

Chancellor's Award recipients honored at UW-River Falls

Jan. 17, 2023 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo honored four staff members and one department with chancellor's awards at the university's Spring Opening Meeting on January 17. The chancellor's academic staff and university staff excellence awards are presented annually to staff who have made outstanding contributions to the university.

The Chancellor's Award for Excellence for Academic Staff was first awarded in 1986 when UWRF faculty, staff and students were invited to nominate outstanding non-instructional staff for the award. The award was expanded in 2021 to include three individual categories – limited appointees, non-instructional academic staff and instructional academic staff – and one unit, department or program primarily staffed by academic staff.

Awarded since 1996, the Chancellor's Recognition Award for University Staff invites the university community to nominate university staff members in one of two categories: blue collar, crafts/technical and law enforcement; or administrative support, fiscal and staff services or supervisory/human resources/other. In 2021, a program category was added to recognize a unit, department or program primarily staffed by university staff.

This year's honorees include:

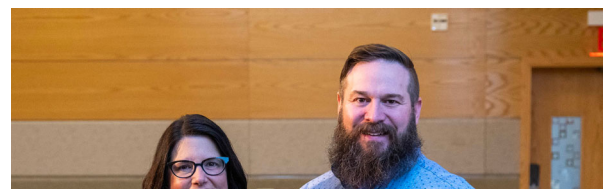
Chancellor's Award for Excellence for Academic Staff - Instructional Academic Staff: Karalyn Littlefield, instructor/lecturer, Animal and Food Science Department.



After a career serving corporate America as a food scientist, Littlefield, a 1990 UWRF alum residing in River Falls and Turtle Lake, has shared her extensive knowledge with UWRF students for more than a decade. Known as an innovator, mentor, and classroom humorist, Littlefield was awarded the Student Government Association Exemplary Teaching Award in 2018. An active volunteer and lifelong learner, Littlefield has shared her many passions – from boatbuilding to cooking to food security – with thousands of individuals from Wisconsin to Malawi, Africa.

Chancellor's Award for Excellence for Academic Staff - Non-Instructional Academic Staff: Kenneth (Kenney) White, associate director for community and student development, Residence Life Department.

Nominators praised White's unwavering commitment to student success, from creating Living Learning Communities in residence halls



to championing student services as a member of the Faculty Senate to individually mentoring current and future staff. Nominators also recognized White as a creative problem solver, excellent communicator, supportive leader, and beloved mentor. One nominator summed it up this way: “Kenney goes above and beyond to support our students, enhance our community and live our campus values.” White resides in River Falls.?



Chancellor’s Award for Excellence for Academic Staff - Program/Unit/Department: Laboratory Farms.



Laboratory farm staff were recognized not only for their long history of excellence in meeting the needs of students, faculty, and staff, but also for their extensive outreach programs and collaborations including the Dairy Innovation Hub established in 2018 and a 30-plus year relationship with WinField United, a Land O’Lakes company, which opened their Innovation Center in River Falls in 2017. The farm’s nearly 50 part-time students receive valuable work experience that makes them sought-after graduates by agricultural industry leaders across the country.

Chancellor’s Recognition Award for University Staff - List A (blue collar, crafts/technical and law enforcement): Jody Pederson, groundskeeper.

Students have nicknamed Pederson “National Treasure” due to her “kindhearted nature” and “overflowing compassion,” nominators wrote. Now in her fifth year at UWRF, following a career as a nurse’s aide and union steward, Pederson, of River Falls, has also been lauded for her strong work ethic and uncompromising commitment to creating a safe and welcoming campus environment. Active in UWRF sustainability efforts, she has helped students achieve Bee Campus USA status, supported campus cleanups and encouraged student workers to try more environmentally friendly approaches to tasks and projects.



Chancellor’s Recognition Award for University Staff - List B (administrative support, fiscal and staff services or supervisory/human resources/other): Jody Sather, Academic Department Associate, Psychological Sciences Department.



Sather, a 2012 UWRF graduate and River Falls resident, has worked at the university since 2007. For the past eight years she has been the “heart and soul” of the Psychological Services Department according to nominators. Not only is she a curriculum expert and program innovator, but she is also well-revered for her student advising and mentorship skills. Said one recent graduate: “Her dedication to student success and nature of compassion and guidance truly set her apart.” Sather has also lent her expertise and leadership skills to multiple campus committees. She currently chairs the University Staff Senate.

To learn more information about each award winner, view past honorees and find nomination criteria, visit www.uwrf.edu/Awards.

Masquers to present 'The 39 Steps'

Jan. 17, 2023 -- The Masquers Drama Student Organization at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls will present "The 39 Steps" adapted by Patrick Barlow at 7:30 p.m. February 1-4 in the Sanford Syse Black Box Theatre in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building.

Mix a Hitchcock masterpiece with a juicy spy novel, add a dash of Monty Python, and you have the intriguing, thrilling, riotous and unmissable comedy. The show hurtles a notorious fugitive and a spellbound blonde from a London music hall north by northwest to Scotland's most remote highlands. Will they save Britain from a den of devious spies? A cast of six actors plays over 150 characters in this fast-paced tale of an ordinary man on an extraordinarily entertaining adventure.

The play is directed by Devon Sundt, a UWRF Stage and Screen Arts major from Osceola. The cast consists of Ellanora Guse of Zimmerman, Minn., as Annabella Schmidt; Lucy Curtis of Amery as Margaret; Mary Rother of Hudson as Richard Hannay; Madison Miller of Somerset as Clown 2; Meredith Bowermaster of White Bear Lake, Minn., as Clown 1; and Laura Klein of Green Bay as Pamela.

Tickets are free. Tickets may be reserved in advance at <https://uwriverrfalls.csstix.com/>

Tickets may also be obtained at the Box Office in the lobby of Kleinpell Fine Arts on performance nights from 6:30-7:20 p.m. For more information, call the Box Office at 715-425-3114.

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By Arrangement with Fiery Angel Limited

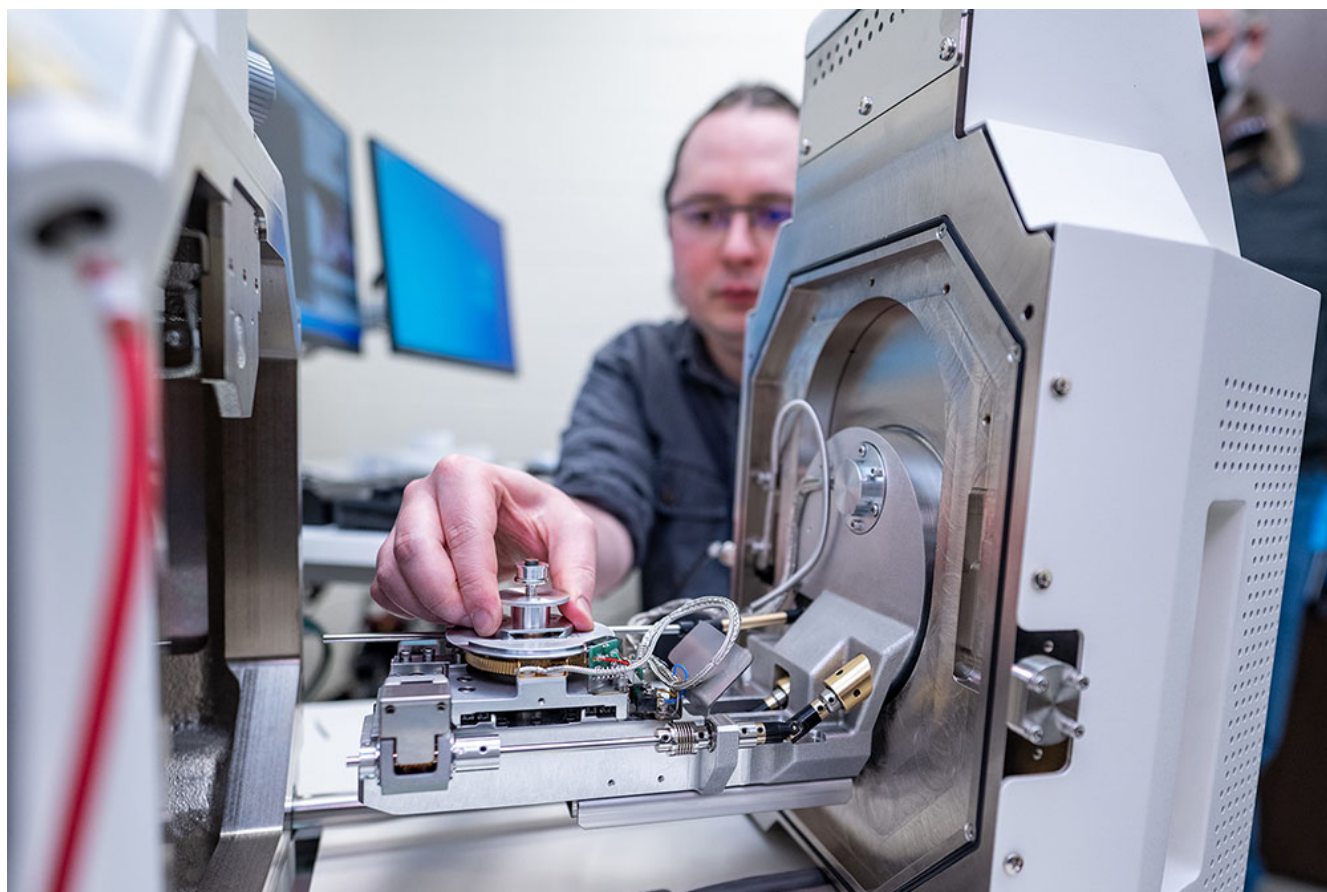
Adapted by Patrick Barlow

From the novel by John Buchan

From the movie by Alfred Hitchcock

Licensed by ITV Global Entertainment Limited

And an original concept by Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon



Sam Alvarado, associate professor of inorganic chemistry at UWRF, trains on the university's new Hitachi scanning electron microscope (SEM) in Centennial Science Hall.

UW-River Falls acquires scanning electron microscope

Jan. 24, 2023 - When science students return to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls for spring semester, they will have access to a new instrument with capabilities that will allow them to explore the properties of a specimen sample as never before on campus.

"It's a real game changer for basically anybody doing science here," said Samuel Alvarado, associate professor of inorganic chemistry, a member of the faculty team that led the effort to acquire a scanning electron microscope (SEM) for UWRF.

"This is moving us way beyond what we have had on campus in recent memory," Alvarado said. "What you realize is that the closer you zoom in on a sample, the more you can see. It's a real Swiss Army knife of technologies."

A scanning electron microscope shoots a beam of electrons instead of light across the surface of a specimen to form a clear digital image. It can also identify chemical elements in a sample. The microscope has a maximum photographic magnification of 300,000x, with an ability to see features as small as three nanometers in size, Alvarado said.

Funding for the microscope came from the National Science Foundation's Major Research Instrumentation Program. The

instrument has been installed on the second floor of Centennial Science Hall.

Alvarado said the microscope will be used by students in a variety of majors across campus, adding, "It's an inter-disciplinary piece of equipment."

Other faculty members who collaborated on the grant proposal were Physics Professor Lowell McCann, Biology Professor Timothy Lyden, and Geology Assistant Professor Kevin Thaisen.

Putting the interdisciplinary group from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences STEM departments together to submit the funding request to the federal government was key to getting the proposal approved, Alvarado said. The first submission was denied, he said, but the group wasn't deterred.

"We took the feedback (from the grant reviewers) to heart and redid parts of the proposal," he said. "We had a pretty good feeling about it, but you never know."

Alvarado said the plan is for the equipment to be ready for spring semester. He is teaching a class that will examine the key parts of the microscope and companion technology and discuss in detail what the SEM can do.

"We will let students get hands-on experience using the instrument," Alvarado said. "We look at it piece by piece. By the end, we put everything together to use the microscope as a whole tool."

This type of advanced equipment is being used more frequently in various workplaces, Alvarado said, which is why it is important for UWRF students to have experience on one before they begin their careers.

"In the last few years, the Chemistry Department had two students who have used the SEM in an industry setting," he said. "Now we can give students training they need on campus as they go out and get employed."

The specific SEM that UWRF acquired is made by Hitachi High-Technologies.

Chancellor Maria Gallo, who holds a doctorate in genetics, said she is well aware of the value of a scanning electron microscope for students and faculty who are doing research.

"We need to give our students and their professors the best tools we can to explore all that the various sciences have to offer," Gallo said. "I applaud the deep collaboration among our faculty that brought this tremendous technology to our campus."



Ryley Rehne, UWRf Meat Plant manager, right, explains production to state officials, UWRf Chancellor Maria Gallo and others Wednesday as part of a statewide tour following Gov. Tony Evers' 2023 State of the State address. Pictured (left to right) are Randy Romanski, secretary, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP); Missy Hughes, secretary and chief executive officer, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation; and Elmer Moore, Jr., chief executive officer, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority.

UW-River Falls Humane Handling Institute effort lauded by state officials

Program will help boost Wisconsin's meat processing capacity

Jan. 26, 2023 – A first-of-its-kind project at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls to train meat industry workers to treat animals more humanely as part of the slaughtering process will play a vital role in expanding and upgrading Wisconsin's meat-processing sector, state officials said Wednesday during a visit to campus.

The university's Humane Handling Institute, announced in October by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), is providing hands-on training for students looking to work in the meat industry. The institute is expected to help boost Wisconsin's meat processing capability after meat supply chain issues occurred during the coronavirus pandemic.

The institute, a partnership between UW-River Falls and DATCP, is funded by Gov. Tony Evers' \$5 million Meat Talent Development Program. Participants learn about humane pre-slaughter handling, transportation, stunning livestock, and proper equipment maintenance.

The Humane Handling Institute "is an example of how a little bit of funding, with some great thought and collaboration, can go a long way," DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski said during a tour of the university's meat processing facility.

In addition to Romanski, the event was attended by Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, and Elmer Moore, Jr., executive director of the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, university officials, and others. The stop at UW-River Falls was part of a statewide tour by the group following Evers' State of the State address Tuesday.

Kurt Vogel, an associate professor in the university's Animal and Food Science Department who leads the Humane Handling Institute effort, said the program will improve animal slaughter procedures while bettering meat processing safety practices and boosting consumer confidence. A growing number of people are concerned about how animals are treated as part of processing, he said.

"My goal is to get to a point where we don't have the humane handling enforcement actions because handling animals that way has become the standard," Vogel said.

Evers has made multiple investments to expand meat processing in Wisconsin, using coronavirus relief dollars to do so. Among them is a partnership announced in September between UWRF and DATCP to develop a high school meat science curriculum to create awareness of career opportunities in the meat industry, an effort to attract students.

Vogel said meat science curriculum plans are proceeding and that 12 schools will participate in an upcoming pilot project to further develop the effort.

UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo praised state funding for initiatives like the Humane Handling Institute and DATCP for its partnering with the university on other projects including the Dairy Innovation Hub and the soon-to-be-completed Wuethrich Family/Grassland Dairy Center of Excellence.

The Humane Handling Institute "will be one more example of how UWRF combines education, research and innovation to contribute to statewide economic development," Gallo said.



Students test out the new gaming computers in the university's Esports arena in Chalmer Davee Library as Dylan Gentilcore, standing rear, new Esports varsity head coach, looks on.

UW-River Falls unveils Esports arena, will field varsity team in fall 2023

Jan. 11, 2023 -- Members of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls campus community now have access to a state-of-the-art arena for playing competitive video games, and the Athletic Department has a tremendous advantage in recruiting students when Esports becomes its 18th varsity sport in fall 2023.

Kellen Wells-Mangold, UWRF associate athletics director for compliance and student-athlete services, said he had become convinced that it was time to add Esports as a varsity sports program. The university already had a club Esports team, but elevating Esports to a varsity sport meant finding a permanent home for the team, much like the football team has Ramer Field and the basketball teams have the Don Page Arena.

Esports, also known as competitive gaming or electronic sports, has become popular with students on college campuses across the country. In the fall, UWRF will become the second WIAC member school to add Esports as a varsity sport, following UW-Stout. UWRF officials said, however, that each WIAC campus has Esports in some capacity. Furthermore, at least 170 institutions across the nation have varsity Esports programming.

Esports athletes, Wells-Mangold said, “are held to the same standards that everyone else is,” and that meant the university had to find a space for the athletes to train and play.

“When you think about equity, having a dedicated space would be consistent with what we do for other teams, so why not do it for them (Esports athletes),” Wells-Mangold said.

After much discussion on campus and a lot of research, a 26-seat facility with powerful computers and monitors opened in the fall on the first floor of the Chalmer Davee Library. It is used by students, faculty and staff, and the Esports club now, but in the fall will also become home to the Falcon varsity Esports team.

“It means everything,” Wells-Mangold said of the new facility. “We needed to make a space unique to our campus with the best equipment for students to compete on. That’s what it takes to attract the best student-athlete.”

Wells-Mangold said he and others hoped that adding a new Esports facility on campus would help attract the right coach to lead the new team, and they believe that Dylan Gentilcore fits the bill.

“He (Gentilcore) ran arguably the best national championship high school program in the country,” Wells-Mangold said of Gentilcore’s record at Carmel (Ind.) High School. He coached more than 100 student-athletes with more than 20 rosters annually and won more than 40 national and regional championships, including 32 Indiana state championships.

Having top-notch facilities “makes a world of difference to these players,” Gentilcore said of the type of student-athletes he is recruiting. “They are going to feel taken care of and have an amazing experience.”

Gentilcore said recruiting is going extremely well and he can’t wait for the season to start.

“I’m bringing people in from all over the country to play here,” Gentilcore said, adding his goal is to have an initial roster of 30 men and women. He said a roster of double or triple that is possible, “if I get the results I want from my players.”

Gentilcore added: “What this (Esports arena) does is, it allows you to come in and focus on what you do best. All the other drama doesn’t come into play when we provide this kind of equipment to play on.”

Another facet of Esports is that men and women compete on the same team.

“It’s very inclusive,” Gentilcore said. “Esports does not discriminate on any basis.”

The arena will remain open to students who are not on the Esports varsity team, including those on the club team. Campus recreation also offers opportunities for both students and staff and faculty to use the space with a membership, similar to how people can use the Falcon Center.

“It’s great to be able to play with teammates here,” said Esports club member Jaiden Trettin about the arena. “It’s a place where we can stay more interconnected, and it can help draw more people in.”

Noah Peick, a sophomore from Lonsdale, Minn., said he was impressed by the technology installed in the arena: AMD Ryzen 7 5800 computers and Nvidia RTX 3080 graphic cards.

“It’s got some pretty powerful stuff,” he said. “It’s very top shelf.”

Trettin, a sophomore from Kaukauna, also said the arena and adding Esports as a varsity sport will have benefits for UWRF as well: “It’s a good way for us to get known,” she said, “and it is helping us branch out more.”

Gentilcore will be at the Minnesota Varsity League (MNVL) Finals representing UWRF as an official sponsor of the event January 13-15 at the Wisdom venue in the Mall of America.



UWRF student Mayala Keita leads a dance session at the February 1 kickoff of Black History Month events at UW-River Falls. Several campus events are occurring this month to celebrate Black culture.

Black History Month events inspire hope for improved race relations

Students, organizers believe discussions about differences can lead to positive change

Feb. 7, 2023 - As Angel Riley scanned the audience at the February 1 Black History Month kickoff event at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, she was grateful for not only the number of attendees, but at how many white faces were gathered there.

Riley, a freshman at the university who is Black, said it can be difficult at times to be among a relatively small number of students with her skin color on a mainly white campus. But Riley said she was heartened by turnout at the event that is meant to celebrate the accomplishments of Black people and recognize ongoing racial struggles.

"The people who showed up tonight, a lot of them aren't Black people," Riley said. "There were people who came here to learn about Black people, about Black culture, and I was learning from them, too. To see that happening, to be a part of it, it

makes you feel good.”

The event was organized by UWRF's Black Student Union and the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB) Program. It included discussion of Black history, a participatory African dance demonstration, a quiz about Black history in America, the singing of the Black national anthem, and food.

Derek Bradley, DIB director, said continued efforts like Wednesday's event that invite Black and white people to connect are especially important given ongoing racial strife across the U.S., as highlighted by Tyre Nichols' recent death at the hands of police in Memphis.

“We're bringing people together for a larger purpose, to show that we're all just people with common interests, and tonight is an example of how we can do that,” Bradley said.

Other events at UW-River Falls throughout this month will offer additional opportunities for people to learn about Black history and culture. Conversations at those gatherings have the potential to educate and lead to greater understanding, Bradley said.

Janiyah Brewington, a UW-River Falls senior who is Black, said she hopes Black History Month events can serve to connect people of different backgrounds who might not otherwise meet. Such meetings “have the power to create change,” she said.

Upcoming campus Black History Month events:

- Discussion of Malcolm X and who killed him at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, in the Riverview Ballroom, University Center.
- Soul Food Dinner hosted by the campus Black Student Union at 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, in the DIB lounge on the second floor of Rodli Hall.
- Allyship Workshop at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14, in the Chippewa River Room, University Center.
- Diversity Roundtable Discussion at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, in the Eau Galle River Room, University Center.
- Africa Night at 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, in Abbott Concert Hall, Kleinpell Fine Arts building.
- Closing Ceremony sponsored by the Black Student Union at 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 27, in the DIB lounge, second floor Rodli Hall.

To learn more about the Black History Month events and whether registration is requested, visit the [FalconsConnect calendar](#). UWRF Black History Month events are free and open to the public.

Chancellor Gallo expresses condolences on the passing of Rebecca Blank

Feb. 20, 2023 – University of Wisconsin-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo didn't know Rebecca Blank for as long as most of her chancellor colleagues across the University of Wisconsin System, but Blank still had a positive, helpful influence on Gallo.

Shortly after beginning her job at UWRF in July 2021, Gallo met Blank – who was chancellor at UW-Madison at the time – at Gallo's first Board of Regents meeting. Blank died Friday at age 67, less than a year after announcing she had an aggressive form of cancer. Her illness forced her to resign in July from a new job as president of Northwestern University.

Blank's willingness to reach out to Gallo at a time when she was new to the UW System - and to leading UW-River Falls - helped her adapt more quickly to her new surroundings, Gallo said.

"In the short time I knew her, she was a wonderful mentor to me and I will miss her friendship," Gallo said of Blank.

Blank was UW-Madison chancellor from 2013 to 2022. She is credited with creating Bucky's Tuition Promise, which guarantees scholarships and grants for students whose household income is \$65,000 or less. Her willingness to help Gallo in her transition was symbolic of how she assisted educators in Wisconsin's higher education system, Gallo and other chancellors said. She is being remembered for navigating challenging budget times and for successfully dealing with many difficulties posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier in her career, Blank was a faculty member at Northwestern University, Princeton University and the University of Michigan. She held senior positions in the Commerce Department under President Barack Obama.

"She was a great leader for UW-Madison and was a strong advocate for higher education across Wisconsin. Her passing is a great loss for our state," Gallo said. "May she rest in peace and may her family find comfort."



Laura Edman, who teaches the organ at UW-River Falls, will be among the performers at a February 24 organ concert at UW-River Falls. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

RESCHEDULED for Friday, April 21

Concert to showcase pipe organ along with musicians performing

Performance of virtuoso organist is part of coffee concert series

Feb. 16, 2023 - A concert featuring multiple styles of organ music at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is intended not only for audience enjoyment but also to raise money to restore the pipe organ musicians will play during the performance.

The concert, "Laura Edman and Friends," is at noon on Friday, Feb. 24, in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building on campus. It is part of the Frances Cohler Coffee Concert Series. The concert is free and open to the public.

The concert is the third since April showcasing organ performances designed in part to solicit funds to restore the musical instrument, installed in 1974 by Charles Hendrickson who built numerous pipe organs throughout the Midwest. The organ is outdated, and a \$130,000 fundraising effort to make improvements to it has been undertaken. Donations can be made at

<https://www.uwrf.edu/Give/Organ-Restoration-Fund.cfm>

"I've tried to put together a concert that shows what you can do with an organ, that it really is a versatile musical instrument," said Laura Edman, who teaches organ at UW-River Falls and who designed the concert. "And I'm trying to tell the story about how we need to raise money to restore this organ."

Renowned organist Aaron David Miller, known for his improvisational playing style, will be among the musicians to play the organ at the concert. He will be the event's last performer, said Edman.

"It's a very special occasion for us to have a world-class improviser, someone of his caliber, performing as part of our concert," Edman said of Miller, who has won numerous international awards and has had his orchestral works performed by major symphonies.

Among other concert performers is Scott Hyslop, music minister at Zion Lutheran Church and School in Dallas, Texas. Hyslop, a graduate of the UW-River Falls Music Department, will play virtually from Dallas as part of the concert. Edman said she is honored to showcase a former UWRF student as part of the concert.

Edman will also be a part of the concert, playing "Shade in a Parched Land" on the organ with two percussion players and a narrator. The song is inspired by the poetry of Tom Gillaspay who wrote about his experiences after making mission trips to Kenya through First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Minn.

Miller was commissioned to write a music composition reflecting those poems, and Edman and others will perform that work. The poems for "Shade in a Parched Land" will be narrated by Kathryn Lien, who will also play the organ. Other concert performers include Craig Hara and Joel Bolen.



Dance Theatre to present annual spring concert

Performance to honor memory of former Dance Theatre student

Feb. 8, 2023 - An upcoming University of Wisconsin-River Falls Dance Theatre event will not only showcase various forms of dance but will serve to honor a former student of the program who died last year.

Dance Theatre will present its annual spring concert February 15-18 at 7:30 p.m. in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building. The event is free and open to the public. Doors open at 7 p.m. and seats will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

One of the event's dances, a full company performance titled "In Memoriam" created by faculty choreographer and Dance Theatre Director Mari Kline-Kluck, is dedicated to Eva Schrank, a former Dance Theatre member and a lifelong River Falls resident. Schrank died Sept. 6, 2022, at age 22. The dance examines the impact of those Schrank knew and danced with.

The dance "explores both the grief and this loss and the beautiful legacy Eva leaves behind," Kline-Kluck said.

The event embraces numerous dance forms including modern, musical theater, jazz, Peruvian, jazz, comedy and contemporary as it features the work of numerous UWRF Dance Theatre students, alumni and faculty along with

professionals. Other dances include:

- Danielle Ricci, a guest choreographer from Minneapolis, created a modern dance performance titled "Effect." Through chaotic gestures and chaotic movements, four dancers examine societal pressure to conform to norms and daily scrutiny.
- Student choreographer Gissela Reyes designed a Peruvian dance titled "Marinera Norteña del Peru" that features colorful costumes and traditional Marinera dance steps that exude a sense of joy.
- In her dance titled "Illumination Leoht," UWRF alumni choreographer Starla Dixen bends light and expectations. Her dancers are a mix of UWRF Dance Theatre members and youth dancers from her River Falls dance studio, Starburst Dance.

UWRF Dance Theatre, a modern dance company, has brought an artistic dance program to students with a passion for dance for over 40 years. It strives to provide rich dance experiences and performances to River Falls and the surrounding communities.

New business analytics master's degree to address shortage

Board of Regents approves new online program

Feb. 13, 2023 - A new master's degree program at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls will fill a growing need in the business sector, helping fulfill demand for more data analysts and data-informed professionals, university officials said.

The UW System Board of Regents voted Friday to approve an online master of science in business analytics degree program at UW-River Falls. UW-River Falls officials said they proposed the new master's degree program in response to growing demand for business analytics workers and related business professionals.

The program is scheduled to begin in the fall and will consist of 30 graduate credits. Full-time students will be able to complete the program in one year and part-time students in two years.

Dawn Hukai, interim dean of both the College of Business and Economics and the College of Education and Professional Studies, said the new program is needed as demand for data analysts and related business professionals continues to grow.

"Effective communication between organizational management and data analysts is essential," she said. "Analysts must understand how leaders use information to create it effectively and efficiently. In turn, managers need to be able to interpret the information provided by analysts."

Statistics show the need for the kinds of skills the program will teach. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that demand for data analyst positions will grow about 20% by 2028. A search of jobs related to "business analytics" revealed 1,975 full-time job listings within a 100-mile radius of the Twin Cities, with almost half of those positions requiring a graduate degree. UW-River Falls is a half hour drive from Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Those figures show "a growing need for graduates with technical, data and management skills," the kinds of abilities the new program will teach, said Wes Chapin, associate vice chancellor of academic affairs and graduate studies at UW-River Falls.

"Students will complete courses from economics, management, and marketing, making the program truly multi-disciplinary and preparing them well. Graduates will be well-positioned to advance in their chosen profession," Chapin said.

University officials expect that 20 students will enroll in the program the first year. After five years, they expect 150 to have enrolled and 130 graduates.

Teaching the course online recognizes the busy schedules of business professionals and the need for adult learners to have flexible schedules, Hukai said.

For more information, email Program Director Leanne Van Allen at leanne.vanallen@uwrf.edu.

Severe Weather Update: Feb. 20, 2023

The following communication was issued to the UW-River Falls community from Provost David Travis on Monday, February 20, 2023.

Dear Campus Community,

Due to the impending winter storm predicted for later this week, a decision has been made to move all classes to virtual formats starting at 7 a.m. Wednesday and continuing through the end of the day Friday. It is my hope that by providing this early decision, instructors can make appropriate accommodations ahead of time to minimize course disruptions. This is a serious storm with snow totals of up to 20 inches forecasted by Friday morning and the possibility of blizzard-like conditions both Wednesday evening and Thursday.

The health and safety of our students and employees is a top priority at UW-River Falls. Please begin making appropriate arrangements to ensure you are in a safe situation as the storm moves into the area beginning Tuesday night. For those on campus, be sure to review our campus winter weather safety tips [here](#). Employees are reminded to use their best judgment and coordinate with their supervisors, per our [inclement weather policy](#), if they feel it is unsafe to travel to campus.

University Center, Riverside Commons, Falcon Center and Campus Rec will remain operational despite classes moving to virtual formats. Hours and options may be limited depending on staffing. Please refer to those offices directly with questions. The UWRF C.H.I.L.D Center will be closed Wednesday and Thursday, tentatively opening on Friday. The Chalmer Davee Library will close Wednesday, Feb. 22 at 9 p.m. and resume regular hours on Thursday, Feb. 23.

UWRF will continue to monitor weather conditions and will provide updates as warranted.



Stage and Screen Productions to present 'Miss Havisham' and other short films

Feb. 7, 2023 - Join the Music and Stage and Screen Arts Department at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls on Thursday, Feb. 16, for a Red Carpet Gala Premiere Screening of "Miss Havisham" and other short films produced by students in the Stage and Screen Arts Program.

The free screening begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Davis Theatre in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building. No tickets are required. A reception with light refreshments begins at 6:30 p.m., prior to the screening.

The program will include:

- "Miss Havisham" is adapted and directed by Kathy Welch. Inspired by the characters in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations," "Miss Havisham" explores a tortured mind bent on a twisted form of vengeance. This short, filmed play utilizes stylized movement, original music, and creative cinematic techniques.
- A selection of short films produced by students in Erik Johnson's Advanced Field Production class, in collaboration with students in Joe Rein's Screenwriting class.
- A selection of short films and commercials produced by students in Casey Palbicki's Multimedia for the Performing Arts class.



UWRF's first choral exchange with an area high school

Feb. 23, 2023 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls choral students and the Woodbury (Minn.) High School Choir sang together and to one another Monday afternoon in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building on campus as part of the university's first choral exchange with an area high school.

Cera Babb, UW-River Falls director of choral activities, said she coordinated the exchange as Woodbury students returned from a short performance tour to Chicago.

"For them, the goal was a positive final stop on tour. For us, the goal was for our supportive choral community to engage with a nearby high school," Babb said. "Exchanges are a great way to connect with high schools, use our beautiful performing space and showcase our choir as a positive, musical and inviting group they can join if they decide to come to UWRF. It gives high school students the opportunity to literally see themselves on stage on a college campus."

UW-River Falls business program reaffirms distinguished accreditation

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business distinction helps graduates find jobs

Feb. 16, 2023 - Students attending business classes at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls have a leg up compared to many of their peers when seeking employment after graduation, thanks to a prestigious accreditation of the university's business school.

The UW-River Falls College of Business and Economics has attained Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation, the most-recognized specialized accreditation that university business schools can attain. AACSB accreditation was reaffirmed for the accounting, business administration, finance, management, and marketing (strategic and sales) majors along with the MBA graduate program at UW-River Falls on January 25. The business school has had that accreditation since 2007.

The designation of UWRF's business program as an AACSB school is a definite positive when UWRF graduates of the program seek jobs after graduating. Some employers only hire graduates from AACSB institutions, as they recognize the benefits employees of colleges with that ranking bring to their workplaces, said Dawn Hukai, interim dean of the College of Business and Economics and the College of Education and Professional Studies.

"Schools that have earned AACSB business accreditation demonstrate an ongoing commitment to excellence in teaching, research, curriculum development, and learner success," Hukai said, noting that the accreditation helps attract students to UW-River Falls. "Accredited members share a common purpose – preparing learners for meaningful lives."

Matt Ihli graduated from UW-River Falls in 2017 with a degree in business administration with an emphasis in marketing and professional sales. He said he decided to attend UW-River Falls in part because it is accredited as an AACSB school.

"I hadn't really even heard of UW-River Falls," said Ihli, who grew up in the Twin Cities suburb of Maple Grove, Minn. "Then I realized they were an AACSB accredited school, and that led me to go to school there."

After Ihli graduated, he said the fact he attended an AACSB school helped him land a job. Today he works as a proposal strategist at Burns & McDonnell, an engineering and construction firm in Bloomington, Minn.

"The (AACSB) accreditation really got my foot in the door when I was interviewing for jobs," Ihli said. "UWRF is not as well known as some of the bigger schools, but having that accreditation made me stand out to employers."

Only 5% of business schools worldwide meet the rigorous standards to attain the AACSB standard. Globally, 965 institutions have earned AACSB accreditation in business; 190 of those are in the U.S.

Accreditation is a voluntary, nongovernmental process that includes a rigorous external review of a school's mission, faculty qualifications, curriculum, and a business program's ability to provide highest-quality programs. The purpose of AACSB accreditation is to encourage business schools to hold themselves accountable for improving business practices through a commitment to strategic management, learner success, leadership and societal impact.



UW-River Falls students finding success after graduation

More than 99% of graduates surveyed have jobs or are continuing their education

Feb. 10, 2023 - Virtually all of the 2022 University of Wisconsin-River Falls graduating class had either landed jobs or were continuing their education by the end of last year, according to First Destination Survey results that measure students' post-graduate employment.

For the survey, the 2022 graduating class refers to UWRF graduates from August 2021, December 2021, January 2022 and May 2022. The survey is based on the results of 83% of the total graduating class of 1,382 who either responded to the survey or were tracked down by other means.

Survey figures show of 1,152 graduates included in the survey, 99.3% were either at jobs, furthering their education, or in the military or volunteer service by the end of last year. Only 0.7% were listed as still seeking employment at that time.

The survey classifies the 99.3% figure as positive career outcomes.

McKenna Pfeiffer, UW-River Falls assistant director of Career Services, called the survey results astounding and the highest the university has seen since it became part of the First Destination process in 2016.

"At first we thought, are these numbers real?" Pfeiffer said. "More than 99 percent is an amazing number. And it turns out it is most definitely real."

The survey shows that 86.2% of graduates in the survey were working at jobs by the end of December 2022. Another 12.8% were furthering their education, with 0.2% in the military and another 0.2% in volunteer service.

The positive career outcome figure for 2021 graduates (August 2020, December 2020, January 2021, and May 2021) was 94%. The average salary for graduates that year was \$48,131, a figure that increased to \$53,028 for 2022 grads.

That number "shows that a lot of our graduates are finding good-paying jobs," Pfeiffer said.

UW-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo said the high number of recent graduates who are employed or continuing their education points to the amazing value students receive at the university. Their experiences on campus, and related opportunities such as internships, are part of a "wonderful, affordable education that results in superior career outcomes," she said.

"It is heartening to see that nearly all of our 2022 graduates [August 2021-May 2022] are either working in jobs or continuing their education," Gallo said. "Those successful numbers are the result of a committed effort by faculty and staff on our campus to not only provide our students with a high-quality education, but to link them with internships and other opportunities that make them desirable as employees."

The high employment rate is the result of numerous factors, chief among them the high-quality instruction they receive while students at UW-River Falls, said Dawn Hukai, acting dean and professor of accounting in the university's College of Business and Economics. Students of all sorts participate in hands-on learning experiences that prepare them for the work world, she said.

"Many students also work with faculty and staff on research projects, also gaining deeper knowledge in their area of interest," Hukai said.

Other factors, such as an especially strong employment market, and the proximity of UW-River Falls to the Twin Cities and quality internship opportunities there, also help boost graduates' job prospects, Pfeiffer said. As a sign of businesses' demand for workers, Pfeiffer said she has a waiting list of 40 companies and organizations for the February 15 Career and Internship Fair.

"For sure the job market itself is part of this year's numbers," Pfeiffer said. "There are so many opportunities for students. But it's about more than just that. It's about the instruction these students receive at UWRF, and about how so many of them are hungry to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them."

One of those opportunities occurred on Monday, when Pfeiffer and others worked with students to help them with their resumes. That session is one of many on campus designed to help students fine tune skills that help them find jobs.

"We're working really hard to have students gain relevant experience and be able to find good jobs once they graduate," Pfeiffer said in between helping direct two students to the resume writing workshop. "To see them have success after they leave here is so gratifying."

Please note: Percentages may not be exact due to rounding.



UW-River Falls journalism students attended the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Student Seminar in Middleton on February 25 where they won five statewide awards. Michelle Stangler photo.

UW-River Falls students win five state broadcast journalism awards

Accolades showcase students' talent, diligent effort, faculty say

Feb. 27, 2023 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls students garnered five awards, including two first-place honors, at the February 25 Wisconsin Broadcasters Association (WBA) Student Seminar in Middleton.

The annual seminar is attended by college students and broadcast journalism educators from across the state and included the presentation of this year's Student Awards for Excellence.

"I am happy to see so many UWRF students represented among the five awards and heartened that broadcasting professionals have recognized their work," said Andris Straumanis, journalism program director in the UWRF Communication and Media Studies Department.

Michelle Stangler, a journalism and agricultural marketing communications major from Watertown, earned first place in the news series and documentary category for her longform radio story, "Dairy Farming Not as Simple a Life as it May Seem" that aired last summer on the student-run radio station WRFW (88.7 FM). The documentary was produced with support from the UW-River Falls Donovan E. Rasmussen Broadcast Journalism Fellowship. It is available online at <https://uwrjournalism.org/2022/08/dairy-farming/>.

Stangler, along with fellow WRFW members Emily Marsolek and Jacob Jensen, won another first-place honor, this time in the live special category for the radio station's October 2022 program leading up to the inauguration of Chancellor Maria Gallo. Stangler also earned second place for her radio air check, a demonstration recording that showcases an announcer's abilities.

In addition, Stangler was one of four university students statewide who was awarded a WBA scholarship. She received the \$1,500 David L. Nelson Scholarship.

Students in the UWRF Music and Stage and Screen Arts Department also won accolades. They received two awards in the special television programming category for short films produced during 2022 as part of the Advanced Field Production course.

Austin Albright, Tyler Buss, Sevki Cevik, Matthew McCarthy, Wesley Papp and Kat Peine earned second place for their production "Ghost Light," a film about a young woman dealing with the death of her mother. "Ghost Light" may be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/788404355/ea282eab9e>.

Third place went to students Ben Brannon, Zoe Palmer, Bradley Horwath, Cam Wallace, Irene Yoshizumu and Logan Carlson for "Consequences," a comedy about bullying in school. "Consequences" may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6uBEMEAKyU>.

This year was the first time the Music and Stage and Screen Arts Department participated in the WBA seminar, and the fact that their two submissions were both accorded awards "was a pleasant surprise," said Erik Johnson, associate professor of digital film. The awards and event "created a buzz" with that department's students, Johnson said, and provided attendees with valuable networking opportunities.

"To see how cool this was for our students, and how it benefits them ... to me it makes a lot of sense to keep this going in the future," he said.

Since attending last year's WBA Student Seminar, Stangler said she has been motivated to see more representation of the "small but strong (journalism) program at UW-River Falls." She said she is honored to have received the awards and scholarship, but more importantly, she wants to continue to grow students' involvement with media organizations like WRFW.

Stangler said she is humbled by the opportunity to depict the lives of people living in rural America.

"My goal is to help tell the stories of people involved in agriculture, and while I am appreciative of the (awards) honor, I am more grateful for the people I have met and the trust they have within me to help tell their story," she said.

Straumanis praised the effort that went into students' work, particularly that of Stangler.

"I am particularly pleased with Michelle Stangler's first-place award for her broadcast documentary about the dairy industry. She worked hard on the project," he said.



UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program garners Regents Diversity Award

Initiative lauded for helping first-generation, low-income students continue education past high school

Feb. 6, 2023 -- Each time Bee Vang sees expressions of wonder on her students' faces when they have a new experience, she feels hopeful for their future.

"When I see that look in my students' eyes, when they get to experience something they've never done before, I feel like we're doing our job," said Vang, director of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Upward Bound Program she has been involved with since 2010. "That's when I feel like we're really making a difference, giving these students opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have."

UWRF's Upward Bound Program has been named a recipient of the prestigious Regents Diversity Award. It is one of just three award designees among UW System schools this year. The program will be recognized at the February 10 Board of Regents meeting at UW-Madison. Started in 1999, the program serves students who attend Washington Technology Magnet School in St. Paul.

Other Regents Diversity Award winners honored include Rickie-Ann Legleitner at UW-Stout and Lori Kido Lopez at UW-Madison. Regents awards recognize individuals and programs that foster success for students who are members of historically underrepresented populations. Each award winner is granted \$7,500 for professional development or to further those programs.

Upward Bound is overseen by the U.S. Department of Education and serves students age 14-18 who would be first-generation college students and whose families have limited income. The program offers participants opportunities and teaches study skills, how to access scholarships, and other abilities in an effort to allow them to attend post-high school education.

The UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program has garnered accolades because of its success in providing students with opportunities, instruction and mentoring that enables them to find success after high school. UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo praised the work of Upward Bound and the important role it plays in its participants' lives.

"The UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program does the important work of preparing students for a post-high school education, an opportunity many of them likely wouldn't otherwise have," Gallo said. "Our university community is proud of this program and honored to receive this award."

When Vang – who was named a Regents Diversity Award recipient in 2018 – received a recent email message notifying her that Upward Bound had won the award, she felt both gratification and validation. Maintaining student success during the coronavirus pandemic was "a very real challenge," Vang said, "and this award shows that we were able to meet our students where they were at and then get them to a better place."

Mai Tao Yang, who operates the UWRF Upward Bound Program along with Vang, expressed a similar sentiment. As program coordinator, Yang and Vang work diligently to provide quality opportunities and mentoring to program participants, she said, noting she is "super honored" to see the program recognized as an award winner. The program focuses on helping students build positive peer support networks as well as leadership and career development and interaction with people with varying life experiences.

"We view what we are doing as really unique," she said. "To be recognized for that, it's amazing ... The award isn't why we do this every day. But it does amplify our program, and that is exciting."



Vang and Yang work with 73 students each year, a heavy workload for the duo, Yang said. Challenges they face are numerous, she said, and include convincing students who come from backgrounds that are limited in some ways that more is possible for them. In addition to a lack of money, Upward Bound students deal with such issues as cultural and language barriers as well as various forms of family trauma, Yang said. They also often lack opportunities available to their more affluent peers, she said.

"A big part of our job is convincing our students that they can overcome the limits they face," Yang said. "A lot of times, because of circumstances, they don't realize the possibilities that are out there for them."

To help students realize their potential, Yang and Vang arrange opportunities and experiences they most likely otherwise

wouldn't have. Students attend everything from a circus to a monster truck rally, to horseback riding, to a trip to Disney World. Those opportunities are intended to expose students to new ways of thinking and new possibilities, Vang said.

"We focus on positive learning experiences for our students," Vang said. "You want to see these students have new experiences and to see their minds open up to what might be available to them in their future lives."

'I am them'

To connect with their students, Vang and Yang work closely with them on academic and life issues. The need for such support became especially evident during the pandemic, they said.

"A lot of the success we have is about building relationships with our students," Yang said. "We don't just talk about academics. We discuss other things in their lives. We can be that mentor that they need."

Making those connections comes naturally to Yang and Vang. They know firsthand about many of the challenges their students face because they were once in a similar situation.

Like many of the students they work with, Yang and Vang are Hmong. They were born in refugee camps in Thailand, and their families fled for their lives from Laos after the war in Vietnam.

They both grew up in the Twin Cities after their families relocated there, and each was a part of an Upward Bound program during their high school years. They know what it's like to feel the odds were stacked against them, like they didn't fit in, like they would not have opportunities.

As Vang and Yang work, they often see themselves in their students.

"The person these kids see today in front of them, that wasn't me in high school," Vang recalled. "I didn't really stick out at all. I just tried to get through my day and didn't speak up much. I was just like these kids, facing the same kinds of challenges they face."

Their backgrounds give them credibility with their students, they said. They tell students how being a part of Upward Bound helped them deal with difficulties and find success.



"We understand many of the challenges our students face because we lived that life," Yang said. "When I look at my students, I am them."

Finding Success

As a Hmong child growing up in the Twin Cities, Pather Zong Lao didn't have a goal of attending college and working as a professional one day. One of six children in a family with few financial resources, Lao's reality simply didn't include those ideas.

Then, when she started high school, Lao was recruited to Upward Bound, and she decided to join. During her freshman year, an Upward Bound trip to Chicago opened Lao's eyes to future possibilities. Her work with program mentors furthered not only her commitment to academic success but helped build self confidence, along with skills such as time management and networking.

Lao attended the University of Minnesota, where she became a student mentor. After graduating in 2021, Lao returned to Upward Bound as an instructor and currently works with students at North High School in North St. Paul. She credits her Upward Bound experience as a teen with her finding success as an adult.

"Without me being in Upward Bound, I don't think I would have gone to college. I wouldn't have the job I have now," Lao said. "Upward Bound was really the starting point for me to have success, to see that more was possible."

UW-River Falls Continuing Education Director Randy Zimmermann said the program helps students like Lao to build skills and awareness that enable them to gain an education after high school.

"The Upward Bound Program has built cultural bridges and paths of academic opportunity for countless urban youth that would not otherwise have confidence to consider continuing their education beyond the secondary level," Zimmermann said.

Lao's story and other similar successes she hears from students are a reward for the effort she and others put into Upward Bound, Vang said. She frequently receives messages from former students who have gone on to graduate from college and find success in their careers, such as a recent note from one of Vang's former Upward Bound students who is now in medical school at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

"When you see these kids go on to have successful lives after they've been with us, that is the most heartwarming part of this job," Vang said.

Yang agreed, saying students' successes amid many challenges makes her work with Upward Bound worthwhile.

"To be one of the people who helps these students, and to see them go on to college, and find success and see them on their way, it's an honor to be a part of that," Yang said. "It's humbling to know that the work we do matters. And it motivates us to keep doing it."

Photo 1:

Bee Vang, UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program director, works with Angel Molina Flores, an 11th-grade student in the Upward Bound Program at Washington Technology Magnet School, St. Paul. The program recently received a UW System Regents Diversity Award. Photo courtesy of Bee Vang.

Photo 2:

Mai Tao Yang, coordinator of the UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program.

Photo 3:

Mai Tao Yang, fourth from left, age 3, and her family in a refugee camp in Thailand, where they lived

while they waited to be resettled in the U.S. Yang, UW-River Falls Upward Bound Program coordinator, said her experience growing up in this country as a first-generation Hmong woman allows her to relate to the challenges her Upward Bound students face. Photo courtesy of Mai Tao Yang.

Visiting scholar to address Black politics, education and inequality in Chicago

Event on March 1 is part of the Wyman Visiting Professorship Series

Feb. 22, 2023 - Changes in public education prompted by desegregation of schools have resulted in significant alterations, such as numerous experimental education models and teachers' organizing efforts, a Chicago-based author, professor and school board member says.

However, significant inequities between students of color and their white counterparts remain, said Elizabeth Todd-Breland, author of "A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago Since the 1960s" and associate professor of history and Black Studies at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

Todd-Breland will discuss those topics and others as part of the Walker D. and Helen Bryant Wyman Visiting Professorship Series event at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls at 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 1, at the university's North Hall Auditorium. Todd-Breland will answer questions from students from 1-2 p.m. that same day in the auditorium.

The talk will include transformations in Black politics, shifts in education organizing, and racial politics of education reform from the 1960s to the current time. Her address describes community-based efforts of Black students, teachers, parents and activists as initial support for desegregating schools led to educational changes.



Her presentation centers on Chicago to tell a national story connecting the history of educational happenings in the wake of desegregation with what she calls "the more recent corporate reorganization of the public sphere and ongoing inequities."

Ryan Fischer, assistant history professor at UW-River Falls and a member of the Wyman Events Committee, said having Todd-Breland on campus is timely, given current discussion of racial inequities and education.

Her address "will be a great event for anyone in the River Falls community interested in education reform, community activism, and struggles against inequality," Fischer said. "Elizabeth Todd-Breland is a top scholar on the history of education in the United States, and she's a member of the Chicago Board of Education, so I think she'll have a lot of different and fascinating perspectives on these issues."

Todd-Breland's research and teaching focus on U.S. urban history, African American history, and the history of education. She also organizes professional development workshops and develops curricula about African American history, urban education and racial justice.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information, email john.ryan.fischer@uwrf.edu

The Wyman Speaker Series started at UW-River Falls in 2015 after a donation from the Wyman family. Series events occur once each semester.

Zimmerman is featured Innovator in Residence speaker

Feb. 24, 2023 -- Angel Zimmerman, local entrepreneur and business leader, is the spring 2023 Innovator in Residence speaker at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She most recently helped navigate the business growth and, after many years, the sale of local winery Belle Vinez.

She will speak on Wednesday, March 1, at 1 p.m. in the Riverview Ballroom in the University Center. The event is free and open to the public.

Zimmerman describes herself as a “developer of people” and is active in a wide variety of civic organizations in the St. Croix Valley. As co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of River Falls born Sajan, Inc., a language translation technology company, Zimmerman would go on to lead various operational areas of that business as it expanded across three continents, adding hundreds of employees. During her tenure at Sajan, she was directly responsible for global delivery, compliance, and global integration of strategic acquisitions. She retired from Sajan in 2015.

The UW-River Falls Innovator in Residence speaker events showcase individuals that exemplify the application of innovation in their organization.

For more information, call the UWRF College of Business and Economics at 715-425-3335.

Annual Wellness Fair is April 5

March 27, 2023- UW-River Falls Student Health and Counseling Services will host its annual Wellness Fair on Wednesday, April 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Riverview Ballroom of the University Center. This is a free event for all community members and UWRF students, staff, and faculty.

Presentations by organizations from River Falls and surrounding areas will include a number of topics ranging from fitness to safety procedures and other health related topics. Food, door prizes and massages will also be part of the event. The Wellness Fair is a great chance to learn more about your health and the options available to you while enjoying snacks and massages.

Huge thank you to the sponsors this year: WESTconsin Credit Union and Royal Credit Union!

For more information, contact Greta Odegaard at shcsinterns@uwrf.edu or 715-425-3884.

Award-winning investigative reporter to speak at UW-River Falls March 9

March 6, 2023 - Randy Travis, an award-winning investigative reporter for the FOX 5 television station in Atlanta, Ga., is this semester's speaker for the Communication and Media Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. His topic will be "Investigative Journalism: American Patriotism."

The seminar is scheduled from 7-8:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, in North Hall Auditorium on campus. It is free and open to the public.

Travis began his journalism career as a sports writer for his hometown newspaper, the Athens Banner-Herald in Georgia, but later switched to television. He joined WAGA-TV (FOX 5) in 1990 and four years later became part of the station's investigative unit.

He has earned numerous honors for his work, including a Peabody Award, two national Edward R. Murrow awards, and 20 regional Emmys.

The seminar is sponsored by the UWRF Communication and Media Studies Department.

Chancellor Gallo's statement on UW System tuition increase

March 31, 2023 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo issued the following statement following this week's Board of Regents meeting:

I want to thank the UW System Board of Regents for approving a modest tuition increase this week. Increasing tuition is not a decision that any of us take lightly, as affordability to our students must remain paramount. After a decade of frozen tuition while costs have risen markedly due to inflation, UW-River Falls, like every campus, must review its revenue sources if we are to continue to offer the quality of education and support programming that our students request and deserve. Our overall cost of attendance will still be one of the lowest in the UW System, meaning UW-River Falls remains an excellent investment where students can access outstanding educational opportunities at a very affordable price.

Chancellor Gallo to discuss leadership challenges facing women

Gallo one of three speaking as part of UWRF Women's History Month

March 8, 2023 - Any way you look at it, Maria Gallo has found professional success, making her way from a child in a middle-class family to the head of two universities.

But Gallo, who began her tenure as the University of Wisconsin-River Falls chancellor in the summer of 2021 after a five-year term as president of Delaware Valley University, said ascending to those positions was anything but easy. Climbing the job ladder is often a challenge, she said, and was more difficult for one simple reason: Gallo is a woman.



She was the first woman president at Delaware Valley University and is the second woman chancellor at UW-River Falls (Ann Lydecker was the first, and Connie Foster has been interim chancellor twice).

"The road to a university presidency is not a simple straight line, especially for women," Gallo said. "Although women are getting the majority of degrees, they are not ascending into leadership roles at the same rate (as men)."

Gallo will discuss her professional journey and the challenges of being a woman in the work world as part of a series of speakers in conjunction with UWRF's Women's History Month. She is scheduled to speak on Wednesday, March 22. Other speakers include Dana Thompson, a trans woman who is a special education supervisor in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage (Minn.) School District, on Wednesday, March 8, and Dr. Morgan Barnum, a Hudson physician, on Wednesday, March 29.

All three speeches are at noon on their respective dates in the Falcon's Nest in the University Center on campus and are free and open to the public.

The speeches are co-sponsored by the UWRF Diversity, Belonging and Inclusion and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies departments and are intended to highlight women's contributions to society as well as the ongoing fight for equality.

For more information, email inclusion@uwrf.edu.

Community invited to roundtable discussion at UW-River Falls April 10

Event is part of Contemporary Political Issues Roundtable Series

March 29, 2023 - Campus and community members are invited to participate in a roundtable discussion at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls on the book "The Education Myth, How Human Capital Trumped Social Democracy," written by UW-Green Bay Professor Jon Shelton.

Shelton studies the history of education, labor, and politics in the U.S. His new book questions the idea that education represents the best, if not the only, way for Americans to access economic opportunity.

The roundtable discussion is Monday, April 10, from 3-4 p.m. in the Kinnickinnic Theater in the University Center. It is free and open to all.

The Contemporary Political Issues Roundtable Series is hosted by the Politics, Geography and International Studies Department. The department hosts several roundtable events annually on a variety of topics. Copies of the book are available for purchase at the UWRF Falcon Shop in the University Center or on the Cornell University Press website. Use code 09BCARD for a discount from Cornell University Press.

For more information, email pgis@uwrf.edu.



Dylan Gentilcore, UW-River Falls varsity esports coach, watches as players from Rural Virtual Academy of Medford prepare for a Division 3 match against Jefferson High School in Rocket League during the Wisconsin High School Esports Association Winter 2023 State Finals at UWRF. UWRF, which is launching a varsity esports program in fall 2023, hosted the event for the first time and welcomed 20 teams from across Wisconsin. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

Getting into gaming: UW-River Falls hosts successful esports state tournament

Event showcases growing popularity as UWRF will start its varsity program in the fall

March 21, 2023 - Hunched forward in his chair, Hunter Wrezinski stared intently at the screen in front of him as his thumbs clicked his video game controller with rapid-fire precision.

Seconds later Wrezinski uttered “oh!” as he directed his video game vehicle upward to intercept a soccer ball and send it forward toward the car of one of his teammates, who quickly sent the ball into the opponents’ goal.

The audience who witnessed the score during the match between Wrezinski and his Stevens Point Pacelli High School teammates and their Random Lake High School opponents cheered loudly. Wrezinski smiled as his coach, Dana LaMotte, clenched her fists in triumph and yelled “yes!”

“This is so much fun,” Wrezinski said shortly after his team won the semifinal matchup. “Esports teaches teamwork, because you really have to work together to score like that.”

Such reactions from participants are exactly what Dylan Gentilcore hoped for when he helped organize the Wisconsin esports high school championship on March 18 at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Gentilcore was hired last summer by UW-River Falls to coach its varsity esports program, set to begin in the fall. He previously coached the top high school esports program in the country at Carmel, Ind.

“The excitement from the 20 participating schools and the audiences that traveled with them was incredibly electric and heartwarming,” Gentilcore said of the high school championship tournament. “So far, the feedback from everyone has been better than I could have hoped for.”

The esports high school championship, overseen by the Wisconsin High School Esports Association (WHSEA), attracted team members’ families and other supporters. Stevens Point Pacelli and Random Lake were among 20 teams competing.

Esports is a term used for organized, team-based video game competitions that feature popular games such as Rocket League, Fortnite and Super Smash Bros. Turnout at the UW-River Falls event is one more sign of the growing popularity of esports, Gentilcore said.

As evidence, membership in WHSEA has increased from seven teams in 2017 to more than 150 currently. A growing number of colleges are taking up the sport too. Some offer club competitions; others, like UW-River Falls, are offering esports as a varsity sport.

To accommodate its esports program – and to attract esports athletes – UW-River Falls recently unveiled a 26-seat state-of-the-art esports gaming center for competitive and recreational players. Gentilcore said the facility will not only allow for high-quality esports activities but will help attract students to UWRF.

That is already happening, he said, noting starting an esports program has attracted students from elsewhere in the U.S. to commit to attending UWRF. Gentilcore anticipates an esports roster of between 30 and 40 members, with about two dozen first year or transfer students.

Given the reactions of high schoolers attending the WHSEA championship, more of them may someday decide to attend UWRF. Tournament participants and their parents spoke highly of the host site, saying it compared favorably to last year’s state tournament location in Wausau.

“This is amazing,” Gabriel Dierks, a sophomore at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, said of the UWRF setup. “To have so many people here all here for the same reason, all excited for this game, it’s a great feeling.”

That sentiment is music to the ears of Kellen Wells-Mangold, UWRF associate athletic director. Several years ago, he began pushing for the university adopting esports, an effort he renewed last spring. “I’m not a gamer, but I knew this was something we needed on our campus,” he said.

As he watched the tournament proceedings, Wells-Mangold reflected on the work of organizing the event and getting ready for the upcoming varsity esports season for UWRF. He credits Gentilcore, hired last summer, with growing the program rapidly.

“It’s been a lot, that’s for sure,” Wells-Mangold said. “But when you see the reactions of these kids, how they’re so excited about this, you know it’s all worth it.”

Gentilcore agrees. Buoyed by the success of the WHSEA tourney, he already is planning future tournaments at UWRF. As esports increasingly are considered a sport, he is optimistic about building a highly successful program at UWRF that will be seen as one more reason for students to attend college in River Falls.

“Five to six months ago, we were an absolute unknown quantity in the collegiate esports space. Now I have nearly a dozen students from different states committing to coming to UWRF,” he said. “The commitment we’re making through our investments in space, equipment, staffing, and events is clear to these recruits, and the opportunities are becoming more tangible each day. This is just the beginning.”



UW-River Falls student Giselle Nunez, from Cottage Grove, Minn., is interviewed on campus as part of “The College Tour” television series. Ten UWRF students interviewed for the show will be part of the program that will be aired on Amazon Prime and other broadcast outlets on March 22. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo

In their own words: UW-River Falls students tell university’s story through ‘The College Tour’

National audience will hear about UWRF through television series

Feb. 16, 2023 – Season seven of a popular streaming television series will feature all that makes the University of Wisconsin-River Falls a special institution in western Wisconsin.

Production has concluded for the UWRF episode to be shown on the show “The College Tour,” a television series streamed on Amazon Prime and Amazon Freevee, as well as other streaming services like Roku, Fire TV and Apple TV. It will be available on the UWRF website at <https://www.uwrf.edu/admissions/the-college-tour> on March 22.

UWRF will be the first UW System institution to be featured on “The College Tour.”

“The student stories told during ‘The College Tour’ can bring awareness to our distinctive programs and exceptional

academic outcomes,” UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo said. “Viewers can see firsthand why UW-River Falls has been recognized as one of the best universities in the Midwest. It will bring our special Falcon community to a much wider audience.”

The host and executive producer of the series is Alex Boylan, who at 23 won the CBS series “The Amazing Race,” and spent the last 20 years as an award-winning onscreen personality and producer. He won an Emmy as a producer of “The Steve Harvey Show” and was named one of Ed Tech Magazine’s Top 30 IT Higher Education Influencers to Follow in 2022.

The episode features 10 students discussing a variety of topics they are familiar with, including campus life, academics, housing and dining, sports and student organizations, all intended to give viewers a complete picture of the UWRF experience.

“We wanted to showcase what sets us apart from other campuses,” said Cathy Leaf, UWRF marketing manager.

One of the participating students, Isaac Roehrig, a junior from Brillion, said he was allowed to write the script he spoke during his segment in “The College Tour” and choose the clothes he wore. That approach lends the program’s UWRF segment a high degree of authenticity, he said.

“I feel like that is the only way to show the entire world my true UWRF story,” he said.

Roehrig said he appreciated the opportunity to experience all that goes into a production like “The College Tour.” The film crew helped him feel more at ease during the process, he said.

“Standing in front of several cameras can be quite intimidating, but there were several of the marketing team staff members there to make sure I felt comfortable. The process flew by, but was so much fun to experience,” he said.

UW-River Falls recently completed a new branding effort, Leaf said, and the insights gleaned from that process helped direct the subject matter included in the show.

“We also selected stories that align with our core institutional values, such as sustainability, inclusion, and others,” Leaf added.

Roehrig and other students chosen for the taping wrote their own scripts, Leaf said, and memorized them for the taping. “The College Tour” crew was on campus for a week doing the taping, Leaf said, adding: “The crew was great. I’ve worked with many in my years in marketing and they were top-notch.”

Leaf said publicity surrounding the show will bring UWRF to the attention of more prospective students.

“We know that prospective students like to see and hear from students who are living and learning here,” she said.

Roehrig said he hopes that is the case.

“I am so eager to share my UWRF story and so thankful that ‘The College Tour’ gave me the platform to do this,” he said.



Students Devon Mares, left, and Jordan Cioni, right, recently won first and second place, respectively, for their research presentations during the WiSys Quick Pitch event at UWRF.

Making their pitch: UWRF students showcase research at WiSys event

Competition offers opportunity to refine communication skills, relate to a broad audience

March 15, 2023 – Her presentation of research to better control an invasive species causing havoc in waterways earned University of Wisconsin-River Falls student Devon Mares the first-place award in the March 1 WiSys Quick Pitch event on campus.

Competing against other UWRF students, Mares' winning presentation was titled "Creating a Biocontrol Agent for Zebra Mussels." Mares focuses on controlling zebra mussel populations by genetically engineering algae to be toxic to zebra mussels, but not to any other species. Zebra mussels are an invasive species that have caused harm to North American waters.

Competition judges praised Mares, a biotechnology major from Unity, for describing her topic in a way that was understandable to a broad audience. The competition inspires UW System students to consider the impacts of their research and effectively communicate it to the public, all within a three-minute timeframe.

"I understand that you did an excellent job of communicating your research ... in a way that was accessible to a broad audience," WiSys President Arjun Sanga said in a letter congratulating Mares on her work. "Your three-minute pitch clearly

and succinctly conveyed both the relevance and economic impact of your research.”

By winning the competition, Mares received \$300 and is eligible to participate in the WiSys Quick Pitch State Final at the WiSys SPARK Symposium August 6-8 in Oshkosh. Mares also won the People’s Choice Award that was voted on by event attendees.

UWRF physics major Jordan Cioni of Green Bay won second place in the competition, along with \$125, for a project titled “The Double Gyroid Composite: A Shock Absorbing Innovation” in which Cioni describes innovative shock absorption research.

Other UWRF students participating in WiSys Quick Pitch include Emma Hamilton, Michelle Stangler and Lilianna Rolands.

UWRF Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs David Travis, who served as a WiSys Quick Pitch judge, praised the high level of the work that participating students presented.

“This year’s WiSys competition demonstrated that UW-River Falls continues to produce the next generation of innovative scientists and entrepreneurs,” Travis said.

Each of the UW System schools hosts its own WiSys Quick Pitch event. Winners take part in the WiSys Spark Symposium event.

Molly Gerrish, director of the UWRF Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity (URSCA), said the WiSys Quick Pitch competition helps students develop the ability to present their project in layman’s terms to an audience not necessarily made up of scientists or academics.

“It really gives our students a chance to refine their communication skills and present to a different audience,” she said. “You not only must be able to explain your work, but you have to be able to pitch it to people who may well not be familiar with it.”

The event helps students in other ways, too, Gerrish said, noting it focuses in part on creative problem solving. Through WiSys Quick Pitch, “we get to highlight some of our most innovative students,” she said.

WiSys is a nonprofit organization that works with UW System faculty, staff, students and alumni to facilitate cutting-edge research programs, develop and commercialize discoveries and promote innovative and entrepreneurial thinking across Wisconsin.

For more information about WiSys, call 608-620-8496, email info@wisys.org, or visit <https://www.wisys.org/>.



Tom Barnett, UW-River Falls marching band director, leads the UWRF pep band at Smith Stadium at Ramer Field in October 2022 prior to the start of a home game against UW-Eau Claire.

Marching Band returns to UW-River Falls after 30 years

Alumni and university support makes dream a reality

March 29, 2023 - More than three decades after it last appeared on campus, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is getting ready to strike up the marching band again.

The Marching Falcons will be directed by trumpet Professor Tom Barnett, director of UWRF's athletic bands, and make appearances at university football games and other events beginning in the fall. The last time a UW-River Falls marching band took the field at UWRF was more than 30 years ago before budget constraints ended the program around 1990.

"A marching band brings so much spirit and excitement to university and community events," said UW-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo. "The program also provides another quality co-curricular experience to our students who have told us for years they would like to participate in marching band if we offered it. This is a response to that need."

"The Marching Falcons will bring back a proud tradition at UWRF," said Barnett, the driving force behind the return of the marching band. Since Barnett began teaching at UWRF in 2001, he has heard many requests from potential students to have

a marching band.

"This area has such a rich tradition of high school marching band success, it just makes sense to have a UWRF marching band," he said. "We're trying to create a diverse student group that will span potentially all the majors on campus."

The Marching Falcons will also have a color guard, Barnett added, allowing for more students to get involved with the group.

The marching band has been restarted with a \$100,000 lead gift from UWRF alums Pat and Dave Stone to buy instruments and storage, Barnett said.

"It's been a long time coming," said Pat Stone, who played in the marching band for two years when she attended UWRF in the mid-1970s. "Music is the universal language of all other studies. It brings a sense of unity. Marching band is a place for non-music majors to get plugged in. It is also a source of family at the university."

The marching band will perform at football events, including the Homecoming Parade, as well as other special events around campus, Barnett said.

A marching band class is planned for students to earn credit and better prepare for the band, Barnett said. The band will be marching basic maneuvers. The goal is to build the band and potentially join band competitions as the band becomes more seasoned. There will be an application process but no formal auditions.

UWRF has a pep band with more than 40 members that play at football games and traveled to the inaugural Culver's Isthmus Bowl when UWRF defeated Washington University in St. Louis 48-27 in November 2021. The game marked the first postseason college bowl game in Wisconsin state history and the first bowl game in UW-River Falls football program history.

The university also has a symphony band, jazz band and ensemble groups. UWRF offers a B.S. in liberal arts music and a Bachelor of Music Education degree.

UWRF is continuing its fundraising efforts to support the Marching Falcons. To donate, go to <https://www.uwrf.edu/give/marchingfalcons.cfm>.

For more information about the Marching Falcons, contact Tom Barnett at thomas.barnett@uwrf.edu or 715-425-4026. For fundraising details, contact Julie Stucky in University Advancement at julie.stucky@uwrf.edu or 715-425-4647.

Minneapolis-based artist Gregory J. Rose to judge Juried Student Exhibition

March 9, 2023 - Minneapolis-based artist and college educator Gregory J. Rose will judge and present awards for the Juried Student Exhibition in Gallery 101 of the Kleinpell Fine Arts building at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls on Monday, March 20, at 3:30 p.m.

Rose will give a talk about his art choices and present awards for ceramics, painting, glass, photography, printmaking, drawing/mixed media, and graphic arts. The awards ceremony and presentation are free and open to the public.

Rose teaches painting and drawing classes at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Rose exhibited in four solo regional shows in the last year. He recently curated an exhibition at Soo Visual Art Center in Minneapolis titled "Change is God-Take Root Among the Stars: Black Abstraction in the Midwest." His most recent international exhibitions have been in Senegal and Spain in 2019 and 2020, respectively. His current mixed media paintings can be seen at Inver Hills Community College in Gallery 120 and Modus Locus Gallery in Minneapolis.

The Juried Student Exhibition is sponsored by the UWRF Art Department. Students are encouraged to submit as many as four exhibition-ready artworks that were completed at the college within the last three years.

Gallery 101 hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The gallery is closed on the weekends.

For more information, email jeannine.kitzhaber@uwrf.edu or call the UWRF Art Department at 715-425-3266.

Nilsestuen Legacy Event addresses agribusiness issues under a changing economic and political landscape

March 9, 2023 - The University of Wisconsin-River Falls will host the 11th annual Rod Nilsestuen Legacy Event on Thursday, March 23, from 2-3:15 p.m. in the Riverview Ballroom of the University Center and via livestream at <https://bit.ly/nilsestuen2023>. The event is free and open to the public.

The talk will focus on “Agribusiness Issues Under A Changing Economic and Political Landscape” as presented by Cesar Escalante, professor of agricultural and applied economics at the University of Georgia and Marc Bellemare, Northrop professor of applied economics at the University of Minnesota.

Escalante’s research specialization spans from traditional agricultural finance, extending to more applied labor, health, and development economics research. His research and service efforts to promote financial inclusion, diversity and equality earned him the 2022 Ketchum Prize, a prestigious award from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation.

Bellemare is a Distinguished McKnight University Professor, Distinguished University Teaching Professor serving as editor of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. In 2022, he was identified by Clarivate as one of “the world’s most influential researchers”— the select few who have been most frequently cited by their peers over the last decade. In 2023, he was elected Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. His work has been featured in The Economist, the New York Times, National Public Radio, and the Wall Street Journal.

Nilsestuen, who earned his undergraduate degree at UW-River Falls, was the Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection at the time of his death in July 2010. He is remembered as a proud steward of sustainable agriculture and a leader in the national cooperative movement who strove to balance the needs of sustainable land use with the maximization of agricultural production. Nilsestuen worked to find common ground on topics including the power of cooperatives, farmland conservation, the future of rural America and the increased pressure on agriculture to feed the world.

The Rod Nilsestuen Legacy Fund was established by friends, family, colleagues, and several land conservation and cooperative organizations, and is part of the Ralph K. Morris Foundation, an organization that shares Nilsestuen’s dedication to cooperatives and leadership development.



Research in the Rotunda event challenges students, offers valuable experience

Nine from UW-River Falls will join others to present their work at state Capitol March 8

March 2, 2023 - When Yihong Deng decided to get involved with a high-level research project to develop a biodegradable film used in packaging, she feared she might be getting in over her head when she agreed to participate in the Research in the Rotunda event.

With only one year of chemistry classes under her belt, Deng, a UWRF senior from River Falls majoring in food science, didn't think she had the lab experience to take on such a challenging endeavor. She knew the project would require more work than any of her previous coursework. It would also require a higher degree of independent research and problem solving than she had previously experienced.

"With my previous experience level, I didn't know if I was up to this," Deng said as she discussed the process she and fellow student Sierra Kolodjski, a food science major from Bethel, Minn., partnered on for their Research in the Rotunda effort. "I really didn't know if I could do it."

Now, eight months after starting their project last summer, Deng and Kolodjski and seven other UW-River Falls students will

join others from across the University of Wisconsin System at the state Capitol in Madison on March 8 to showcase their Research in the Rotunda projects. Students, joined by their faculty mentors, will discuss their research in the rotunda with lawmakers and others who attend the public event.

Other UW-River Falls students doing research projects include Diego Theisen, Cierra Kirkwood, Dylan Jensen, McKinley Davis, Emma Etten, Beth McIlquham, and Sophia Cobian.

The annual event is intended to communicate some of the high-level research that UW System students and faculty do on campuses across Wisconsin. UW System educators and Board of Regents members praise the event as a great way to showcase the important research of students and faculty, work that often has real-world implications.

That could certainly be the case for Deng's and Kolodjski's project. The duo combined a part of plants that gives them structure with whey, a leftover waste product in the production of cheese, and glycerol to form a biodegradable film for packaging. If it can be more fully developed, the product could be used to replace plastic film commonly used in packaging. The packaging film could even be an edible product and could be antibacterial.

"It's pretty amazing to be working on a product that could one day have such a major impact in our society," Kolodjski said.

Developing the film was anything but easy, Deng and Kolodjski said. They worked repeatedly to create the best conditions to develop the film, a painstaking process that at times required them to check on it hourly. Monitoring their project while maintaining their busy class schedules was a challenge that required near-constant communication and teamwork, they said.

Another difficulty involved the extremely precise measurements that were needed for their project. Especially when monitoring water vapor, "we were measuring very, very small amounts," Kolodjski said.

In addition, the time-intensive, research-heavy project at times stretched the students' schedules, they said.

"Doing this project with all of our already busy schedules was a lot," Kolodjski said. "We had to stay on top of things and make sure we were balancing it all."

Youngmi Kim, agricultural engineering technology associate professor, and Grace Lewis, food science assistant professor, watched Kolodjski and Deng work arduously on their research project. The faculty members said they admire their students' commitment to their work.

"This is certainly a more in-depth experience than a typical class," Kim said. "It is much more work. It is graduate-level research. To see Sierra and Yihong work so hard, and be so exacting, it has been really remarkable."

High-level work

Student advisers for other UW-River Falls students participating in this year's Research in the Rotunda event offered similar sentiments about the diligence and high-level research of their mentees.

On Wednesday afternoon Psychology Professor Travis Tubre talked with Thiesen about the poster he created to share depicting his research project.

For his project, Theisen, a psychology and business administration major from Minneapolis, researched the impact on job reviews/ratings of an employee informing their employer that they have a diagnosed mental health condition. He measured that impact on both low- and high-performing employees.

His results show that while a mental health revelation has little impact on how bosses treat high-level workers, it provides employees who tend to produce lower-quality work a higher degree of grace. That result contradicts most past research on the topic, a factor Tubre attributes in large part to growing awareness about and acceptance of mental health concerns.

"You've done some really outstanding work on this," Tubre told Theisen during their discussion. "This research has the potential to start to change thinking about this topic."

Like other UW-River Falls students participating in the event, Theisen said the project has ramped up his research skills, his ability to multitask amid a heavy class load, and allowed him to look more deeply into a topic. The project also has helped prepare him for future research and graduate school, he said.

"Being able to lead a research project like this showed me the initiative that would be necessary to succeed in a graduate program. I feel much better prepared going into graduate school having research experience," Theisen said.

Kirkwood, a UWRF senior from St. Cloud, Minn., expressed similar sentiments. The high-level work required of research projects – hers measured the amount of lead, copper and zinc in western Wisconsin wetlands – has prepared her well for a job after graduation or for graduate school, she said.

"This project was a lot of work, and it is high-level work beyond what you would normally expect in the classroom," said Kirkwood, an environmental science major. "These projects are a credit to the kind of work going on at the campuses across Wisconsin. UW-River Falls is small, and that's exactly what I love about it. Because of its size, we get to know our professors on a first-name basis. We get to work closely with them on quality research projects like this, on graduate-level work as an undergrad."

Another valuable lesson Kirkwood and other students said they learned was that oftentimes research doesn't yield expected results. Students said their research often presented challenges in the form of results they didn't anticipate or challenges in simply obtaining data.

"There are all kinds of unexpected challenges that come up, and you have to learn how to get around them and be a problem solver," Kolodjski said. "Along the way you realize that not getting the answer you were looking for is a big part of research. But that has value too, because it leads your work in other directions."

Jill Coleman Wasik, environmental science associate professor, served as Kirkwood's adviser for Research in the Rotunda. Among the most valuable parts of the project is the personal growth she sees in students who are part of it.

"I've definitely seen growth in (Kirkwood's) presentation skills, in her confidence in presenting the material," Coleman Wasik said. "I've also seen her start to ask the important questions, the kinds of questions you need to ask to do important research. It's really important for students to see themselves that way, to understand that they too can ask important research questions, and that is what this program helps develop."

'Excited for the opportunity'

Students who are part of Research in the Rotunda said they have had opportunities to present their research to various groups in recent months. But next week's stage at the state Capitol will be bigger, with an audience of state lawmakers who could enact policies based on students' research.

Some of the UW-River Falls students who will be there said they have never visited the state Capitol. They said they're excited at the prospect of being a part of the event and grateful for the opportunity to discuss their research. But most acknowledged at least some trepidation at discussing their work with politicians.

"I have mixed feelings," Deng said when asked how she feels about discussing her project with others in Madison. "I am definitely excited to present my work. But I am nervous, too. I don't know what kinds of questions to expect."

Kolodjski acknowledged nervousness as well, saying "when it comes to the political side of this, I haven't discussed it to that audience before." Still, she said she is excited about the opportunity to educate others about her work. "I think it will be a good learning experience," she said.

Theisen said he is motivated by the chance to present to legislators "who might find this information very relevant." He has presented his work many times previously, to many different groups. But this time feels different, he said.

"This is a very professional event where I feel like I have to bring my A game," he said, "and I'm very excited for the opportunity."

Photo: UW-River Falls students Sierra Kolodjski, left, and Yihong Deng conduct work on their Research in the Rotunda project. The duo seeks to develop a more resistant biodegradable packaging film that could be used instead of plastic on a mass scale.

Speakers to highlight Women's History Month

University chancellor, physician and educator to discuss women's issues, importance

March 2, 2023 - Three women, including University of Wisconsin-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo, will be featured speakers as part of the university's Women's History Month celebration this month.

The Women's History Month Series, co-sponsored by the UWRF Diversity, Belonging and Inclusion and Women's, Gender and Sexualities Studies departments, is intended to highlight the many contributions of women to society.

Speakers include Dana Thompson, a trans woman who is a special education supervisor in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage (Minn.) School District, on Wednesday, March 8; Gallo on Wednesday, March 22; and Dr. Morgan Barnum, a Hudson physician, on Wednesday, March 29. All three speeches will take place at noon in the Falcon's Nest in the University Center, 501 Wild Rose Ave., River Falls. All are free and open to the public.

The speakers are expected to discuss various topics such as women's health care access, pay equity and other issues in which women continue to struggle for equality, said Alan Toussaint, coordinator of UWRF's Pride Center and coordinator of Women's History Month events.

For more information about the Women's History Month Series, email inclusion@uwrf.edu.



Stage and Screen Productions to present 'Alice in Wonderland'

March 14, 2023 -- Stage and Screen Productions at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls will present "Alice in Wonderland" March 30-April 1 at 7:30 p.m. and April 1 and 2 at noon in the Blanche Davis Theatre in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building.

"Alice in Wonderland" is an audience participation play where willing audience members are invited to join in Alice's madcap adventure. This original adaptation of Lewis Carroll's classic opens in Camp Wonderland where a band of happy and mischievous campers follow Alice down a mysterious rabbit hole. Through movement and imagination, the campers create a marvelous land of unforgettable characters such as an inquisitive caterpillar, the infamous Queen of Hearts and, of course, the aptly named Mad Hatter.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (60 and up), and \$5 for children under 18 and UWRF students. Purchase tickets online at <https://marketplace.uwrf.edu/collections/theatre-2022-23-productions> or in person at the Box Office located in the lobby of Kleinpell Fine Arts. The Box Office is open weekdays from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and one hour prior to performance times. Call the Box Office at 715-425-3114 for more information.

Cast:

Alice 1: Adrienne Quinlan (Watertown, Minn.)

Alice 2: Corinna Brose (Little Falls, Minn.)

Sister/Red Queen: Meredith Bowermaster (White Bear Lake, Minn.)

White Rabbit/Ensemble: Stan Stanley (Vadnais Heights, Minn.)

Dormouse/Ensemble: Madison Miller (Somerset)

Lory/Ensemble: Eve Grabau (Spring Valley, Minn.)

Mock Turtle/Ensemble: Brandi Weiland (Zumbrota, Minn.)

Caterpillar/Ensemble: Jonathan Lorsung (Amery)

Flower/Ensemble: Kendra Lefeber (Fond du Lac)

Flower/Ensemble: Sydney Maier (Amery)

Knave/Ensemble: Levi Lindsay (Hudson)

Soldier/Ensemble: Luke Dovenmuehler (Woodbury, Minn.)

Soldier/Ensemble: Jessica Wiggins (Milltown, Minn.)

Mad Hatter/Ensemble: Billy Chester (Medford, Minn.)

March Hare/Ensemble: Cailyn Kuechle (Kimball, Minn.)

Fish Footman/Ensemble: Lucy Curtis (Amery)

Frog Footman/Ensemble: Laura Klein (Wrightstown)

Cook/Ensemble: Olivia Denninger (Maple Grove, Minn.)

Duchess/Ensemble: Sophie Hilo (Rosemount, Minn.)

Cheshire Cat/Ensemble: Jesse Ahlgren (Prescott, Minn.)



Staff members of the UW-River Falls Student Voice newspaper recently earned nine awards at the annual Better Collegiate Newspaper Contest. Back row, left to right: Natalie Riddle, Joshua Brauer, and Anna Gunderson. Front row, left to right: Jack Van Hoof, Lexi Janzer, and Ethan Lay. Julian Emerson/UWRF photo.

Student newspaper garners nine statewide print journalism awards

March 28, 2023 - The Student Voice, the student newspaper at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, recently won nine awards in the annual Better Collegiate Newspaper Contest sponsored by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation.

The awards – which included three first-place honors – were announced March 24 during the state press association's annual convention in Madison. A total of 220 entries from nine Wisconsin campus newspapers were judged by the Arkansas Press Association.

"I am thrilled by these results," said Andris Straumanis, journalism program director in the UWRF Communication and Media Studies Department. "Three first places, and so many winners overall – that's a testament to the good work of these student journalists. I hope that as a result more students will be drawn to getting involved with student media."

The Student Voice won two awards in the feature stories category. Joshua Brauer, a junior journalism major from Waukesha,

won first place for his April 2022 story, "For veterans, American Legion more than just bingo." The story examined what American Legion Post 121 in River Falls means for its members and to its community.

His story had special meaning to Brauer, who is a military veteran himself. That link to fellow veterans likely helped his story subjects feel more at ease with him, allowing him to write a more insightful story, Brauer said.

"I never thought this story would win," he said. "I just wrote it from the heart. To see it win this award, it is kind of astounding and very gratifying."

Student Voice Editor Jack Van Hoof, a junior English major from Hudson, won second place in the feature category for his November 2022 article, "UWRF one of 14 colleges to offer sustainable justice minor."

The newspaper also garnered three awards for in-depth reporting.

Anna Gunderson, a senior communications major from Roberts and Student Voice general manager, won first place for "New pantry tackles food insecurity on campus." The story, which reported on Freddy's Food Pantry, was published in February 2022.

Van Hoof earned third place for his September 2022 story, "UWRF rebrands to emphasize recruitment," and Student Voice Assistant Editor Lexi Janzer, a junior from Mayville who is double majoring in journalism and criminology, was accorded honorable mention for her October 2022 story, "Amazon show 'The College Tour' to feature UWRF."

Former Student Voice Assistant Editor Charlie Swanson, of Hugo, Minn., won first place in sports writing for his April 2022 feature, "Junior breaks longstanding 1977 track and field record." The story covered Lexi LeFever and the school record she set in the 100-meter dash. Swanson is now a reporter for the online Hastings (Minn.) Star Gazette.

Former editor and alumna Isabella Forliti, of St. Paul, won third place in public affairs reporting for her April 2022 story, "Students, faculty petition against custodian outsourcing."

In column writing, the Student Voice won two awards. Janzer earned second place for her December 2022 opinion piece, "UWRF new animal policy 'lets the dogs out.'" Staff member Natalie Riddle, a junior psychology major from St. Paul, earned honorable mention for her February 2022 article, "Question for the culture: Valentine's Day Edition."

Staff members described their strong bond and credited their awards to their colleagues' commitment to doing quality journalism. They said they feel proud of their work, especially given that the Student Voice has only nine staff members.

"Even though our paper staff is small, we are putting out quality work and it shows," Janzer said. "Covering a whole campus with only nine people is something that not everyone can do. I think (the awards) show that hard work and sleepless nights pay off."

Janzer and others also credited Straumanis for providing guidance and pushing them to think about issues critically.

“Straumanis is a huge help with everything from gathering information to perfecting our paper layout,” Janzer said.

The Student Voice is published during the academic year, appearing monthly in print as well online at uwrvoice.com. The paper was founded in 1916.



Nine UW-River Falls students presented their Research in the Rotunda projects at the state Capitol on March 8. Participants and university staff at the event include (back row, left to right) Diego Theisen, Cierra Kirkwood, and Dylan Jensen; (front row, left to right) Sophia Cobian, McKinley Davis, Emma Etten, UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo, Beth McIlquham, Sierra Kolodjski, Yihong Deng, Faculty Adviser Grace Lewis, and URSCA Director Molly Gerrish. Beth Schommer/UWRF photo.

Students gain confidence, make connections at Research in the Rotunda event

Experience credited with building not only research but relationship skills

March 16, 2023 - As the nine University of Wisconsin-River Falls students presenting their research projects at Wisconsin's state Capitol in Madison on March 8 entered the ornate building that is home to state government, feelings of trepidation and awe washed over them.

The trepidation was because students would interact with state lawmakers and other officials who would ask them questions

about their projects they had prepared during the previous eight months as part of Research in the Rotunda, named for its location in the Capitol rotunda.

The awe? It was for the exact same reason.

In the days leading up to their Research in the Rotunda presentations, participating UWRF students said they were excited to describe their research project to lawmakers and others. But they acknowledged feelings of nervousness and uncertainty, too.

Those worries disappeared, however, as soon as they began to talk about their work with lawmakers, university officials and other students also presenting their research.

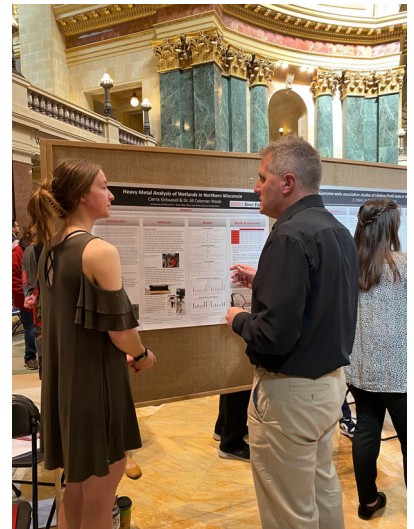
"I was nervous at the beginning, but being familiar with my research project made it easy for me to relax and be confident in what I was talking about," said Diego Theisen, a senior psychology and business administration major from Minneapolis who researched the impact on job reviews/ratings of employees informing their employers that they have a diagnosed mental health condition.

"The whole event felt very prestigious, and teachers and administration from all of the UW schools went around looking at (project) posters," he said. "It was a very useful networking event while also allowing me to meet important politicians within the state."

Besides Theisen, other UW-River Falls students who presented Research in the Rotunda research include Yihong Deng, Sierra Kolodjski, Cierra Kirkwood, Dylan Jensen, McKinley Davis, Emma Etten, Beth McIlquham, and Sophia Cobian.

Students from across the UW System participate in the annual Research in the Rotunda event. As undergraduates, they spend months on their research that is considered graduate-level work.

Like other students, Kirkwood said she was nervous about presenting her work in the state Capitol. But her nerves melted away when she described her work to others, especially when she realized they were interested in her research. Her project surveyed the amount of lead, copper and zinc in western Wisconsin wetlands.



"I was surprised by how many people stopped to ask about my research," said Kirkwood, a senior from St. Cloud, Minn., who is majoring in environmental science. "It felt good to have so many people express their interest and praise for all the hard work I had done."

Other students said they also had positive interactions with people who wanted to learn more about their work. They described how discussions about their research boosted their confidence and prompted additional thoughts regarding their projects.

"When I talked with people who stopped by, I felt so proud of our research, and it was an excellent opportunity to think about the next steps," said Deng, a food science major from River Falls who presented with fellow senior food science major

Kolodjski of Bethel, Minn., on developing a more durable biodegradable packaging film that could replace plastic wrapping. “I got a lot of inspiration.”

Students said seeing others’ work, and discussing research with their peers, helped them better realize the high-caliber projects being done by their colleagues across Wisconsin.

Interactions with state lawmakers also were enjoyable, they said, and helped them become more confident about their projects.

“I believe that getting to talk to (lawmakers) one-on-one removed their political labels in my mind,” Kirkwood said. “It helped remind me that they are just people too.”

As she and Kolodjski described their research to politicians, Deng said she felt an unexpected surge of confidence.

“When we got to talk with some legislators to introduce our research, they were very friendly, and I was not nervous at all, unlike what I had imagined,” she said.

Grace Lewis, a food science assistant professor, and Youngmi Kim, an agricultural engineering technology associate professor, served as faculty advisers for Deng and Kolodjski. Lewis attended the event and said it was heartening to watch students’ confidence grow.

“In doing this, you see the students take a new level of pride in their work,” Lewis said. “They realize that the research they’ve conducted is important and cool, and it gives them a new level of enthusiasm and confidence as they move forward in their journeys.”

Photo Inset: *UW-River Falls student Cierra Kirkwood discusses her research about heavy metals in northern Wisconsin waterways with Rep. Shannon Zimmerman, R-River Falls, during the March 8 Research in the Rotunda event at the state Capitol in Madison. Beth Schommer/UWRF photo.*



UW Farm and Industry Short Course returns, other Short Course offerings expanded for 2023-24

JOINT RELEASE from UW-Madison, UW-River Falls and UW-Platteville

Contact: Steve Kelm, UW-River Falls, steven.kelm@uwrf.edu, 715-425-3704; or Doug Reinemann, UW-Madison, doug.reinemann@wisc.edu, 608-262-9229; Paul Erickson, UW-Platteville, ericksop@uwplatt.edu, 608-342-1194.

March 7, 2023 - The University of Wisconsin System's oldest training program in the agricultural sector, the Farm and Industry Short Course, will be returning in fall 2023 with the traditional 16-week residential program hosted by UW-River Falls on their campus in collaboration with UW-Madison and UW-Platteville. UW-Madison will also continue its longstanding commitment to farmer education, now offering an expanded array of different types of flexible training options to meet the needs of today's agricultural industry.

The Farm and Industry Short Course began on the UW-Madison campus in 1885 as a way for scientists to share their findings with farmers during the dormant winter season so new practices could be applied in the following growing season.

The program has gone through many changes over the past 137 years. Meanwhile, agricultural programming has grown

significantly at two UW System campuses: [UW-River Falls](#) and [UW-Platteville](#). All three campuses currently offer active agricultural education and applied research programs, with multiple experimental farms serving as living laboratories and hands-on classrooms.

The Farm and Industry Short Course was last offered at UW-Madison in the 2021-22 academic year. The program will return for the 2023-24 academic year, offered at UW-River Falls. Input has been sought from farmers, alumni and other dairy industry representatives who confirmed the need for a training program that is hands-on, credit-bearing, taught by world-class faculty, and driven by the discoveries made by Wisconsin's agricultural scientists.

"The expertise of faculty and professors teaching the specific courses opens your eyes to a range of possibilities you may not have considered," said dairy farmer Paul Lippert of Grass Ridge Farm, a Farm and Industry Short Course graduate. "Living and learning with others who are as passionate as you is a significant benefit of the residential short course program. The camaraderie and relationships I built as a student have stayed with me throughout my career."

The UW-River Falls College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science (CAFES) — well known nationally for outstanding education in a broad range of agricultural fields with expertise in dairy science, animal science, plant and earth sciences, ag business, ag engineering, and food science — is positioned to meet the needs articulated by these dairy industry leaders.

"UW-River Falls is excited to develop a residential program to train today's and tomorrow's agricultural workforce, in a perfect complement to our other student-centered, hands-on educational offerings," said Dean Olson, interim dean of CAFES. "The Farm and Industry Short Course has provided valuable instruction and networking opportunities for decades of students, and we are ready to host the next generation of farm owners, managers and service providers. While at UWRF, short course participants will both benefit from our partnership with UW-Platteville and UW-Madison and will find mentors, develop networks and create friendships on campus that will serve them their entire careers."

The Farm and Industry Short Course at UW-River Falls will include an opportunity for students to participate in additional educational programs at UW-Platteville and UW-Madison.

"We have long understood the value of the Farm and Industry Short Course to the state's agriculture industry. UW-Platteville is excited to partner on this new collaborative vision for the Short Course hosted by UW-River Falls. Short Course students will benefit from unique features of each campus during the full program, such as the automatic milking systems in use at the Platteville campus," said Charles Steiner, interim dean of the UW-Platteville College of Business, Industry, Life Science and Agriculture. "The Dairy Innovation Hub has helped our campuses reinforce our partnership in research; now we are reinforcing it in the training and professional development area as well with expanded offerings to meet the diverse needs of today's workforce."

"As the historical home for the Farm and Industry Short Course, we are very pleased to partner with our sister campuses to expand the overall training opportunities for Wisconsin farmers," said Glenda Gillaspy, dean of the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. "Much has changed about farming and the world since the first Short Course students came to Madison. Today, by working together, we can serve more people and better leverage the unique features of each campus."

The **Farm and Industry Short Course** at UW-River Falls will start **October 25** and run through **March 15, 2024**. The inaugural class will be limited to a cohort of 24 students. A special tuition and housing rate will be offered to the 24 students

that make up this inaugural class and interested students should plan to apply before June 1.

Students will live in the UWRF residence halls and earn academic credits from UWRF, experiencing the supportive environment of a welcoming campus community where lifelong relationships and lasting mentorships are created. Classes will be taught by UWRF faculty during the first semester (eight-week period). During the winter term (more commonly known as J-Term), programming is envisioned as a collaborative effort between UWRF, UW-Platteville and UW-Madison to expose participants to unique characteristics of each campus. Students would then take classes for the first half of the spring 2024 semester at UWRF. A total of 20-24 transcriptable credits would be earned by the students in the first year, credits that may be applied to a degree program at UWRF or elsewhere.

Students will have the opportunity to take courses for one or two years. The first year will focus on the critical, fundamental aspects of dairy farm operations with heavy emphasis on managing the animal. The second year will continue to focus on animal management with additional emphasis on managing operations of the whole farm.

To learn more about the Farm and Industry Short Course Program at UWRF, visit <https://www.uwrf.edu/Academics/FISC>, call 715-425-3704 or email Steve Kelm at steven.kelm@uwrf.edu.

Continuing its century-long tradition of farmer education, UW-Madison is expanding its offerings of Short Course programs. Their growing array of short courses for working professionals will include flexible training programs with digital badges certifying mastery of specific skills and content aimed at helping specific agricultural sectors learn about new technologies and management practices. For example:

- **UW-Madison: Ag Forward, Jan. 16-19, 2024** – A flexible five-day, in-person intensive professional development training for farmers, farm managers, ag professionals, and other current practitioners interested in applying the latest research findings in agricultural production and/or management. Dairy is the topic for the 2024 program.
- **UW-Madison: Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program, Nov. 2023-Feb. 2024** – A 12-week, in-person educational boot camp for professionals in the turfgrass industry, followed by a field-based apprenticeship at a golf course, athletic complex, or other turf facility.
- **UW-Madison: Spanish for the Dairy Industry, February and September each year** – A two-class online series for dairy farm owners, managers, employees and other ag professionals who interact with Spanish-speaking personnel. Participants can grow their Spanish language skills while learning important technical vocabulary for communicating in Spanish on a dairy farm or in the dairy industry. Each class is four-weeks long, offering level 1 and level 2 language instruction.

UW-Madison plans to develop additional courses for those interested in professional development and skills-building in specific areas of agricultural production, food processing and distribution, and natural resource management. These courses may include organic agriculture, agricultural business management and conservation planning.

For more information about the UW-Madison offerings, visit <https://fisc.cals.wisc.edu/>.



UW-River Falls student Essie Whitehead, a food science major from Amery, finishes preparing a meal during her food product development and sensory evaluation class March 22. The course in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences is a capstone experience for food science majors. The Falcon Annual Fund, a focus of this year's Giving Day fundraiser at UW-River Falls, is an unrestricted fund that supports such efforts as innovative academic programs and classroom technology improvements across campus. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

UWRF Giving Day to showcase donations that address wide range of needs

April 14 fundraising effort is vital to providing resources to students, programs, projects

March 30, 2023 - It doesn't garner splashy headlines, and it doesn't result in a name on a building. But the Falcon Annual Fund provides money for a wide range of initiatives at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls that are at the core of the university's mission: providing students with a high-quality education.

In fact, the Falcon Annual Fund is essential to UW-River Falls being able to ensure funding for many university programs and for unforeseen needs not covered by designated funds.

"The Falcon Annual Fund is the engine that powers the UWRF Foundation's ability to designate resources to address emergency needs, provide faculty and student grants and fuel innovative, student-centered solutions," said Mark Gherty, '75, who has been involved with many previous Giving Day fundraisers as the past chair of the UWRF Foundation Board of Directors.

Because of its importance to so many UWRF initiatives, the Falcon Annual Fund is the focus of this year's Giving Day fundraising effort for the university. Giving Day, on Friday, April 14, is the largest single-day fundraising effort at UWRF.

Each year, more than 2,000 UWRF alumni and friends donate to the Falcon Annual Fund. Contributions range from \$10 to \$25,000, with an average gift of \$125. Donations of any amount support the educational opportunities of current and future UWRF students.

The fund is of vital importance to UWRF operations, in part because of the flexibility it provides, Gherty said. Donations to the fund are unrestricted, allowing the university to allocate dollars where they are most needed.

Money made available by the Falcon Annual Fund also allows UWRF to help finance important projects. For instance, the addition of fund dollars to other money made the university's renovated Dairy Pilot Plant project a reality. The fund also helped pay for the UWRF Falcon Center athletic complex.

"When you have unforeseen expenses that need to be covered, this is one way we can do that," Gherty said.

The catch-all flexibility of the Falcon Annual Fund has become even more important in recent years as tuition has been frozen and state funding for Wisconsin universities has lagged cost increases, said Rick Foy, assistant chancellor for university advancement at UWRF. Fund dollars are used to help offset the lesser revenue, playing an important role in maintaining and building quality.

"The fund has no restrictions, so the financial resources are for the university's most pressing needs," Foy said. With the Falcon Annual Fund playing an increasingly important role at UWRF, highlighting the fund seemed appropriate for this year's Giving Day, Foy said, noting it provides critical financial resources for so many students and programs.

Mayala Keita, of Coon Rapids, Minn., is one of many UWRF students who benefit from scholarships and other financial assistance made possible by donors. A junior majoring in food science, Keita said she knows students who would not be able to afford to attend school without financial assistance.

Keita has a brother who also is in college and during her first year, her parents took in three younger cousins who needed a new place to live, meaning affording to pay for her college suddenly became more challenging.

"One of my good friends, she almost didn't make it through the school year for monetary reasons," Keita said. "These donations are very important."

Many donors give money to specific projects and it is important to have the annual fund be available for other important needs that donors may overlook but are much needed, Gherty said.

“There are ways to give to certain projects,” he said. “But it is so important to have the annual fund to give to so many projects and programs that are the lifeblood of this university.”

Supporting core UWRF programs and its students are exactly what the Falcon Annual Fund and Giving Day are all about, Foy said.

“The alumni and friends of UWRF have always been there when we’ve needed them,” he said. “We appreciate their consideration of joining us on Giving Day April 14 to once again make a difference.”

For Giving Day details, visit UWRF Giving Day 2023 or contact Foy at richard.foy@uwrf.edu or 715-425-4291.

UW-River Falls office works to raise awareness about sexual assaults

Three events in April meant to bring attention to issue, support victims

March 30, 2023 - Three upcoming events organized in part by the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Student Health and Counseling Services Office are designed to raise awareness about sexual assaults and provide support for victims as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April.

Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) will host two of those events, which will occur on the UWRF campus, and support another in the community.

The first event, Take Back the Night, occurs from 4-8 p.m. on **Thursday, April 6**, at the Glen Park Pavilion, 630 Glen Park Road, River Falls. This sexual assault survivor-centered event aims to promote awareness and provide healing for victims. It is put on in conjunction with Hudson-based St. Croix Valley Sexual Assault Response Team and Turningpoint, an organization that supports victims of sexual and domestic violence. Food, activities, and local resources provided.

Then, on **Wednesday, April 19**, sexual assault survivor and activist Abby Honold of Minnesota will speak about her work to address sexual assaults, including federal legislation to financially support trauma-informed training for law enforcement officers. The event is from 7-8 p.m. in Riverview Ballroom in the UWRF University Center, 501 Wild Rose Ave., River Falls.

The third event, Denim Day, is intended to raise awareness about sexual assaults and is set for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on **Wednesday, April 26**, in the University Center lobby. UWRF students will staff a table to speak with passersby and offer resources available through SHCS. For more information about Denim Day, visit denimday.org.

"Take some time out of your busy April to access these valuable awareness and educational events," said Faith Velez, violence prevention coordinator with SHCS.

Additional awareness about sex assaults is needed, said Velez, a 2021 UWRF graduate. Statistics show one of every six women in the U.S. has been sexually assaulted as a child or adult. Experts say sexual assault figures are artificially low because many of those assaults are not reported to authorities.

For more information, contact Velez at faith.velez@uwrf.edu or 715-425-3938.

UW-River Falls recognized as Military Friendly School

March 9, 2023 - The University of Wisconsin-River Falls has again been recognized as a Military Friendly School for the 2023-24 school year in the small public institution category, according to a survey of higher education institutions.

More than 1,800 schools took part in the survey for 2023-24, with 530 being designated as gold, silver, or bronze winners. UW-River Falls is among those selected as a silver-level school, based on its practices, outcomes and programming related to veteran services.

The UWRF Veteran Services Office works to provide services to students whose military service ranges from active duty, to the National Guard, to GI Bill recipients. Those offices work in conjunction with the university's Financial Aid Office to assist student veterans in accessing finances to be able to attend school.

UWRF students in the military also receive assistance with advising services and career fairs.

Viqtory, the agency that conducts the survey, is a veteran-owned small business that links military members to jobs, business opportunities and education. The survey measures institutions' levels of retention, graduation, job placement, debt repayment and loan default rates for student veterans and others.

A list that includes UWRF and other schools who are accorded as Military Friendly is available by visiting at militaryfriendly.com.

To contact the UWRF Veteran Services Office, call 715-425-3529 or email veterans@uwrf.edu.

57th Commissioned Composer Concert April 20

April 5, 2023 -- The University of Wisconsin-River Falls will welcome featured composer Davor Bobić to Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building on Thursday, April 20, at 7:30 p.m. for the university's 57th Commissioned Composer Concert. The concert is free and open to the public.

Bobić is on campus April 18-20 for a three-day residency. He will also present a convocation in 129 Kleinpell Fine Arts on April 20 at 3 p.m. where he will discuss his new composition.

Composer, pedagogue, organizer and long-time director of the Varaždin Baroque Evenings, Bobić (1968) is one of the most influential musicians of contemporary Croatian musical life. Born in Varaždin where he finished primary and secondary school, he graduated accordion, composition and musical theory at the P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Kiev.

After finishing his studies, Bobić started his teaching career at the Varaždin School of Music. He continued his teaching career at the Academy of Arts in Osijek, where he has been a professor since 2003. In 2009, he was appointed to vice dean for science and art at the Academy of Arts in Osijek and since 2019 he is an adviser of the dean.

Bobić's compositional opus is one of the most comprehensive, diverse the most performed in contemporary Croatian music. His opus includes instrumental, vocal, vocal-instrumental and musical-stage works. He is also the author of film music and music for a number of theater plays.

Each year, UW-River Falls commissions a composer to write a piece of music for the student body. The composer also makes a campus visit to interact with the students and take part in the premiere performance of that work.

UWRF Professor Emeritus Conrad De Jong began the Commissioned Composer Project in 1967. It is the longest-standing program of its kind in the United States and places a national spotlight on the UW-River Falls Music Department.

5K run/walk to be held in memory of former UW-River Falls student

April 13, 2023 - A 5K run/walk to honor the memory of University of Wisconsin-River Falls student George Musser is set for Saturday, April 29, at the Falcon Center, 1110 S. Main Street, River Falls. Check-in for the event begins at 10 a.m. The race will begin at 11 a.m.

UW-River Falls students in the Sport, Fitness, and Recreation Management class are hosting the event. Musser, of Stillwater, Minn., was an exercise and sports science major at UW-River Falls at the time of his death in December.

Each fall and spring semester, Health and Human Performance students in the Sport, Fitness, and Recreation Management course host an event related to their field of study. The event provides students with the skills and experience needed for event management and ties into content from the course. Musser completed the course in the fall semester, contributing to a successful on-campus Bean Bag Blitz event.



The course will take runners through the scenic UWRF campus with the start and finish line in front of the Falcon Center. Prizes and snacks will be provided (as supplies last).

To register and for more information about the run/walk, visit <https://georgemusser5k.yolasite.com/>.

For those who would like to contribute to Musser's memory but cannot attend the 5K, donations to the GoFundMe for the Musser family are welcomed at <https://gofund.me/efbf8e26>.

Accomplished basketball coach McKenzie to speak at commencement May 6

April 20, 2023 - A renowned Minneapolis boys basketball coach who in 2014 became the first African American coach selected for the Minnesota Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame will be the keynote speaker at the Saturday, May 6, commencement ceremonies at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Larry McKenzie, a UW-River Falls alum, will address graduates at two commencement ceremonies in Knowles Field House in the Falcon Center. A total of 749 students are scheduled to graduate. Of those, 652 will receive bachelor's degrees, 84 master's degrees and 13 associate degrees. The ceremony for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and the College of Business and Economics and Graduate Studies is at 9 a.m.; the College of Arts and Sciences and College of Education and Professional Studies ceremony is at 1 p.m.

McKenzie is well known for his success as a basketball coach. He coached two Minneapolis high school teams to six state championships in 10 tournament appearances, making him the first boys basketball coach in league history to lead two schools to multiple championships. His career record is 481-167.

In addition to his success as a basketball coach, McKenzie is well known for his passionate leadership in the Minneapolis community. He is a certified national speaker and has served on numerous community boards in the nonprofit sector. He and his wife co-founded the Above the Rim Youth Sports Foundation that provides opportunities for young people.

"Our goal is to develop a foundation for a championship program and use basketball as a tool to empower young men to be champions in the classroom, in their families, and their communities. Our desire is to develop the 'whole person,' not just young men who can jump high and score," a statement on the foundation's website reads.

UW-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo said McKenzie's longtime record of success and his ability to connect with students make him an excellent choice to address this year's graduating class. His story is one of resilience and he is truly inspiring, she said.

"Coach Larry offers our students an example of someone from UWRF who has made and continues to make a positive difference in his community," Gallo said.

In 2019, McKenzie received a Living Legend Award from the NCAA and the NABC Guardian of the Game award. He was



most recently inducted in the Minnesota Basketball Hall of Fame and Minnesota State High School Hall of Fame.

In 2021, McKenzie was inducted into the UW-River Falls Athletic Hall of Fame as a positive contributor to Falcon Athletics and the university. McKenzie earned his bachelor's degree in political science from UW-River Falls in 1980.

Commencement ceremonies will also be available via livestream. For more information, visit <https://www.uwrf.edu/commencement/>.



UW-River Falls students pet a calf during last year's Ag Day on Campus event.

Ag Day on Campus event intended to grow connections

Event educates visitors about life on the farm

**** Please note:** Ag Day has been **moved inside** to the Riverview Ballroom in the University Center.

April 4, 2023 - Farmers across Wisconsin and the rest of the nation are beset by struggles of many sorts, and while those difficulties are real, there is much to celebrate in modern agriculture too, organizers of Ag Day on Campus at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls say.

This year's annual event is Tuesday, April 18, from 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and will highlight the importance of the agriculture sector. Many agriculture-related advances, such as technology-driven farm-related jobs and efforts to open new ag markets, are signs that farming, despite challenges, has a bright future, organizers said.

"This event really helps show that no matter who we are or what we do in our lives, we all are tied to agriculture in some way," said Katrina Hoesly, co-chair of Ag Day on Campus and a junior from Denmark who is majoring in ag marketing communications and agricultural business.

Ag Day on Campus was started in 2012 and is put on by the UWRF Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter. The attendance by

many on campus and from the surrounding community is evidence of the recognition of agriculture's importance, said Joe Schlies, who is co-chairing this year's event with Hoesly and is a senior agricultural business major from Denmark.

"You have people from all walks of life who come to this event, people from the other programs on campus who attend," he said. "It shows how agriculture influences all of us."

After a 9:30 opening ceremony at the University Center mall, event attendees can visit more than 20 booths set up by student organizations and businesses, many of which will feature interactive activities. Farm animals will be on site for attendees to pet and learn about until 2 p.m.

"For some people, this will be the first time they have seen a farm animal in person," Schlies said.

A dinner featuring Wisconsin-grown foods is scheduled for 5 p.m. in the Agricultural Science Hall on campus. The meal is free and open to all. The dinner is followed by a panel of agriculture experts discussing farm-related topics. Then, at 7 p.m., in the Riverview Ballroom in the University Center, the acclaimed Kansas-based Peterson Farm Brothers will perform their farm-related musical parodies.

For more information about this year's Ag Day on Campus events, visit <https://www.uwrf.edu/community/ag-day>

Connecting to food

During the coronavirus pandemic, people became more interested in where their food comes from. Hoesly and other event organizers said one of their chief aims is to help people attending the event make connections with the food they consume.

Sierra Howry, a professor of agriculture economics who works to organize Ag Day on Campus, said the event "helps bridge the gap" between urban and rural communities. Local daycares are invited to attend the event, allowing youngsters to learn about agriculture.

"We hope with early exposure, these children will be comfortable asking questions and learning about where their food comes from as they get older," Howry said.

In addition to teaching people about how their food is produced, Ag Day on Campus provides students with an opportunity to engage with others on "real-world issues in agriculture," said Dean Olson, interim dean of the UWRF's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES). The event also provides attendees with hands-on agricultural experiences, he said.

"How often do community members have the chance to see a lamb or to sit in the seat of a modern tractor?" Olson said.

Student Grant Buwalda, a senior from Waupun majoring in agricultural business, agrees that one of the main goals of the event is educating people about how the food they eat is produced on farms. Because the event is led by students, they take a leadership role in describing the role of agriculture to attendees.

"It is very neat to see students with an interest and passion for agriculture get to share about how modern agriculture works and share the story that a lot of people don't get to hear," Buwalda said.

Student Carter Beaulieu didn't grow up on a farm, but he learned the value of agriculture through the Future Farmers of America chapter at the high school he attended in his hometown of Randolph. The junior agriculture business major said he is excited for this year's event after the pandemic canceled it and then last year's attendance was below the 800 or more who typically show up.

Like Hoesly and Schlies, Beaulieu said he hopes Ag Day serves to bring urban and rural people closer together.

"My hope is that people from both sides can come together and learn from each other, and I think Ag Day on Campus is one way to do that," Beaulieu said.

'Challenges are overcome'

Student Rachel Rynda knows plenty about agriculture, having grown up on a dairy farm near Montgomery, Minn. She currently is serving as Princess Kay of the Milky Way, a role in which she speaks with groups of all sorts advocating for dairy farmers. A junior majoring in agriculture business, Rynda works to spread awareness about the importance of farming in modern society.

"There is a story before the food gets to the grocery store," Rynda said. "Helping people make those connections, about the role that agriculture plays in our everyday lives, that is what we're trying to do."

Ag Day on Campus also will also feature sustainability, a topic of growing importance in many sectors, including agriculture, Schlies and Hoesly said. Farmers take seriously their impact on the environment around them and are working on ways to make agriculture more sustainable, they said.

"Sustainability is a buzzword now with everybody, and farmers want to be a part of this," Schlies said. "They want to be good stewards of the land. The balance is how do you do that and still make enough money to stay in business."

The hundreds of people who attend Ag Day on Campus show that many people not only are interested in agriculture but support it, organizers of this year's event said. They acknowledged challenges agriculture faces but expressed optimism that leaders will meet those obstacles. Farmers supporting each other goes a long way toward meeting that goal, they said.

"Agriculture faces many unique challenges, but as time goes on, challenges are overcome as the tools and resources to do so continue to develop," Buwalda said. "Things will not get any easier as time progresses, but I believe agriculture will continue to make the progress necessary to meet our needs."



Laura Edman, who teaches the organ at UWRF, will be among the performers during an April 21 pipe organ concert at UW-River Falls. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

Concert will showcase pipe organ, raise money to restore the instrument

Performance of virtuoso organist is part of coffee concert series on April 21

April 6, 2023 - A concert featuring multiple styles of pipe organ music at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls is intended not only for audience enjoyment but also to raise money to restore the pipe organ that musicians will play during the performance.

The concert, "Laura Edman and Friends," is at noon on Friday, April 21, in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building on campus. It is part of the Frances Cohler Coffee Concert Series. The concert is free and open to the public.

The concert was originally scheduled for February 24 but was cancelled because of a snowstorm.

The event is the third since last April showcasing organ performance, an effort designed in part to solicit funds to restore the musical instrument, installed at UWRF in 1974 by Charles Hendrickson who built numerous pipe organs throughout the

Midwest. The organ is outdated, and a \$130,000 fundraising effort to make improvements to it has been undertaken. Donations can be made at <https://www.uwrf.edu/Give/Organ-Restoration-Fund.cfm>.

"I've tried to put together a concert that shows what you can do with an organ, that it really is a versatile musical instrument," said Laura Edman, who teaches the organ at UW-River Falls and who designed the concert. "And I'm trying to tell the story about how we need to raise money to restore this organ."

Renowned organist Aaron David Miller, known for his improvisational playing style, will be among the musicians to play the organ at the concert. He will be the event's last performer, said Edman.

"It's a very special occasion for us to have a world-class improviser, someone of his caliber, performing as part of our concert," Edman said of Miller, who has won numerous international awards and has had his orchestral works performed by major symphonies.

Among other concert performers is Scott Hyslop, minister of music at Zion Lutheran Church and School in Dallas, Texas. Hyslop, a graduate of the UWRF Music Department, will play virtually from Dallas as part of the concert. Edman said she is honored to showcase a former UWRF student as part of the concert.

Edman will also be a part of the concert. She will play the organ as she performs "Shade in a Parched Land" with two percussion players and a narrator. The song is inspired by the poetry of Tom Gillaspy, who wrote about his experiences after making mission trips to Kenya through First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Minn.

Miller was commissioned to write a music composition reflecting those poems, and Edman and others will perform that work.

Other concert performers include Craig Hara and Joel Bolen. Hara, a musician, producer, conductor and music director, also teaches music at UWRF and Hamline University. Bolen performed with bands in and around Nashville for more than 20 years. He recently moved to the Twin Cities and works as interim director of music at Ascension Episcopal Church in Stillwater, Minn.



UWRF senior Dylan Jensen works on one of his research projects. Contributed photo.

Jensen receives 2023 Lydecker Student Research Award

Research, overcoming adversity play key roles in student's success

April 17, 2023 - Dylan Jensen has compiled an impressive list of academic distinctions during his time at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

McNair Scholar. National Honor Society in Psychology member. Honors Program and Dean's List student. Research projects presented at such locations as Kansas City and San Diego. The list goes on and on.

Now Jensen, a senior from Racine who will graduate in May, can add the Drs. Ann and William Lydecker Student Research Award to that list. The award, given annually since 2011, recognizes an outstanding undergraduate's research efforts combined with service to and/or involvement in UW-River Falls.

The award was created by William Lydecker, now deceased, to honor his late wife, Ann, UWRF chancellor from 2000-04, who died in a car accident south of River Falls in March 2004. Ann was the university's first woman chancellor.

"I was completely surprised," Jensen, a neuroscience and psychology double major, said of being named the award recipient. "But I am so grateful for it. This award is going to go a long way toward making my resume look even better."

The honor is especially gratifying to Jensen because he grew up poor and is a first-generation college student. In fact, when Jensen first arrived at UWRF, he said adapting to college life was a challenge. He felt out of place, he said.

“It was a big struggle for me when I first came here,” he recalled. “My family was supportive of me being here, but there were so many aspects of being at college that I didn’t really understand. It was like I had imposter syndrome.”

Jensen did find his place on campus and learned how to thrive. He credits UWRF faculty with helping him find his way. Being part of the club volleyball team and participating in other intramural sports also helped him discover a sense of belonging, he said.

Jensen is using his experience with adversity to help other students, helping them overcome their struggles.

“I’m trying to act as a service person to those younger students,” he said, “telling them that I have been through what they’re going through and letting them know that I am willing to help them.”

Prompted by a desire to help, Jensen co-founded the UWRF Psychological Sciences Journal Club, a means by which students can present and discuss current research. The club also is designed to provide participants with a way to get more comfortable presenting their research, Jensen said, noting “that is a big hurdle for a lot of students.”

Daniel Ehlinger, assistant professor of psychology who has worked closely with Jensen, praised his ability to connect with his peers.

“Dylan has a seemingly natural ability to teach others in a way that provides support but allows them to build their own skills,” Ehlinger said.



Jensen credited the Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity (URSCA) Program for supporting the research he and other students take part in. He is a member of the Society of Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities (SURSCA) Council that reviews research grants.

Molly Gerrish, URSCA director, said Jensen is a “strong researcher with incredible insight and curiosity.” She praised his abilities as a grant reviewer and his mentorship to his peers.

“Dylan is an innovator and deep thinker and a gracious student,” Gerrish said. “His research demonstrates his inquisitiveness and commitment to excellence.”

Jensen’s next step is graduate school at the University of Nevada or the University of Michigan, where he plans to conduct research on cognitive processes and psychiatric disorders. He credits his experiences at UWRF for preparing him for whatever comes next.

“I know that grad school will have its challenges,” he said. “But I have the confidence that I can do quality research and that I can contribute and thrive. And that was built here at UWRF.”

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Photo Inset: *UWRF senior Dylan Jensen conducts research in a lab with Daniel Ehlinger, assistant professor of psychology.*



The staff in the UW-River Falls Student Health and Counseling Services Office is being recognized this week by the Pierce County Public Health Department for their work meeting university students' health needs. Submitted photo.

Meeting many needs: Student Health and Counseling Services Office recognized for its efforts

Team members among five honored by Pierce County Public Health Department

April 6, 2023 - When University of Wisconsin-River Falls students need help in a variety of forms, the university's Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) is there to meet their needs.

From mental health counseling to reproductive health to wellness classes and more, SHCS staff finds ways to assist students in need of assistance. To recognize those efforts, the Pierce County Public Health Department is recognizing UWRF's SHCS staff this week as part of the department's Public Health Heroes campaign.

The SHCS team is one of five entities being honored this week as Public Health Heroes. The efforts of SHCS team members will be honored on the health department's [Facebook page](#) on Friday, April 7.

Pierce County Public Health Director AZ Snyder praised the UWRF SHCS team for its longtime dedication to promote the

health of the university's students. The team's efforts during the coronavirus pandemic were especially notable, Snyder said.

"UWRF Student Health and Counseling staff went above and beyond during the pandemic to work with Pierce County Public Health to ensure students and staff had access to COVID-19 vaccines and testing," she said. "Many of the (SHCS) team volunteered to work during on-campus vaccine clinics to augment public health's capacity."

Others being recognized for their work to improve public health include Alyson Sauter, community impact director for United Way St. Croix Valley; Dianne H-Robinson, a retired Pierce County Public Health Department nurse; Mercedes Falk, director of the nonprofit organization Puentes/Bridges; and Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, an energy services co-op in Ellsworth.

SHCS team members were humble about the recognition, saying they strive to do their job the best they can to meet students' needs. Doing so during the pandemic was especially challenging, they said, but the students they work with motivate them.

SHCS Director Debra Janis praised her staff's ability to meet students' needs amid the numerous challenges the pandemic posed. Seeing their hard work be recognized is heartening, she said.

"I'm so proud of this team," Janis said. "They are such a wonderful group of professionals who work very hard to provide students with the best possible services."

During the pandemic, SHCS staff worked diligently to keep connected with students who needed their assistance, said Sonja Johnson, SHSC office manager. Oftentimes that meant devising creative ways to reach students and meet their needs when they couldn't be on campus, she said.

"The office worked together to meet the need by building community, thinking of other ways of connecting with students, such as health apps, virtual telehealth appointments, and care kits for students in isolation," Johnson said.

SHCS staff has continued its work since the pandemic, as students continue to struggle with increased anxiety, depression and other stresses.

"Our office is very busy. A typical day can be filled with back-to-back counseling appointments, group events, health promotional activities, and occasionally a crisis," Janis said. "To keep things running smoothly requires a great team with a common goal of student success."

When asked why they think their office has success working with students, SHCS staff members offered a seemingly simple yet meaningful answer.

"I think students sense that our care for them is genuine," Johnson said.

New York Philharmonic tuba player Alan Baer is Artist in Residence

April 5, 2023 - New York Philharmonic tuba player Alan Baer is the Artist in Residence at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls April 10-14.

Baer will share his skills as a performer, pedagogue and educator during this residency. He will perform James Woodward "Tuba Concerto" with the St. Croix Valley Symphony Band led by Kris Tjornehoj, "Sinfonia" by Gregory Fritze with Gary Bird and the University Band, and the Gary Ziek "Tuba Concerto" led by the UWRF Symphony Band.

A masterclass on Thursday, April 13, will be followed by a tuba/euphonium ensemble rehearsal, culminating in a performance of "Yesterday" and "Wabash Cannonball" in a public concert at 7:30 p.m. in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building on campus. Tickets available at the door: \$8/adults, \$5/seniors and \$2/students.

To conclude his residency, Baer, on tuba, will be featured at the Frances Cohler Coffee Concert Series along with UWRF faculty member and collaborative pianist Ivan Konev, at noon on Friday, April 14, in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building. This free public concert will be followed by refreshments and conversation.

For more information, email kristin.tjornehoj@uwrf.edu or call 715-410-7416.





Grace Coggio, right, UW-River Falls sustainability fellow and communication studies associate professor, speaks with attendees about water quality during last year's inaugural Earth Fest in River Falls. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

One year after its start, interest in Earth Fest continues to grow

UWRF's Sustainability Office partners with city, school district and numerous organizations to stage event

April 6, 2023 – In the year since the initial Earth Fest occurred in River Falls, the much-discussed topic of sustainability has become even more so, making this year's fest especially timely, event organizers say.

In the past year, the number of community groups and organizations seeking presentations about sustainability issues has continued to grow, said Mark Klapatch-Mathias, sustainability coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Earth Fest co-chair. Likewise, the number of organizations participating in this year's Earth Fest – set for April 22, Earth Day – has nearly doubled from last year to nearly 80 groups.

"Global and local challenges continue to demonstrate the need for more sustainable lifestyles, and it seems the River Falls community is interested in learning more, engaging, and taking action," Klapatch-Mathias said.

That interest is evident by increased support for the second annual Earth Fest, Klapatch-Mathias said. The event will take place from noon to 4 p.m. at Glen Park, 630 Glen Park Road, River Falls. Attendance is free, and the public is invited.

Earth Fest is a celebration of community and environmental wellness efforts happening at UWRF and in the River Falls region, Klapatch-Mathias said. The event is a collaborative effort involving the UWRF Sustainability Office, the city of River Falls, the River Falls school district, and a variety of additional organizations.

In addition to nearly 80 exhibits intended to educate about sustainability related practices, this year's event will include free samples of local and sustainable food and giveaways of such items as trees, LED light bulbs and other items used to address sustainability.

Attendees can bring well water samples to have tested, as well as one or two gently used adult clothing items to trade, an effort to reduce throwing away clothing. The site also will be home to battery recycling and prescription drug disposal.

Sustainability is an issue of importance to many River Falls area residents, according to Mike Noreen, conservation and efficiency coordinator and forester for the city of River Falls. A major organizer of Earth Fest, Noreen said sustainability measures are a focus of River Falls city government as well, as evidenced by the fact the city has funded sustainable initiatives for the past 15 years.

"You can tell if something is a priority based on its budget allocation," he said. "River Falls has an innate conservation ethic, which we're cultivating with innovative energy efficiency and renewable energy programming, electronics recycling, and composting and through the comprehensive plan."

Last year's Earth Fest focused on environment-related aspects of sustainability, Klapatch-Mathias said. While the environment is part of this year's event as well, event organizers are adding a wellness component to this year's fest, a recognition of a more holistic approach to sustainability, he said.

"Our goal is to celebrate community and environmental wellness as we recognize the need to have a healthy and thriving community in order to care for the Earth," Klapatch-Mathias said.

Parking is limited at Glen Park, and free shuttle transportation is available from several River Falls locations in collaboration with the River Falls Bluegrass Festival. In case of inclement weather, the event will take place in the University Center at UWRF at 501 Wild Rose Ave., River Falls. A location decision will be made by 1 p.m. Thursday, April 20, and will be posted at <https://www.hope4creationrf.org/earthfest>.

For more event information, visit <https://www.hope4creationrf.org/earthfest> and facebook.com/earthfest.RF

In addition to UWRF, the River Falls School District and the city of River Falls, other event hosts that form the planning committee include: Hope for Creation-River Falls, River Falls Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau, Kinnickinnic River Land Trust, River Falls Public Library, Mindful SOULutions, Grow to Share, Our Neighbor's Place, Kinni Corridor Collaborative, Bee City USA RF Committee, Drive Electric Earth Day, Hope Lutheran Church, and Pierce County Public Health Department.

Rasmussen fellow will work on documentary about crime victim services in western Wisconsin

April 27, 2023 - A University of Wisconsin-River Falls student who is studying journalism and criminology has been named the latest recipient of the Donovan E. Rasmussen Broadcast Journalism Fellowship.

Through the fellowship, Lexi Janzer, a junior from Mayville, will spend six weeks this summer reporting on crime victim services in western Wisconsin. Her work will be featured in a broadcast documentary.

Janzer is assistant editor of the UWRF campus newspaper, the Student Voice, and is a member of the Student Media Committee.

The fellowship is named in honor of Donovan E. Rasmussen (1922-09), who funded an endowment in 2006 with the UW-River Falls Foundation to be used by the journalism program.

The first Rasmussen fellow was Brooke Shepherd, who reported and produced a broadcast documentary about obesity in 2021. Last year's fellow, Michelle Stangler, worked on a story about dairy farming in western Wisconsin.





Seven UWRF students were honored with the Chancellor's Award for Students during a banquet and ceremony Wednesday evening in the Falcon's Nest, UC. Left to right: Sam Anzai, Dylan Jensen, James Bowers, Brady Gartner, accepting on behalf of his brother Collin (on the laptop screen, studying internationally this semester), Matthew Fischer, Carisa Cleven, Linnea Miller and Chancellor Maria Gallo. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

Seven students honored with Chancellor's Award

April 20, 2023 - Seven University of Wisconsin-River Falls students received the Chancellor's Award for Students on Wednesday.

The Chancellor's Award for Students is the highest non-academic honor students can receive at the university. It recognizes students who have shown distinguished leadership and service while on campus.

"Those receiving the Chancellor's Award are a testament to the high quality of our students here at UW-River Falls," Chancellor Maria Gallo said. "Their accomplishments show not only that they are top-notch scholars, but they are engaged members of their communities. I have no doubt that they will continue to have a positive impact on the world as they head into the future."

Gallo congratulated the recipients and encouraged them to continue their commitment to excellence and service.

The 2023 Chancellor's Award for Students recipients are:

- **Sam Anzai**, of Los Angeles, Calif., is a senior majoring in neuroscience and biomedical and health science. Anzai is a leader in the classroom and for the UWRF hockey team he captained. A regular on the Dean's List, he also was the UWRF hockey student-athlete of 2022, was named to the 2022 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference All Sportsmanship Team and was awarded the Falcon Fly High Award in 2022. Anzai also was part of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, Falcon Athletics Five-Year Strategic Planning Committee, and the Faculty Senate Athletics Committee.
- **James Bowers**, of Richfield, Minn., is a senior physics major. Bowers has conducted numerous research projects, including work he completed in the South Pole in conjunction with the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Antarctic Program. He has worked as a tutor and has been a volunteer host and speaker at more than 25 Campus Visit Days. He also has served as a UWRF student representative, meeting with the UW System president, other UW System officials and state lawmakers.
- **Carisa Cleven**, of Kendall, is a senior majoring in agricultural education. Cleven is dedicated to helping others, those who know her say, whether organizing campus activities, assisting peers with their studies, or helping younger students adapt to college life. She served as vice president of the Wisconsin Future Farmers of America and as a national Teach Ag ambassador. She also represented UWRF as a member of the STAR Teach Ag Committee and helped organize a National Association of Agricultural Educators meeting.
- **Matthew Fischer**, of Owen, is a junior dairy science major. Fischer was awarded the American Future Farmers of America degree, has served as secretary of the UWRF Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter and was yearbook editor of the Dairy Club. He also conducted research on dairy calves set to be published in the Journal of Dairy Science and presented at the North American Dairy Science meeting in Ottawa, Canada. In addition, Fischer is involved in agriculture projects in his Clark County home.
- **Collin Gartner**, of Sparta, is a senior applied physics major. Gartner is a nontraditional student and is a member of the Wisconsin National Guard. He has completed numerous research projects and is currently conducting research in Germany on horse prosthetics. Those nominating Gartner for the award used the words "empathy," "intelligent," and "thoughtful" when describing him.
- **Dylan Jensen**, of Racine, is a senior double majoring in neuroscience and psychology. Jensen is a McNair Scholar, a National Honor Society in Psychology member and has presented numerous research projects across the U.S. He has helped and mentored students through his roles as teaching assistant and research assistant, has served with numerous campus organizations, co-founded the UWRF Psychological Sciences Journal Club and played on the men's club volleyball team.
- **Linnea Milner**, of Columbus, Ohio, is a senior double majoring in neuroscience and psychology. Milner is a UWRF Honors Program member who has received numerous academic awards and has presented her research as part of such prestigious events as the Midwestern Psychological Association and the National Conference for Undergraduate Research. She worked as a resident assistant, as a peer academic leader in the Striving Toward Academic Recovery

Mentorship Program and has been involved in efforts to address mental health and wellness on campus.

The awards were presented during a reception in the Riverview Ballroom, University Center. Students are nominated by a faculty member, staff member or a student peer. Student recipients demonstrate undergraduate research, inclusivity and service to the community and university.

First awarded in 1980, the award has been presented to 317 outstanding students.

For more information, email Beth Schommer at beth.schommer@uwrf.edu.

Speaker to highlight contradiction in American politics

Kotsko featured in speaker series named for beloved former UWRF professor

April 4, 2023 - Adam Kotsko, faculty member of the Shimer Great Books School at North Central College in Naperville, Ill., will share his thoughts about neoliberalism and its impact on politics in America at this year's Dr. Imtiaz Moosa Philosophy and Ethics Speaker Series event on Monday, April 17, at 4 p.m. in the Kinnickinnic River Theater in the University Center at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Kotsko's address, "Democracy Between Populism and Neoliberalism," will include a Q&A session and a reception at 3:30 p.m., before his talk begins. The event is free and open to the public.

While Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. seem as divided as ever, leaders of the two political parties share a philosophy that prevents the most important issues facing Americans from being addressed, Kotsko will argue.

Neoliberalism is an approach that favors free-market capitalism, deregulation and reduced government spending. Historically, major figures in both political parties have shared that philosophy and claimed to support individual freedoms through market competition, Kotsko argues. However, he says, they distrusted democracy and have sought to preserve capitalism over democracy. The result, he says, is that many important issues go unaddressed, and true democracy is in peril.



Kotsko is an American theologian, religious scholar, culture critic and translator who works in the field of political theology. He has authored numerous books, and his work at North Central College focuses on humanities and social science.

The speaker series was established in 2021 in tribute to former philosophy Professor Imtiaz Moosa, who taught at UW-River Falls from 1989 until his unexpected death in December 2020. The series features leading experts and thought leaders with expertise in a variety of important philosophical, social justice and contemporary ethics-related issues. It is intended to discuss society's most pressing issues and the fragile nature of democracy itself.

More information about the speaker series can be found at <https://www.uwrf.edu/HIST/Events/MoosaSeries.cfm>.



Spring choral concert has something for everyone

April 14, 2023 - A Spring Choral Concert at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls will feature several performance groups on Sunday, April 30, at 3 p.m. in Abbott Concert Hall in the Kleinpell Fine arts building.

The Chamber Singers, Concert Choir, Tenor/Bass Ensemble, and the Treble Choir will all perform under the direction of Cera Babb, director of choral activities and assistant music professor. Deborah Fristad, associate music lecturer, will direct the University Community Chorus. The student ensemble Tonal Silence will also perform.

The Concert Choir will perform a newly composed piece, American Croatian Triptych, written specifically for the UWRF choir by famous Croatian composer Davor Bobi?. The piece is part of a collaboration and residency through the music department with Bobi? to learn about music from another part of the world. The composition features soloists, narrators, various percussion instruments, contemporary techniques on the piano, whispering, stomping, cluster chords, and more!

The Spring Concert is the debut concert for the Tenor/Bass Ensemble. A long-retired ensemble, the concert reintroduces this vocal group of tenors and basses to the UWRF community.

The concert is open to everyone. Tickets are available at the door: \$8/adults, \$5/seniors, \$2/students.

UW-River Falls takes pride in offering high-quality programs in music leading to the degrees Bachelor of Arts in Music, Bachelor of Science in Music, and Bachelor of Music Education, as well as minors in music and musical theater.

Students showcase their BFA exhibitions

April 6, 2023 - Fourteen University of Wisconsin-River Falls senior BFA candidates will present their Bachelor of Fine Arts degree exhibitions in Gallery 101 of the Kleinpell Fine Arts building April 12 –May 3. The exhibition includes glass, graphic design, printmaking, ceramics, and an art history thesis presentation. An opening reception is Friday, April 14, from 4-8 p.m. in Gallery 101. The exhibition and opening reception are free and open to the public.

Celia Becker was born and raised in western Wisconsin. She primarily works with glass but also enjoys painting and creating multimedia sculptures. Her inspiration often comes from her desire to form genuine connections with others. Whether she's laughing, crying, or both simultaneously, she strongly believes life is more fulfilling with company.

Lane Bohlig is a multimedia designer from Beaver Dam, who specializes in graphic design, printmaking, and painting. Their imaginative work reflects both humor and identity. Bohlig's oil paintings were on display at the UWRF Student Juried Exhibition in spring 2022 and 2023.

Veda Campbell is a graphic designer and small business owner based out of Prescott. Campbell is the co-founder of Blooming Brightly, an eco-friendly candle company with products sold both online and in stores locally. Her business was featured in a recent issue of the Woodbury Magazine.

Vanessa Christiansen, an artist based in River Falls, is majoring in art education with an emphasis in printmaking with a focus in the intaglio and relief processes.

Alayna De La Cruz is a printmaker from small town Minnesota. Her work focuses on the female form and natural elements to explore ideas of body image and harmony between body and earth. Much of her inspiration comes from her travels to the west, growing up as a plant enthusiast, and having close connections to strong women.

Grace Hajlo is a ceramic artist from Maplewood, Minn. Her hobbies include spending time in nature, hiking, and biking. The influence of nature is evident in her pots that resemble natural shapes and formations. She often uses a coil building process and soft slabs to create flowy, organically shaped sculptures that allow the clay to move itself and create its own shapes. Her pieces were displayed in the 2022 Student Juried Exhibition.

Connor Isenberg of Cannon Falls, Minn., has an emphasis in ceramics. He uses multiple processes to explore ideas and to research the possibilities of clay. After graduation, he plans to continue his research in clay through internships and residencies.

Madeline Jezierski is an American photographer with interests in printmaking and drawing. Her work is mainly based on nature and realism, inspired by the tranquility and solace that it brings to her life. She combines her enjoyment for adventure and love for photography to capture unique and personal experiences.

Miranda Kieren is a multi-media artist from western Wisconsin focusing on painting and ceramics. Inspired by aspects of nature (rocks, bones, and moss) and the memories and emotions of herself and others, she uses color, texture, and light to

convey complex abstract concepts through literal forms.

McKenzie Lachowitzer is a mixed media artist and art historian from Stillwater, Minn. Her main passion is researching artworks that involve intersectional feminism, gender, and the media's influence on these topics. She also likes to create mixed media collage artwork that involves text, personal narrative, and nature.

Natalie Meyer is a three-dimensional artist whose work examines the mechanical relationship in our daily lives with inventive qualities whether imaginative or realistic. They use many media platforms not limited to glass, metal, plastic, ceramic, and fibers. The uses of these materials are needed to make the pieces functional or aesthetically pleasing. Their work is made through many processes of examination and application of trial and error like any inventor. Meyer's work has evolved from the failures of today's technologies and the ideas that imagination can create the next generation of creations.

Maddy Rae Powers is an artist currently living in Mondovi but originally from Turtle Lake. Her focus is on illustration and graphic design. She mostly uses traditional mediums such as marker and watercolor, however, is also exploring the possibilities of digital mediums as well. Her inspiration for her art comes from the quiet parts of life that happen around her.

Juliana Romero-Jensen was born in River Falls and is currently based in Minneapolis where she works on different types of digital media. Whether that be illustrations, branding, packaging, posters, or web design, she is pursuing her goal of doing it all. With her extra time, she works on ceramic pieces and handbuilds whatever her stomach desires. She is passionate about food advertisement and packaging. Her end goal is to work with a food marketing company and continue her love for all things food.

Moz Rude is a ceramic artist born in Minnesota and residing in Hudson. Rude is currently a teaching artist at Northern Clay Center in Minneapolis and a ceramic instructor at the Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson. Rude's personal work is a collection of ceramic forms containing illustrative allegories on the surfaces that act as a catalog of their experiences with space and time. They enjoy handbuilding, altering thrown forms and building sculptural work. Rude hopes to create an intimate experience through ceramic objects that contemplate and document their memories.



UW System President Jay Rothman converses with UW-River Falls students Lauren Look, center, and Linnea Milner Thursday as they presented their work during the National Conference of Undergraduate Research at UW-Eau Claire. Bill Hoepner photo.

Students showcase their research at national conference

Undergraduates discuss, display their expertise to a large audience

April 18, 2023 - As soon as Ali Thome-Hough and Emma Etten entered the large room where they would present their research as part of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Friday morning, they knew this wasn't just any event.

The duo, University of Wisconsin-River Falls students, instantly noticed the loud din of hundreds of voices talking at once in a tightly packed space at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Davies Student Center. Thome-Hough and Etten, both seniors majoring in animal science, were among 3,500 college students and faculty from 45 states and six foreign countries attending the conference April 13-15. About 30 UWRF students presented research at the event.

"The buzz of energy I felt when I walked into that room, it was amazing," Thome-Hough, of Madison, said. "There were so many people there, all discussing their research at once."

Thome-Hough and Etten were soon discussing their research with faculty and students moving through the room. They

talked about planning their project, which measures to what degree electromagnetic therapy helps horses heal and better tolerate pain and pressure. They described the testing process and challenges working the frequent testing required into their busy class schedules.

Any nerves they felt leading up to their presentations melted away as they discussed their research with others, they said. Visitors to their research poster location asked questions and offered positive feedback.

"When you talk about your work with other people, you realize you really know what you're talking about," Etten, of Shawano, said. "It builds your confidence."

That message is music to the ears of Molly Gerrish, director of Undergraduate Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity at UWRF. Student research projects not only help students better understand their study subjects, but the presentations build confidence, she said.

"This kind of research really elevates students' mindset," Gerrish said. "When they present their work, to see their confidence grow, it's really amazing and gratifying."

Students also benefit from networking with their peers and faculty from other schools, Gerrish said. Those connections don't happen unless students attend such research forums as NCUR, she said.

Wesley Chapin, UWRF associate vice chancellor for academic affairs and graduate studies, praised student research projects and the assistance of faculty who work with students on their projects. Students and their faculty mentors spent months or sometimes multiple years on research.

"The faculty really show their dedication to these students through these research projects," Chapin said.

UWRF Physics Professor Lowell McCann played a significant role in Tori Gehling's research on aerosols and their impact on climate change. In fact, Gehling said, without McCann's guidance, she wouldn't have been presenting her work at NCUR at all.

"He's the reason I'm doing this in the first place," Gehling, a junior physics major from St. Cloud, Minn., said Saturday following a presentation of her project. "His positive feedback about my work has made such a difference and helped me get to the point where I can present research like this."

'You learn so much'

Nicole Hetletved, a senior psychology major from Hammond, credited Melanie Ayres, chair of the UWRF Psychology Department, with assisting on her research studying the impacts on caregivers on forming bonds with terminally ill patients. Hetletved's work hits close to home: her mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness several years ago.

Thankfully, Hetletved's mom is still alive, her diagnosis having changed from terminal to chronic, thanks not only to advancements in her medical treatments but likely also because of positive relationships with her caregivers, Hetletved said.

"There can be positive outcomes for both patients and caregivers by forming these relationships," she said. "To have my research show that is possible feels amazing."

Emma Augustine and McKinley Davis, seniors double majoring in psychology and neuroscience, partnered on research studying the impact of nicotine on adolescent mice when they are isolated. Their project may have applications for teenage humans and whether they're more likely to use alcohol and drugs to deal with feelings of stress isolation.

They discussed their research with passersby, describing the responses of the 67 mice they tested, and how adolescent mice showed a strong preference for nicotine quickly, much more so than adult mice tested. Augustine, from Ellsworth, and Davis, from Menomonie, said they plan to forward their research for others at UWRF to study further.

"You learn so much by doing these kinds of projects," Davis said, "and you learn how to present your work to others. That only helps us after we graduate."

Many UWRF participants in NCUR are graduating in May and will head off to graduate school. Others will go into the workforce, while still others will return to UWRF to continue their studies. No matter what they do, students benefit from being part of research programs and presenting their work to others, both Gerrish and Chapin said.

"These research projects represent next-level learning," Gerrish said. "This kind of work, it makes our students realize that they are scholars in their field, that they are contributing to the knowledge base. It contributes to our students being able to go out and make a positive difference in the world."

UW-River Falls receives state funding for student internships in agriculture field

April 14, 2023 - Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers on Thursday announced that the UW System has been awarded \$1.1 million, including \$244,426 for the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, through the Wisconsin Fast Forward program to expand student internship opportunities in high-demand fields.

The funding, provided in conjunction with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, will pay for internships for 20 UW-River Falls students studying agriculture to participate in either 14- or 28-week hands-on study sessions at one of nine regional businesses.

Internships traditionally are for junior and senior students, but these opportunities will be focused on first- and second-year students, enabling them to obtain valuable hands-on experience early in their academic careers, said Holly Dolliver, chair of UWRF's Plan and Earth Science Department who headed the internships funding effort at UW-River Falls.

"We are really excited about this opportunity, to see what it does in terms of launching our students into some really great opportunities," Dolliver said.

As part of their internships, UWRF students will take part in career-building workshops and assess strategies for advancing their careers. Internships will begin this summer, Dolliver said. Most students will participate in summertime internships, but a few will do theirs during the school year, an option not typically available.

Businesses partnering with UW-River Falls on the internship program include Winfield United/Land O' Lakes, Ag Source, Brownseed Genetics, Oakridge Engineering, MAC Contractors, American Excelsior Company, Seneca Foods, Chippewa Valley Bean, and La Crosse Seed.

UW-River Falls is one of three UW System schools to receive Wisconsin Fast Forward funding as part of the internship initiative; the others are UW-Milwaukee and UW-Stout.

Evers said Wisconsin Fast Forward dollars are intended to help provide employees in key areas of Wisconsin's economy from clean energy and green energy jobs to those in agriculture and technology sectors. The effort is intended to help Wisconsin develop and retain its workforce and to bolster job skills for a fast-changing economy.

"Our UW System is a major economic driver in our state and a critical resource for building our state's next-generation workforce," Evers said in a news release. "These grants will help students earn while they learn, ensuring greater access and opportunities for our homegrown talent to start growing their careers right here in Wisconsin."

The majority of Wisconsin Fast Forward funding will pay for student internships, with a lesser amount covering staffing costs and miscellaneous expenses. Dean Olson, interim dean of UWRF's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, said the internships will provide students with valuable experience that will lead to high-quality job outcomes. The program will help fill a shortage of employees in agricultural fields, he said.

"This is a great opportunity for our students to gain valuable experience that may lead to an exciting new career," Olson said.

“Also, our industry partners benefit because they are in the market for quality people and these internship opportunities can result in a match.”

As they developed the internship program, Dolliver, four UWRF colleagues and business leaders looked to develop student opportunities where they hadn't previously existed. That includes students working in such areas as clean water and energy, and soil erosion. Those are areas that may not have been a priority for businesses before, she said, but the new funding allows industry officials to expand traditional internship offerings.

“This project involved UWRF and businesses working together,” Dolliver said. “It is a really wonderful opportunity to develop this partnership in a way that will benefit students and businesses.”

UW-River Falls to honor outstanding alums, special contributors

Annual Evening of Excellence set for May 5

April 28, 2023 - Three University of Wisconsin-River Falls alums and two longtime supporters of the university will be honored at the UWRF Evening of Excellence, Friday, May 5, in the Riverview Ballroom in the University Center. The event begins at 5:30 p.m.

"This year's award recipients have carried on the Falcon tradition of serving others and creating a better world," UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo said. "They've proven that the opportunities they experienced at UWRF provided a strong foundation for a future of limitless potential."

The UWRF Alumni Association will present four awards, including Distinguished Alumnus, Lifetime Achievement, Outstanding Young Alum and Outstanding Service.

Distinguished Alum Award

For more than three decades, Margaret Keating built a remarkable record of achievement at Hallmark. She started in 1979 as a process controller and advanced through various positions of increasing responsibility in operations, graphic arts and human resources. In April 1994, Keating was promoted to vice president of the graphic arts department and named a Hallmark corporate officer.

As the group vice president of operations, Keating was responsible for all United States and Canadian manufacturing, distribution, transportation, graphic arts and global procurement for the entire Hallmark family of companies, which included buying offices in Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Shanghai. Keating retired from Hallmark in 2010.

Keating, originally from New Richmond, has served on many boards, including the UW-River Falls Foundation Board of Directors, the University of Missouri-Kansas City Bloch Advisory Council, United Way of Greater Kansas City, Women's Leadership Council, Girl Scouts of Mid-Continent, the University of Michigan Ross School of Business and the Master of Supply Chain Management Corporate Advisory Council.

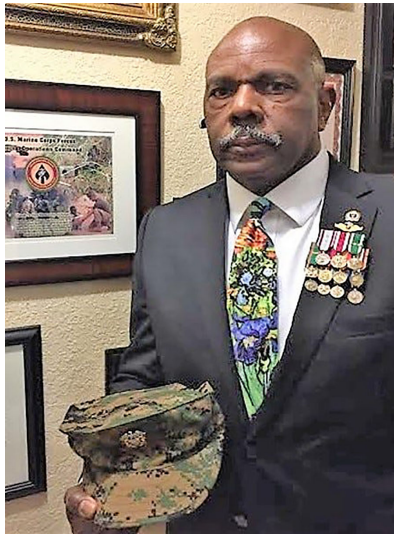


Keating is now an adjunct professor within the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where she teaches supply chain curriculum. Keating also serves on the board of Outreach International, a global nonprofit that supports local leaders and community-led groups who develop lasting solutions to poverty-related issues.

Keating earned a business administration and economics degree from UWRF in 1975. Keating and her husband, Daniel Turkisher, live in Raymore, Mo. She enjoys spending time with her two children and five grandchildren.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Chaplain Richmond E. Stoglin, Arlington, Texas, a first-generation student who earned a UWRF history degree in 1979, has gone on to a career of exceptional service to his country and his community.



Stoglin served his country in the United States Navy Reserve Chaplain Corps from 1985 to 2013. During his service career, he attained the rank of commander and former regimental chaplain to the 14th Marines, the largest artillery command in the U.S. Marine Corps. He also served as command chaplain of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and the Combined Security Training Command-Afghanistan.

Stoglin served for more than 22 years for the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Federal Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas. His last position within the Department of Justice was as department head of Religious Services.

After retiring, Stoglin started his own consulting group, The Stoglin Group. The firm specializes in consulting organizations, corporations and nonprofits through mediation, family mediation, workplace ethics, strategic planning, leadership development, public policy and law enforcement counseling.

A decorated veteran, Stoglin's accolades include being awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal and two National Defense Service Medals. He's been a recipient of the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce MVP award and was named the University of Texas-Arlington's Outstanding African American Alumnus.

Stoglin was the first African American to be ordained in the Minnesota United Methodist Conference in 1981. In January, he became the first African American ordained to the priesthood in the Fort Worth Anglican Diocese of the American Church of North America.

Stoglin enjoys walking, reading, public speaking and volunteering for multiple charitable causes. He is also a published author. He lives in Arlington with his wife, Reecia.

Outstanding Young Alum Award

Ali Kofiro is the first Somali student accepted into the UWRF School Counseling Program. After earning his master's degree from UWRF in 2010, he went on to become the first Somali licensed school counselor in the region and possibly in the nation.

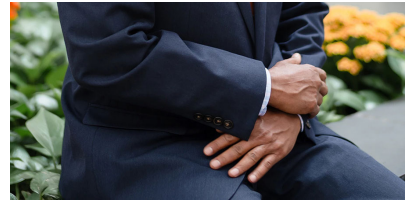
Recognizing a need and opportunity to have more diversity in counseling, Kofiro became a tireless advocate, encouraging members of the Somali community to explore counseling as a career opportunity.

"I wanted to show them the way," Kofiro said. "I showed them how to apply and connected them to the right people at UWRF, such as Dr. Mark Gillen. I helped mentor



them through the program.”

As a result of Kofiro's efforts, there are now 16 licensed Somali school counselors in Minnesota. Several have moved on to become principals. The group continues to network and encourage others to join the UWRF program. Kofiro returned to UWRF to teach classes and is a leading member of the program's stakeholders' group.



Kofiro has been a school counselor at Wellstone International High School in Minneapolis since 2011. He is also the founder and president of Disability Benefit Solutions, a firm that specializes in representing people with disabilities who need to apply for Social Security disability benefits. Since 2018, Kofiro has handled thousands of Social Security disability claims across the nation.

Kofiro earned his bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in 2006.

Outstanding Service Award

Charles and Ruth Anne White, River Falls, are longtime community leaders and generous supporters of UW-River Falls people, programs and projects.

After graduating from River Falls High School in 1945, Chuck attended River Falls State Teachers College for one year, where he starred on the debate team. He transferred to UW-Madison, received his bachelor's degree in 1949 and earned his law degree in 1951. He then served in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps in Korea, where he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for Korean Service, the Korean Service Medal and the United Nations Service Medal.



Following his service, Chuck returned to his hometown, where he became one of River Falls' community leaders. He practiced law for 42 years and taught business law at UWRF. Chuck earned many high honors in the Masonic fraternity, served as chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire and was a longtime member of the First National Bank of River Falls Board of Directors.

Ruth Anne grew up in Viroqua and earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from UW-Madison. She went on to a long career at the Niro Atomizer manufacturing plant in Hudson, which produced evaporation equipment for food, dairy and chemical products.

The Whites have been long-time generous supporters of UWRF, establishing multiple scholarship funds and providing support for major university projects such as the renovation of David Smith Stadium at Ramer Field, the Falcon Center and the Science and Technology Innovation Center (SciTech).

“Funding scholarships for UWRF students has been one of our favorite causes,” Chuck said. “The joy expressed by the recipients is very heartwarming. It's our hope we've made a great difference in students' lives.”

Wyman Visiting Professors in Art to deliver public lecture

River Falls, Wis. -- Please join the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Art Department on Wednesday, April 12, from 6-7:30 p.m. in North Hall Auditorium for a free public lecture by Walker D. and Helen Bryant Wyman Visiting Professors artists Eric T. Kunsman and Lynn Bierbaum.

Kunsman is a photographer, book artist, fine printmaker, educator, and collaborator. While Kunsman claims “[t]here’s no ‘given’ formula” for his work, he is interested in the unwritten stories of objects left behind in neglected, struggling landscapes from the American southwest to the upper northeast. His current work explores one of those relics: working payphones.

Bierbaum, a UWRF alum (2017 BFA in photography and graphic design) and past assistant to Kunsman, is an alternative photographer and glass artist. Bierbaum specializes in wet plate collodion in combination with blown glass and uses optical properties to create and alter light in her image-making process. She is currently an MFA candidate in photography and related media at Rochester Institute of Technology.

If questions, email kaylee.spencer@uwrf.edu.



Tim Buttles, 2023 CAFES Outstanding Faculty Awardee, and Roger King representing WAAE for the Outstanding Service Award.

UW-River Falls CAFES awards scholarships and recognizes outstanding faculty and service

May 2, 2023 - More than \$229,000 was awarded to students in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls at their Annual Scholarship and Awards Recognition Program on April 20. Students, donors, faculty and honored guests made up the nearly 200-person audience. The 170 scholarships were awarded to continuing students who will be sophomores, juniors or seniors in the 2023-24 academic year.

Four new scholarships were among those awarded:

- The Adeline and Oliver Lerum Family Scholarship. Oliver was an agricultural education graduate who taught at Seymour High School and Fox Valley Technical College.
- The Jane E. Jeffrey Memorial Scholarship honors her love, concern and special bond with animals.
- The Jan Roberts Yde Water Scholarship in memory of Yde, a UWRF alum, and founder and CEO of Sioux Valley Environmental of Sioux Falls, S.D.
- The St. Croix Valley Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts Scholarships to support students who will protect, preserve and manage native prairie and oak savanna.

The college also recognized one of UWRF's industry/organization partners for their service, presenting the 2023 Outstanding Service Award to the Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators (WAAE). Roger King, past president of WAAE, was on

hand to accept the award. WAAE has been instrumental in providing assistance in preparing agricultural education students for their future careers. WAAE monetary support opens up national scholarship opportunities for the students, they organize tours for pre-service teachers to observe and discuss the program planning and structures of different ag programs, and they introduced an “official” signing event at the Wisconsin FFA State Convention giving increased recognition to students choosing this career path.

To wrap up the evening, Interim Dean of CAFES Dean Olson presented the 2023 CAFES Outstanding Faculty Award to Agricultural Education Professor Tim Buttles. This is the highest award bestowed upon a faculty member in the college. Nominations are submitted by faculty peers and the selection is made by the College Awards and Promotions Committee. The awardee is also honored nationally with the Teaching Award of Merit from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) in recognition of meritorious efforts in college teaching.

Nomination materials described Buttles, of Glenwood City, as a student-centered faculty member who has contributed greatly to the preparation of our current students, our alumni, and the state of Wisconsin. The nomination described how Buttles demonstrates his commitment to students, including how he consistently seeks out and incorporates new teaching techniques and technologies to not only enhance his classes, but also to allow students the opportunity to learn the ‘how’ of using these teaching tools.

Olson highlighted Buttles’ commitment to the college, the university and the state by referencing the annual Agricultural Technology Contest. Buttles has organized the event for the past 22 years. Olson conservatively estimated that under Buttles’ leadership, the contest brought more than 15,000 high school and middle school students to the UWRF campus.

Buttles’ nomination concluded noting how the CAFES centennial motto truly fits him: Always for our students; Always to the best of our ability; Always so our students may achieve their greater purpose.



L-R: CAFES Outstanding Seniors Grant Buwalda and Ashley Tuszka took part in UWRF Commencement on May 6.

CAFES outstanding seniors honored at senior supper

May 10, 2023 -- The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls presented two awards to outstanding seniors at their 40th Annual Senior Supper on April 26. The event is sponsored by the CAFES Alumni Association to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduating seniors and to welcome them into the alumni family.

Ashley Tuszka, of De Pere, received the Rochelle Junkman Seymour Award for 2022-23. The award recognizes the graduating senior with the highest GPA in the college. Tuszka, an animal science major, was not at the supper as she was completing her first year of veterinary school having been accepted into the 3 + 1 program at UW-Madison.

The faculty that know Tuszka best described her as an exemplary student who served as the president of the Equine Physical Therapy Association, the vice president of the Pre-Veterinary Club, and took part in six equine-related research projects, including presenting her findings at regional and national conferences. They went on to say that she achieved so much due to her hard work, dedication to learning, and perseverance but she worked toward each with a smile on her face and a go-getter mentality. With this award, Tuszka had the honor of serving as the class marshal, leading the CAFES graduates into commencement ceremonies on May 6.

Grant Buwalda, an agricultural business major from Waupun, was presented with the Dr. Earl Hildebrand Memorial Award which honors the graduating senior who best exemplifies a combination of scholastic achievement, extracurricular

involvement and leadership roles in CAFES. Students are nominated by faculty and the recipient is selected by the CAFES Awards Committee.

In a tribute to Buwalda's impact at UWRF, nine faculty from three departments prepared his nomination. In their letter they noted his academic achievements plus his extensive involvement in clubs and teams. He held multiple leadership roles with the Agricultural Business and Marketing Society, the Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter, the Beef Management Team, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and was a member of the successful Agricultural Business and Knowledge Bowl teams at NACTA competitions the past two years. In team settings, Buwalda's enthusiasm to "get things done" infected his teammates, but his habits of neatness and accuracy always resulted in high-quality team output. The faculty concluded their nomination indicating they hold Buwalda in the highest esteem for his diligence, maturity, and integrity.

"He is always a positive influence on others. He is an individual we are proud to have representing the college and our departments," they wrote.

The senior supper featured the traditional series of speakers. Representing the alumni was Lisa Ecker Mielke, a 2017 agricultural engineering technology graduate, who shared her personal experience of how if you don't ask for something, you won't get it. Amanda Dunavan, a graduating senior in the geology program from Minooka, Ill., recalled thinking how college was going to be so "professional" and "tight-laced" only to discover geology faculty who could also do interpretive dance, and faculty who were not above lobbing rocks into the river to win a rubber duck race. She acknowledged having been given all the tools to succeed, but that it will be difficult without these teachers and her friends leading the way.

Animal Science Professor Justin Luther wrapped up the evening and shared three key points that he felt would help the graduates be successful: be a life-long learner, embrace the joys of serving young people, and be caring and compassionate with one another.

The students graduating with Laude honors, those who maintained a minimum 3.7 GPA for their entire college career, were recognized and presented with red and white cords to wear at commencement. Dean Olson, CAFES interim dean, also took a few moments to list the many events CAFES students were involved in in just the month of April. He acknowledged the students who took time to volunteer in many capacities and those who had to work, those preparing to take over the family business or already pursuing an entrepreneurial dream, all while attending classes. Olson thanked them for all they did to make CAFES a model of success that is recognized across campus.

Chishty selected as dean of the College of Education, Business and Allied Health

May 11, 2023 - Muhammad Chishty, Ph.D., has been selected as the dean of the newly established College of Education, Business and Allied Health (CEBAH) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Chishty will begin his role on July 1. Interim Dean Dawn Hukai will provide leadership through the end of June.

Chishty steps into this position following the recent realignment of the College of Business and Economics (CBE) and the College of Education and Professional Studies (CEPS). The bringing together of the two colleges will be effective July 1.



"Dr. Chishty will provide stability and direction during this very exciting time for UWRF," said David Travis, provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs at UW-River Falls. "Bringing CBE and CEPS together is the result of more than a year of meaningful collaboration. This reorganization allows us to focus on giving our students the best opportunities to succeed while being fiscally responsible with taxpayer and tuition resources."

"I am honored to serve as the inaugural dean of the College of Education, Business and Allied Health at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls," said Chishty. "Throughout the hiring process, I was struck by the deep commitment of the faculty and staff to their students' education and wellbeing, as well as the resulting engagement and enthusiasm among students I met during my campus visit. I am grateful to Chancellor Maria Gallo, Provost David Travis, and the university for inviting me to join this incredible community, and I look forward to working with all of you."

Chishty comes to UW-River Falls from Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kan., where he was dean of the Robbins College of Business and Entrepreneurship and a professor of finance. Prior to that, he served as a faculty member, and also in a variety of administrative positions including interim dean of the Graham School of Management at Saint Xavier University in Chicago.

Chishty earned his B.A. in political science in 1984 from Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. After a year in the Ph.D. program in political science at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, he switched his focus to finance and went on to earn his M.S. in finance in 1988 and a Ph.D. in business administration with a concentration in finance in 1991, both from Georgia State University in Atlanta.

"The realignment of academic resources reflects the university's commitment to students and the community," said UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo. "We are pleased to have a future-focused leader like Dr. Chishty join our team with the goal of developing transformative experiences for our students."

Keynote speaker praises UW-River Falls graduates for overcoming obstacles leading to graduation

Coronavirus pandemic, other obstacles don't stand in the way of success, McKenzie says

May 6, 2023 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls graduates have faced all sorts of challenges, including the Coronavirus pandemic, and have worked hard to overcome them to graduate with their degrees, renowned Minnesota high school basketball coach and keynote speaker Larry McKenzie told attendees at the university's graduation ceremonies May 6.

McKenzie, a UWRF alum who coached two Minneapolis high school boys basketball teams to six state championships, credited students for their perseverance in obtaining their degrees and likened them to superheroes for doing so.

"If I were to give this class a name, I would call you 'the overcomers,'" McKenzie told students. "Despite your adversities, we are here today to celebrate your accomplishments."

McKenzie addressed graduates at two separate commencement ceremonies in Knowles Field House in the Falcon Center on campus. A total of 749 students were scheduled to graduate, including 652 who received bachelor's degrees, 84 who received master's degrees, and 13 with associate degrees.

UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo praised students for their work to obtain their degrees. Interacting with students on campus is "by far the most rewarding part of my job," she told graduates.

Gallo urged students to pursue their passion and to not be afraid to take risks that enable them to follow their dreams.

"Whether it is a job offer in a new city, a chance to start your own business, going to graduate school, or an opportunity to travel the world, do not be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone and take a leap of faith," Gallo said. "This is not the end, but only the beginning, as you leave with your UW-River Falls education and use it to pursue your career or continue your education."

McKenzie said that like this year's graduates, he faced his own adversity. In fact, he said, based on his background, "I am not supposed to be here."

McKenzie's grandparents had little access to education and worked hard in search of the American dream, he said. He was born to a teen mother and his father worked three jobs. He spent his early years living in a housing project in Miami, in the kind of place "where dreams were often deferred," he said.

Nearly five decades ago, McKenzie traveled by Greyhound bus halfway across the country to a place neither he nor his mother were familiar with.

"All she knew was that I, her oldest child, was going to college in Wisconsin near a river and a waterfall," McKenzie said in reference to River Falls.

Graduating with an academic degree is a laudable achievement, McKenzie said, “and will open doors that you never imagined.” But other skills students learn by attending college also will serve them well as they progress through life, he said.

“As a fellow UWRF alumnus, what I’m most grateful for from my time at UWRF is the life lessons I learned on how to navigate real life,” McKenzie told students. “It was here where I learned that I’d mastered being an overcomer.”

Those skills have served McKenzie well in ensuing years. In addition to his success as a basketball coach, he is well known for his passionate leadership in the Minneapolis community. He is a certified national speaker and has served on numerous community boards of nonprofit organizations. He and his wife, Pam, co-founded the Above the Rim Youth Sports Foundation that provides opportunities for young people.

“You have now prepared to be productive, creative, ethical, engaged citizens and leaders with an informed global perspective,” McKenzie said. “Now go forth to be the difference makers!”

Student speaker Brigitte Ledferd also praised students for overcoming challenges on the way to obtaining their degrees. She faced her own challenges, growing up in northern Wisconsin as the daughter of a single mother who she credits with helping her make it to UWRF. She also faced mental health challenges, she said.

Ledferd praised UWRF’s faculty, mentors, and her fellow students for helping her and others reach graduation. She urged her fellow graduates to use their experiences while at UWRF as they move into the next chapter of their lives.

“These experiences you will spend the rest of your life thinking back on, they would have never happened if you didn’t allow yourself to be uncomfortable, to start a conversation, to say yes to an opportunity,” Ledferd said. “Trust yourself, and trust that wherever you end up is a new chapter.”

Kisting selected as College of Arts and Sciences dean

May 19, 2023 – Wesley Kisting, who worked as an associate dean and an English professor at a Georgia university, has been hired as the new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Kisting, who worked most recently as associate dean of the Pamplin College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Augusta University, will begin in his new role on July 1.



Professor Karl Peterson will continue as interim CAS dean until June 30, after which he will return to his role as associate dean.

Calling his job at UW-River Falls “a dream come true,” Kisting said the university’s teachers, students and leadership team prompted him to apply for the job.

“You have highly dedicated faculty and staff, highly engaged students, a superb cohort of deans, excellent leaders like Provost Travis and Chancellor Gallo, and a wonderful community that is clearly invested in the university’s success,” he said.

David Travis, provost and vice chancellor at UW-River Falls, said Kisting’s experience and approach make him a strong fit for the CAS dean position.

“Dr. Kisting has overseen many facets of the administrative process in his role at Augusta University,” Travis said. “That experience enables him to see issues from multiple perspectives that will empower our faculty and create even more learning opportunities for our students.”

At Augusta University, Kisting has worked as associate dean since 2014. Prior to that he was director of the university’s quality enhancement plan and taught English there since 2007. He received his bachelor’s degree in English and writing at Marquette University in 1999 and his doctorate in English at the University of Iowa in 2007.

Among his top goals as he begins work at UW-River Falls, Kisting said, is helping CAS faculty develop forward-thinking, interdisciplinary programs that combine the strengths of liberal arts and sciences with experiential learning infused with technology. That approach will be important as technology advancements continue and as artificial intelligence advances as well, he said.

“More than ever, our students will need the versatile knowledge and skills we teach in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as media and technology skills that now powerfully affect the reach and impact of the ideas we share,” Kisting said.



L-R:

Dean Olson, CAFES Interim Dean; UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo; and David Lenzmeier, 2023 Distinguished Agriculturalist

Lenzmeier named 2023 Wisconsin Distinguished Agriculturalist at UW-River Falls

May 1, 2023 -- David Lenzmeier has been named the 2023 Wisconsin Distinguished Agriculturalist by the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Lenzmeier is CEO of Milk Specialties Global and an alumnus of UWRF. Dean Olson, CAFES interim dean, presented Lenzmeier with the award at the college's Annual Scholarship and Awards Program in front of an audience of nearly 200 students, donors, faculty and staff on April 20.

Olson shared highlights of Lenzmeier's successful career noting how he went from being a student worker in the UWRF dairy plant to CEO, a CEO who makes the time to meet with UWRF students touring Milk Specialties Global facilities, calling it 'awesome' that he was willing to do that.

In his remarks, Lenzmeier left three take-aways for the students in the audience. First, he encouraged them to take responsibility because leadership and leaders are needed. Second, he said they should be determined, adding each of them has more in you than you know. And finally, don't hold back on believing how far you can go. He wrapped up his remarks with, "You are the future, you will be leading organizations and you will be standing at a podium like this one day."

Lenzmeier grew up on a dairy farm in Kimball, Minn., beginning his career in quality/operations/business development for First District Association in Litchfield, one of the first North American producers of whey protein. In 1999, he co-founded

Protient, a manufacturer of specialty whey protein for use in baby formula, processed foods and dietary supplements. He sold the company and joined Milk Specialties Global in 2008 as president of their newly formed food division. In 2011, he became CEO of the entire company. The division he started became the biggest part of Milk Specialties' business helping the company grow from four locations in the Midwest to over 1,000 employees at 12 locations across the nation.

In 2013, Lenzmeier was named one of Ernst & Young's Entrepreneurs of the Year for the Upper Midwest. He and his wife own Stickney Hill Dairy and devote time to the Hendrickson Foundation, helping to make hockey accessible to anyone who wants to play the game.

The Wisconsin Distinguished Agriculturalist Award was established in 1970 to recognize individuals who have provided leadership, service and other contributions to the broader agricultural community. Lenzmeier was presented with a framed copy of the charcoal sketch of his portrait that hangs in the Agriculture Hall of Fame in the Agricultural Science building on campus. Visit www.uwrf.edu/CAFES/Awards.cfm to see previous honorees.



Former UWRF student Mikayla Birschbach works with a cow at the university's Mann Valley Farm. This fall, UW-River Falls will host the longstanding farm and industry short course that teaches participants about farming during 16 weeks of classes.

Registration open for Farm and Industry Short Course at UW-River Falls

Participants urged to register soon to secure a spot in inaugural course at UWRF

May 24, 2023 - Registration is open for the popular, longstanding Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls this fall. The program had been held at UW-Madison since 1885 but is moving to UW-River Falls for the first time this year.

UW-River Falls will host the 16-week program and will collaborate with UW-Madison and UW-Platteville to provide instruction. The course is scheduled to begin October 25 and run through March 15.

Enrollment in the class will be limited to 24 students. Those interested should register soon to ensure their placement. A special tuition and housing rate will be offered to students participating in the course during the inaugural year.

UW-River Falls is nationally known for its agriculture program and focus on undergraduate education, making the university a

perfect fit for FISC, said Steve Kelm, chair of the Animal and Food Science Department. The university's dairy farm is 10 minutes from campus and dairy and meat processing plants are on campus itself, providing students with numerous hands-on learning opportunities, he said.

"Add in a very active UWRF Dairy Club, plus other student organizations, and you have an environment where FISC students can thrive and develop relationships that will last decades into the future," Kelm said.

When UW-Madison decided to change its programming to offer different flexible training options in agriculture and not host the FISC program, UW-River Falls decided to host it. The course was last offered at UW-Madison in the 2021-22 academic year.

FISC students will live together in one of the newly renovated residence halls at UW-River Falls. Classes will be taught by UWRF faculty during the first eight weeks of the course. Then, during the winter term in January, UW-River Falls will collaborate with UW-Madison and UW-Platteville to instruct students. Students will continue their coursework at UWRF for the first half of the spring semester until the course ends.

The focus of FISC will be on dairy farming, specifically the fundamentals of managing cows and calves, with additional education on topics such as nutrition, dairy techniques, mastitis and milk quality and dairy recordkeeping.

Students will earn 18-20 credits during their first year, credits that can be applied to a degree at UWRF or elsewhere. By living on campus, they will experience a supportive environment and meet other students.

FISC students will enjoy the same benefits as other students. They can join clubs and participate in campus recreation activities and will have free admission to all campus athletic facilities and events and reduced admission to other events such as theater performances.

To learn more about the Farm and Industry Short Course Program at UWRF, visit <https://www.uwrf.edu/Academics/FISC>, call 715-425-3704 or email steven.kelm@uwrf.edu.

Retired UW-River Falls professor honored for her Montessori work

Gay Ward's dedication has impact at university, around the world

May 8, 2023 - After educating more students and teachers than she can count in locations across the United States and around the world, retired University of Wisconsin-River Falls educator Gay Ward is receiving recognition for her tireless efforts to help others learn through the Montessori method, one person at a time.

Ward, a teacher education professor at UWRF from 2001-15 and the founder and director of the university's Montessori program in 2012, recently received the American Montessori Society (AMS) Living Legacy Award, given for a lifetime of dedication and service to the society and to advocating for Montessori in education.

On May 6, Ward was honored at UWRF with a reception celebrating her achievements and the graduation of students from UWRF's Montessori program. Ward said she was "stunned" to receive the award and said it represents the UWRF Montessori and education programs as well as others she has worked with around the world.

"This award is for us. It's for our whole program," Ward said. "None of this happens without the collaboration of a lot of people."

Ward's list of Montessori-related honors and achievements is seemingly never ending. Through the years, she has been part of and led numerous AMS committees. She has played key roles in numerous Montessori research efforts nationally. She has presented at and taught in AMS programs in South Korea, Taiwan and throughout the U.S. and played a leadership role in Montessori organizations in Australia.



She has won numerous awards, including the UWRF Lifetime Achievement Award for Scholarly and Creative Activity, the Dennis Shapiro Innovation and Montessori Teacher Education Award, and received the Education Lifetime Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Montessori Association.

"She is nationally known. She has made such a significant difference for me and for students and educators here at UWRF, and for others all around the world," said Kateri Carver, director of UWRF's Montessori programs.

As she described her journey from young education major to Montessori devotee, the soft-spoken Ward, 75, recalled numerous individual students and teachers who she taught and learned from. They range from children she taught in the

U.S. and Australia to educators she worked and studied with, including Jean Piaget, the noted Swiss psychologist known for his systematic study of cognitive development.

“There are all of these amazing people I have been able to work with, and all of these amazing places that I have been,” Ward said. “Being able to work with individuals and see these (Montessori) ideas come to fruition feels really good. It is gratifying.”

Montessori movement

As Ward earned her teaching degree and taught in the U.S. and then Australia, she became increasingly interested in and a believer of the Montessori education method. The method is named for Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori and focuses on hands-on learning, developing problem-solving skills, critical thinking and both independent and collaborative learning.

“I was very interested in learning more about active learning and differentiated curriculum,” Ward said. “Montessori is about teaching the whole child, not breaking up learning into separate parts. Children learn that way, learning about topics in multiple ways.”

In addition to teaching creative yet practical approaches, Montessori also educates students to value individuals and to retain a sense of wonder about the world around them, Ward said. She saw her students become more enthused about learning as she taught them using the Montessori method.

“My students didn’t want to leave the classroom,” Ward said with a smile. “They were enjoying being there and learning.”

Ward took her commitment and enthusiasm for Montessori from Australia to UWRF. The university didn’t have a Montessori program, but Ward believed she could “have a Montessori influence” on student educators. Eventually Ward began a Montessori program in the River Falls School District, and in 2012 started a Montessori program at UWRF.

Ward subsequently worked to establish a pre-K Montessori effort at UWRF and last year, the university became the first in the nation to offer a Montessori education doctoral program. The Ed.D. program provides coursework in hybrid and on-campus formats and serves students from across the country.

Stephanie Van Fleet, a Montessori teacher and administrator in Lafayette, Colo., enrolled in the doctoral program last year and praised Ward for getting the program up and running.

“She was the key player in getting this off the ground and allowing me to pursue my educational dreams,” Van Fleet said.

Carver praised Ward for her mentorship, saying Ward’s ongoing work teaching UWRF students is key to helping the program evolve. Ward’s dedication and energy propel the program and its students and teachers to succeed, Carver said.

“I can’t say enough how much she has helped this program and the Montessori movement across the world,” Carver said.

Ward is humbled by those words. She said she continues to advocate for Montessori in any way she can because she believes in it wholeheartedly. She said she will continue to work to integrate the Montessori approach into as many schools as possible.

"I get such a thrill out of doing this work," Ward said, her face breaking into a smile. "This work excites me, and I will do this until I die. There is nothing else I would rather do."



The St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center includes a high-quality space to prepare food that numerous business owners said has been key to getting their operations up and running and able to expand. The center has helped 36 businesses since it opened five years ago. Photo courtesy of the SCVBIC.

St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center celebrates five years of helping grow businesses

UW-River Falls, others help make effort to boost the regional economy possible

May 30, 2023 - Five years after it first opened its doors as a place to grow businesses, the success of the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center (SCVBIC) was evident in the form of attendees celebrating that milestone.

During a May 22 ceremony at the business innovation center just north of River Falls, one owner after another spoke about how the facility and its staff helped grow their businesses, and in some cases make them possible at all.

A coffee roaster and seller. A risk assessment company. A CPR trainer. A language training specialist. Several food providers.

Some owners described how the space at the business innovation center was key to their company getting off the ground.

Others discussed training they received, helping them learn to run their business. Still others mentioned key ideas they gleaned from meeting other business owners at the facility.

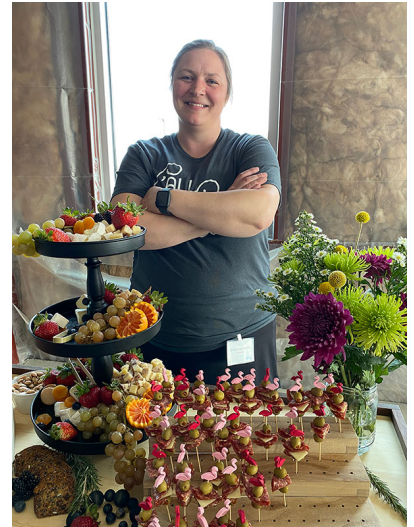
No matter their business type, all of those owners said their operations wouldn't be where they are today without the SCVBIC, a combined effort of UW-River Falls, Chippewa Valley Technical College, the River Falls Economic Development Corporation, and the city of River Falls.

"In my time here, the business has just exploded," said Ed Rosheim, who owns Workplace Languages, a corporate language training company and international translation agency based in Woodbury, Minn.

Since he housed his company at the SCVBIC, the River Falls part of Rosheim's business has grown to six full-time and three part-time employees, along with two intern positions. Sales and clients have experienced significant increases, he said.

Other business owners told similar success stories. Brianne Rehak, who operates her That Girl Brie grazing table business, described how her sales have taken off in the three months since she began using the center's food space.

"Now, instead of me searching for customers, they're searching for me," Rehak said. "In my short time here, people have gotten to know about me, and my business has really taken off."



Such stories of business success are music to the ears of Sheri Marnell, SCVBIC director. Seeing business ideas come to fruition and knowing that the center plays a key role in that motivates her, Marnell said.

"We serve as a stepping stone for these businesses," Marnell said. "We want this facility and what we do here to make it possible for them to grow and get established in the community."

'Stronger together'

That has certainly been the case for many businesses. Since the SCVBIC opened its doors, 36 different businesses have been started or expanded there, resulting in the retention of 153 jobs and the creation of another 94. With that growth, \$33.1 million has been invested in the local economy. Twelve businesses have "graduated" during the past five years, meaning they have grown enough to move from the center into the surrounding community.

Those successes wouldn't be possible without UWRF and other partners who worked for years before it opened to make the center a reality, Marnell said. Having four partners support a business incubator is a rarity, she said.

UWRF provides staffing for the business innovation center, while the city of River Falls donated the land near River Falls where the center is located. Chippewa Valley Technical College sponsors the training room, offices and lighting maintenance, and the River Falls Economic Development Corporation helps finance building ownership.

“Our four founders knew they couldn't do it alone, that we would be stronger together, and with their commitment to 'get to yes' we have the innovation center,” Marnell said.

UW-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo said supporting the business innovation center fits with the university's mission of supporting the surrounding community and region.

“This facility really adds to the ecosystem of innovation in our region,” Gallo said, “and UW-River Falls wants to play an important role in that work.”

To get the center up and running, the U.S. Economic Development Administration provided \$1.4 million. Grants and corporate sponsorships provide additional dollars, as does a loan from the River Falls Economic Development Corporation, along with lease charges paid by businesses using the site.

The SCVBIC offers services ranging from management guidance and technical assistance to new business owners, networking opportunities, and different types of workspaces to rent. Among the business incubator's 15,300 square feet of leasable space are mail-only options, cubicles, private offices and office suites, co-working rooms, industrial space and food-ready space.

“We try to offer a variety of spaces that can accommodate different types of businesses,” Marnell said. “We want this building and its services to be available to a wide variety of businesses.”

‘A real business’

Rehak said her business has benefited substantially from the networking and connections she has made since she started operating That Girl Brie. Working with other business owners and the ideas that come from their discussions “has been invaluable,” she said, as has the business management expertise the center's staff have provided. In addition, she said, access to a high-quality commercial kitchen has allowed her business to ramp up.

“Commercial kitchens like this are really hard to come by,” Rehak said. “Being here makes me feel like I'm operating a real business.”

The center is 87% occupied, Marnell said, above the 70-75% considered a healthy level. Now she is focused on leasing the building's second floor to accommodate an anchor business, and initial designs to expand the building are finished. Doing so, she said, would allow for a doubling of the building's size, increase income, and provide much-needed industrial space. Increased staffing to provide additional help to businesses is another need, she said.

“Our wish list is really long on what we would like to do,” Marnell said. “We just need more funding.”

To raise more money, business incubation center officials are relaunching their sponsorship program to allow for sustaining sponsor levels. That and other revenue streams will enable the center to enable more business owners to achieve their goals while at the same time growing the regional economy, Marnell said.

“We are grateful for the success our business owners have had,” Marnell said, “and we are working to make sure more businesses can enjoy that same success.”

For more information about the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center, visit <https://www.stcroixinnovation.org/>.

Photo Inset: *Brianne Rehak, owner of That Girl Brie grazing table, said her business sales have increased significantly since she began using the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center’s food space three months ago. UWRF photo.*



UW-River Falls senior Emily Larsen was recently named the Paul Thomas Floriculture Production Intern of the Year for work she did during a three-month internship in Colorado last summer. Larsen was chosen as the top intern nationally among those taking part in the prestigious intern program coordinated by the American Floral Endowment. Photo courtesy of Emily Larsen.

Student awarded top national internship honor

Emily Larsen lauded for her passion working with flowers, other plants

May 18, 2023 – When Emily Larsen headed to Peyton, Colo., for an internship at a major greenhouse last summer, an award was the last thing on her mind.

So when Larsen learned recently that she was the recipient of the Paul Thomas Floriculture Production Intern of the Year Award – a national award – she was more than a little surprised.

“I got an email and then a phone call notifying me that I had won this award and I was like ‘Oh my gosh, I didn’t even realize I had entered,’” Larsen said with a laugh. “I was very surprised.”

The award is given annually by the American Floral Endowment (AFE) and recognizes the top intern taking part in a horticulture internship program across the U.S. Students who successfully complete their internship and complete a written report and produce multiple video blogs are eligible for the award.

Larsen finished her report and videos, she said, but didn’t realize until she won the award that those actions could lead to that honor.

"I did that work simply because I was interested in the work I was doing," said Larsen, a senior horticulture major from Hudson. "To actually have won this award, it is an amazing feeling."

As part of being named the top intern, Larsen will attend Cultivate, a major national horticulture trade show. This year's event is in Columbus, Ohio, July 15-18.

According to the April 26 AEF [press release](#), Larsen's hard work and passion for horticulture stood out among the many other AEF interns working across the country.

"This year, one intern stood out from the rest for her limitless passion, drive, and curiosity in horticulture, which she exemplified in her internship," the release said of Larsen.

Larsen certainly is passionate about all things horticulture. During her three-month internship at the Altman Plants in Colorado, she was surrounded daily by plants of all shapes, sizes, colors and varieties and took part in a wide variety of jobs.

She spent time in each part of the business, doing everything from propagating and growing plants to controlling pests in innovative ways. She measured soil conditions to determine how to augment plant growth and measured the height of chrysanthemums to determine their growing conditions. She even learned how to weld.

"I saw so many different aspects of how a large greenhouse operates," Larsen said. "There is so much that has to happen, in a detailed way, for it all to come together."

Larsen got interested in flowers and other plants in high school when she took on a leadership role in a floriculture team that was part of the Future Farmers of America Club she was president of. When the school built a greenhouse, she cared for plants there.

Her interest in plants was further piqued when her high school team advanced to a national horticulture competition. When she toured the greenhouse at UW-River Falls and met Horticulture Associate Professor Sonja Maki, she knew she wanted to attend school there.

Since enrolling at UWRF, Larsen has been a standout student, taking part in research and learning diligently, Maki said. Larsen's passion for horticulture shines through in her work and how she continues to learn more about the subject, Maki said, calling Larsen "a very good ambassador for our (horticulture) program."

"It's competitive to even get one of these internships," Maki said. "And then to be chosen as number one in the nation is a really big deal."

In her quest to learn more about horticulture, Larsen has been chosen for another prestigious internship this summer with Ball Horticultural Company. Her internship is in Chicago and she will work in plant pathology. Larsen's experiences during last summer's internship and since have led her toward wanting to work with plant genetics and diseases.

That realization has her thinking about graduate school, she said. But first she is excited to learn more about plants this summer and then during her senior year at UWRF.

“No matter what I do, it will be about plants,” Larsen said with a smile. “Plants are so important to our world in so many ways. And working with them is what I love to do.”



Sarah Langlois is graduating from UW-River Falls with degrees in biomedical and health sciences and mathematics and has been admitted to the doctoral biomedical engineering program at the University of Minnesota. She initially thought she wanted to work in biology but learned through her experiences at UWRF that she enjoys engineering and is now pursuing a career in that field. Pat Deninger/UWRF photo.

Students offer advice for landing a job before graduation

Get involved early, make connections

May 3, 2023 - One University of Wisconsin-River Falls student who will graduate on May 6 will realize her dream job of teaching school. Another will work as a pediatric speech and language pathologist, while still another will operate her own business. Others were admitted to doctoral programs.

While those post-graduate plans are as varied as the students themselves, they share a commonality: each of those students was hired for a full-time job or have been admitted to graduate programs before they graduate.

Of the more than 700 UWRF students graduating on May 6, 87 of them reported* either being hired for jobs or admitted to graduate school programs before commencement. Those students said they're grateful to have their post-undergraduate plans in place and to have found their way to careers they are enthused about.

"It feels really good to be doing something that makes me excited," said Cale Graeber, of Tomahawk, who is graduating with a major in conservation and environmental planning and has been hired as an equipment operator at St. Paul-based

Landbridge Ecological, a landscape restoration business. "It feels like you're part of something bigger than yourself, and that is a good feeling."

Students who lined up jobs or grad school admissions before they graduate credit their getting involved in internships, research projects and student organizations early on in their time at UWRF with their employment success. Those experiences help inform students about what they really want to do, and in some cases, what they don't want to do for a profession, they said.

Caleb Anton, of New Richmond, will graduate with an exercise and sports science major and was admitted to the physical therapy doctorate program at the University of Minnesota. He credits his internships at Twin Cities Orthopedics and Kinnic Health and Rehab with fostering his affinity for physical therapy.

"That is really how my actual love of physical therapy started," Anton said of his internships. "Ever since I started there, my love of PT has grown and grown."

Students also credit faculty and staff with their success at UWRF. The university's relatively small size and the dedicated, personal nature of faculty create an environment that fosters learning, they said.

UWRF faculty that KateyInn Firlie worked with pushed her to excel, she said. Oftentimes they were tough, but that was because they cared and wanted her to succeed, said Firlie, of Fairfax, Minn., who is graduating from UWRF's communication sciences and disorders master's program and has been hired as a pediatric speech language pathologist at Fraser in Woodbury, Minn.

"The faculty here at UWRF really want the best for you," Firlie said. "Sometimes they give you tough love. But they have also been very supportive. They have always been here for me when I needed it."

In addition to being involved in internships, organizations and other opportunities, students said a willingness to step outside their comfort zone is key to discovering what they want to do and landing jobs early on. Sometimes that means changing a major one or more times, they said.

When Halle Haines, of Hastings, Minn., enrolled at UWRF three years ago, she decided to major in education. That decision made sense, given Haines' affinity for children and her previous experience that included jobs in daycare and as a nanny.

However, during Haines' freshman year, she switched majors from education to business administration management after her education coursework didn't seem to fit, she said.

"I love kids and all that, but something wasn't clicking in the (education) program," Haines said. "I knew I had to find something else that was a better fit for me."

Haines' willingness to alter her original plan has worked. She is graduating with a business management degree in just three years and has been hired as a revenue tax specialist by the state of Minnesota.

“This whole auditing thing is not even close to what I thought I would be doing,” Haines said. “It just goes to show that you can’t be afraid to try new things, to go after opportunities.”

Sarah Langlois offers similar advice. She is graduating with degrees in biomedical and health sciences and mathematics and has been admitted to the doctoral biomedical engineering program at the University of Minnesota.

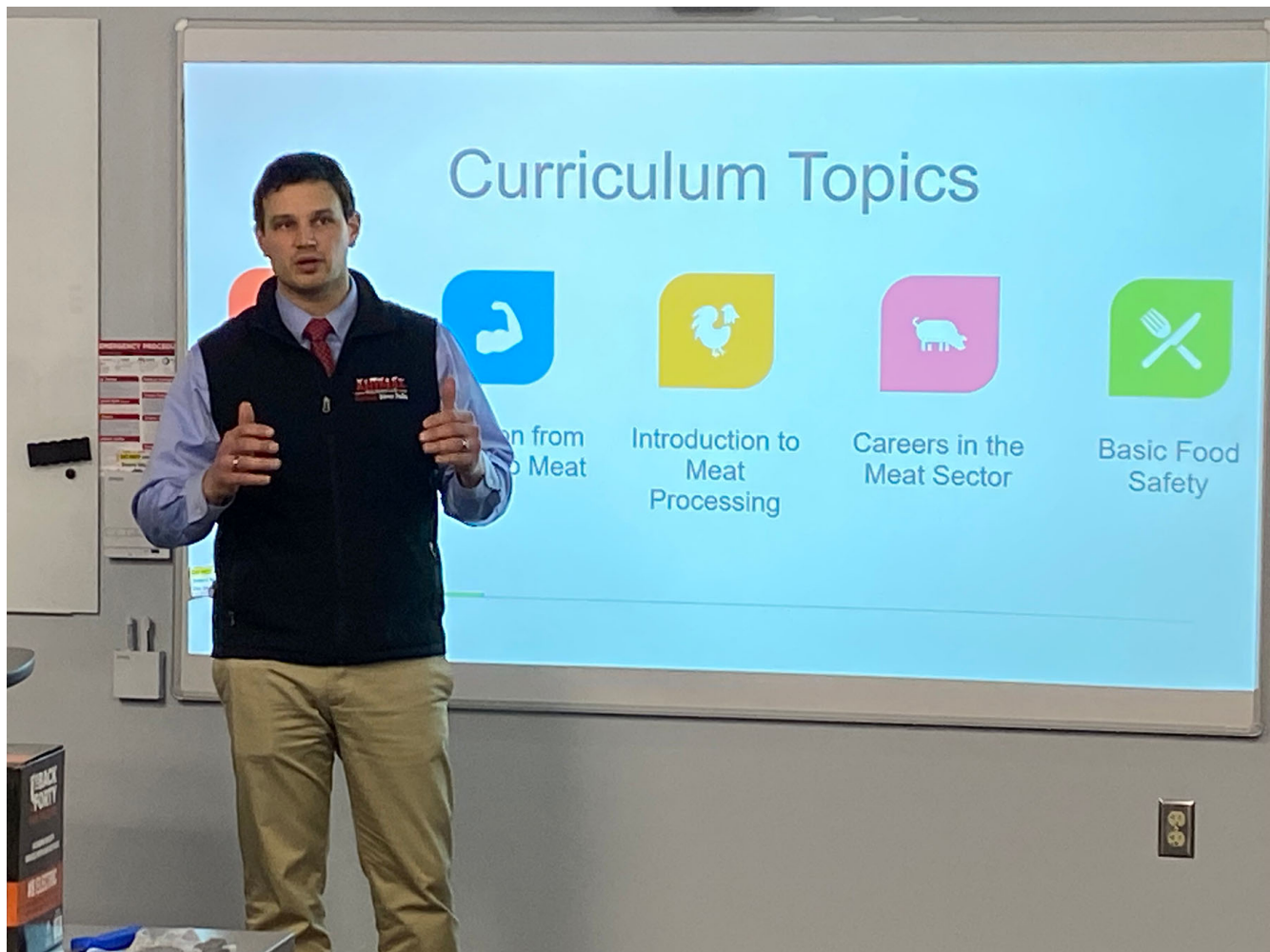
When she enrolled at UWRF, Langlois, of River Falls, thought she wanted to study and work in biology. But her work in research projects and as an intern revealed that she enjoyed engineering.

“Don’t be afraid to take an opportunity, to take a chance,” Langlois said. “That is a big part of how you learn what you really want to do.”

Profile stories about some of this year’s UWRF graduates who landed full-time jobs or were admitted to graduate school before they graduate are available at <https://www.uwrf.edu/admissions/hired-before-graduation>.

A list of all 87 UWRF students who reported being hired or admitted to graduate school before graduation can be found at <https://www.uwrf.edu/CareerServices/Students/StudentSuccessStories.cfm>.

**Graduating seniors and graduate students were surveyed by UWRF Career Services in spring 2023 prior to graduation about their post-graduation plans. 87 respondents shared that they had received a job offer or been admitted to graduate school prior to commencement.*



Kurt Vogel, director of the Humane Handling Institute at UW-River Falls, discusses a meat processing curriculum being used at high schools during a January 25 presentation to Wisconsin state officials when they visited UWRF. UW-River Falls recently received a \$20,000 state grant to help address a meat processing shortage in Wisconsin.

UW-River Falls one of eight recipients of state meat processing infrastructure grant

Money will improve facilities, provide students with training to address processor shortage

May 16, 2023 - The University of Wisconsin-River Falls has received a \$20,000 meat processing infrastructure grant from the state to renovate its livestock holding pens and handling facilities, an effort that will increase student learning opportunities and help address a meat processing shortage in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has awarded UWRF those funds as part of a \$200,000 grant given to eight applicants statewide through the 2023 Meat Processor Infrastructure Grant Program. The grants are intended to grow Wisconsin's meat industry and boost the viability of livestock operations.

The grant was awarded to Animal and Food Science Associate Professor Kurt Vogel and the Humane Handling Institute (HHI) at UWRF that he oversees. Specifically, the grant will be used to modernize current livestock handling and holding pens to improve worker safety and animal welfare. The HHI was created in fall 2022.

“We appreciate DATCP’s support for humane handling and meat processing education at UWRF,” Vogel said. “This grant will help provide safer conditions for the students, staff and animals that enter our facilities. Our team is very excited to continue to do our part in developing the next generation of training opportunities for the meat industry.”

The grant will allow UWRF to, through the HHI, educate and train meat processing employees to address a processor shortfall across the state and elsewhere in the U.S., said Dean Olson, interim dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

“This is important for UWRF in that this (HHI) is the first comprehensive training program in the nation and demonstrates UWRF is a leader in offering education and training for our students and agricultural industries in the state, region and nationally,” Olson said.

The grant process was competitive, with 70 applicants seeking more than \$2.8 million in funding. A maximum of \$50,000 was available to any one project.

Grant recipients are required to match the full grant amount. The grants are available as part of the 2021-23 state budget which included \$200,000 annually to increase meat processing output in the state.

In addition to UW-River Falls, other grant award winners include Salchert Meats in St. Cloud, JM Watkins Meats & Meat Processing in Plum City, Wisconsin River Meats in Mauston, NF Packing in Elkhorn, The Durand Smokehouse in Durand, Sailer’s Meat Market and Food Processing, Inc. in Elmwood, and D-D Meat Processing in Sheboygan Falls.

Gov. Tony Evers said the grants will address an ongoing meat processing shortage across Wisconsin that was made evident during the coronavirus pandemic. His administration created the meat processing grant program in 2021 to boost processing capacity, but more work on that front is needed, Evers said. Many farmers report waits of a year or longer to have their animals slaughtered and processed.

“Even still, need continues to outpace available funding, which is why investing in and supporting our local meat processors continues to be a top priority for me and our budget includes an additional \$1.6 million to continue this successful program,” Evers said in a news release.



Members of the UW-River Falls College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences won multiple team and individual awards recently at the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Student Judging Contest in Modesto, Calif., April 12-15. Students also placed first in the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. UWRF photo.

UW-River Falls teams take top awards at national competitions

Agriculture students win multiple team and individual honors

May 11, 2023 – Coryn Davidson and her three teammates on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Ag Business Team arrived at a national competition in Modesto, Calif., with high hopes.

They worked diligently in the months leading up to the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Student Judging Contest, held April 12-15, learning as much as they could to prepare for the contest's exam covering several subjects in agricultural economics. Davidson, of River Falls, and her teammates – Grant Buwalda, a senior from Waupun; Casey Denk, a junior from Mondovi; and Joe Schlies, a senior from Denmark, all agricultural business majors – were matched against other four-year universities, many with much higher enrollments than UWRF.

When contest scores were announced, UWRF was not only named the winner, but the four top individual scores in the event belonged to team members. Buwalda took first place, and Schlies, Denk, and Davidson won second, third, and fourth place, respectively. After event results were announced, team members felt relief and pure joy.

"I will never forget riding in the car, windows down, ribbons high, and music turned up loud as we rode home with our victory,"

Davidson recalled.

The Ag Business Team wasn't the only UWRF team that is part of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) celebrating first-place honors at recent national competitions. A soil judging team competing in the NACTA event also took first in both the team and individual contests. UWRF also took top national honors on April 1 at the annual North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge event in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

In addition, the UWRF Knowledge Bowl Team took second place at the NACTA event after winning last year. The UWRF Crop Judging Team placed sixth at the NACTA event as well.

High-level performances at national competitions are nothing new for CAFES teams. UWRF has a reputation for excelling at the national level, often topping the scores of larger universities and Ivy League schools.



Holly Dolliver, soil science and geology professor and chair of the Plant and Earth Science Department, remembers her days as an undergrad at UWRF and the school's tradition of CAFES teams performing at high levels nationally. She has coached the Soils Judging Team to back-to-back first place finishes at NACTA, five national titles overall.

"There is a culture here that has the expectation that we will do really well," Dolliver said. "We have a rich tradition and a history of being a part of these competitions. It is something our students are really motivated about."



Other coaches of UWRF teams participating in national competitions concurred, saying their students are extremely hard working and diligent about learning as much as they can from those events. Students strive to perform well in the national competitions, and that dedication is directly tied to their performance in the classroom, according to Veronica Justen who coaches the Crop Judging Team and is an associate professor of crop science.

"Every year we keep striving to make our class a little more challenging so that students are better prepared for the competitions," Justen said. "The students do extra practice because they really want to do well. It's really fun to see how excited they get about the competition."

Justen's Crop Judging Team includes Dresden Lambert, a senior agricultural business major from Fountain City; and crop and soil science majors Jace Heiman, a junior from Kewaunee; Simon Kluzak, a senior from Taylors Falls, Minn.; Cheyenne Burgess, a junior from Shullsburg; Alexandria Broderick, a senior from Pound; Jordan Hellenbrand, a junior from Sun Prairie; and Jack Wolter, a senior from Waconia, Minn.

‘A surreal feeling’

Students who have competed in the national events said preparing for those competitions energizes them to work harder in class. Competing at the national level requires increased rigor, they said, and those competitions require critical thinking and problem-solving skills in real-world situations.

Grace Haase, a junior dairy science major from Somerset, said she and her teammates competing in the Dairy Challenge used knowledge they had acquired in their classes, combined with discussions with industry professionals and their personal experiences, to meet the competition’s goal of making a farm more efficient and profitable. Their coach, UWRF Dairy Science Professor Sylvia Kehoe, had prepared them well for the challenges that arose during the competition, Haase said.

The UWRF Dairy Challenge Team was competing against six other schools from around the nation, including favorite and perennial power California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. When team members heard judges announce that university had placed second, their spirits dropped.

Then the judge announced the winner: UWRF.

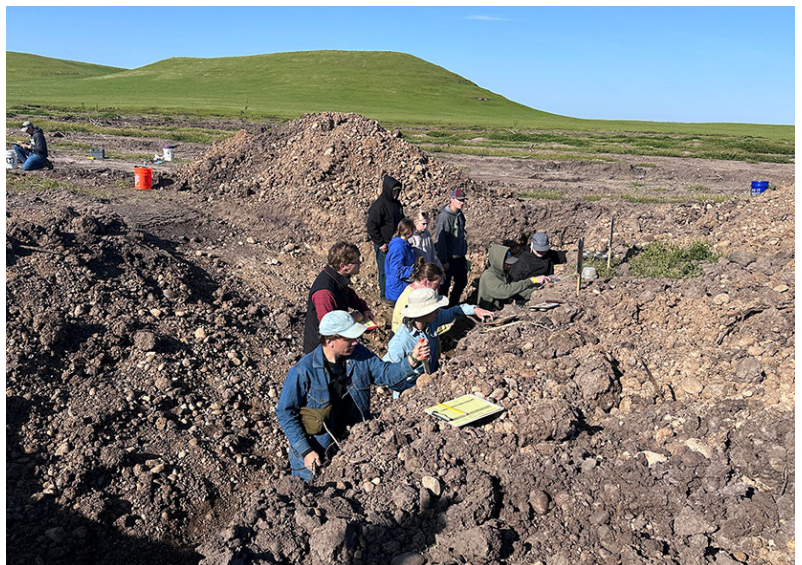
“It was a surreal feeling when we won,” said Dairy Challenge Team member Ben Stone, a senior dairy science major from Ripon. “We were going against a team who had a long history of winning the competition ... We knew we had done a good job, but it wasn’t confirmed until they announced us as the winners.”

Other members of the Dairy Challenge Team include Alison Wagner, a senior dairy science major from Cedarburg; and Haley Kirchoff, a senior agricultural business major from Hutchinson, Minn.

The UWRF Soil Judging Team won its competition as well but had to overcome challenges to do so. The competition pits in which students judged soils were unlike the pits where they had practiced, making an already difficult competition even tougher.

The team worked together, relying on each other’s skills, to win the team event. In addition, team members placed high in the individual event. Megan Culpitt, a sophomore crop and soil science major from Norwalk, took first place; Savannah Lynch, a senior environmental science major from Green Bay, placed second; and Seth Lokensgard, a senior crop and soil science major from St. Peter, Minn., placed fifth.

“The difficulty of the competition this year made winning feel that much more special,” Culpitt said.



Other soil judging team members include Dagan Lance, a junior crop and soil science major from Mukwonago; Ben Foust, a senior agricultural business major from Fountain City; Linus Chaple, a senior crop and soil science major from St. Paul; and Elliot Connelly, a junior environmental science major from Rockford, Minn.

Buwalda was joined by Lambert, Wolter and Kluzak on the Knowledge Bowl Team. The group answered questions about a range of agriculture-related topics “and probably had the most fun of any team there,” Buwalda said.

Making connections

The competitions are important in part, team members and coaches said, because they put into practice what students have learned in the classroom. UWRF teams continued high placings in national contests are a testament to the quality education they receive.

UWRF’s high rankings at national competitions “shows that we have a strong program, and strong supporting areas as well,” Kehoe said. “It’s not only our strong ag program, but the plant sciences, communications and other areas of study that our students get. It all leads to a very well-rounded student that we are able to get out into the workforce.”

Dolliver agreed. She and Kehoe credit UWRF’s commitment to providing students with out-of-classroom experiences that emphasize hands-on learning and critical thinking, skills that are required at the national competitions and in workplaces. While some universities are decreasing those opportunities because of budget concerns, CAFES and UWRF continue to make them a priority, they said.

“As a campus and surely at (CAFES), we are highly committed to these hands-on opportunities for our students,” Dolliver said, noting her students learn skills at the NACTA competition and other events that they can’t get in a classroom setting.

In fact, Dolliver said how she teaches her students, and what she is able to teach them, is positively influenced by the national competitions. In addition to boosting academic achievement, those competitions also lead to valuable networking opportunities for participating students.

Stone, a member of the Dairy Challenge Team, experienced networking possibilities firsthand. He exchanged contact information with a dairy company representative at the Dairy Challenge Midwest Regional Qualifying Competition, then met with him again at the national event. Since then they have exchanged email messages and had numerous phone calls, Stone said.

“This competition might have led me to a future job in the dairy industry,” he said.

That is music to Kehoe’s ears. While she appreciates the satisfaction that comes with winning national events, the real value of those competitions is in motivating students to strive to learn, she said.

“Winning this just helps get the word out there that this is a university and a program that has strong students who are capable of doing just as good or better than other schools out there,” Kehoe said.

Photo Inset #1: The UW-River Falls Dairy Challenge Team placed first in the annual North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., held March 31 and April 1. Team members are, left to right, Alison Wagner, Grace Haase, Ben Stone, Haley Kirchoff and team coach and dairy science Professor Sylvia Kehoe. UWRF photo.

Photo Inset #2: The UW-River Falls Crop Judging Team examined plants during competition as part of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Student Judging Contest in Modesto, Calif., April 12-15. Photo courtesy of Megan Culpitt.

Photo Inset #3: Members of the UW-River Falls Soil Judging Team work in a soil pit in Modesto, Calif., during the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Student Judging Contest last month. UWRF students placed first in both the team and individual soil judging contests. Photo courtesy of Megan Culpitt.