

# Spirit

FACULTY & STAFF NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026  
VOL. 27/No. 6



Holly J.  · 2nd

Strategic by design. Playful by nature. Unforgettable on purpose.

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Gonzaga University



Gonzaga University



Jamie, Julie and 23 other mutual connections

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 Message



## LinkedIn Success

### From the Window to the Wall

*Reflections by Holly Jones ('22 M.A.)  
and Phil Tyler*

LinkedIn used to feel like a digital conference badge I forgot to take off. Useful, but stiff. Over time, it became something else: a place to tell stories that matter, learn in community and stay connected to people who change how I think and work. And yes, it also makes a difference for Gonzaga's future.

When employees share the inner workings of Gonzaga, the institution becomes more legible to the world. Higher education can feel like a closed set to anyone who hasn't worked inside it. LinkedIn gives Gonzaga a window instead of a wall. The more people understand what happens here and why it matters, the more likely they are to engage, enroll, apply for roles, partner with Gonzaga, or invest philanthropically. Visibility builds understanding. Understanding builds trust. Getting there is half the fun, and the "there" can be enrollment, recruitment, partnerships, fundraising, and so much more.

For the last year, I've been intentional about being on LinkedIn: one article a week and quick check-ins all week to

like, comment and occasionally reshare posts I find meaningful or useful.

I've found what makes it work is variety. I think of it as a three-lane highway:

**Gonzaga stories:** I translate our daily work into impact, not jargon. I ask, "What would make a stranger care about this?" Those articles, posts and comments help people see Gonzaga as a place where values become action.

**Scholarly work:** I'm a doctoral candidate in the School of Leadership Studies, and sharing ideas in progress has led to real connections in my field of study, area of interest and beyond – including fellow play-at-work and Muppet fans.

**Personal glimpses:** This is the lane I think people worry about most. My rule is to share a slice of life, not the whole loaf. LinkedIn isn't my journal, but it is a place where small, human moments build connection. It also reminds me that accomplishments don't have expiration dates. If you did something great, it still counts and should be celebrated! LinkedIn is a place where that can happen.

LinkedIn can also become relationship-building in the most practical way. At the Jesuit Advancement Administrators conference last summer, I made my phone wallpaper a QR code linking to my profile. Since then, several of the connections made at JAA have turned into ongoing, symbiotic collaborations across advancement shops, swapping insights, successes and learning opportunities, systems and new ideas.

There's a quiet wellness benefit to it, too. Having a community that shows up for you feels good, and your brain registers that encouragement as connection and belonging. Like when my son recently received his college acceptance package, I shared GU's post about mailing them and a whole community celebrated with me.

In short, LinkedIn can market the University and strengthen relationships that lead to revenue in many ways, while also helping employees like us feel more seen, more connected and more resilient. So, if you've been on the fence, come on in—the water's fine!

*Read Phil Tyler's reflection on pg. 2*



**Phillip Tyler** • 2nd  
Experienced Associate Director of Campus ...  
3d •

## LinkedIn

Continued from pg. 1

Most people know LinkedIn as a place for networking and career growth, but I see it as something even greater.

LinkedIn has become a true linking agent for me and my community. It is more than career credentials and milestones – it showcases my experience, including life experience, and it creates the capacity to be relational. I believe the greatest accomplishment of social technology is not visibility, but the ability to connect with others in ways that can translate into real-world relationships.

As a leader in Campus Security and Public Safety, I regularly talk about our ongoing efforts to keep campus safe. I share stories about working with students, discussions about resilience, thoughts on leadership, and conversations about mental health and suicide prevention. These aren't just topics for certain times of the year, they're part of my everyday life and our community.

Often, I use my platform to highlight others and their impact: students who step up when it matters, officers who serve quietly and consistently, and colleagues who lead with empathy. I believe leadership is more about shining light outward, not inward. When we publicly recognize others, we affirm their value and strengthen the culture we are building together.

I am proud to spotlight the remarkable work of the Gonzaga University Campus Security and Public Safety team. Our campaigns of kindness and safety reflect who we are at our core. A uniform can symbolize authority, but I try to humanize it so it can also represent care, compassion, community and approachability.

LinkedIn has also opened doors for speaking engagements across the nation and for facilitating public speaking workshops on my own campus. Students and staff will often say, "I saw your post!" That simple statement becomes the beginning of something meaningful.

To me, that's what real success looks like. LinkedIn has helped me represent Gonzaga, support others, and create real relationships right here on campus, where it matters most.

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1 comment • 1 repost



# Honoring a Legacy, Crafting a Future

By Thea Skokan ('22)

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

Faculty, students, trustees, benefactors, industry partners and elected officials filled the space surrounding the newly completed laboratory in the Bollier Center for Integrated Science and Engineering as President Katia Passerini and several other important figures cut the ribbon and unveiled the name honoring the late Patrick "Pat" Ferro, a beloved professor of mechanical engineering (2009-2024).

Interim Dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) Jennifer Shepherd acknowledged the many hands that brought the Center to life – from architects and engineers to faculty collaborators and industry partners. Other speakers recalled how Shepherd saw an opportunity for collaborative partnerships to benefit education, research, and workforce training at Gonzaga. She assembled the interdisciplinary group of faculty across SEAS and the College of Arts and Sciences to imagine how Gonzaga could contribute to the region's emerging aerospace tech hub.

President Emeritus Thayne McCulloh emphasized the Center grew from Gonzaga's Jesuit mission and highlighted the continuity of leadership as Gonzaga transitions into its next

era. "I could not be prouder to pass this work into the hands of a president whose background in technology and innovation uniquely positions her to lead this next phase."

The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the Center's official name. Ferro (right) was known for his deep expertise in materials science, his mentorship of students and his collaborative spirit across campus.



"Everyone I told the name to just lit up," Shepherd agreed. "Pat left such an incredible mark on Gonzaga. He embodied our Mission. He was a wonderful teacher, researcher, colleague and friend. Everyone he touched felt his magic."

Through all the acknowledgements and inspiring words, the message was clear: the Patrick Ferro Center for Materials Research is more than a facility. It is a commitment to students, to interdisciplinary discovery, and to the Jesuit belief that knowledge must serve the common good.

"Today," Passerini concluded, "we forge forward – to new inquiries, new solutions, and a future shaped by innovation."

# Adapting in Real Time

## Gonzaga's ongoing response to federal uncertainty

The start 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 to help the University navigate an increasingly unpredictable policy landscape.

The work continues! This team meets regularly to stay abreast of proposals that go before legislative groups and decision-making bodies, and continually advises GU's administration – and the Board of Trustees – in matters that need advocacy at local, state and national levels. These efforts help ensure that GU can anticipate impacts, support affected students and researchers, and respond quickly as funding shifts or opportunities reopen.

### Here are the impacts Gonzaga has navigated this last year (as of Feb 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 7 research projects led by GU faculty
- » Changes in federal funding terminated 7 AmeriCorps (later reinstated) and 2 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 new legislation requiring retail sales tax on certain services effective October 1, 2025 that will significantly impact some programs and departments, adding increased pressure on departmental budgets.
- » The State reduced Washington College Grant funding for students attending private, not-for-profit institutions (beginning Fall 2026), significantly lowering grant amounts for students. Lawmakers are currently considering bills to partially restore these cuts, but no final decisions have been made.

### Changes to student loans pose concerns:

- » Beginning July 1, 2026, the Federal Graduate PLUS Loan will be eliminated for new borrowers, unless they qualify for the Legacy Provision. Students who meet the Legacy Provision may continue borrowing Graduate PLUS for up to three additional years or until they finish their current program, whichever comes first.
- » New federal rules distinguish between "graduate" and "professional" students for loan-limit purposes; at Gonzaga, Law is currently the only program expected to qualify as "professional," with higher annual and lifetime unsubsidized loan limits (pending final federal confirmation).

- » New Parent PLUS borrowers after July 1, 2026 will have a \$20,000 per-year limit and a \$65,000 lifetime limit per student, while existing borrowers may still borrow up to the full cost of attendance for up to three years or through the student's current program.
- » New borrowers will have two repayment options, with existing plans being phased out by July 1, 2028.
- » Federal loans will also be prorated for students enrolled part-time.

### Taking Action Together

Each of those examples has come with its own set of unique challenges and complications. Colleagues in the respective departments have dedicated countless hours to understanding the realities and evaluating the outcomes. 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. They met individually with Sen. Maria Cantwell, Sen. Patty Murray, and Rep. Michael Baumgartner to thank them for continued support and discuss Gonzaga's future priorities.

Wherever and whenever possible, this team asks for Gonzaga employees, students, families and friends to join in advocacy efforts, and – please know – **these collective actions have already made a difference.** When you receive emails or see social media requests to voice your opinion on a bill before the Senate or House, please continue to take action. In this way, we ALL help to ensure students continue enjoy the outcomes of a Gonzaga education.

- » Stay informed and find resources: [my.gonzaga.edu/federalresponse](https://my.gonzaga.edu/federalresponse)



### Advocacy in Action

President Passerini and Jack Kashork, a senior at Gonzaga, traveled to Olympia to advocate for the Washington College Grant and College Bound Scholarships, which were both cut in the 2025 legislature.



# Honoring Anniversarians

*20 faculty, staff and administrators honored for decades of service*

The 2026 Anniversarian Dinner gathered colleagues and loved ones for an evening honoring the remarkable dedication of Gonzaga employees celebrating 25, 30, 35, and 45 years of service. President Katia Passerini opened the event for the first time by expressing her gratitude for the “tremendous and significant years of service in support of the Mission of Gonzaga University,” noting their work continues longstanding commitment to preparing people to make a difference in the world.

*Thank you to this year’s honorees for their enduring contributions that strengthen Gonzaga’s Mission and community!*



## 25 Years

**Maureen Duclos,**  
School of Business  
**Thomas Buck,** ITS  
**Rick Smith,** Plant  
**Ann Murphy,** School of Law  
**Kevin Chambers,**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
**Joseph Haydock,**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
**Shannon Strahl,**  
Athletics  
**Kelly O’Brien-Jenks,**  
Foley Library

## 30 Years

**Colleen Goodwin,**  
Mathematics  
**Cheryl Mitchell,**  
University Advancement  
**Louisa Diana,**  
Financial Aid  
**Pat Reese,** University Advancement  
**Gary Weber,**  
School of Business Administration  
**Nancy Yamaura,** Plant

## 35 Years

**Thayne McCulloh,**  
Office of the President  
**Douglas Kries,**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
**Carl Bozman,**  
School of Business Administration  
**Paul De Palma,** School of Engineering and Applied Sciences  
**Lori Leonard,** GUEST

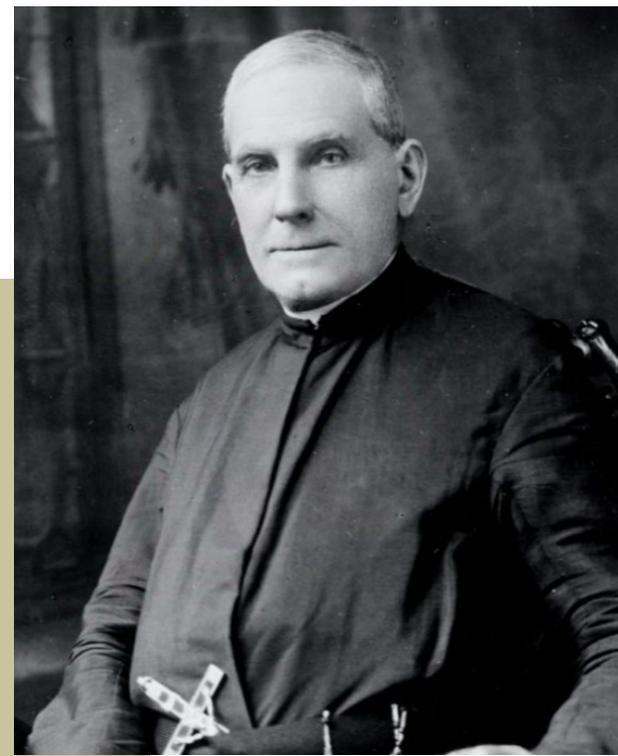
## 45 Years

**Larry Perkins,** ITS



## *A March Birthday*

Father Joseph Cataldo, S.J., Gonzaga’s founder, was born on St. Patrick’s Day – a coincidence that once shaped campus tradition. For decades, his March 17 birthday was celebrated as Founder’s Day, giving students a holiday that, by the early 1970s, had become a bit too spirited, prompting Gonzaga to eventually shift the celebration to the fall.



# Managing the Madness

The academic coordinators supporting student-athletes behind the scenes

By Thea Skokan ('22)

In a little more than a week, basketball teams across the country will find out who they face in the first round of the NCAA tournament. From last minute flights to major national attention, the end of the season is nothing short of a whirlwind.

There's a whole team of people who keep everything steady amid the March chaos – including Academic Coordinators **Charlie Watkins ('23 M.A.)** and **Colette Yamaoka**. They are quiet constants ensuring student-athletes stay academically grounded during their seasons and one of the most demanding stretches of the year.



Both coordinators manage multiple teams throughout the year, every sport from soccer to golf to cross country and track, but March puts a sharper focus on basketball,

Yamaoka working with the men's team and Watkins with the women's team.

And all the hard work begins long before brackets are even announced.

Each semester, they track NCAA academic benchmarks – credit minimums, degree-progress percentages, and eligibility requirements that apply to every student-athlete. Gonzaga's athletes, they note, consistently rise to the challenge.

"Our students are really academically driven, and they perform well in the classroom," Yamaoka says. "We're not usually down to the wire when it comes to meeting our benchmarks."

As soon as teams know where they're playing, everyone in Athletics hits the ground running. Teams depart within 48 hours of finding out their placement, and Watkins and Yamaoka shift into high-communication mode. They help coordinate travel details, class absences and faculty notifications while also making sure students know what the next two weeks may look like.

Neither coordinator travels with the teams, but their preparation is what allows student-athletes to stay focused once they're on the road. They front-load assignments, arrange quizzes or exams, and ensure students have a plan for every class they'll miss.

"The goal is to get ahead of everything," Yamaoka says.



"If we need to hop on Zoom while they're traveling, we can – but ideally, they're already set up for success."

Strong faculty partnerships make that possible. Gonzaga's class sizes and close student-faculty relationships mean professors often know the athletes well and understand the demands of tournament travel.

"Our students do a great job communicating directly with their professors," Watkins explains. "We're just an extra layer of support."

The tournament also brings national visibility – and pressure. While mental-health support isn't formally part of their job descriptions, both coordinators see relationship-building as central to their work. "You get to know them beyond academics and athletics," Yamaoka says. "There's a lot on their plates, and we help connect them to the right resources when they need it." Those resources range from licensed mental-health counselors to athletic trainers to primary academic advisors. "We're not experts in those areas," Watkins agrees. "But we know where the experts are."

For both, the joy of the job comes from watching student-athletes succeed in every part of their lives. Watkins still remembers hosting the women's first and second rounds in 2024 and beating Utah at home to advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2015 – a season where players like Yvonne Ejim and the Truong twins made the team feel like family. Yamaoka points to celebrating the men's regular-season conference championship this year. "Seeing them cut down the nets at home – that was special."

As Gonzaga heads into another season of madness, Watkins and Yamaoka will be doing what they do best: preparing, supporting and cheering on the students who make this time of year unforgettable.



If you try the recipe, don't forget to send your photos to [spirit@gonzaga.edu](mailto:spirit@gonzaga.edu)!

## *Dessert of the Month*

# Brown Butter Toffee Chocolate Chip Cookies

*Adapted from Bon Appetit.*

### Ingredients

1 cup (2 sticks) butter  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
½ tsp salt  
1 cup (packed) dark brown sugar  
⅓ cup granulated sugar  
2 large eggs, room temperature  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
2 chocolate toffee bars (like Skor), chopped into pieces  
1½ cups chocolate chips  
Flaky sea salt

### Instructions

**Step 1** Cook butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often until it foams, then browns, about 5–8 minutes. Scrape into a large bowl and let cool slightly, until cool enough to touch (like the temperature of a warm bath), about 10 minutes.

**Step 2** While the butter cools, whisk flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

**Step 3** Add dark brown sugar and granulated sugar to the browned butter. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Add eggs and vanilla extract and increase mixer speed to medium-high. Beat until mixture lightens and begins to thicken, about 1 minute. Reduce mixer speed to low and add dry ingredients. Beat until just combined. Mix in chocolate toffee bars and chocolate chips with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula. Let dough sit in the mixing bowl at room temperature for at least 30 minutes to allow flour to hydrate. Dough will look very loose at first but thickens as it sits.

**Step 4** Place a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 375°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and scoop out dough, placing on the prepared baking sheet. Don't flatten; cookies will spread as they bake. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt.

**Step 5** Bake cookies until edges are golden brown and firm but centers are still soft, 9–11 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough, using a cool baking sheet lined with fresh parchment paper.

# Noteworthy

## Goodbyes

**Amber Stastny**, social justice initiatives, School of Law; **Benjamin Chu**, specialist I for ecological spiritual engagement, University Ministry; **Herbert Shah**, program asst III, College of Arts and Sciences; **Mary Hunt**, administrative asst, Chief Financial Officer; **Ryan Malarkey**, enrollment operations specialist I, Admissions

## Anniversaries

- 05** **Brittany Copeland**, asst to the vice provost, Student Affairs; **Doug Vandenboom**, director of strategic sourcing and procure to pay, Controller's Office; **Hannah Cylkowski**, business analyst, ITS; **Tammy Everts**, program asst III, Sports Management; **Robert Hernandez**, custodian, Plant; **James Taylor**, mail services lead, Mail Service and Delivery
- 10** **Brittany Harmon**, assoc director of course design, Instructional Design and Delivery; **Jason Houston**, assoc professor of modern languages, College of Arts and Sciences
- 15** **Kareena Byrd**, career services manager, Career Center; **Ryan Forim**, asst registrar, Registrar's Office
- 20** **Nesiba Besic**, manager of custodial and special services, Plant
- 30** **Jane Tiedt**, professor of nursing, School of Health Sciences

# Around Campus

## Events, celebrations and lectures of note this month

- Mar. 11**, Women Lead Spring Conference — an annual gathering for women in leadership, featuring speakers, workshops and networking | Hemmingson Center
- Mar. 14, 7:30 p.m.** Spokane Jazz Orchestra presents “Blake Braley Sings the Music of Prince” — a high-energy big-band tribute to Prince | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center
- Mar. 20–30, various times** “The Tempest” is Shakespeare’s final play brought to life by Gonzaga Theatre, directed by Prof. Blake Edwards | Magnuson Theatre, College Hall
- Mar. 22, 7:30 p.m.** Ballet Hispánico performs CARMEN.maquia, an electrifying contemporary reimagining of Bizet’s iconic tale | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center
- Mar. 23, 6–7:30 p.m.** Housing Affordability & Homelessness in Spokane: A public panel exploring data and policies shaping the region’s housing landscape | Wolff Auditorium
- Mar. 26, 6 p.m.** “Structural Design of Lightweight Architecture” is a talk on sustainable, adaptive building design and the future of the built environment | Hemmingson Auditorium
- Mar. 28, 11 a.m.** The Okee Dokee Brothers bring their Grammy-winning, family-friendly folk adventure songs to campus for a fun performance | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center
- Mar. 29, 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.** The Zag Alumni & Friends Easter Egg Hunt is a family-friendly spring celebration with treats and community fun | Herak Quad
- April 2, 6–7:30 p.m.** “The New Science of Weight Loss: From Brain Biology to GLP-1s” — Ellen Schur explores how brain inflammation offers context on today’s weight-loss medications | Wolff Auditorium
- April 8, 6–7:30 p.m.** “From the Spokane River to Our Common Planet” — A conversation with global sustainability leaders Wayne Visser and Isabel Braga da Cruz on how universities can drive environmental impact | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center



## A Sweet Tradition

It’s well-known that Gonzaga’s Jesuits know how to party! In February at the Della Strada House, they marked Mardi Gras with a sweet tradition — tossing candy to students passing by and brightening an otherwise ordinary Tuesday.