replicate their work without an impact on the animals themselves was even better.

Enter beaver dam analogs (BDAs) to save the day.



Students weave young pine boughs between posts, creating a textured fill that forms the core of the beaver dam analog

## The Best-Ever Research

“Oh, I want to do that,” was Niezgoda’s response when she first heard of BDAs during a conference about river restoration. “I knew it would be a great opportunity for my undergraduate students in civil engineering to get their feet wet in river restoration work.”

She returned to her stream restoration class, excited to share what she’d learned. In a moment of kismet, one of her students, Emily Zikmund, had worked for The Lands Council as a summer intern and learned about its work with BDAs and connected Niezgoda with the agency.

What ensued and grew over the next decade became what Niezgoda says has been the “best-ever” research project. “What I love is the undergrad focus and the practical applied design experience they’re gaining in an area of water resources engineering that usually isn’t experienced until graduate school. These projects are low-risk and low-cost, but still require a lot of field work and data analysis.”

Over the years, her teams have worked on several sites in Spokane County. The first three – California, Rattlers Run and Spangle Creeks – were south of the city in rural areas bordering Palouse country; the current site is Thompson Creek, which empties into Newman Lake, northeast of Spokane.

Regardless of the location, the students’ work is done in much the same way. First, the students complete a watershed assessment to understand the inputs of water, sediment and nutrients coming into a project reach. Second, the students spend five days in the field conducting labs to collect data related to evaluating how well the river is connected to its floodplain, the energy and power of the flowing water to erode or deposit sediment, the health of the vegetation along the streambanks, and the water quality through an analysis of the macroinvertebrates present in the reach. Lastly, the students use the results of these watershed and reach-

scale processes to develop a design using BDAs that can lead to significant improvements in the quality, health and stability of the degraded river reach.

“We want rivers to flood! When the water in the river rises enough to break out into the floodplain it acts like a relief valve, to allow stream energy to dissipate and sediment and phosphorus to fall out and deposit within the reach rather than it being transported by the flow to downstream water bodies – which is what’s happening in Thompson Creek and Newman Lake,” Niezgoda explains.

In this BDA project, a key element to observe is phosphorus. It’s a naturally occurring mineral that becomes dangerous when in excess, which usually is due to the use of agricultural fertilizers, or, in this case, the runoff caused by logging and off-road vehicle use in the watershed forests, “kicking up all that sediment that has phosphorus attached to it,” Niezgoda says. Runoff carries that sediment/phosphorus into Thompson Creek, which has been modified by past land use practices to act like a superhighway, and transports it down into Newman Lake. The high levels of phosphorus accelerate algae blooms, reduce oxygen, kill fish and destroy the aquatic ecosystem. At places like Newman Lake, where residents have waterfront yards, family pets that enjoy a splash in the lake fall victim to its dangers.

The work Gonzaga students are doing to design and install four different types of dams – following the examples set by beavers that typically build a primary structure and then two or three secondary structures downstream – is helping to mitigate those concerns.

Josh Braun (’25) heard Niezgoda speak about this project during his freshman engineering seminar and it cemented his plan for BDA work to be his top choice for a senior design project.



Kat Hall (left) of The Lands Council has partnered with Professor Niezgoda for nearly a decade



This photo taken by Professor Niezgoda shows a completed starter dam in the foreground and a secondary dam behind it

“Something that piqued my interest was the theory behind the BDAs,” Braun says. “Not only were they low-tech process-based structures – meaning they rely on natural deposition and erosion to alter the stream (as opposed to going in with large machinery) – they use materials that beavers would use and will decompose eventually.”

Senior Isabella Camarota ('26), of Holland, Michigan, says she chose civil engineering due to questions around how developers might reduce damage caused to the environment in construction. As for the BDA project, Camarota says its scale was “small enough that the end goal could be grasped and the effects of decisions could be seen,” while also showing how the concepts could benefit the environment on a larger scale.

“The project showed that adaptability and perseverance are key when working in the environment,” Camarota says. It also has opened her up to the many opportunities within water resources engineering as she begins her career.

## Grants, Permits and Partners

Niezgoda’s students are learning about the non-design tasks required of these types of projects, too. For one, obtaining permits can be a hurdle, and each permitting agency can have different processes. There are sometimes state or federal rulings about the type of work that can be done in wetlands and rivers, and opportunities or challenges can arise in the Spokane area specifically due to being on an aquifer. Just last year, students learned how The Lands Council and Niezgoda navigated all of those permits successfully with Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Spokane County.

They also learn how this kind of work is paid for, and how critical partnerships are made to connect with funding

resources. In the case of BDAs, The Lands Council writes grant applications to the Department of Ecology to secure funds – something the University wouldn’t be eligible to do as the grants are mostly available to environmental nonprofits.

It’s a win-win arrangement. The Lands Council fosters the relationships with landowners and permitting agencies, secures and delivers materials for building the structures, and works alongside students in their waders, too.

Watershed Restoration Program Director Kat Hall is an environmental educator at her roots and thrives on getting her hands dirty alongside students and complementing what they’ve gained from Niezgoda in the classroom. At home in a pair of waders and boots, she enthusiastically talks about the sinuosity of the channel, the wood they’ve selected for posts, and how to weave young pine boughs in and out of the posts from one bank to the other.

“Think of the channel spanners as speed bumps,” Hall says. “They don’t need to store water behind them, we just need them to slow the flow.”

She can point to all the dams and tell which years they went in and what they’ve accomplished. She’s especially proud of the new “s” curves in what used to be a straight path for Thompson Creek.

Hall sees those regularly from the ground as she brings crews of volunteers to plant patches of willows, mountain alders, and a host of other native trees and shrubs to nourish the creek. Niezgoda brings a drone to get a bird’s-eye view of the subtly changing landscape each year.

Together, they’ve inspired a generation of hopeful water restoration workers. Something all of us benefit from in one way or another.

*Continued*

An aerial view of Thompson Creek where there are more than 25 beaver dam analogs acting as hydraulic "speed bumps" to slow water and trap sediment and phosphorus before it reaches Newman Lake.

*“I can bring my expertise here, but I can still learn a whole lot about these other areas and work together as a team to do good for the environment and the people and everything that uses this water.”*

- Sue Niezgoda



## Working Wonders

Niezgoda – like so many of her students – chose this field because of an innate appreciation for and enjoyment of being outdoors. But she’s quick to acknowledge that civil engineers alone won’t fix the waterways that have been damaged or degraded.

“It involves so many disciplines – ecologists, geomorphologists, engineers, landscape architects,” she says. She jokes that the macroinvertebrates that engineering students collect are generically referenced as “bugs” until Betsy Bancroft’s biology students come along and give them proper identities. She also leans on Madeleine Matthews and Dave Cleary from chemistry, who provide greater understanding of changing phosphorus concentrations in the creek.

“I can bring my expertise here, but I can still learn a whole lot about these other areas and work together as a team to do good for the environment and the people and everything that uses this water.”

“Dr. Sue’s work has introduced many future engineers at Gonzaga to the somewhat niche world of stream restoration, specifically through BDAs,” Braun says. “Because of her work, many civil engineers choose water resources as their focus because they can see the same fascinating potential in the field that Dr. Sue can see in stream restoration.”

That was certainly true for Braun, who chose civil engineering and the water resources concentration. He’s currently putting that to good use during a five-month internship in Senegal with Engineering Ministries International.

As students finish their work at Gonzaga and move into their chosen fields, Sue Niezgoda and Kat Hall keep their eye on the movement of water in local creeks.

And somewhere nearby, the actual beavers who invented the work are proud of what they inspired . . . and are patiently waiting to move in and take over.

*Note: Author Kate Vanskike is currently president of the board of The Lands Council.*

# The Land Misses Us

An Indigenous skier's call to return the mountains to the people who first called them home

By Thea Skokan ('22)



Ellen Bradley ('20) skiing her native homelands in Alaska, inspiring her film "Let My People Go Skiing" *Photo by Matthew Tufts*



Photo: Matthew Tufts

## There's just no snow.

This was a steady chant through the winter months on the West Coast this year. Temperatures that typically drop to well-below freezing plateaued in the 40s and 50s, and what little snow did fall was quickly washed away in rain showers. Through it all, the threat of intense summer wildfires loomed like hazy smoke on the horizon.

And when there's no snow, people stop skiing. It's not out of the ordinary for winter conditions to fluctuate, but as the global temperature is increasing, dramatically unpredictable winters could have all sorts of long-term ramifications in the ski industry.

For Ellen Bradley ('20), it's much more than that.

Bradley, a professional skier from Everett, Washington, and an enrolled member of the Tlingit tribe, started skiing at age 4. What was at first a way to connect with her immediate family on the slopes of Stevens Pass soon became something more profound.

**"I started to be more reflective of what it meant to me," she explains. "I found I actually really enjoyed the sport and the way I moved on the land."**

It braided a delicate thread between Bradley, the Earth around her and her Indigenous identity. So much so that she's turned it into a career.

## Inherently Indigenous

Between the late 1700s and early 1870s, the United States entered more than 350 treaties with Native nations mainly as a means to legitimize the taking and use of Native land. Violations began almost immediately after treaties were established, with the U.S. government seizing land or changing boundaries without consent or failing to deliver promised goods.

To this day, the multi-billion-dollar outdoor industry across America relies on the land that once belonged to Indigenous people. Skiing enthusiasts alone can spend hundreds, if not thousands, each season on the equipment, passes and transportation to and from the mountain. “Every step along the way, spending time in the mountains in the winter is really expensive,” says Bradley. “And it shouldn’t be.”

Then account for the looming effects of a changing climate. Resorts are continually finding ways to up the ante, to draw people to the mountain with new luxury hotels and events, even when conditions like this past winter had people opting to stay home.

Bradley is trying to get people on the mountain, too. But rather than keep a challenged industry afloat, she’s trying to make it accessible for Indigenous people to ski the lands that rightfully belong to them.

“Skiing needs to be recognized as an inherently Indigenous movement through the land,” Bradley says in an interview with Patagonia. “The ski industry lens is extractive – the narrow filter through which we perceive the activity – not the act of skiing itself. The removal of Indigenous peoples from these lands, from access to this sport, from decision-making about where and when skiing can happen, erases us from our home.”

She partners with corporations that have the resources to make a difference, like the Alterra Mountain Co., the company that owns Ikon, the largest ski pass available nationwide.

Bradley worked with the company to create the Mountain Access Program, a partnership with Native Youth Outdoors that gives away 40 Ikon passes, equipment rental and a ski or snowboard lesson to Indigenous people across the country each season. Those are valued at about \$900 each.



Photo: Matthew Tufts

“It’s a complex relationship for me,” Bradley admits. “This entire industry exists on stolen land and stolen labor, and any contribution to that, to some extent, is a contradiction of my values.”

But she also readily acknowledges what can be accomplished with the resources of a corporation like Alterra.

**“These things exist – so how can I utilize their existence to try and create better change for everyone in the outdoor industry?”**

## A Return to Áak'w Kwáan

In the U.S., there are nearly 600 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations, and many more exist without government recognition. Bradley is a proud member of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Southeast Alaska.

“I feel very lucky that I’ve always known who I am and where I came from,” she says. “But at the same time, I’ve always felt a sever in my identity knowing I did not grow up on my traditional homelands.”

In 2022, she had the chance to stitch together, at least partially, this severance. She journeyed to Áak'w Kwáan, commonly known as the Juneau area, to experience her homelands in a way she never had – on skis.



Ellen Bradley hosting the Native Youth Snow Sports Camp at Eaglecrest Ski Area in Juneau, Alaska. The camp helps create meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth to access the outdoors, strengthen cultural connections and try new experiences.

There still existed the same contradiction she felt in her other work – Alaska is a frequent destination for outdoor activities, the commercialization of which tends to exploit the land rather than encouraging connection to it. That tension initially made her hesitate, but she also knew this was something she had to do.

Bradley turned her experience into a film called “Let My People Go Skiing.” The project, spanning more than three years, enveloped her life in myriad ways. After losing sponsorship from the brand that originally backed her film team, Bradley funded the project herself, quitting her job and focusing all her efforts on telling the story the right way.

It wasn’t just another ski film, she says. It was a ski film made by Alaska Natives, for Alaska Natives, and deeply personal for her as well. It put her through a lot, mentally and emotionally, but now, as the film plays at festivals across the country, she knows it was worth it.

“I knew if we didn’t finish it or get it right, we’d be doing a disservice,” she says. “Now that we’re done, I’m really liking this part where I get to show it to audiences and speak alongside the film.”

## Learning & Unlearning

Bradley returned to Gonzaga’s campus this spring for a screening of “Let My People Go Skiing,” organized by the Office of Sustainability. It was a return that held a lot of weight.

Gonzaga sits on the ancestral lands of the Spokane Tribe. The University’s founder, Father Joseph Cataldo, originally intended to educate Native American children from across the region; however, when the school opened in 1887, Native students were denied admission.

That’s a history Bradley didn’t hear until her senior year.

Telling its history more fully and in context of the work of Jesuit missionaries alongside what was happening to tribes by the government is something the University continues to improve. While there have been intentional strides made, there is still work to be done to ensure that all who come to GU understand the implications of this history.

To this, Bradley offers two pieces of advice.

First, unlearn what you think you know.

“When you’ve gone through the United States education system, there’s a lot you’ve been taught, especially about history, that is simply false,” she explains. “We need to give better context, more accurate depictions of history, in order to have a better understanding of the world we currently live in.”

This type of discernment is something from her time at Gonzaga Bradley looks back on fondly. “I was taught by some really incredible professors,” she says, specifically naming biology Professor Betsy Bancroft. “She’s so good at teaching students how to think for themselves, to think critically and to analyze what they’ve been told in order to get to truth.”

Bradley's second piece of advice is to become familiar with the Indigenous-led movement “LandBack.”

Often printed on T-shirts, plastered across billboards, and spray-painted on the sides of buildings, it’s a rallying cry for the restoration of Indigenous stewardship over ancestral lands.

“It also means culture back, art back, language back, water back, sky back,” Bradley says passionately, listing the many stolen, erased or forgotten things this phrase calls to be returned.

It is not, however, a sweeping call for all who live in North America to suddenly vacate the land. In fact, organizers of the movement are emphatic this is not about repeating the mistakes of colonization. Instead, it could mean a real seat at tables where decisions are being made, a recognized assertion of tribal sovereignty, or the return of control over government-owned forestry.

“To me, it’s the most important step we can take to combat climate change,” Bradley says. “It’s been shown historically and through research that Indigenous peoples are the best stewards of the lands we know and have lived on.”

## An Ongoing Mission

Explore the Gonzaga offices working to confront our history honestly, strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and lead climate action rooted in justice.

» [gonzaga.edu / tribal-relations](https://www.gonzaga.edu/tribal-relations)  
/ [climate-institute](https://www.gonzaga.edu/climate-institute)  
/ [sustainability](https://www.gonzaga.edu/sustainability)

## Missing the Land


There’s just no snow.

It’s a scary thought to anyone who feels at home on the mountain, strapped to a pair of skis, and carving sweeping turns through soft, white powder – or to anyone living in areas at high risk of wildfires late in dry summers.

But to those with an ancestral connection to the mountain, who feel the lineage of their people run from the tips of their ice-encrusted eyelashes to the depths of their toes like roots on a tree, it’s personal.

For that reason, Bradley knows there’s a need for Indigenous people to be in these spaces, before these spaces cease to exist. Maybe some effects of climate change can no longer be reversed, but there is still time to care for the land rather than extract from it. And the land is begging for it.

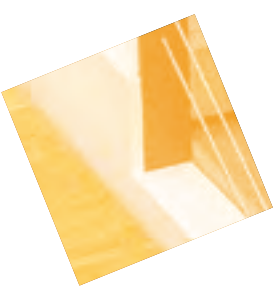
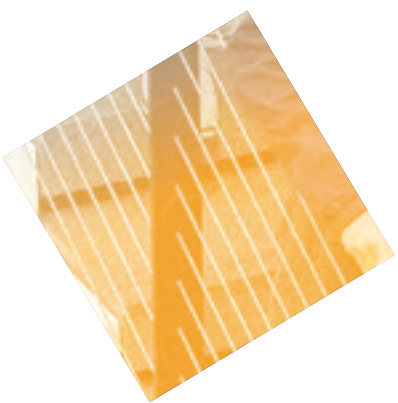
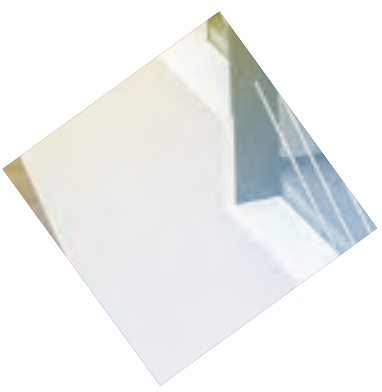
“We can feel and see the tangible effects of Indigenous people returning,” she says with hope. “It means so much because, as much as we miss the land, we know the land misses us.”

A high-angle photograph of two skiers ascending a vast, snow-covered mountain slope. The skiers are positioned in the lower-left and lower-center of the frame, moving diagonally upwards. They are wearing winter gear, including jackets, hats, and backpacks, and are using ski poles. The snow is bright white, and the sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and outdoor recreation in a high-altitude environment.

**"It means so much  
because, as much as we  
miss the land, we know  
the land misses us."**

ELLEN BRADLEY ('20)

Photo: Matthew Tufts





# Shared Mission, Shared Momentum

*Gonzaga and Microsoft Formalize Alumni-Driven Partnership Committee to Expand Opportunities for Students*

Story by Thea Skokan ('22)  
Photos by Zach Berlat ('11)



long-running connection between Gonzaga University and Microsoft has taken its next step forward, evolving to strengthen career pathways, deepen

mentorship and highlight the University’s growing presence in the technology sector.

For 20 years, largely led by now-retired Microsoft alum and Gonzaga Regent **Arnie Mondloch ('84)**, Zags working at Microsoft have built a tradition of showing up for students – hosting students during the annual Seattle Career Trek, offering mock interviews, sharing career advice and opening doors. **Kara Hertz ('01)**, GU’s assistant vice president for alumni and external relations, says this consistent support is what sparked the idea for something broader and more structured, supporting all areas of the University.

In 2023, under the leadership of President Emeritus Thayne McCulloh, Gonzaga began evaluating how to strengthen industry engagement broadly. The Microsoft connection stood out – a pipeline built not through formal recruiting, but through alumni commitment.

**Robbie Ptazynski ('12, business)**, director of strategic partner investments at Microsoft and chair of the Gonzaga-Microsoft partnership committee, says the effort represents a shift from informal goodwill to intentional, coordinated impact. “This alumni committee turns connection into action,” he says.

**“We prepare students for tech careers, surround them with alumni mentors, collaborate on innovation and academic partnerships and elevate the Gonzaga and Microsoft story.”**

– ROBBIE PTAZYNSKI ('12, business)



Students on the Seattle Trek connected with alumni at Microsoft in January 2026



Kaitlin Beller ('09) answers a question from a student at a campus networking event

**Kaitlin Beller ('09)** is a senior product marketing manager in the cybersecurity marketing organization at Microsoft. A communications major, Beller's favorite class was one called Persuasion. She looked up the class catalog recently and couldn't find it, but she laughs and says, "The entire comms major looks so fun now. I want to do it all over again."

## To guide the work, the committee established four pillars:

- Career and talent development
- Alumni engagement and networking
- Strategic collaboration and growth
- Increasing visibility for the Microsoft-Gonzaga connection

Together, these pillars create a framework for strengthening the student-to-career pipeline and deepening alumni involvement – a foundation steadied by the very people who have been doing this work all along.

## The Alumni Behind the Momentum

Meaningful career opportunities, continued engagement with the Gonzaga community and access to mentorship and networking after graduation – what better pairing could a college student hope for in today's environment?

It's no secret that higher education is navigating a challenging moment. Search the headlines and you'll find words like "crisis," "declining enrollment" and "uncertainty." Rising tuition costs and a shifting job market leave many students wondering whether a four-year degree is still worth it.

Against that backdrop, Gonzaga's partnership with Microsoft's alumni represents something increasingly rare: a concrete, future-focused pathway that connects academic learning with real-world opportunity, readying students for careers in technology for years to come.

And it wouldn't be possible without all the alumni already leading the way.

It taught her how to analyze long-form written and oral communication, how people frame their stories and how to figure out what's been left unsaid. "It was a really big moment for me," she explains. "I learned how important that type of skill set is, and I bring it into a lot of my work today."

Beller is an important example of what can be done outside the boundaries of a major or specialization. The skills learned at Gonzaga prepare students for every facet of a professional career.

"It's a pretty big misconception about Microsoft that you need a technical background to work here. In fact, most people I work with don't," she says.

That's what excites her most about this partnership – enlightening students to the possibilities their degree carries, even outside its designation.

"When I graduated, I didn't know what companies like Microsoft were looking for. I didn't know how to talk

about myself or my professional skill set," Beller continues. "A partnership like this can really help students along in that journey and give them confidence the day they graduate, knowing they understand what's going to be required of them in the working world."

**"What the company looks for is people who want to learn, who can communicate thoughtfully and who are adaptable to the pace of innovation we have here."**

– KAITLIN BELLER  
( '09, communications)

**Don Campbell ('92, management and finance, '93 MBA)**, senior director of employee experience success, celebrated 20 years at Microsoft at the end of 2025. He believes the partnership is key for both Gonzaga and his employer.

“From a student perspective, I’m jealous,” he laughs. “I wish we had this connection when I was in school. Having access to major companies – to network and interact with people in the industry – is super critical.”

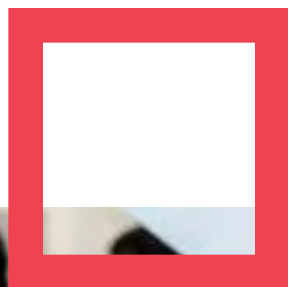
From the Microsoft perspective:

**“These students are young minds that are wonderful assets.”**

**Ayla McKorkle ('21, business administration)**, a product manager on the Microsoft Defender for Office 365 team, agrees, noting one of the biggest advantages for the company is choosing from a pool of students who are already in the know when it comes to rapidly developing technology.

Artificial intelligence is one of the most talked-about branches of computer science, shaping everything from Super Bowl commercials to the day-to-day software running your devices. Discussion around AI and how to best utilize it is a daily – if not hourly – occurrence at Microsoft.

“Students need to be aware of what we’re doing in the tech space as it’s happening,” she says, describing a potential key feature of the partnership: Microsoft informing what’s being taught at the university level. “This will allow students to grow in those areas prior to entering the workforce. Having that information already at their fingertips is going to make them incredibly competitive.”



Shelby Reed ('21) sits with a Gonzaga student during the Seattle Trek.

## Built on Zag Spirit

For alumni like **Connor Flanagan ('13, marketing)**, director of go-to-market program development at Microsoft and partnership committee member, the work is deeply personal. "When we think of Gonzaga, we want it to be synonymous with being leaders in the professional community," he says. "This partnership shows students the breadth of possibilities available after graduation – and how deep the Zag network runs."

Flanagan believes Gonzaga students bring something distinctive to Microsoft: grit, consistency, work ethic and talent. "There's an assumed level of trust that is automatically associated with a Zag."

Ptaszynski sees the committee's work evolving beyond annual events toward an "always-on" model of engagement. "If we get this right, more students launch meaningful careers, more alumni stay connected and the Zag network grows stronger with every class."

For Hertz, the heart of the partnership remains unchanged:

**"This partnership is alumni-driven at its core. It's a testament to what happens when Zags support Zags – and how far that commitment can go."**

Set against the challenging landscape enveloping higher education, this partnership and the alumni making it happen is adding value to a Gonzaga degree and opening doors that might otherwise stay shut.

"At the end of the day," Beller says, "I find it very inspiring that I could be forming a connection with a student who will one day be my co-worker."



Connor Flanagan ('13) is one of the committee members working on the partnership

### Thank you to these Microsoft alumni partner leaders!

Ryan Currie ('21), Connor Flanagan ('13), Katie Hopps ('04), Ayla McKorkle ('21), Stefany Northcutt ('05), Robbie Ptaszynski ('12), Jenelle Trimmell ('17), Diego Valdez ('20), Mateo Valdez ('24), David Visintainer ('87), Sam Winninghoff ('10), Robin Wood ('97), Joe Zavaglia ('01)

**Help open new doors for Zags and connect us with organizations that share Gonzaga's Mission.**

» [gonzaga.edu/IndustryPartnerships](https://gonzaga.edu/IndustryPartnerships)



# The Living Continuum *of Leadership*

Story by Holly Jones (M.A. '22, Ph.D. '27)  
Photo by Sam Rains ('26)

## The floor spoke first.

Not loudly, just the soft creak of century-old wood doing what old wood does when it recognizes familiar footsteps. In the student chapel, beneath the pressed-tin ceiling once hidden and now restored to its original dignity, three Gonzaga University presidents stood shoulder to shoulder while a student photographer adjusted his lens. Sam, a journalism major from the Class of '26, leaned forward, camera lifted, watching history quietly arrange itself into a frame.

On the left stood President Emeritus Thayne McCulloh; in the center, current President Katia Passerini; on the right, former President Father Robert J. Spitzer, S.J.

Someone had already nicknamed them “Gonzaga’s Holy Trinity.” They shared breakfast earlier that morning, connecting over coffee and the kind of conversation that refuses to fit into an agenda because it belongs more to relationship than schedule. Spitzer and McCulloh reminisced. Passerini listened, asked and added. Institutional memory met institutional future, and neither felt the need to prove anything to the other. They did not speak like successors and predecessors. They spoke like colleagues who understood the same promise from different decades.

## The chapel itself seemed to keep time with them.

McCulloh mentioned the floors were original, boards that had held generations of prayers, anxious exam mornings, friendships formed in late-night conversations, Zag weddings, moments of grief, and the quiet relief of finding one’s place. Gonzaga buildings rarely behave like architecture – they behave like witnesses. The room carried a rhythm, not measured in minutes but in recurrence. Through footsteps, pauses, laughter, silence, then footsteps again, the past did not sit behind the present here. It moved alongside it.

Spitzer told the story of helping orchestrate the chapel’s renovation, including securing the stained-glass windows, and replacing avocado green and harvest gold with something closer to permanence. It was restoration recalled not as nostalgia but as honesty. Jesuit education often works the same way: Remove distraction, reveal intention and allow what has always been true to become visible again.

Conversation drifted naturally from memory into present work. Passerini spoke about recent trips to Washington, D.C., advocating for higher education and Gonzaga in Florence, and to Olympia, where she and a student met with lawmakers about financial aid reductions affecting

Washington students hoping to attend Gonzaga. As they spoke, the rhythm of leadership unfolded in real time and they sounded less like presidents and more like friends reunited after long travel, not because they shared the same years but because they shared the same vocation.

## Then came a question that turned the morning gently playful.

“If you three were siblings, what would your birth order be?”

Laughter arrived almost immediately and stayed for a while. Passerini, an only child, decided she would be the youngest, her independence paired naturally with curiosity about the story she had stepped into. Spitzer described himself as the peacemaker, the second born who gathers people into understanding. McCulloh acknowledged the organizing instinct of the firstborn, the steady responsibility to hold structure so others can flourish. Lighthearted answers revealed decades of leadership building systems reconciling people and charting forward movement. Together they represented the distinctly Jesuit ways of community in motion and harmony formed not by uniformity but by attunement.

Each of these leaders has stewarded major philanthropic efforts in Gonzaga’s history. Each understands deeply how benefaction sustains the mission. Yet during the entire morning, impact was never described in dollars. It was described in names. Jesuit education has always insisted education is relational before it is institutional. Alumni and friends do not support Gonzaga because the University needs money. They support Gonzaga because someone once believed in them and it’s in their hearts to pay it forward.

Three presidents in one room is unusual. Three presidents in conversation is even more rare. Three presidents comfortable enough to laugh about sibling dynamics and then discussing public policy advocacy reveals something deeper than coincidence. The moment carried weight not because of hierarchy but because of continuity. Spitzer helped shape the spiritual and intellectual identity. McCulloh guided growth and national stature. Passerini now carries the work into a changing higher-education landscape marked by rising student need, increasing costs of living and ever-changing public opinion. Different eras, yet the same purpose resonated with them all – educate the people the world needs most. The photograph Sam captured holds stewardship across generations, in a relay race where the baton is Gonzaga’s enduring Mission.

The University moves forward not by leaving its past behind, but by letting it keep pace.

# Life After 90

By Dale Goodwin ('86 M.A.T.)

*Editor's Note: Rol Herriges passed away unexpectedly Jan. 24, mere weeks after an interview for this story; we're still including him as a tribute to his contributions.*

Who could blame these gentlemen if they were sitting back in their easy chairs watching daytime TV. They are 90-plus and have lived exemplary lives.

But hold that thought.

**Marty Weber ('56, '64 J.D.), Rol Herriges ('57) and Mike Paioni ('47)** are anything but whatever your image of couch potatoes might be. All three continue to give back in an assortment of ways, making life better for those around them.

This trio served in the military. They rose high in the ranks of their chosen professions. Weber spent most of his career as a lawyer, Paioni as a bank administrator and Herriges as a journalist and public relations professional.

And all three set sterling examples of their Gonzaga educations late in their retired lives.

Weber, 91, took down his shingle in 2010 after 46 years practicing law, the last 36 at Lukins and Annis in Spokane. Raised in a Catholic family in Uniontown, Washington, he was the ninth of 10 children. It's no surprise much of his service work is devoted to his church and parish. He also promoted religious life vocations through the national board of directors of Serra International and as a trustee for the Serra Club of Spokane.

One of his favorite causes has been the restoration of the Jesuit Cemetery at Mt. St. Michael's in northeast Spokane. In a project established with impetus from Mary Margaret (Brajeich) McLafferty ('74) and Dan Harbaugh ('70, '74 J.D.), Weber was the moving force in the repair of the water system, straightening tombstones, trimming trees, and creating a brick-and-marble directory with the names of almost 700 Jesuits interred there.

Weber still shows his Gonzaga colors, attending every Zags' home men's basketball game with daughter Joan. He's been a season ticket holder since 1999 but remembers the days "when we could arrive at game time and have no trouble getting a seat."

Paioni is a man who has made the most of his 100 years.

"Gonzaga has come a long way since I was there as part of the Navy V-12 officer training program in 1944-47," says Paioni (pronounced pie-OWN-ee), crediting former President Father Bernard Coughlin "for laying the foundation for what we have today."

One of his best college memories was meeting Gonzaga alumnus Bing Crosby when the crooner came to campus and sang with the Glee Club.

Paioni also boxed for Gonzaga "but I got tired of getting hit, so I sang the national anthem before every fight," he says. He was elected student body president by a slim margin over his boyhood friend Art Dugoni, "although Dugoni long believed it was a tie."

Before Crosby's death in 1977, Paioni twice ran into him at a golf and country club. "Although Bing was quiet and reserved, we loved talking about Gonzaga and our memories of the Glee Club," Paioni adds.

After a distinguished career with Bank of America (1963-1994) and living in Los Altos, California, Paioni made a point to continue singing and making people smile. With a beautiful tenor's voice, he sang at the San Francisco Opera House, in a synagogue, at Bay Area churches and at his 600-member Vi Palo Alto retirement community, where he is known as "the Western Union Singing Telegram Boy." He sings "Happy Birthday" to fellow residents in English, Italian and Spanish, igniting many smiles. Not bad for 100.



Mike Paioni ('47)



Rol Herriges ('57)

Also from a strong Catholic family, Herriges – whose middle name was Aloysius – was the seventh of 12 children. While he was never a member of Gonzaga’s Glee Club, as were the other two, it was a Glee Club performance at his high school that lured the Whitefish, Montana, lad to GU.

Before Gonzaga, Herriges attended Carroll College in Helena, Montana, and served a stint as photographer onboard the USS Rochester, stationed in Japan, during the Korean War. During that time, he cultivated a deep affinity for the Japanese people and their culture. He completed a journalism degree in GU’s School of Business and his career took him to Spokane’s KHQ TV and radio station, serving the last 10 of his 15 years there as news director. He helped publicize Expo ’74, then joined Associated General Contractors as trust manager, where he finished his working career in 2007.

Serving on community boards put his passions to good use for the AGC foundation board, Morning Star Boys’ Ranch, Spokane Heart Association, Gonzaga Alumni Association, GU’s Board of Regents and United Way.

A champion of Spokane’s Sister Cities Association, Herriges was its president for 13 years and remained active in the Spokane Nishinomiya (Japan) Sister City Society until his death. He welcomed many Japanese visitors to Spokane and made the return trip a few times.

“The last time in Japan I visited Hiroshima (190 miles from Nishinomiya), and a museum retelling the city’s story about the atomic bomb drop in 1945,” Herriges



Marty Weber ('56, '64 J.D.)

remembered. “I had the strangest feeling, seeing burnt clothing, melted bottles, a building whose top was blown off. It was haunting.”

One retirement project Herriges claimed “is the best job I ever had” was proofreading Gonzaga Magazine. “It helps me keep in touch with all the great things that are happening here.”

To these three gents who routinely exemplified Gonzaga’s mission, Salute! And to Herriges, rest in peace, good friend.



## Who's this ZAG?

This Zag touched the lives of students, colleagues and friends worldwide. Spending a year in Romania as a Fulbright professor at the University of Timișoara, he opened young minds to Western culture and became a father figure to many. This professor of English taught at Gonzaga for 29 years, retiring in 1995. Students loved meeting in his small office where he made ideas big. He pitched wild possibilities in class, then stood back and watched with delight as students explored myriad prospects. He earned his Ph.D. from USC and was well-educated on the life and times of William Faulkner. A private pilot and frequent Bloomsday runner, he died in 2002.

» If you know this **Mystery Zag**, please share a favorite memory: Visit [gonzaga.edu/editor](http://gonzaga.edu/editor), or write Editor, Gonzaga Magazine, Gonzaga University, 502 E. Boone Ave., Spokane, WA 99258-0070.

## Our Mystery Zag from the Winter 2026 issue is . . .

### Jane Rinehart

1974-2015 | Professor Emerita of Sociology

She was a trailblazer, pure and simple. Professor Rinehart laid the foundation for the development of what would become the Women's and Gender Studies Program. Throughout her distinguished teaching career she was a social justice advocate, encouraging Gonzaga to deal openly with gender equality and other social rights issues. A student favorite, she was among GU's most influential faculty members. Rinehart encouraged her students to listen well and do the right thing, which she emulated.

Rinehart, 80, lives in Portland, Oregon.



## Readers' Responses

Jane Rinehart is the mystery Zag. I was the first babysitter for Jane and Richard's two children shortly after they moved here from Long Island, so Richard could teach in the theology department. Jane asked Richard: "What do you know about her?" His reply: "She's from Yakima, Washington! How bad can she be!?"

**Sharon Fischer ('75)**

Spokane

Absolute legend, Dr. Jane Rinehart! I loved all of her classes and she was a true inspiration: both thoughtful and thought-provoking. A powerhouse of wisdom!

**Zoey Mdalel ('10)**

San Francisco

Loved Professor Rinehart! I took my first gender studies class with her. Incredibly impactful.

**Carli Schiffner ('96)**

Olympia, Wash.

The one and only Dr. Rinehart! I was fortunate enough to have several classes with Dr. Rinehart as well as have her as an adviser. She was an exceptionally formative part of my university education.

**Stephanie Jamison ('99)**

Spokane

The most amazing woman and professor in my time at Gonzaga. Jane Rinehart taught lessons that went well beyond the classroom that I am teaching my daughter today.

**Michelle K. Proulx-Schuette ('96)**

San Jose, Calif.

Dr. Rinehart is the reason I became a sociology professor at Gonzaga. Her introduction to sociology had me more excited about a class than I'd ever been. I quickly declared it as my major and asked her to be my adviser. I'll never forget when she told me I had enough credits available that I could take classes that sounded interesting to me. Ended up with an English minor thanks to her.

**Katie Eubank ('04)**

Sammamish, Wash.

One of the greats! She encouraged vibrant discussion that moved text out of the classroom into tangible social settings. I was struck by her willingness to challenge what we thought were the "right" answers to a discussion topic, illustrating the bias in our conclusions. The exercises in her classroom ensured students left having honed their critical thinking skills and trained empathy in every interaction. What a blessing it was to have been her student. She was one of the reasons I went on to shift my major to sociology.

**Aliya Quidwai ('07)**

Omak, Wash.

Jane Rinehart! My absolute favorite professor at Gonzaga and a huge reason I chose to major in sociology, and ultimately why I'm a therapist today. She had this gentle way of allowing so much freedom to think and feel while still completely captivating our attention. We knew we were experiencing something important. We weren't just learning from a syllabus – we were learning about ourselves, about one another, about love and injustice and how we're all trying our best to do this life together. We were growing up. I grew up in her classroom. I ran into Prof. Rinehart maybe 10 years after graduation (actually I drove my minivan right past her and totally stopped, jumped out, and interrupted her walk to give her a big hug). The fact that she remembered me and took the time to reminisce meant everything.

**Julia Ruiz Hoffman ('02)**

Dallas

Dr. Rinehart is the reason I majored in sociology. She not only taught me about the academic lens of sociology, but also the personal and how it influences your views on family. I will never forget her story about her stance on consumerism and compared it to the need to "fit in" for her child, and how it is a balance. I think about her words of wisdom daily.

**Cerra Sand ('02)**

Everett, Wash.

Jane Rinehart. One of my favorite professors at Gonzaga.

**Michael Gray ('11)**

Tacoma, Wash.

I took classes from her that changed the course of my time at Gonzaga and landed me with a sociology degree! I'll never forget taking "Gender, Difference & Power" as an 18-year-old freshman. An incredible impact on students in her decades as a professor.

**Ellie Takemura ('16)**

Bellingham, Wash.

Professor Rinehart! Her classes had some of the best discussions during my time at Gonzaga. She truly cared about what her students thought and would ask thought-provoking questions. I learned so much from her. I look fondly back on my time in her classes.

**Melody Crick Peters ('01)**

University Place, Wash.

## More Than a Degree

Ryan Grulich ('25, M.A.) chose Gonzaga for personal development, but it's given him much more

By Dan Nailen



When **Ryan Grulich** graduated from Gonzaga's Communication and Leadership Studies master's program, it was the culmination of five COVID-interrupted years pursuing a deeper understanding of Jesuit principles of communication. He learned as much through his interactions outside class as through online lectures and study sessions.

The 42-year-old Grulich already had several professional lives before enrolling at GU: touring musician, filmmaker, senior vice president and CEO of a live-events production company, and now director of business development in the fast-evolving world of artificial intelligence.

His academic journey was never about chasing a title or a pay raise, he says. It was about something deeper.

"For me, it was more of a mountain that I just wanted to climb," Grulich says. "It wasn't going to bump my pay grade or necessarily open any specific doors. There was no motive in that way. It was really just about personal development."

Grulich enrolled just two months before COVID-19 changed everything. What might have been a two-year program stretched into five, as the pandemic disrupted life and work.

For Grulich, Gonzaga's Jesuit values – especially *cura personalis*, care for the whole person – became a lifeline.

"In this chaotic time, having access to thinking and people who were rooted in putting the human first was hugely important," he says. "My professors didn't see me as a statistic. They saw me as a fellow traveler."

That human-centered approach mattered most when Ryan hit a wall and considered leaving the program.

"I had a moment where I wasn't sure if I could stick with it," he admits. "But my professors and the Center for Cura Personalis talked me through it. That whole moment catalyzed it for me to stay in and keep going – even if I had to take breaks – because I knew I had permission to be human and still accomplish my goal. Sometimes that goal was the thing keeping me going."

Ryan's passion for communication runs deep. He started his own little production company at 15 and has been in communications, entertainment, film and media ever since.

After years as a touring musician, he shifted to live event production, managing audiovisual experiences in the Seattle area. Later, he turned to filmmaking, drawn to the creative rhythm of projects with a clear beginning and end. "You never make the same film twice," he says.

During the pandemic, Ryan poured his energy into a true-crime documentary, "The Lady in the Lake," about the 1937 murder of Hallie Illingworth, whose body was discovered in Lake Crescent in 1940. His film explored the chilling case that had haunted local lore. Released in 2024, the documentary is streaming on multiple platforms.

Post-pandemic, Grulich moved to Florida and to the blossoming field of artificial intelligence. It's a leap that might seem surprising, but for Grulich it felt natural.



“Whether it’s music, live events, or AI, it’s all about creating experiences that connect people,” he says.

Today, Grulich is a consultant for AI company Metropolis Technologies as well consulting on the fast-evolving technology for a company in the United Kingdom. “I’m privy to this technology and seeing how it unfolds,” he explains. “But the ethics of it are so new, and they require a standpoint that capitalism doesn’t typically allow. A purely transactional education doesn’t prepare you for that.”

That’s where his Gonzaga experience makes a huge difference, he says.

“The emphasis on ethics translates into very real-world success – not just financially, but in a deeper sense of purpose and balance,” Grulich says. “Technology should serve people. That’s the heart of leadership.”

Grulich says Gonzaga gave him more than a degree. It gave him resilience, perspective, and a renewed sense of vocation. In addition to his consulting work, he’s tapping those skills as a strategy coach for both individuals and business leaders.

“Cura personalis resonates with me,” Grulich says. “It’s about caring for the whole person, and that’s what I try to bring into my work now.”

From Texas roots to Seattle stages, from pandemic online classrooms to Florida boardrooms, Grulich’s journey is proof that reinvention isn’t about leaving your past behind – it’s about carrying it forward into new possibilities.

## On the Move

**'04 Mikayla** and **'02 Sean Patella-Buckley** moved their family to Taiwan. Sean teaches English literature and Mikayla teaches chemistry at the Taipei American School. They’re pictured here with children Atticus and Roxie at Vase Rock on Xiaoliuqiu Island off the coast of Taiwan.

## Of Note

**'01 J.D. Jason Vail** is director of the American Bar Association Center for Professional Responsibility.

**'05 Tim Neary** is chief executive officer of the Northwest ADHD Treatment Center.



**'05 Jobin Panicker** received a 2025 National Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Writing.

**'05 Chase Perrin** is senior vice president at Edelman, a corporate reputation practice working with aerospace and aviation clients.



**'07 Bonnie Leko-Shapiro** is director of marketing and communications at the Humane Society of Southern Arizona.

**'18 Annika Perez-Krikorian** is literary director at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, leading play development and helping to curate each season.

**'25 Katie Harris, RN**, received recognition at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., for nursing with cura personalis in mind – something Katie says she learned through her Gonzaga professors.



## In Print

These Zags share publications they’ve authored.

**'79 Larry Murillo:** “Inner Child Healing”

**'96 Stefan M. Bradley:** “If We Don’t Get It: A People’s History of Ferguson”

**'07 Laura Collins:** “Beyond Recognition: Transgender Antidiscrimination Law, Rhetoric, and Ethical Responsibility”

**'22 Lauren Haas:** “A Heart That Holds It All: The Story of Adoption”

## Worthy of Debate

For **Chuck Lloyd ('83)**, a single phone call from Gonzaga's new debate coach changed the course of his life – launching him into a career defined by advocacy, justice and deep gratitude. Debate sharpened the skills that carried him from Yakima to law school, through landmark legal cases, and ultimately to freeing an innocent man from death row. Returning to campus decades later, Lloyd and his wife, Deb Nelson, felt the momentum behind Gonzaga Debate's new endowment and made a transformative gift of their own.

"Gonzaga Debate changed my life," Lloyd says. "This is our chance to make sure it changes others' lives too." Their support ensures future students will gain the confidence, discipline and intellectual generosity that debate instills; qualities Lloyd believes are urgently needed in today's fractured public discourse. Their legacy strengthens a program built on curiosity and the discipline of disagreement.



## Foundation in friends, purpose and action manifest in conservation work

By Kaya Crawford ('25)

**Brian Muegge's** interest in conservation was cultivated in his experience as a student at Gonzaga University, and now is making an impact working with the environmental nonprofit Salmon Safe to promote sustainable actions focused on water and habitat conservation in the Inland Northwest.

Growing up in San Jose, California, Muegge spent time camping and enjoying the outdoors. He says his parents fostered an "ethos of conservation" in him. He graduated in 2016 with a degree in biology with a research concentration and a desire to work in conservation.

He conducted his undergraduate research exploring the dietary habits of yellow-bellied marmot in the Spokane area, as well as an internship with the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho that entailed studying noxious weed dispersion throughout the Coeur d'Alene National Forest. His first job out of college focused on bolstering a more environmentally friendly food system for Impossible Foods, which helps transition our global food system away from a reliance upon large, combined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which have an immense climate-negative footprint.

Today he is a farm program manager at Salmon Safe, which works to keep urban and agricultural watersheds clean enough for native salmon to spawn and thrive in the Pacific Northwest. Muegge helps farmers to undergo rigorous, third-party Salmon Safe certification of best management practices for protecting habitat and water quality, and also connects farmers to technical support and grant funding that can support necessary changes to support their

conservation efforts. Last year, he also helped GU achieve Salmon Safe certification, another step toward rewilding the urban Spokane river system.

Muegge is excited to see the reintroduction of Chinook salmon into the Spokane River by the Upper Columbia United Tribes, a consortium of the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Salish Kootenai and Colville tribes whose ancestors thrived alongside the salmon population in the area since time immemorial.

As a member of GU's College of Arts and Science advisory committee, Muegge looks to further connect students with research and other opportunities to engage with environmental efforts locally.

Muegge says now is the time to shine the light on conservation efforts.

"I truly don't think that we're focusing enough effort on it, globally, nationally, at the state level," Muegge says.

"Anything that I can do to further ring the bell that the time is short to shift our focus on protecting our environment without causing future irreparable harm, I'll do."



## Tireless Advocates for Health

By Thea Skokan ('22)

Regardless of insurance or income, health care needs never rest.

At the Washington Association for Community Health (WACH), three alumni – Kristina Alnajjar ('07, business), Patrick Jones ('20, communications) and Kate Cherrington ('04, public relations) – are helping strengthen one of the state's most essential health care networks. Their organization represents 28 community health systems operating more than 400 clinics statewide, all committed to caring for patients regardless of insurance status, income or circumstance.

"We really consider ourselves the last primary care safety net," says Jones, communications and marketing manager. "We are here to help the health centers accomplish their mission as best as possible."

As chief operating officer, Alnajjar brings a lifelong commitment to service shaped by her family and her years immersed in community engagement programs. After earning her business degree at Gonzaga, she spent time in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and later pursued a master's in public health.

"Access to quality health care makes up about 20% of someone's overall health," she says, explaining the importance of their work. "Community health centers touch so many of the other factors – behavioral health, nutrition, mobility, aging. They're part of the whole ecosystem that helps people thrive." Her role focuses on protecting funding, supporting member organizations through shifting policy landscapes and ensuring the community health centers movement is supported by strong strategic programs and initiatives so they can have the best chance to keep their doors open to those who need them most.

Jones grew up around health care – his mother worked in a hospital for decades. He knew he was interested in the field, but with a communications degree, he also knew he'd end up with a less traditional role. What he discovered was how



L to R: Kate Cherrington, Kristina Alnajjar, Patrick Jones

powerful clear, accessible messaging can be in a complex policy environment.

"Health care is full of acronyms and barriers to understanding," he says. "My job is to translate that complexity into something clinic staff can act on and legislators can understand." He sees himself as a connector between policymakers and the people delivering care on the ground.

For Communications and Engagement Specialist Kate Cherrington, her time at Gonzaga solidified a call to work in the nonprofit sector. What keeps her rooted in community health is the human component and seeing the impact it has even on her own circle.

"Having kids made it even more real," she says. "Knowing that some of their classmates and their families rely on community health centers reminds me why this work matters." She finds purpose in elevating stories from clinics across the state and helping communities understand the value of accessible care.

All three agree this is a challenging time to be in their line of work. With constant changes to federal policy, future and current funding remain unstable. But the need for care is constant, so the work of the WACH – and its member organizations in Spokane, CHAS and The Native Project – stays rooted in its mission.

"Ensuring no clinics have to close, services don't need to be canceled and staff don't have to be laid off," Jones says. "That's what we're focused on."

## Purpose-driven Newsmaker



For more than 25 years, **Kris Higginson ('98)** has helped shape the news that millions of Washingtonians read each day. As assistant managing editor at the Seattle Times, she oversees the news desk, the nation/world report, the Morning Brief, and a team of copy editors.

Higginson traces her path to Gonzaga, where she majored in

journalism and political science and spent countless hours in the Gonzaga Bulletin newsroom. "The critical thinking, the not being afraid to question authority – that Jesuit education prepared me for this work," she says.

Her career has spanned major elections, breaking news and Pulitzer-winning coverage, but the people remain her favorite part of the job. "Newsrooms are full of brilliant, wicked-funny, incredibly dedicated people," she says. "Being part of that purpose-driven community has been the highlight of my career."

# Zag Weddings

Following are all submissions received from July 2025 to January 2026. Where available, locations of ceremonies are included. Congrats to All!



**'07 Aliya Quidwai** and Brent Nourse married in Omak, Wash., surrounded by family and friends who traveled from around the world to celebrate. Their wedding was a beautiful fusion of cultures and faiths, reflecting a shared belief that love and family transcend borders and differences.

**'18 August Braun** and **'18 Abby (Bordewick)** began their love story at 30,000 feet. Though they grew up just 15 minutes apart in Minnesota, the two didn't meet until they were on a flight to Spokane for their first year at Gonzaga. They tied the knot 11 years later.



**'06 Sandy Fujiwara** and Cullen Kawano said "I do" on Maui, where Sandy is a retail director at the Maui Ocean Center.

**'06 Jenni Opalinski** and Brian M. Ingrassia

**'09 Rebecca Watters** and Erik Skjerseth

**'12 Courtney Quinn** and Robert Krause Jr.

**'13 Brian Sliger** and Monica Gallucci, Puyallup, Wash.

**'15 Katarina Habelt** and **'16 Mitch Thielemann**

**'15 Brenna Doll** and **'15 Kevin Dixon**

**'16 Kara Brown** and Levi Jordan, Woodland, Wash.

**'17 Glynn Baxter** and Travis McGuire

**'17 Cole Mitchell** and **'14 Jordan Chapin**. St. Cecilia's Church, Bainbridge Island, Wash.

**'18 Kelsie McKenna** and **'18 Ben White**, Boulder Creek, Boulder, Colo.

**'19 Andi Clark** and **'19 Michael Hoeller**, Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, Wash.

**'19 Molly Foster** and **'18, '20 M.A. Brandon Pollard**

**'19 Elise Scacciotti** and **'17 Joseba Bidaburu**, Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Boise, Idaho

**'19 Mallika Sharabu** and **'19 Alexander Johns**

**'20 Sydney Skinner** and **'21 Brett Harris**

# Baby Zags

'20 **Gabriella Favorito** and  
'20 **James Pon**

'20 **Regan McCabe** and  
'20 **Donald Savaiano**

'20 **Cole Walchenbach** and  
'20 **Gaby Foley**

'20 **Samantha Galluzzo** and  
'21 **Derek Dzingle**, Bonney  
Lake, Wash.

'21 **Michelle Cuaresma** and  
'20 **Justin Arnaldo**

'21 **J.D. Sara Fukuhara** and  
'21 **J.D. Joshua Grissom**

'21 **Emilya Ramsey** and  
'21 **Patrick Donoghue**

'22 **Rachel Bauman** and  
Samuel Titus, Fallbrook, Calif.

'22, '25 **M.A. Sophie Kuhn**  
and '22 **Matt Braatz**, Hill's  
Resort at Priest Lake, Idaho

'22 **M.A. Amanda Little** and  
Kayla Bolt, Charlotte, N.C.

'22 **Mackenzie Richards** and  
'22 **Chris Jacobs**, Fox Canyon  
Vineyards, Marsing, Idaho

'24 **Tyler Zabolio** and  
'24 **Sally Zabolio**

'25 **Katie Gosvener** and  
'25 **Parker Teague**, Lake  
Chelan, Wash.



Five former housemates at 510 E. Sinto Ave. all had babies in 2025 and reunited there during alumni weekend in September! They are: **Piper Sutherland** with baby Lenna, **Kaitlin Torre** with baby Robin, **Paulina Izzo**, **Michelle Bykonen (Smigaj)** with daughter Louella and baby Lilly, and **Christa Julien (Lum)** with twin girls, Riley and Morgan

'08, '16 **M.A. Danielle Loparco**  
and Carrie Loparco: a son, Lochlan

'08 **Matt Pollard** and Jess Smyth:  
a son, Oliver

'11 **John Molloy** and Amy Christine  
Molloy: a son, James Cillian Michael

'12 **Katie (Horelick)** and Perry Chaubal:  
a daughter, Arya Rose

'12 **Maria Alauddin Small** and  
'12 **Vinny Small**: a daughter,  
Isabelle Camila

'16 **Gabriella Perko Esteban** and  
'15 **Gregory Esteban**: a daughter,  
Jillian

'17 **Emma Bulba-Herges** and '17 **Riley  
Bulba-Herges**: a son, David

'17 **Scott Taylor** and '16 **Jen (Hudson)**:  
a daughter, Skye

'17 **Riley Soukup** and '18 **Ben Willis**: a  
son, Beckett

'18 **Claire (Atkinson)** and '20 **Conner  
Jones**: a son, Dawson Jones

'21 **Morgan (Wald)** and '21 **Anthony  
Larranaga**: a daughter, Carmen

Baby Camille is still getting  
used to lots of smooches from  
her adoring Zag parents,  
'20, '21 **M.A. Erin (Johnson)**  
and '20 **Cole de Silva**.



This includes submissions received from August 2025 to January 2026.  
See all photos online at [gonzaga.edu/magazine](http://gonzaga.edu/magazine).



**'50 Howard Swenson**, Navy veteran and longtime Boeing engineer whose faith, stories and cross-country family adventures defined a life full of humor and heart. Dec. 21 – Seattle

**'52 Charles Owens**, accountant and Navy veteran whose devotion carried him through loss, parenthood and a long career in business. Nov. 29 – Reno, Nev.

**'57 Eugene Harsch**, veteran and journalist who worked for the Spokesman-Review, a talented artist with a passion for model trains. Aug. 17 – Spokane

**'57 Roland Herriges**, photographer in the Navy who fell in love with Japanese culture and later served many years as Spokane's ambassador for the Sister City association with Nishinomiya. (See story, p. 34.) Jan. 24 – Spokane

**'57 Benjamin Visintainer**, businessman, Army veteran and lifelong advocate of faith, family and education. Nov. 17 – Spokane

**'58 Louis Beckman**, devoted Elks and Kiwanis member, and lifelong enthusiast of travel, cards and community service. Dec. 1 – Spokane

**'59 Thomas Driscoll**, respected radiologist, devoted Catholic and joyful world traveler who cherished family above all. Aug. 30 – Spokane

**'59 J.D. The Hon. Richard Guy**, Washington Supreme Court justice and chief justice who championed court improvements and access to justice. Oct. 27 – Seattle

**'59 John O'Clair**, Air Force veteran and beloved choral director whose 30-year career shaped generations through music, faith and

mentorship. July 23 – La Canada Flintridge, Calif.

**'60 Jane Dempsey**, wore many hats as a local fashion model, corporate fundraiser and even a concierge at the Sheraton Hotel, loved to visit with family and friends. Dec. 12 – Gig Harbor, Wash.

**'60, '61 M.A. John Lounibos**, longtime professor of religion and ethics, and former Jesuit who blended scholarship, faith, athletics and music in equal measure. Nov. 1 – Blauvelt, N.Y.

**'61 J.D. Donald Brockett**, longtime prosecuting attorney known for his integrity, dedication to justice and devotion to family. Nov. 14 – Spokane

**'61 James Schmit**, a former Jesuit and devoted teacher and counselor, lived a life of faith, intellect and deep compassion for others. Oct. 19 – Calgary, Alberta

**'62 Thomas Bewley**, dedicated social worker and public servant who rose to statewide leadership in Washington's vocational rehabilitation system. Sept. 27 – Shoreline, Wash.

**'63, '81 M.A. Sr. Patricia Gordon**, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, educator and principal who served for 74 years. July 11 – La Crosse, Wis.

**'63 John Stirling**, insurance professional and attorney who enjoyed reading, military history and chess. Nov. 9 – McMinnville, Ore.

**'64, '68 J.D. Robert Leeds, Jr.**, a tenacious trial attorney whose career spanned five decades; deeply loved the outdoors, golf and community service. Nov. 16 – Spokane

**'64 Dolores Slovarp**, warm educator who championed special-needs students

and was once Montana's Teacher of the Year. Dec. 13 – Helena, Mont.

**'65 Edward Cody**, longtime Washington Post foreign correspondent known for his linguistic fluency and fiercely independent reporting from global conflict zones. Oct. 27 – Canterbury, U.K.

**'65 J.D. Jay Compau**, Navy officer turned attorney whose integrity, civic leadership and lifelong commitment to social justice shaped both his community and his family. Dec. 9 – Spokane

**'65 Katherine Marzano**, adventurous and generous soul whose life blended family devotion, community service and a lifelong love of learning and travel. Nov. 25 – Eugene, Ore.

**'65 James O'Connell**, insurance broker whose warmth, humor and love of sports shaped a life centered on faith, family and the relationships he built with everyone he met. Nov. 23 – Spokane

**'65 Kenneth Sullivan**, corporate lawyer, Army veteran and dedicated volunteer mediator, remembered for integrity, wit and love of reading. Nov. 3 – Denver

**'66 Paula Blanchat**, distinguished in marketing and communications and known for her creative mind and humor. Aug. 26 – Winston-Salem, N.C.

**'66 Rosemarie Heinegg**, an educator and world traveler who taught at Union College and later found a creative second life as a street photographer. Dec. 29 – Schenectady, N.Y.

**'66 John McRae**, clinical psychologist and Navy veteran remembered for his kindness, humor and devotion to helping others. April 27 – Sequim, Wash.

**'66 Gary Westerman**, dedicated 43 years to pediatric dentistry, teaching and outreach, including missions in the Dominican Republic and within the Nebraska Special Olympics. Aug. 21 – Omaha, Neb.

**'67 Patrick Cohen**, devoted educator, lifelong Disney fan and dedicated community member whose career spanned teaching, hospitality and public service. Nov. 14 – Rancho Mirage, Calif.

**'67 Joan Dellar**, Navy veteran, educator, lover of the outdoors whose warmth touched students and friends. Oct. 26 – Mesa, Ariz.

**'67 Peter Dito**, civil engineer and oil pipeline professional whose life was rooted in faith, family and a love of learning. Dec. 11 – Anaheim, Calif.

**'70 Carol McConnell**, social worker, dedicated educator and paraprofessional known for her warmth and generosity. August 1 – Spokane

**'67 Jedediah Steele**, pioneering California winemaker and founder of Steele Wines after a celebrated career. Oct. 31 – Kelseyville, Calif.

**'71 M.B.A. John Ceserani**, proud Marine and accomplished engineer whose drive, loyalty and love for family shaped a full life of hard work and mentorship. Dec. 1 – West Linn, Ore.

**'72 Michael Busch**, Navy veteran and longtime Spokane clothier known for his easy charm, love of sports, and deep devotion to family, faith, and friends. Sept. 3 – Spokane

**'72 Fr. William Floch**, devoted priest whose 42 years of ministry spanned parishes across Eastern Washington; remembered

for his gentle spirit and deep scholarship. Dec. 17 – Spokane

**'72 Michael McNeilly**, generous, loyal man and gifted athlete whose baseball career spanned Lower Columbia College, Gonzaga and multiple MLB draft selections. Oct. 24 – Spokane

**'72 Mary Niland**, advocate and nonprofit founder who championed education, dignity and opportunity for people with disabilities. Aug. 18 – Nampa, Idaho

**'74 Rodney Miller**, warm, funny and compassionate family man whose career spanned probation work and business ownership. Oct. 29 – Mohnton, Pa.

**'74 Robert Thelen**, electrician, entrepreneur and devoted church member known for his woodworking skills, generosity and love of nature. Dec. 8 – Martinsville, Ind.

**'74 The Hon. Patricia Williams**, attorney and first female bankruptcy judge in the Eastern District of Washington, known for her intelligence, wit and dedication to justice. Nov. 21 – Spokane

**'76 J.D. Frank Murray**, New Mexico assistant attorney general and master state attorney, known for sharp intellect, work ethic and service to public law. Oct. 16 – Santa Fe, N.M.

**'76 Catherine O'Neill**, a world traveler and Wall Street trailblazer who brought people together from Sonoma to Killarney, Ireland. Nov. 12 – Sonoma, Calif.

**'77 Albertus Gabo**, remembered for his warm smile, humble spirit and easygoing nature. July 5 – Olympia, Wash.

**'77 Anna Hansen**, loved books, sewing and travel,

especially loved to take trips with her mother, Pat. Nov. 17 – Seattle

**'77 J.D. John Lynch**, attorney, CPA and lifelong advocate for those with rheumatoid arthritis, known for his courage, service and dedication to community causes. Oct. 23 – Spokane

**'78 M.A. Leo Pelleriti Jr.**, Army Ranger and Vietnam veteran, Purple Heart recipient and dedicated history teacher and coach. July 18 – Gulfport, Fla.

**'79 Linda Blayne**, speech pathologist known for her compassion and for giving a voice to vulnerable individuals. July 23 – Medical Lake, Wash.

**'79 J.D. William Nolan**, speech pathologist known for her compassion and for giving a voice to vulnerable individuals. Feb. 25 – Rockaway Park, N.Y.

**'81 M.Ed. Carmen Chrumka**, life-long learner and teacher known for her book recommendations. July 10 – Calgary, Alberta

**'82 M.A. Mary Dahl**, lifelong singer whose voice lifted churches, choirs, radio airwaves and generations of families; remembered for her joy and generosity. Sept. 8 – Billings, Mont.

**'82 Betty Pedersen**, dedicated nurse whose faith, service and spirited love of Chicago sports shaped a long life of care for others. Dec. 4 – Rockford, Ill.

**'83 Roberta Miner**, journalist, arts leader and creative force whose work uplifted writers, performers and friends alike. July 3 – Seattle

*Continued*

**'84 M.Ed. Robert Hughes**, educator and respected school principal, proud Legion member and devoted family man. July 27 – Calgary, Alberta

**'84, '94 M.A. Lisa Wolfe**, nationally respected communications leader whose sharp insight and steady professionalism shaped PR education for decades. March 25 – Chicago

**'87 J.D. Clark Jordan**, devoted advocate for “the little guy” who spent decades as a workers’ compensation and personal injury attorney. Aug. 17 – Tendoy, Idaho

**'87 Laura South**, dedicated ecologist and singer, whose passion for music, conservation and family touched all who knew her. Nov. 21 – Albany, Ore.

**'88 M.A. Paul Martin**, psychotherapist who dedicated more than three decades to counseling individuals, couples and families while fostering community healing. Oct. 20 – Port Angeles, Wash.

**'90 M.A. Linda Dahmen**, teacher and ski instructor known for being a good listener and thoughtful gift giver. Aug. 19 – Spokane

**'92 M.A. Paul Cooley**, lifelong teacher and coach who loved music and sports, remembered for the easy joy he brought to his students and those around him. Dec. 19 – Spokane

**'92 M.A. Glenys Jones**, New Zealand-born educator whose 40-year teaching career and Rotary service enriched her community. July 9 – Castlegar, B.C.

**'93 M.A. Stefan “Gary” Bjarnason**, beloved science teacher and lifelong volunteer whose humor, generosity and

unforgettable classroom experiments inspired generations of students. Nov. 23 – Golden, B.C.

**'93 M.A. William Hottell**, veteran and adventurer who spent more than a year traveling around in a Volkswagen camper, inspired others with his love of storytelling. Nov. 9 – Twisp, Wash.

**'93 Ilona Ringler**, spirited entrepreneur, devoted community leader and lifelong adventurer who embraced every opportunity with curiosity and joy. August – Henderson, Nev.

**'99 Sr. Catherine Beckley**, SNJM, educator, counselor, therapist and spiritual director, founded Spokane’s Women’s Drop-in Center. Nov. 21 – Lake Oswego, Ore.

**'99 Alvaro “Bert” Leos**, devoted supporter of school athletics known for his gentle spirit, loyalty and quiet dedication to his community. Dec. 9 – Tacoma, Wash.

**'00 M.A. Kim Linder**, social worker known for her compassion, intellect and unwavering advocacy for children, also found joy in Pokémon Go in retirement. Nov. 23 – Spokane

**'00 Daniel Usdrowski**, known for his relentless work ethic and for his devotion to his family and community, Ducks Unlimited Silver Valley chapter president. Nov. 8 – Harrison, Idaho

**'01 M.A. Leslie Snelling Scabar**, dedicated counselor and advocate, inspired all with her courage and unwavering optimism while facing stage-3 breast cancer. July 20 – Calgary, Alberta

**'02 Patrick Molvik**, engineer, inventor, Navy veteran and devoted STEM mentor whose curiosity powered submarines, patents and generations of young scientists. Oct. 22 – Newport, Wash.

**'05 M.B.A. Spike Bighorn**, leader in the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, public servant and celebrated athlete who dedicated his life to family and community. Nov. 23 – Oklahoma City, Okla.

**'05 M.A. Beth Conrath**, beloved teacher who courageously fought brain cancer for a decade; remembered for her welcoming smile and love of the outdoors. Dec. 12 – Spokane

**'10 Michelle Koike**, lifelong athlete whose drive, heart and talent carried her into a career in design; remembered for humor and the deep love she shared with family and friends. Nov. 5 – San Francisco

**'13 M.A. Sarita Davis**, award-winning educator and founder of a mentorship and coaching collaborative. Nov. 6 – Durham, N.C.

**'14 M.A. Steven Fought**, writer-turned-public servant whose love of literature, sharp political mind and lifelong commitment to public good shaped a remarkable career. Jan. 10 – Toledo, Ohio

### Special Friends of the University:

**William “Bill” Ilgen Jr.**, former Gonzaga regent, professor of engineering and dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science. He also led the effort to expand the engineering building to become the Herak Center. Dec. 3 – Spokane

**John Marciniak**, professor emeritus who was chair of the mechanical engineering department and whose decades of teaching, advising and curriculum leadership shaped generations of students. Nov. 15 – Spokane

**Rev. Gregory M. Goethals**, S.J., a Gonzaga Trustee whose wisdom, pastoral presence and deep Ignatian leadership enriched the University. Nov. 8 – New York, N.Y.

### Correction:

We regret the errors in the winter 2025 issue regarding **Paula (Evans) Shaw ('89)**. She owned and led a successful outdoor retail business in the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle and was an accomplished recreational athlete who was beloved by many. Jan. 4, 2025 – Seattle

2026

# ZAGS GIVE day

Gifts came from all 50 states and benefited all of the Schools, the College, Athletics, Foley Library, the Climate Institute and the Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology, showing that once again, Zags Give Day supports the greatest needs of the entire campus community.

1,606 DONORS

948  
Alumni

678  
Parent/Family

325  
First time

255  
Staff & Faculty

\$708,280

*Thank you!*



## Built to Serve

For **Darell Jackson ('85)**, college felt out of reach at first — raised in St. Maries, Idaho, in a family shaped by military service and limited means, higher education depended on opportunity. After serving in the Marines during

Vietnam, the GI Bill provided Jackson that chance. He chose Gonzaga to stay close to home, and what followed became far more than a practical decision.

At Gonzaga, mentors and the Jesuit tradition reshaped Jackson's understanding of education. The experience paired engineering with philosophy and reflection, strengthening both technical skill and purpose.

"Those philosophy classes were so important," Jackson recalls. "Critical thinking is something that matters so much within a technical background." The lessons carried forward into a long and successful career in the Spokane technology industry and continued service in the Marine Reserves, including deployments to the Persian Gulf and Iraq.

Jackson approached school with discipline learned in the military — working while studying, long nights in the engineering lounge and steady focus on finishing the mission. The effort created not only a fulfilling profession but also a desire to help others reach the same starting line.

Philanthropic scholarship support began with veterans and later expanded to students across the engineering program. Today, Jackson prioritizes helping more women enter the field, especially those who may not otherwise see a path into science and technology. The motivation is simple, because he knows firsthand what financial support can mean to a student.

"If it wasn't for programs or people who put money out there to help folks ... it's life-changing. It's absolutely life-changing."

A gift to the University in Jackson's will extends Jackson's impact into the future, ensuring Gonzaga students continue to learn and serve. The advice Jackson offers future Zags remains straightforward: Study hard and put in the work. The benefits, Jackson says, last long after graduation.

**Have you included Gonzaga in your estate plans?**

Please let us know or request more information:

Call **509-313-6141** or email [plannedgiving@gonzaga.edu](mailto:plannedgiving@gonzaga.edu)

# Art of the Mission

By Aaron Danowski ('17)

I didn't know how much Gonzaga's Jesuit Mission meant to me until I felt its absence. After graduating, I missed being part of an organization that valued me as a whole person and encouraged the pursuit of faith that does justice.

As a result, after four years in the workforce, I felt the urge to return to Gonzaga. In Fall 2021 I was hired as an undergraduate admission counselor, and shortly after arriving in Spokane, I joined a staff Mission Formation cohort organized by the Office of Mission Engagement. This program gathered 20 employees for conversations about the distinctiveness of Jesuit higher education. It was during one of these conversations that I learned the Jesuit's Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs). I quickly realized I wanted to introduce them to people across campus

– including my Admissions colleagues and the prospective students I worked with.



## The Universal Apostolic Preferences

1. Show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment
2. Walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice
3. Accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future
4. Collaborate, with Gospel depth, for the protection and renewal of God's creation

Showcasing the UAPs became the focus of my final project in the staff formation program, through art. I do not have artistic talent, so the chair of the art department, Mat Rude, and I issued a call for proposals.



The submission received from first-year student **Sophie Micciche ('28)** blew us away. Her vision incorporated stained glass patterns from St. Al's Church, College Hall, and the sculpture of St. Ignatius. Here was her vision for each UAP:

1. **A labyrinth** (the winding journey of Ignatian spirituality and discernment)
2. **Hands sharing bread** (care for the poor and hungry, as well as spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist)
3. **A child and an elder lifting a paper lantern into the sky** (a hope-filled future lit by God's light)
4. **A dove flying over a natural landscape** (care for creation and God's presence throughout it)

**“While there are pieces of my beliefs and my roots within the painting, I was creating with the intention of expressing outside of myself, to express the University's Mission, a belief system and words to live by.”**

– SOPHIA MICCICHE ('28)

Gonzaga's Mission says the institution exists to “educate students for lives of leadership and service for the common good” – individuals who stand in solidarity with the poor, advocate for creation, and believe in a better tomorrow. The UAPs remind us of this vision, and Sophie's artwork does, too.

As Sophie brought her vision to life, my passion for this work brought me into a new role on campus. I joined the Mission Engagement team as a specialist to lead those same formation programs that reintroduced me to Gonzaga's Jesuit identity. I hope that through my work I can share the gift of the UAPs with staff and faculty across campus, encouraging them to animate the Jesuit spirit at the heart of our education. That way, more students will realize the value of the Mission before they walk across the graduation stage.

#### **ABOUT THE ART**

24x32, ink pen, watercolor, gold leaf  
*Installation in the John J. Hemmingson Center is planned for summer 2026*



502 E. Boone Ave., Spokane, WA 99258-0098

## Wading for Insight

“Research is one of the most transformative experiences we can offer to undergraduate students,” says biology and environmental studies and sciences professor Betsy Bancroft. “They gain so much experience for a relatively small investment.”

Students gain perspective on maintaining freshwater resources for humans and biodiversity through their studies at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge near Cheney, Washington.

Visit [gonzaga.edu/Turnbull](https://gonzaga.edu/Turnbull) for photos and student reflections on work that influences the health of biodiversity in nature as well as humans.



Want to support  
research opportunities?  
Give here.