

Spirit

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Thirty Years of Finding & Keeping Gonzaga Students

The career pathways of Jolanta Weber and Julie McCulloh

By Kate Vanskike ('22 M.A.)



Jolanta (Kozyra) Weber ('91, '94, '16) and Julie (Lopach) McCulloh ('92, '97 M.B.A.) have inhabited the strategies of student recruitment and academic success at Gonzaga for more than three decades.

For Weber, a student job in the admission department turned into a full-time job as a sophomore, a role she kept through graduation. Thirty-eight years later, she is retiring as vice-provost of academic affairs.

"Julie started in '93," Weber says. "I remember because that's when I left admissions and came to the registrar's office."

The two had met earlier when McCulloh accompanied a fellow student to an interview with Weber. Fast forward a couple of years when Weber served on a search committee in admissions: "I don't know even know why we wasted our time with interviews. Julie just had this way about her that inspired good energy and we knew she would just roll up her sleeves and get to work."

This year, McCulloh retires as vice provost for enrollment management.

Psychology in the Workplace

Both leaders had been psychology majors. Weber had plans to be a psychologist to help people individually; McCulloh was more interested in organizational psychology.

"I was fascinated by how people work together," says McCulloh. "My mom went to work at IBM when I was in eighth grade and I was fascinated by her stories, thinking, 'Wow, that's how people work together?'"

Weber had initially considered taking a break from school after having her daughter, but after a short time realized she missed school, and was accepted into Arizona State's clinical psychology program.

"She's being humble here," McCulloh interjects. "Arizona had a very good program and they flew her down there to meet. They really wanted her."

Ultimately, practicums, internships and leading groups for adult children of alcoholics, among others, made Weber question the path. About that time, she heard about changes occurring at Gonzaga and decided to stay.

Studying psychology – as with any of the humanities, McCulloh and Weber agree – has great benefits.

"It's such a helpful area of knowledge, to do anything in life but especially when you work with people," Weber says. "I credit my studies for understanding how to use language well, without putting people on the defensive, and I've used that so much, especially as a supervisor."

She continues: "You use that knowledge in more meaningful ways than in the industry, necessarily, as it translates into critical thinking and problem solving. That's why I'm such an advocate for the liberal arts."

McCulloh, too, applied for grad school. Putting \$300 worth of fees into the mail with her applications is a vivid memory. "I remember being at a mailbox at Gonzaga and letting go of that stack and thinking, 'I'm never going to go to these schools.' I just suddenly knew it wasn't what I wanted."

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Weber & McCulloh

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The Privilege of Higher Ed

Though neither of them envisioned staying at GU their whole careers, they agree that being in higher education provides ample opportunities to learn new skills and stay excited about work.

“It’s just this incredible gift – a luxury, a privilege and an honor,” says Weber. For her part, she has enjoyed a different function or role or had slightly different responsibilities every two years or so, all within the realm of academic administration. “I felt recognized for my efforts and it just gave me opportunities to learn new things.”

Similarly, McCulloh rose in the ranks and had new opportunities to tackle in admission, and more broadly, all of enrollment management.

“I love that Beth Martin (former interim academic vice president) gave me the opportunity to pull together the enrollment management team and to move it under the provost model,” says McCulloh. “I love the chance to connect with Jolanta and it’s been a joy to work with Kent Porterfield (Student Affairs) and to have it all be seamless.”

Enrollment, of course, has significant expectations and with those outcomes for the whole university. It is a big responsibility and one that weighed heavily on McCulloh, especially during the pandemic, technology implementations and demographic challenges. It’s a pressure not often understood by others.

The Impetus for Growth

Weber and McCulloh have seen their fair share of growth and change at Gonzaga, both in critical areas for development as the University hit a growth spurt in the late ‘90s and early 2000s.

“There were multiple things happening and there was synergy to make them happen,” says McCulloh. “It’s easy to say it was basketball, because that was most public. But there was also population growth in college readiness ages and we finally had the technology that let us get on the common app system. There was also Father Spitzer who was very entrepreneurial, and there were all of us – including Thayne – with energy, just saying, ‘Ok, let’s go!’”

In her role as Institutional Research director, Weber often took calls from other school leaders across the country who wanted to know the secret of GU’s success. “People assumed we were going to say it was basketball, but we’d say, ‘We’re so thankful for basketball, but there were also many other institutional strategies and initiatives being implemented to help us achieve higher yield in enrollment,’” she says.

Hopes for Gonzaga

A couple of decades later, the two can look back at 30+ years navigating the complexities of higher ed administration and still have enthusiasm for new ways to adapt to technology and changing expectations. Watching them together, it seems the energy and passion of freshly minted grads has never really waned.



Weber and McCulloh were in this 1989 social dance class, which they both remember vividly. Can you spot them?

And yet, in summer 2025 both women will exit their offices in College Hall and pass the sculpture of St. Ignatius for the last time as Gonzaga administrative leaders.

What do these two legendary leaders hope for the next generation of Gonzaga administrators?

“One thing I hope is held onto is our high-touch culture – how much we value the relationships with each other as employees and with our students,” Weber says. “I’ll forever be thankful to Thayne for giving us the room to do whatever it takes to be good to our students. It doesn’t mean we give the store away. It means using our best judgment to determine what’s best for a specific situation and have the courage to defend that approach.”

McCulloh’s hopes also surround deep care for members of the community. During winter break, she asked her team to name what’s on their minds, what’s causing worry. When she learned that many were really concerned about the impact of leadership at the federal level, like the Department of Education, she followed up with some research and anecdotes about other transitions of power.

She pointed the crew back to the GU mission statement. “The fourth paragraph talks about appreciating each other, our cultures, our language, religious traditions. It’s not Democrat or Republican, right or left, liberal or conservative. I think it’s important to reground ourselves in this mission.”

“Jesuit philosophy can transcend religion, as a model of thinking, to use context, experience, data and contemplation to find a way forward,” says McCulloh. “It takes discipline, too, and it will be important to engage Jesuit practices including the examen prayer. It centers us in our Mission.”



The Maestro Behind the Madness

Toph Parkin brings new energy to the Bulldog Band

By Thea Skokan ('22)

It's a Saturday night in the McCarthy Athletic Center. The Zags are down 10 points and the energy in the Kennel is faltering. Suddenly, a timeout is called. **Toph Parkin** snaps to attention, jots down a song on a small whiteboard, and the Bulldog Band roars to life.

"Shofukan" by Snarky Puppy is reverberating out from the far corner of the court, a song you may not know by title, but would definitely recognize the instant the hype song hits your ears. The energy is back, thanks to the band.

Welcome to a regular night in the life of Gonzaga's new Bulldog Band director, at least during basketball season. Parkin took over the role in September, replacing longtime director and friend David Fague. It's somewhat of a dream come true for Parkin who was born in Vancouver, Washington, but grew up in Spokane. He was an adjunct professor in Gonzaga's music department years ago before taking a job at Whitworth, but always stayed connected with Fague.

Between his two early loves – basketball and music – Parkin knew his chances of playing professional ball were slim, but music was something he could see a future in. He let go of basketball, started to focus on music full-time and the rest, as they say, was history. Parkin has been a professional musician for the last 20 years.

As Bulldog Band director, Parkin is trying to keep things fresh. The difference between a pep band and really any other level of professional music he's played before is popularity. A pep band is all about playing the current hits, the instant classics and anything else that will get the Kennel up on its feet and energized. In other words, songs that 18- to 22-year-olds will recognize, with a few oldies like "Sweet Caroline" by Neil Diamond to appeal to the rest of the crowd. But let's be real – that song appeals to all ages.

Parkin says they have about 40 well-practiced songs in their repertoire that they can cycle through. But something the general public might not realize is there is no pre-determined setlist for games. "When the opposing team is going on a run and you can feel the energy snowballing," that's when, he says, directing becomes critical. "I'm thinking and calculating – what would be a good song here to lift up the team? It's kind of like air traffic control mixed with a studio orchestra or a Broadway show."

If you've been to a game this season, you might be familiar with their cast of characters. From "Tubaman," as he is colloquially known, to the trumpet player **Sam Morosov ('25)** who pops up in different parts of the arena – each member of the band has a part to play. And they play it well.

Jackson Smith ('25) is the man, the myth and the legend behind "Tubaman." Capturing the attention of the Kennel with a wild, energetic dance routine where his tuba is the focal point. It's hard to describe the level of hype this brings to McCarthy.

Parkin knows it's the unabashed ability of students like Smith and Morosov, who let their individuality and love for Gonzaga shine through, that makes the band what it is. And he knows it's his job to foster the environment that allows them to do so. In this sense, he's a leader for the people.

He also credits the band's student leaders for easing the workload and helping him transition smoothly into his new role. "They have been top-notch in helping me learn the ropes," he says. "They've been so welcoming, giving me helpful critique and feedback. All around, they've just been so great."

With the regular season behind him, Parkin is turning his attention to the WCC tournament and, hopefully, to Gonzaga's 26th consecutive appearance in the NCAA tournament. He's always been an avid basketball fan – but to go from watching Selection Sunday from his couch to packing a "go bag" and hitting the road with 48 hours' notice while coordinating the travel of an entire pep band, means things will look a bit different for him this year.

"It's a little nerve wracking," he says. "But that's part of the gig. It's why they call it March Madness, right? We don't know where we're going."

Upcoming chaos aside, Parkin could not be more grateful for the opportunity. "I want to keep building the program," he says. "I don't know what the future holds, but it's exciting to think about what could happen."

From the Archives

The History of Founder's Day

By Stephanie Plowman, special collections librarian

Did you know the Gonzaga-specific, October holiday actually used to be celebrated in March? Traditionally, Founder's Day recognized Fr. Joseph Cataldo, S.J., who is considered the founder of Gonzaga. After his death in 1928, Gonzaga recognized his birthday, March 17, as Founder's Day by giving students the day off. That tradition held through 1972, by which point it became apparent sharing the day with St. Patrick's Day was problematic.

As reported, students on this day off would be inebriated and throw food in the COG. Bill Edmonds wrote in an editorial in the *Gonzaga Bulletin*, March 24, 1972:

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“A little clean fun is fine, and overindulgence in the fruit of the vine is excusable in most circumstances. But a near riot is not to be condoned. When people start throwing salad bowls at each other with murderous intent, events have gotten out of hand. St Patrick's Day (or Founder's Day, if you will) has become an excuse for the most vulgar kind of rowdiness. Wars like the one in the COG Thursday, March 16, are not fun or even mildly enjoyable. They are simply an outlet for all the frustrations of people who drink four or five times a year, cannot hold their liquor in such quantity and are bent on raising all kinds of hell. Maybe Founder's Day should be abolished or at least changed to a different date for the welfare and lives of all.”

”

The following fall, Gonzaga changed Founder's Day to October 30. From October 1977 until 1988, Gonzaga even commemorated the founding of the University with a week-long celebration featuring several speakers and events such as a special Mass.

I cannot locate the official decision why the holiday was changed from March to October, but after it was moved to the fall, the holiday was observed on the last Monday of October, possibly to give a day off near mid-terms for students and for faculty. Although Fr. Ignatius of Loyola's birthday is October 23, 1491, I have never heard his name being associated with Gonzaga's celebration of Founder's Day.



Photos of campus in the 1960s pulled from the University Archives and Special Collections.

Making Room to Grow

Haddock brings wealth of experience to the Lincoln LGBTQ+ Resource Center

By Thea Skokan ('22)

Brandon Haddock is a long way from home. The second-ever director of the Lincoln LGBTQ+ Resource Center packed up and moved to Spokane in September after growing up in the Missouri Ozarks and spending most of their adult life in the Midwest. There are a few key differences – the lack of tornado sirens being a major one, Haddock jokes – but across hundreds of miles and several state lines, their mission remains the same.

“It’s always been very important to me to be able to give people a voice.”

Haddock earned their bachelor’s degree in geography, geology and planning, and their master’s at Missouri State University, then went on to earn a doctorate in geosciences from Kansas State University (KSU). Even if earth science didn’t seem like a clear path to helping others, that was always a driving force for Haddock. Their first week on campus as an undergraduate, Haddock volunteered with the AIDS Project of the Ozarks, carrying out HIV testing and delivering food to people who needed it. Haddock leaned on their education to connect with their indigenous roots and support historically erased and underrepresented communities. It eventually led them to a job in higher education as the inaugural coordinator of the LGBTQ+ support center at KSU, where they stayed for more than a decade.

“I’ve had a lot of experiences,” Haddock says. “I’ve had great experiences, bad experiences,” and everything in between, including a complicated relationship with higher education. But it’s the collection of those experiences that led them to Gonzaga, straight to a role meant to serve and affirm students.

“I don’t want students to have to go through what I went through,” Haddock says, describing struggles with financial aid, navigating housing and discrimination. Haddock knows they are here to share in students’ troubles and be the support system they need. “I want students that are having a similar experience to what I went through, or that have similar identities to me, to know that somebody is there for them.”



Haddock also believes their role goes beyond that. The Lincoln Center is widely regarded as a “safe space” for LGBTQ+ students to exist in community on campus. Haddock believes there are no “safe spaces,” not really. But, they say, “it’s an open and affirming space, a space for individuals to be themselves away from the day-to-day.” It’s a place for students to come between classes, to relax or to eat lunch. “Between Matthew and I, there is a lot of lived experience,” Haddock says (Matthew Barcus is the programing manager for LGBTQ+ education and support). “We can help people navigate whatever they’re going through,” and provide them with a space to do it, too.

The center and the support that comes with it extend to faculty and staff as well, Haddock says. “There is a lot that we, as adults, neglect to acknowledge,” they say. “We have this idea that bullying or social problems stop when you grow up, but they don’t necessarily.” Haddock wants the people at Gonzaga that support students to know they are supported, as well.

A lot of this work existed at the Lincoln Center before Haddock even arrived. They hope to continue the good things they’ve got going, “but also to re-imagine some of those things.”

AdventureOUT is a program implemented by Haddock that focuses on physical wellness – getting people outside, in nature, through short lunchtime walks and weekend hikes. So far, Haddock has partnered with GU Outdoors for multiple outdoor events including a snowshoeing trip to Mount Spokane, and they hope to bring a foraging hike to the center soon.

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Haddock

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Growing Wellness, another new program, is Haddock's metaphorical baby. They started the program at KSU in 2019, giving about 20 students a plant to nurture then planning events, check-ins and trainings to go along with the growing process.

"There's a lot of research that shows having a living, green thing around you and in your living environment helps your mental health," they say. "The routine of watering and taking care of something helps students better understand how to care for themselves."

By the time Haddock left for Gonzaga, the program had grown (no pun intended) to more than 120 people. They're hoping for the same kind of success this time around.

There's important work being done in the Lincoln Center, and Haddock wants the faculty, staff and students to know, just as the space can be enjoyed by all, that work isn't meant to be carried by the LGBTQ+ community alone.

Referencing a quote from Bayard Rustin, a political activist and gay civil rights leader, Haddock invites us all to "be angelic troublemakers."

"I truly feel like right now is the time and place to do that," they say. "We have to stand up for our kin, our brothers and our sisters, our cousins and everyone we are in community with. We need to be making sure that our voices are heard, and for those who can't, we need to use our privilege to heighten their voices."

Around Campus

Events, celebrations and lectures of note this month

March 6, Zags Give Day The biggest day of giving for Gonzaga! Double your impact, create opportunities and transform lives – be a part of something extraordinary on Zags Give Day! Learn more and give a gift at gonzaga.edu/ZagsGiveDay

March 7, 7 p.m. The Spokane International Film Festival presents the world premiere of RECOLLECTION by local filmmaker Caden Butera | Myrtle Woldson Center, Coughlin Theater

March 12, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. The 10th annual Women Lead Spring Conference, designed to educate and empower women in the workplace | Hemmingson Center

March 18, 7 p.m. A lecture by Michael Lobel, professor of art history at Hunter College, entitled "Van Gogh and the End of Nature" | Jepson Center, Wolff Auditorium

March 20, 7:30-8:30 p.m. The Visting Writer Series welcomes Kate Lebo, an essayist, cookbook writer and poet | The Humanities Building, College Commons

March 21, Diversity & Social Justice in Education Conference Submission Deadline

March 21-22, 28-29, 7:30 p.m. and March 23-30, 2 p.m. Watch a post-modern re-telling of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's 1895 "Stupid F**king Bird" | College Hall, Magnuson Theatre

March 27, 4-6 p.m. A compelling panel discussion on the intersections of public health, law and justice, featuring a keynote by Washington State Supreme Court Justice Debra Stephens | Jepson Center, Wolff Auditorium

March 29, 7:30 p.m. A captivating evening of dance by Alonso King LINES Ballet, paying tribute to the iconic Alice Coltrane | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center



Dessert of the Month

Chocolate Guinness Cake

Adapted from Nigella Lawson's recipe in New York Times Cooking

FOR THE CAKE

Butter, for the pan
1 cup Guinness stout
10 tablespoons unsalted butter
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
2 cups superfine sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sour cream
2 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking soda

FOR THE FROSTING

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar
8 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream (or sub $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Irish cream)

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9-inch springform pan and line with parchment paper. In a large saucepan, combine Guinness and butter over medium-low heat until butter melts. Remove from heat, then add cocoa and superfine sugar. Whisk to blend.

Step 2 Combine sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a small bowl. Add to Guinness mixture. Add flour and baking soda and whisk again until smooth. Pour into buttered 9-inch cake pan, and bake until risen and firm, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Place pan on a wire rack and cool completely in pan.

Step 3 For the frosting: Use a fork to mix and smooth out any lumps in the confectioners' sugar, then add in the cream cheese and mix until smooth using a mixer or a food processor. Add heavy cream and mix until smooth and spreadable.

Step 4 Remove cake from pan and place on platter or stand. In Lawson's words, "Ice top of cake only, so it resembles a frothy pint of Guinness."

Cheers!



From Scratch

Amy Barton, A&S web specialist, made our December shortbread recipe with a holiday twist – little pieces of peppermint! They almost look deserving of a Paul Hollywood handshake!

If you try out the Guinness Cake, send me a picture!
spirit@gonzaga.edu



CREW Council Honored

The Department of Nursing Civility, Respect and Employee Wellness (CREW) Council were recently honored with the 2025 Academic Healthy Work Environment Award by the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing. The CREW council includes **Ana Chavez**, **Trena Redman**, **Kaylyn O'Rourke**, **Shauna Ellefson**, **Erin Hennessy** (pictured on phone held by Shauna), **Susan Edwards** and **Alex Giffin** (from left to right).

The Academic Healthy Work Environment Award recognizes and honors an academic setting that demonstrates commitment to promoting a healthy work environment, involvement in the community, personal health resources to promote health in the work environment and promoting excellence in faculty and student outcomes. Congratulations!



Noteworthy

New Hires

CK Daily, program specialist, University Advancement; **Jabez LaBret**, executive in residence, School of Business; **Jadyn Ashcroft**, student services specialist, Graduate Enrollment Management; **Jakob Rosman**, instructional support and scientific materials specialist, College of Arts and Sciences; **Jonathan Wenger**, volleyball coach, Athletics; **Mary Condon**, program coordinator, Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment; **Sydney Zinnecker**, dance program coordinator, College of Arts and Sciences; **Timothy Fennessy**, visiting assistant professor, School of Law

Position Changes/Promotions

Briana Ingram, integrated work management system administrator, Plant; **Chris McGaughey**, head men's soccer coach, Athletics; **Christopher Michaelson**, men's soccer assistant coach, Athletics; **Claire Le Poulouin**, instructional technology specialist, Instructional Design and Delivery; **Elizabeth Reamer**, budget & personnel officer and facilities support, Plant; **Cole Fairbairn**, asst director strategic communications, Student Financial Services; **Darci Smith**, JFVP coordinator, School of Business; **Graham Morehead**, computer science lecturer-IR, School of Engineering & Applied Sciences; **Fr. John C. Bentz, S.J.**, Jesuit specialist, Mission and Ministry; **Kira Fredricks**, academic advisor I, Center for Student Academic Success

Goodbyes

Aneshia Jerrals, asst dean for residential experience, Housing and Residence Life; **Christopher Almgren**, facilities coordinator I, Auxiliary Enterprises; **Erin Magnuson**, admissions specialist, Graduate Enrollment Management; **Jacob Russell**, security officer, CPSS; **Kenneth Sammons**, AVP plant and construction services, Plant; **Kindra Gillen**, asst volleyball coach, Athletics; **Marilyn Johnson**, head of technical services librarian, School of Law; **McKenzie Hand**, academic advisor II, Center for Student Academic Success; **Megan Farley**, access and accomodation specialist, Center for Student Academic Success; **Rebecca Larson**, senior training specialist, Human Resources; **Sophie Cieslicki**, residence director, Housing and Residence Life

Anniversaries

- 15** **Kurt Heimbigner**, interim associate vice president, Marketing and Communications

- 10** **Addison Cavanaugh**, business solutions and systems analyst, Controller's Office; **Angie Hinz**, CURCI program manager, Center for Undergraduate Research