

Spirit

FACULTY & STAFF NEWSLETTER

Caring for our Common Home

Turning Local Action Into Global Impact



Gonzaga University welcomes internationally recognized sustainability scholar Wayne Visser and Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Catholic University of Portugal) leader Isabel Braga da Cruz for the next installment of the Presidential Speaker Series.



DR. WAYNE VISSER



ISABEL BRAGA DA CRUZ

Hosted by President Katia Passerini, the panel discussion titled “Caring for Our Common Home: Turning Local Action Into Global Impact,” takes place Wednesday, April 8, at 6 p.m. at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center.

As higher education faces increasing scrutiny, universities across the nation must wrestle with challenging questions: Are institutions reinforcing elitism or helping overcome class divisions? Are they overly politicized or not engaged enough? Are they agents of capitalism or catalysts for a better society? Are they enabling dialogue or are they reinforcing silos? These tensions shape the ways Catholic, Jesuit, humanistic institutions like Gonzaga consider their role in confronting climate change, advancing sustainability, and addressing persistent social inequities.

“The challenges facing our world require universities to tackle questions on how we can best prepare our

students to be able to deeply understand and engage with those challenges facing our current and future generations,” Passerini says. “The insights of Dr. Visser and President Braga da Cruz will remind us that Catholic higher education is uniquely positioned to lead in this educational endeavor: grounded in mission, enriched by global perspectives, and committed to the common good.”

A panel discussion will also include Brian Henning, director of Gonzaga’s Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment, and Jim Simon, director of Gonzaga’s Office of Sustainability.

President Passerini notes that “Dr. Visser and President Braga da Cruz bring invaluable insights into how institutions like ours can turn local commitments into meaningful global impact. Their perspectives challenge us to imagine what’s possible when higher education leads with purpose.”

April 8 | 6 p.m.

Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center
» Gonzaga.edu/TicketCenter

Other Earth Month Events

April 7, 4 p.m. “A Conversation with Terry Tempest Williams” – The award-winning writer and environmental activist shares a reading and dialogue on climate justice, imagination and ecological restoration | Hemmingson Ballroom (Climate Institute and Visiting Writer Series)

April 9, 7 p.m. “Closing the Loop” documentary screening and discussion | Hemmingson Auditorium

April 13, 5 p.m. “Divestment as Mission Fidelity” is a virtual presentation on the theological and ethical foundations of Catholic fossil-fuel divestment, featuring Daniel DiLeo and Erin Lothes | Zoom (Office of Mission Integration and Climate Institute)

April 17, 12:15-1:15 p.m. Watch “Let My People Go Skiing” and stick around after for a Q&A with the film’s creator Ellen Bradley (’20), an Indigenous skier, scientist, and storyteller | Wolff Auditorium (Office of Sustainability)

April 18, 1-3 p.m. Help prepare the Centennial Trail for the Spring season at the “Unveil the Trail” Cleanup. Clean, weed and remove debris to keep one of Spokane’s best outdoor resources in tip-top shape.

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Earth Month

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April 20, 6 p.m. “AI, Climate Change & Energy Demand” is a public panel on whether society can meet decarbonization goals while managing the rising energy needs of AI data centers | Hemmingson Ballroom (Climate Institute and Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology)

April 24, 3-6 p.m. “Rock the Planet,” the annual concert hosted by the Gonzaga Environmental Organization to end Earth Week, will be filled with live music from students and other local artists | Jundt Amphitheater (Office of Sustainability)

April 25, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Get your hands dirty at EarthFest! This hands-on volunteer day features seedling potting, fence removal, tree thinning for wildfire defense, partner outreach tables and a keynote by author Jack Nisbet | Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge



HELLO, GROWING SEASON!

A quick guide for gardeners gearing up for April

April in Spokane is that sweet spot where the soil thaws, the sun lingers and gardeners start dreaming in green. While we're still tiptoeing around the last frost, there's plenty you can prep and plan right now. Here's your guide to getting those pots ready for the season.

Garden To-Do List

Prep beds: Add compost, loosen soil and remove winter debris.

Apply 2-3 inches of mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.

Start some seeds indoors – tomatoes, peppers, squash and herbs.

Plant cool crops outside.

Watch the weather – Spokane's last frost is usually in early May.

Cool-Season Veggies

Carrots – steady growers for cool soil

Beets – colorful, forgiving, delicious

Radishes – ready in a flash

Spinach & Lettuce – crisp and cold-loving

Peas – Spokane's early-spring superstar

Blooms & Pollinator Friends

Borage – bee magnet

Chamomile – fragrant and cheerful

Chives – edible, hardy, and pretty

Local Resources

SpoCanopy

Help expand Spokane's urban canopy by requesting a free street tree for your neighborhood within city limits.

» Learn more at landscouncil.org/urban-canopy

Spokane Public Library Seed Library

Check out up to 12 free seed packets (6 edible, 6 ornamental) each season with your library card.

» Browse seeds at spokanelibrary.org/discovery-garden

ChipDrop

Mulch is a gardener's best friend for moisture retention and weed suppression. ChipDrop connects you with arborists who will deliver a load of wood chips for free.

» Request a drop at getchipdrop.com

Water Wise Rebates

Thinking about replacing lawn with native or drought-tolerant plants? Spokane offers rebates for lawn removal and drip irrigation conversions

Spokane Edible Tree Project

If you have a fruit tree that produces more than you can use, register it so volunteers can harvest and donate the produce to local food programs.

» Get involved at spokaneedibletreeproject.org/take-action

Educating Tomorrow's Teachers

Inside Gonzaga's Hands-On Preschool Lab

By Thea Skokan ('22)



The preschool operates inside the Rosauer Center as part of the School of Education.

Tucked behind an unassuming door in the Rosauer Center is one of Gonzaga's most immersive teacher-training classrooms – a fully functioning preschool where students studying education can learn to teach by actually teaching.

The preschool operates as a lab within the School of Education's Special Education and Applied Behavior Analysis department. It serves children ages 3-5 in an inclusive environment that mirrors the diverse classrooms graduates will one day lead.

"We try to make this experience as close to real life as possible," Senior Lecturer Jennifer Neyman says. She oversees the program, helping to guide future educators.

For Gonzaga students pursuing special education certification, the preschool is more than a practicum, it's a full teaching cycle compressed into a two-hour session. Each semester, student-teachers rotate through roles as lead teacher, assistant and data collector. They write detailed lesson plans, implement them with small groups of preschoolers, and then evaluate their effectiveness using real-time data.

"Student-teachers typically have a target skill they want the preschoolers to develop," Neyman says. "This way they can use real data as a reflection after they teach to show how well their students performed."

A typical session moves quickly. After free play and opening circle, the room splits into three simultaneous learning centers: fine motor, academic, and language/communication. Student-teachers deliver each lesson three times to rotating groups, gaining repeated practice and immediate feedback.

"The goal is to synthesize a typical day in preschool but within about a two-hour period," Neyman says, noting it may be fast but every minute is intentional.

Beyond instruction, students take on the full spectrum of classroom responsibilities. They decorate bulletin boards with colorful displays and construction paper, prepare home-connection packets for families, film and self-evaluate their teaching, and even run parent-teacher conferences. These experiences, Neyman says, build confidence and professional readiness.

"Everything we do, including self-evaluations, is for the benefit of the preschoolers," she continues. "But it also benefits the student-teachers, it's how they know how they're doing in real time."

The preschool serves families across campus and the greater Spokane community. Enrollment is first-come, first-served, and the program never turns a child away for inability to pay. Many families discover the preschool through word of mouth or partnerships with local organizations, but Neyman wants staff and faculty to know it's open to them as well.

For Gonzaga's future educators, the preschool often becomes one of the most memorable parts of their training. Alumni regularly return with stories about lessons taught, challenges navigated and the preschoolers who shaped their understanding of what it means to teach.

"It builds your character," Neyman says. "It can be intimidating, but this is the kind of experience that can really solidify for someone that they are meant to be in education."

Spotlight on Excellence



Kent Porterfield, vice provost for student affairs, received the prestigious 2026 Reverend Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J. Award at the Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators (JASPA) annual conference.



Joan Iva Fawcett, dean for social justice, leadership, & community empowerment, received the Asian Pacific Islander Knowledge Community VIP Award at the 2026 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) annual conference.



Sierra Pancoast, assistant director of housing & residence life, received the Northwest Association of College and University Housing Officers (NWACUHO) Diversity and Inclusion Award.

Congrats to all!



Shared Mission, Shared Momentum

Gonzaga and Microsoft just made it official – a new alumni-driven partnership focused on mentorship, career pathways and opening doors in the tech world.

For 20+ years, Zag alumni at Microsoft have been showing up for students. Now we're taking that energy to the next level with a partnership built around networking and elevating a Gonzaga degree in the professional world.

This is what happens when Zags support Zags.

» Learn more at gonzaga.edu/industry-partnerships



Where Science Meets Purpose...

At Gonzaga School of Health Sciences, students don't just learn health care — they live it through hands-on experience, compassionate care, and a commitment to making a difference. Dean Julie Wolter (pictured above) and the rest of the faculty and students that make the school so incredible were recently featured in a series of videos for Empowered, an education program.

» Scan the QR code to watch

Value and Responsibility in AI Technologies Conference

April 23 | 8 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Hemmingson Ballroom

This year's conference will address three themes through panels and discussions with industry leaders, educators, scholars and healthcare leadership; Personal Identity and Meaning, Learning and Education, and the Future of the Workforce.

Who Should Attend?

This event convenes scholars, students, thought leaders in education, INW industry professionals and global tech leaders.

» Learn more at gonzaga.edu



If you try the recipe, don't forget to send your photos to spirit@gonzaga.edu!

Dessert of the Month

Lemon Sugar Cookies

Adapted from Sarah Kieffer's Vanilla Bean Blog

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
12 Tbsp (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 ½ cups granulated sugar, plus more for rolling
2 Tbsp lemon zest, from 2 to 3 lemons
¾ tsp salt
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1 ½ tsp lemon extract
½ tsp vanilla extract

Instructions

Step 1 Adjust an oven rack to the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Step 2 In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and baking soda.

Step 3 In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, beat the butter on medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Add the sugar, lemon zest and salt and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes.

Step 4 Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the egg, yolk, lemon extract and vanilla extract, mixing on low speed until combined. Add the flour mixture and mix on low speed until incorporated.

Step 5 Put about ½ cup granulated sugar in a small bowl. Form the dough into balls and roll in the sugar. The cookies will spread on the pan quite a bit, so make sure to leave space between them.

Step 6 Bake the cookies, rotating the pan halfway through baking. After 10 minutes, give the pan a slight tap in the oven and continue baking until the sides of the cookies are pale golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes more.

Step 7 Transfer the pans to a wire rack and let the cookies cool to room temperature on the pan.

Around Campus

Events, celebrations and lectures of note this month

April 10-11, 7 p.m. Witness original works by Gonzaga students at the “Student Choreography Showcase,” highlighting contemporary, jazz, tap and interdisciplinary movement | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

April 12, 2 p.m. Celebrate academic excellence at the Phi Beta Kappa Induction Ceremony and help Gonzaga welcome its newest PBK members | Hemmingson Ballroom

April 16, 5:30 p.m. In “The Philosophy of Humor & Pop Culture,” Elizabeth Cantalamessa explores how memes, irony and satire reshape our shared norms of responsibility and accountability | Hemmingson Ballroom

April 16, 7 p.m. Attend the inaugural Woodley Institute Lecture featuring Tom Woodley ('69) and a panel discussion about the rights and responsibilities of free speech and how they shape campus life today | Hemmingson Auditorium

April 17-18, 7:30 p.m. Join the Boone Street Hooligans for a lively evening of student-written sketch comedy and performance | Magnuson Theatre

April 18, 7:30 p.m. Take 6, the 10-time GRAMMY-winning a cappella group brings its signature blend of gospel, jazz and soul | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

April 22, 12:15–8 p.m. The Student Achievement Showcase Symposium is a campus-wide celebration of undergraduate research, creative inquiry and academic excellence

April 24 Diversity & Social Justice in Education Conference is a community conversation on dialogue, justice and building shared understanding across differences | Hemmingson Ballroom

April 24, 7-8 p.m. “We Share Our Futures With You” with Laurie Arnold, director of Native American Studies, explores the meaning of shared histories and shared futures, and invites us to recognize our bonds as neighbors in these shared homelands | Hemmingson Ballroom

April 24-25, 7:30 p.m. Spring Dance Concert – Featuring faculty and guest-artist choreography across contemporary, ballet and global dance forms | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

April 27, 7:30 p.m. Attend the Gonzaga Symphony Orchestra featuring Pascal Rogé and Elena Font | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

April 29, 12–2 p.m. Senior Design Expo – Engineering and computer science seniors present capstone innovations to industry partners and the community | Hemmingson Ballroom

April 29, 12:15-1:25 p.m. Ever wondered how a university raises tens of millions of dollars to build new facilities, renovate residence halls or refinance debt? Attend “The Story of GU’s 2026 Bonds” to find out more | Wolff Auditorium

Noteworthy

Anniversaries

05 **Ashley Davis**, director, International Students and Scholar Services; **Candace Williams**, coordinator II, Mission and Ministry; **Kaylen Carlson**, program coordinator, HR Learning and Development

10 **Audra Henkins**, custodian, Plant; **Cathy Santangelo**, assignments coordinator, Housing Operations; **Randall Castleman**, general maintenance, Plant

15 **Laurie Ferguson**, custodian specialist, Plant



Photo: Julia Schlect Patino

You may have noticed a new addition to the Gonzaga grounds. Jimmy’s Garden was constructed in the fall to honor Harry “Jimmy” Magnuson, a former groundskeeper who passed away in 2021 at the age of 36.