

LANTERN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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SUMMER 2015



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

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Celebrating career achievements of UW-L alumnae



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LANTERN

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UW-LA CROSSE ALUMNI MAGAZINE



CLASS NOTES ONLINE

For complete class notes each quarter, go to www.uwlalumni.org. Click on 'News,' then 'Class Notes.'

ON THE COVER:

LEADING BY EXAMPLE – Shelmina Babai Abji, '85, a native of Tanzania, East Africa, says her path to leadership, which included UW-La Crosse, was not a straight journey. Rather, it involved many small milestones. Full story on page 16.

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CLASS NOTES POLICY: The UW-L Alumni Association publishes class notes and obituaries online in January, April, July and October. The deadline is the 1st of the month prior to the quarterly postings. See www.uwlalumni.org for details.



LESSONS IN MOVING AHEAD

So, I asked Shelmina Babai Abji “How do you do that: not listen to your weakness?”

The ’85 graduate replied, “Just don’t listen to them, just focus on your strengths. If you make a mistake just don’t

strengths.” I am happy to report that I recently accepted the job.

In the coming years, I’ll have many more opportunities, paths to take, responsibilities and competing messages of who I “should” be as a woman. I signed up

and education I was relieved to know that they didn’t have easy, linear paths either. But, they found ways to navigate.

I learned that I can help myself through those competing messages by focusing on strengths and putting energy into the things that matter the most to me — the “big rocks” as Shelmina called them. When I’m stuck, I should reach out to those I admire and support me and ask for their guidance.

Women Moving Ahead showed me the importance of paying it forward. I hope I can take what I learned to help other women in the future.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Kayleigh Day attended a campus conference in April on how women can “move ahead” in their communities, workplaces and beyond. Women Moving Ahead featured presentations from women leaders including UW-L alum and former IBM executive Shelmina Babai Abji who contributed \$5,000 to support the conference. Read about Babai Abji on page 16.

worry about it, there are no mistakes — just things to learn.”

Eleven days later, as I drove to a job interview, every time I started to doubt myself I kept repeating, “don’t even listen to your weaknesses — focus on your

for Women Moving Ahead because I craved guidance.

Among my questions: This is hard! Am I doing something wrong? How do successful women do it?

As I listened to the stories and insights from women in business, politics

Kayleigh Day is in UW-L’s Master of Public Health program. She aims to graduate in May 2016. She recently started as a community health educator at the Monroe County Health Department.

Regent honors

UW-L History professor, Mathematics Department honored by UW System Board of Regents



History Professor Víctor M. Macías-González received a 2015 Board of Regents Diversity Award in February. The Board makes up to three, \$5,000 awards statewide each year to recognize institutional change agents who foster access and success for historically underrepresented populations. This isn't the first time someone from UW-L has received System diversity honors. Biology Professor Roger Haro, who also directs UW-L's McNair Scholars Program, received the 2014 Regent's Diversity Award. Macías-González also received the Wisconsin Professor of the Year Award in November 2013.



The Mathematics Department earned the UW System Board of Regents' 2015 Teaching Excellence Award. It's the only department in the state to be honored this year. And, it's not the only time a UW-L department earned Regent kudos. The Biology Department received the board's department teaching excellence award in 2013. Mathematics Professor Jennifer Kosiak won a Regents' individual teaching award in 2012.

Pictured above is Becky LeDocq, UW-L Department of Mathematics chair, receiving the department's award from Regent Nicolas Harsy. "We've always felt that we have a great department that is very student-centered," says LeDocq.

Watch the video: <http://news.uwlax.edu/sum-of-excellence-uw-l-math-department-honored/>.



TOP SCHOOL FOR UNDER \$30K

UW-L is the only Wisconsin college to make "Kiplinger's Personal Finance" magazine's list of 24 Best College Values Under \$30,000/Year, 2015." It's the second year in a row UW-L

has made the prestigious list. Kiplinger's also lists UW-L on its America's 100 best public colleges and universities.

New campus leaders named

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION: **LAURA MILNER**



Laura Milner will become the dean of the College of Business Administration. Milner, associate dean of the College of Business and interim chief international officer at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, will start Aug. 1. Milner comes to UW-L with a wealth of experience, particularly in international education. She has experience working on six continents with two Fulbright scholarships, and has published extensively in international marketing. Current CBA Dean Bruce May is retiring.

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL STUDIES: **JULIA JOHNSON**



Julia Johnson, associate dean of the College of Liberal Studies, will be the college's new dean effective July 1. Johnson has been the associate dean and director of the School of Arts and Communication since 2011. She was the inspiration behind the college's Creative Imperatives festival, and has worked closely on several major projects for the college and the university, including a number of task forces. She replaces Dean Ruthann Benson who plans to take a sabbatical and teach before retiring in December 2016.

CAREER SERVICES: **GAIL BEAUSOLEIL**



Gail Beausoleil, of Davenport University in Michigan, will be UW-L's new director of the Academic Advising Center and Career Services, starting at the end of June. Beausoleil has served as director of Career Services at Davenport since 2007 where she managed a budget and staff for a main campus and four satellite campuses of 3,500 students. Tim Tritch, who has been interim director of Career Services since August 2013, is retiring.

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Add alumni@uwlax.edu to your
list of email contacts and sign up
at www.uwlalumni.org

NOW HEAR THIS!



La Crosse's downtown has come alive with memories of locals who worked, lived and shopped on its streets. UW-L Assistant History Professor Ariel Beaujot, right, and one of her students in a new Public and Policy History major emphasis helped to launch the "Hear, Here" project in April. Signs at downtown locations — which will remain up through the year 2020 — are linked to a mobile phone system where people can hear the collected stories of everyday people. The stories contribute to the larger history of the community, says Beaujot. Stories range from the aftermath of a downtown fight to homelessness in La Crosse. Listen at:

www.hearherelacrosse.org.



ARCHAEOLOGY ACE



Archaeology major Thatcher Rogers earned the most prestigious award an undergraduate archaeology student can receive for research just before graduating in May. Rogers earned the Institute for Field Research Undergraduate Student Paper Award from the Society for American Archaeology, the largest professional archaeology organization in the world. He presented award-winning research at the organization's annual meeting in San Francisco.



REUNION SET

Football champions return this fall

All 1985 & 1995 national football championship players, coaches and family members are encouraged to return to campus Saturday, Oct. 10, to celebrate the anniversaries of those great Stagg Bowl victories. Kim Blum, new athletic director, and Coach Roger Haring are excited to welcome everyone back to campus!

The Eagles play UW-Stout at 1 p.m. Then participants will gather to share stories, reconnect and hear about this year's squad.

Contact the Alumni Association at **877.895.2586** or alumni@uwlax.edu if you're willing to follow up with teammates to attend. Registration materials will follow soon via email.



FOR A COMPLETE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CALENDAR OF EVENTS, VISIT

WWW.UWLALUMNI.ORG

GOLF LOCALLY, GLOBALLY



Participants in last year's Alumni & Friends Golf Outing had fun at Cedar Creek Golf Club in Onalaska. Alumni and others can join worldwide by registering and golfing at their local course.

The UW-L Alumni Association has planned a day of golf Wednesday, Aug. 12, at Cedar Creek Golf Club in Onalaska — or at your local course.

This is the 26th year of the UW-L Alumni & Friends Golf Outing. "This is a great opportunity for alumni and friends to reconnect while raising funds for important programs that strengthen UW-La Crosse," says Janie Morgan, UW-L Alumni Association executive director. In 2014, more than \$15,000 was raised to support legacy scholarships, the Lantern, networking events, alumni reunions and more.

The five-person golf scramble includes lunch, 18 holes of golf with cart, special edition UW-L polo shirt, team photo, beverages on the course, special hole events, dinner and a raffle.



PLAY ANYWHERE

Those who can't make it back to the Coulee Region can participate too. Play on your home course Wednesday, Aug. 12. Registration is \$50 and includes a special edition UW-L polo shirt. Round up friends and colleagues to play at www.uwlalumni.org.

The UW-L Alumni Association hopes to have regional, national and international participation. Post photos on the UW-L Alumni Association Facebook page.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS MAY 2015

THE MAURICE O. GRAFF DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Recognizes outstanding achievement in the lives and works of alumni who have brought honor and distinction to the university. Long-time administrator Maurice O. Graff instituted the honor in 1977.



SUSAN M. GAPSTUR

- Nationally and internationally respected cancer epidemiology researcher.
- Researcher and professor at Northwestern University. Vice President of Epidemiology for the American Cancer Society in Atlanta.
- Authored peer-reviewed research studies published in high-impact scientific journals.
- Received pre- and post-doctoral fellowships from the National Cancer Institute.
- Earned a master's and doctorate in epidemiology from the University of Minnesota, 1989 & 1993; bachelor's in biology from UW-L, 1983.



THEODORE N. KNUDSON

- Respected manager within U.S. and European manned space programs.
- Head of Ground Operations and Logistics for European Manned Space Programs; Operations and Checkout Engineer for the Skylab and Mars Viking Lander Programs; Project Engineer for the Apollo/Saturn Moon Landing and Exploration Programs.
- Authored scholarly papers on space and aeronautics.
- Received numerous NASA and European Space Agency honors.
- Earned a bachelor's in general and physical science from UW-L, 1960.

THE RADA DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD

Recognizes alumni who have graduated within the last 20 years, achieved professional distinction, and taken part in humanitarian activities. Professor emeritus Ron Rada and his wife, Jane, created the award in 2002.



BRIAN J. PUERLING

- Innovative educator using digital technology.
- Director of education technology at the Catherine Cook School, Chicago.
- Former pre-school teacher in Chicago Public Schools.
- Authored "Teaching in the Digital Age: Smart Tools for Age 3 to Grade 3."
- Earned the National PBS Innovative Educator Award and National PBS Teacher's Choice Award, 2010.
- Holds a master's from Erikson Institute and a bachelor's in elementary and early childhood education from UW-L, 2006.

THE PARKER MULTICULTURAL ALUMNI AWARD

Recognizes outstanding alumni who have contributed greatly to the improvement of multiracial culture and understanding on the campus and in their careers. History Professor Emeritus James Parker initiated the award in 1997.



THEO HOWARD

- Respected and proven leader who promotes student learning and development.
- Currently associate vice chancellor for Student Affairs at North Carolina Central University.
- Director of Campus Recreation and assistant vice chancellor for Campus Life at Winston-Salem (North Carolina) State University, 2003-2015.
- Held numerous leadership positions at Detroit area YMCAs from 1996-2001.
- Earned a master's in sports administration from UW-L, 1995; bachelor's in psychology and sociology from UW-L, 1994.

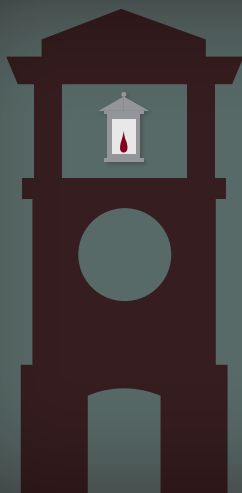
THE BURT AND NORMA ALTMAN TEACHER EDUCATION AWARD

Honors and recognizes outstanding educators and the significant contributions they make to children and communities. Professor Emeritus Burt Altman and his wife, Norma, both long time supporters of teacher education, created the award in 2015.



CINDY MARTEN

- Innovative and respected educator for more than 25 years.
- Superintendent of San Diego (California) Unified School District.
- Taught elementary school and served as a school-wide literacy specialist in the award-winning Poway Unified School District.
- Served for 10 years as teacher, instructional leader and principal at one of the most challenging schools in San Diego — Central Elementary in City Heights — where she greatly improved student achievement.
- Earned a master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of California, San Diego, 1995; bachelor's in elementary education from UW-L, 1988.



NOMINATE A UW-L ALUM!

Alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the university are encouraged to make nominations.

Nominations are accepted throughout the year. They must be received by Oct. 1 to be considered for the award in the spring of the following year.

COMPLETE THE FORM ONLINE AT
WWW.UWLALUMNI.ORG/NOMINATE.PHP

Here comes the judge

David Wambach becomes 24th Alumni Association president

Living “The La Crosse Experience” was coined a few years ago by David Wambach, ’81, the new Alumni Association president. He loved his experience at UW-L and continues to be involved and gives back in many ways.

“When you first meet Dave, you realize what a bright, caring professional he is.”
Janie Morgan, ’85 & ’86

Wambach began volunteering with the Association at a Madison Freshmen Send-Off. He enjoyed meeting incoming students and their families, along with sharing pride for his alma mater.

“When you first meet Dave, you realize what a bright, caring professional he is,” says Janie Morgan, ’85 & ’86, executive director.

Wambach has a great sense of humor and doesn’t take himself too seriously, notes Morgan. He was invited to join the board of directors in 2011 and quickly rose through the ranks. At the annual meeting in May, he was elected president for 2015-16.

While at UW-L, Wambach majored in political



David Wambach, '81

science. After graduation, he attended Marquette University and received a juris doctorate in 1985. His career includes serving as a prosecutor, assistant attorney general for the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and now as Jefferson County circuit court judge.

The Alumni Association's mission is to build and maintain relationships with students, alumni, friends and the university. Alumni are encouraged to volunteer at events, speak to students in the classroom, hire current students as interns and professional staff, serve on the board, and contribute their time, talent and treasures to ensure UW-L will be a great university for many years to come.

Be proud ... continue to live “The La Crosse Experience!”

2015-16 UW-L ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICERS

David Wambach, '81, president
Linda Kastantin, '91, vice president
Sandy Jensen, '01, treasurer
Kelly Nowicki, '98 & '02, past president
Janie Morgan, '85 & '86, executive director

DIRECTORS

Lisa Butterfield, '83
Matt Damico, '08
Jan Hincapie, '82
David Johnson, '92
Nikki Kenyatta, '02 & '08
David Peterson, '84
Kristina Rynes, '04
Roger Schlies, '60
Corey Sjoquist, '96 & '03
Ken Schmocker, '75
Alicia Stratman, '97
Lore Vang, '04 & '08

ALUMNI NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES

Scott Butler, '07, Delta Sigma Phi
Jeff Hankey, 1985, Band
Kara Pennoyer, '06, Madison
Chuck Rudrud, '69 & '80, Beta Sigma Chi
Adekunle Samuel, '09, Twin Cities
John Stangler, '05, Milwaukee
Kevin Weis, '14, Silver Eagles

EX-OFFICIO

Vickie Bain, UW-L Alumni Association
Bill Colclough, UW-L Foundation
Keli Frigo, UW-L Alumni Association
Joe Gow, UW-L Chancellor
Carlie Hopp, Student Alumni Ambassador
Ilene Kernozeck, UW-L Foundation
Greg Reichert, University Advancement
Emma Sutkay, UW-L Alumni Association

A LASTING EFFECT

Gifts support women leaders, staff

Proud UW-La Crosse alumna. Generous benefactor. Advocate for women and teachers.

Carol Dobrunz was all during her life, and continues to be after her death in July 2013.

Dobrunz, '57, left a \$100,000 estate gift to establish a fund for female student leaders. It will award three, \$1,300 scholarships annually to females in health, physical education and recreation.

After graduating,



Carol Dobrunz, '57, established numerous funds through the UW-L Foundation.

Dobrunz earned master's and doctoral degrees. She taught algebra and physical education in high schools. Later at UW-Stout she became professor of physical education, chair of health and physical education, associate dean of the school of Liberal Studies, and eventually assistant vice chancellor.

"Her success as a physical education teacher and administrator also gave her a keen insight and interest in helping students, as well as the professionals who teach them," says Al Trapp, retired UW-L Foundation president.

Dobrunz' commitment to professional development was clear from the fund she established in 2005. It supports conference costs for non-tenured faculty and instructional academic staff. After her death, a \$100,000 estate gift expanded the fund, allowing the UW-L Foundation to award six, \$1,000 grants for 2015-16.

Gail McCormick, a UW-L lecturer in Health Education and Health Promotion, received a travel

"Her success as a physical education teacher and administrator also gave her a keen insight and interest in helping students, as well as the professionals who teach them."

Al Trapp, retired UW-L Foundation president

grant in October 2013 to attend the American School Health Association conference. It allowed her to experience a national conference, network, and stay current with teacher preparation and best practices.

"In my profession of teaching future health educators, it's important that I continue to be a lifelong learner," she says. "I absolutely loved it. It was a wonderful opportunity to take it all in."

Professor Adrienne Loh, right, with Advancement of Women in Chemistry & Biochemistry scholarship winner Brianna Haight as they prepare samples for experiments studying the binding of model antibiotic peptides to liposomes.



“We want to be a catalyst for our students. We want to support them and encourage them to become leaders in their field.”

Adrienne Loh

A CATALYST

Two chemistry professors start scholarship fund for female students

Adrienne Loh was the first female tenured professor and Sandra Grunwald was the first fully promoted female professor in UW-L's Chemistry and Biochemistry Department.

Such promotions of women into leadership roles in the sciences weren't typical when they were hired in the 1990s, and they still aren't today. Despite increasing numbers of women earning

bachelor's degrees in science fields, fewer women obtain doctoral degrees. Even fewer pursue advanced positions. In 2010 only 22 percent of full professors in science, engineering and health were women, according to the National Science Foundation.

That's a trend Loh and Grunwald want to change.

“We want to be a catalyst for our students,” explains Loh.



Professor Sandra Grunwald, right, with UW-L student Hannah Piper, one of the UW-L Advancement of Women in Chemistry & Biochemistry scholarship winners.

“We want this to be another door that opens for our students. We want them to discover who they are and be the best person they can be.”

Sandra Grunwald

“We want to support them and encourage them to become leaders in their field.”

That’s why Grunwald and Loh established a scholarship to advance women in chemistry and biochemistry. Two scholarships were awarded at the UW-L foundation’s spring scholarship reception totaling \$750. Since setting up the fund, numerous colleagues have contributed. They hope to inspire more contributions within their department and among others passionate about the topic.

Grunwald and Loh say their paths to senior positions within their department and the university were not direct. They took on many roles related to service and mentoring early in their careers, rather than choosing responsi-

bilities that might directly lead to promotions. The scholarship carries that theme — recognizing students who inspire success and are successful in a variety of ways.

“We want this to be another door that opens for our students,” says Grunwald. “We want them to discover who they are and be the best person they can be.”

There are many ways to create a scholarship fund to help future generations of UW-L students.

Contact **Greg Reichert** at
608.785.8672 or
GREICHERT@UWLAX.EDU

2015 OUTSTANDING SENIORS

MURPHY AWARDS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Recognize the top two graduating scholars, as chosen by the Scholarship and Awards Committee.



KALI KRAMOLIS

Major:
Biology (biomedical concentration), Spanish

Hometown:
River Falls, Wisconsin



JACOB GLOE

Major:
Computational physics, applied mathematics

Hometown:
Rochester, Minnesota

THE JAKE AND JANET HOESCHLER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Recognizes a College of Business Administration graduate for academic accomplishment and qualities of leadership demonstrated in campus and community activities.



SAM WALLACE

Major:
Marketing

Hometown:
Germantown, Wisconsin

THE STRZELCZYK AWARD IN SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Recognizes an outstanding senior in the College of Science and Health for academic achievement and service to the campus and community.



EVAN GLASGOW

Major:
Biochemistry, biology

Hometown:
Brodhead, Wisconsin

THE JOHN E. MAGERUS AWARD FOR THE OUTSTANDING GRADUATING SENIOR FROM THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL STUDIES

Recognizes an outstanding graduate for academic accomplishments, leadership, and involvement in the campus and community.



KATHERINE SVITAVSKY

Major:
Political science, public administration

Hometown:
Waupun, Wisconsin

THE ROSANDICH GRADUATE THESIS AWARD

Recognizes the best graduate thesis, based on originality, impact and written quality.



JOSEPHINE GREVE

Master's:
Microbiology

Hometown:
Bankston, Iowa

Abroad to Great Britain

Shakespeare's birthplace. Stonehenge. The birthplace of the smallpox vaccine. These historic sites have been the backdrop of UW-L faculty-led classes in Great Britain over spring break.

LONDON STUDY PROGRAM

Ruthann Benson, retired CLS dean, started The London Study Program 13 years ago. It offers College of Liberal Studies classes the opportunity to travel abroad to learn about topics from art to archaeology.



Ruthann Benson

Benson has taken theatre students to watch live productions on London stages; visit Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare; and take in museums specializing in everything from ancient Greek to modern art. Students get a taste for life abroad and see the



Participants in Healthcare and Public Health Study Experience in Great Britain paused in front of Edward Jenner's original clinic and home in Berkeley, England, where he provided free smallpox immunizations in the 1700s. He called it "The Temple of Vaccinia."

U.S. from an outside perspective, says Benson.

"In England people are very savvy about political situations around the world and will start asking students about American politics," says Benson. "I think you understand more about your own country after you've been to another country."

HEALTHCARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERIENCE

Similarly, participants in the Healthcare and Public Health Study Experience in Great Britain compare and contrast British and U.S. healthcare during a biennial trip.

Gary Gilmore, director of Graduate Community Health Programs, offered the first study experience there in

1989. It's an opportunity to connect with global leaders in healthcare and visit sites such as Broad Street Pump in London, associated with cholera outbreaks in the 1800s, and where Edward Jenner pioneered the smallpox vaccination and administered it for free in the 1700s.

Both trips are only about a week long, but the implications are long lasting.

"For many students, the London Study Program is their first time going abroad and it's a safe way to do it," says Benson. "Many go on to take more international trips after the program, which is part of the purpose."

from the cover



Shelmina Babai Abji, '85



Jennifer Shilling, '92

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Celebrating career achievements of UW-

A portrait of Kathie Schroeder Ward, '80, a woman with shoulder-length blonde hair, wearing a dark blazer over a blue and white striped shirt. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. A name tag is visible on her chest. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

G OPLE

L alumnae

Kathie Schroeder Ward, '80

Three UW-L alumnae didn't forecast their future in leadership. One started in Tanzania with no concept of corporate success, another as a UW-L student who ran for La Crosse County Board, and yet another as a first-generation college student whose mother encouraged her to pursue higher education. These women have become corporate and political leaders. Moreover, they've inspired others that they too can learn to lead.

SHELMINA BABAI ABJI, '85: LEADING AND EMPOWERING



Shelmina Babai Abji, '85, grew up in Tanzania, East Africa, with no concept of corporate success. But the young girl got good grades to please her parents, and ended up doing well in school.

She wanted to continue studying, but education was only offered up to 10th grade. So Babai Abji moved in with her uncle in a far away city to complete high school. She left home again to go to college in India, although it meant little contact with family and having to find a means to pay her own way. She brought clothes home to Tanzania from India to sell during her summer breaks to help pay for tuition.

Upon graduating with a degree in mathematics, Babai Abji wasn't sure what to do. She had read about computer science in a magazine and decided she wanted to do that. The only place she knew where she could study this field was in the United States.

"My father probably had a small heart attack," she says.

"Every success I've had built me up for the next success and the next milestone. The thing is that I apply myself. I put my heart and soul into everything I do."

Shelmina Babai Abji, '85

"He didn't know where the U.S. was."

Her parents eventually gave her permission to go and \$2,000 — a generous chunk of their life savings.

She didn't know what was ahead of her — cold Wisconsin winters, tuition she didn't have a means to pay and years living thousands of miles from family. But the path to success isn't always clear from the start, she adds. Hers became

clear with time.

"Every success I've had built me up for the next success and the next milestone," she says. "The thing is that I apply myself. I put my heart and soul into everything I do."

LANDING IN LA CROSSE

When she arrived in La Crosse in January, Babai Abji had to recalculate her definition of cold. She'd never felt anything below 60°F.

"I found myself complaining, 'This is so dreary. I don't like it,'" she recalls. "But I quickly learned that I couldn't change that, and I needed to accept what I couldn't change. It was a simple thing, but a huge lesson in life."

She worked 30-40 hours a week, plus overtime at the Computer Science Center on campus every chance she had. One of the happiest days of her life was receiving a 20-percent raise which brought her hourly rate to \$3.55.

Being far away from home was difficult, says Babai

Shelmina Babai Abji, '85, of Seattle, Washington, says college was the launch pad of her "adult" life, and she would not be where she is today without it. Babai Abji donated \$5,000 to support Women Moving Ahead conference hosted by UW-L in the spring of 2015. She was also one of the speakers at the conference, along with Jennifer Shilling, '92.



Abji. Her family didn't have a phone, so the only way to communicate was letters through airmail monthly.

She met wonderful people at UW-L with whom she became close. Her best friends were classmates Lucy Altenhoffen and Mark Gaffney who taught her about American food and culture. They stayed up late studying, talking and eating pecan pie at Perkins. "They are still my friends today," she adds.

Others reached out to her who didn't have to. She received a D on her first computer science test.

"I had never gotten a D in my life," she says. "I came from being one of the brightest in my school to starting a computer science class and having no clue of the basic concepts."

She recalls a patient instructor, Keith Burand, now faculty emeritus. He took time outside of class to teach her, giving her the confidence to continue.

SOARING WITH STRENGTH

After graduation, Babai Abji started her career as a computer programmer at ETA Systems, then leaving for IBM. When she became pregnant, she applied for a sales position in order to afford a house for her children. This is when she discovered that her greatest strength was working with people. She moved into sales leadership for the company within a decade.

But moving into management had unforeseen perks. Babai Abji learned that she liked helping others meet their target more than doing it herself — her first clue that she was meant to be a leader. She eventually became one of the highest-ranking executive women of color at IBM.

Babai Abji became a single mom when her kids were two and four. That motivated her even more to be successful in her career as now she wanted to provide

for the well-being of her children. She also learned that being a mother made her a better leader and learning leadership skills made her a better mother.

EMPOWERING OTHERS

Having achieved personal success, Babai Abji is now channeling her energy toward empowering other women to do the same. She serves on the board of Young Women Empowered, which supports young women to become leaders, and she donated \$5,000 to support a conference at UW-L in April on the topic of women moving ahead.

"I want to inspire women to truly apply themselves and be confident," she says. "If I can do it based on where I come from, they surely can."

JENNIFER SHILLING, '92: A PUBLIC SERVANT



Jennifer Shilling, Wisconsin State Senator for the 32nd Senate District in the La Crosse area, is also the Senate's minority leader. In May, she was named to the Washington Post's "40 Most Interesting Women in Politics."

"I got bit by the bug — the public service bug. I could apply what I was learning in textbooks to what was happening in the real world."

Jennifer Shilling, '92

To become a leader one needs to take some calculated risks, says Sen. Jennifer (Ehlenfeldt) Shilling, '92, D-La Crosse.

Shilling took her first one as a UW-L junior when she ran against a 78-year-old opponent for a seat on the La Crosse County Board.

"To this day I can't believe I made that jump," she says.

It ended up being a good move. At age 20 Shilling won the race and made her first move into the world of politics. She served on the board from 1990-92.

"I got bit by the bug — the public service bug," she says. "I could apply what I was learning in textbooks to what was happening in the real world."

Shilling, now the state senate minority leader, says it's also been helpful in her political journey to be surrounded by people who believe in her. When she ran for county board it was UW-L political

science professors like Joe Heim and Pamela Rodgers who encouraged her to serve. As a legislative staffer, Mark Meyer, who was serving in the state assembly at the time, encouraged her to run for the state legislature.

Throughout her political career, she's had that "tap on the shoulder" when opportunities to advance arose.

"There are things we do that we don't give ourselves credit for — that we don't consider to be leadership," she says. "That's where that tap on the shoulder comes in. But you have to feel that tap."

Shilling was elected to the assembly in 2000 and the senate in 2011. She loves to come back to her alma mater and talk about leadership skills and her role in politics. It's a way to pay it forward, she says.

"Higher education is about opening opportunities and I'm grateful I had the opportunity," she says.

KATHIE SCHROEDER WARD, '80: A LEADER AND A LEARNER



Kathie Schroeder Ward grew up in the rolling hills of southeast Minnesota, but she doesn't attribute her work ethic to her Midwest roots. Instead, it came from someone very close to her.

The 1980 first-generation college graduate was deeply influenced by her mother who encouraged Ward and her siblings to go to college. Her mother always said, "If you work hard, you can be successful."

And successful she is.

Ward started working as a consultant for Chase when she and her husband, Steve, moved to Tampa. That consulting job turned into a full-time position, and 26 years later she is a senior vice president at Chase in Mortgage Banking.

"Leaders never stop learning. You help others get to their destination," notes Ward. "Leaders define vision and allow staff to be autonomous. You learn from other leaders — see how they do it."

Everyone at Chase brings something to the table, says Ward. "I'm surrounded by a lot of smart people. At Chase, I never felt like there was a glass ceiling," she explains. "There are

"Leaders never stop learning. You help others get to their destination. Leaders define vision and allow staff to be autonomous. "

Kathie Schroeder Ward, '80

many women in mortgage banking; I've had good mentors and great bosses. If you work hard, you get what you put into it."

Ward emphasizes that a key to success is to never stop learning. Ward recently created a new list of, "what I learned today." She was afraid of retiring before she learned everything there is to know about mortgage banking.

Ward credits UW-L for providing her a good education. It's also where she met her best friends at Sanford Hall. Schroeder, Pandl, Bragiel and Karen, as they call each other, have been friends for the past 37 years. (Kathie, Kathy, Kathy and Karen, respectively, were too similar). The group maintains weekly contact and doesn't let

time or distance come between them.

"Kathie was always known for being diligent with her attention to detail and tremendous preparation for any task," says Kathy Pandl O'Connor, '80. "She is extremely respected and highly valued by her colleagues and friends."

Kathy Bragiel Jacobson, '81 — recalls Ward being structured during college. "Kathie had a great mix of studying, working hard and having fun, and did it all well," she says.

Karen Kesser Harlos, '80, says Ward is a model of what leadership should be. "She expects as much — if not more — of herself, than she does of others."

"Her most pronounced quality is her Midwest work ethic," says Paul Beidlich, '79, a high school and college friend.

Ward continues to tie her success back to her strong family upbringing. "I felt it was always important to work hard and succeed in order to pay my parents back for the opportunity they provided my siblings and me," says Ward.

Her parents would be proud.



\$20k challenge

Alum, husband start challenge grant to support undergraduate research

Yvonne Datta, '82, remembers trying to find a new way to synthesize a compound in organic chemistry as her undergraduate research project in Cowley Hall. "I have to admit, I can't remember what it was that I was trying to make," laughs Yvonne.

But what she does remember are lessons the project taught her. "It gives students the real world experience for what they're learning in the classroom," says Yvonne.

That's just one reason why she and her husband, Milt, want to support undergraduate research at UW-L,

and encourage others to do the same. The Dattas have issued a \$20,000 challenge grant.

"I think that both Yvonne and I know there are other people who feel the same way about supporting La Crosse," says Milt. "In particular, they feel the same way about supporting undergraduate research."

The money will reinforce a program recently recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of 39 universities nationally that provide excellence in undergraduate research.

"I come from a long family of research scientists,"

Yvonne, '82, and Milt Datta are issuing a challenge grant to promote UW-L's undergraduate research program – recognized by US News & World Report as one of 39 nationally providing excellence.

notes Milt. "We firmly believe that through research we can change the world and make a difference."

"I have such fond memories of my time at UW-L," says Yvonne. "And I really feel like I want to give back."

Learn more about this challenge grant — and help students get these opportunities at www.uwlax.edu/urc.



Byron Williams, left, and Anita Williams, right, with student Kali Kramolis, the first recipient of the Daron James Williams, M.D., Memorial Scholarship in Pre-Medical Studies. This was the first year for the award honoring Daron, '06, who died from leukemia March 29, 2014. Before he died, Daron told family members he wanted a scholarship established for UW-L students more than a memorial service.

SCHOLARSHIPS GALORE

UW-L FOUNDATION AWARDS MORE THAN \$725K IN SCHOLARSHIPS

More than 550 students heard good financial news in April. They found out they're receiving scholarships for 2015-16. The UW-L Foundation awarded over \$725,000 in

more than 600 scholarships at the annual Student Scholarship and Awards Program. The Daron James Williams, M.D., Memorial Scholarship in Pre-Medical Studies and the Hong Rost

Memorial Scholarship Fund were among scholarships awarded for the first time. Learn more about the UW-L Foundation at www.uwlfoundation.org.



MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS SCORE

UW-L music students benefited from this spring's La Crosse Symphony Conductor Wannabe contest. The symphony revised its popular fund-raising event so contestants designated a non-profit to receive half of the proceeds from funds they collected. Ilene Kernozek (second from left), vice chair of the UW-L Foundation, won first place. Kernozek collected \$14,754 in donations — half of which went to UW-L Music Student Scholarships, the non-profit charity she designated. Her slogan was "Music Students Are a Sound Investment." Seven contestants raised \$46,686 for the orchestra and the non-profits. Kernozek and the second place winner conducted selections at the May 2 concert.



Gymnastics is all in the family for these UW-L coaches. They include, from left, Mason Howard, Jenna Swails, Jessica Herrmann, Barb Gibson, Kasey Crawford, Teagan Oare and Jeff Reamer.

UW-L gymnastics: A family affair

Feeling at home with success and each other

UW-L gymnastics coaches feel right at home with success — and with each other.

The five assistants working with Head Coach Barb Gibson all have different jobs leading the squad's 23 gymnasts. But they all have one common thread: they're all alumni. Gibson says that dynamic is essential to the continued success.

"We have developed a tradition internally," says Gibson. "Many former student-athletes still have a passion and love of the sport. They want to give back and coaching is the perfect way to do that."

The coaches assisting the balance beam fit that description perfectly. Tegan Oare and Jessica Herrmann are pursuing master's degrees at UW-L after competing in the program and earning undergraduate degrees. Despite demanding physical therapy studies, they still find time to coach.

"We have developed a tradition internally. Many former student-athletes still have a passion and love of the sport. They want to give back and coaching is the perfect way to do that."

Barb Gibson

Mason Howard, a junior, helps on the uneven parallel bars. He serves as a spotter and helps move equipment, an unheralded but essential coaching attribute. His route to the program came through his sister, Mackenzie (Howard) Poulson, a four-time NCGA All-American.

Jeff Reamer took a different path to coaching. After being a member of UW-L's cheer and

stunt team, he was an instructor in the Junior Eagle Gymnastics Program, which serves nearly 500 community area youth each year. He got to know some of the coaches and team members and decided to coach. He joined the staff in 2012.

Jenna Swails, a '10 graduate in marketing, starts work at 6 a.m., two hours early, to make it to gymnastics practice in the afternoon to assist with the uneven parallel bars.

The most accomplished and longest tenured assistant coach is Kasey (Clausen) Crawford. In her seventh season, Crawford coaches the floor exercise and assists on vault. She does choreography for the team and cuts the music, and is the primary recruiting coordinator.



GYMNASTS EARN TITLE NO. 16

Women's gymnastics won its 16th National Collegiate Gymnastics Association Championship in Mitchell Hall March 27 with a school record team score of 191.525.

Amy Enright and **Samantha Wiekamp** tied for the national crown on the uneven parallel bars. Head coach **Barb Gibson** was named 2015 NCGA Coach of the Year, the sixth time she has earned the honor. She has led the Eagles to all 16 of its national titles.

WRESTLERS FINISH 8TH

UW-L placed eighth at the 2015 NCAA III championships — the Eagles' 20th top-10 finish at nationals in 24 appearances. **Tyler Schneider** (second at 165-pounds), **Eric Twohey** (third at 197) and **Richard Carlson** (sixth at 184) each earned individual All-America honors.

Women's and Men's Track & Field

Women run away with national titles

The women's track & field team captured its first NCAA III indoor title in March and its first outdoor title since 1984 in May. It was the first national titles for 24-year head coach



Pat Healy. Healy also led the Eagles to outdoor second-place finishes in 1993 and 1997. Read more at www.uwlathletics.com



Men win outdoor title, place 2nd in indoor meet

Men's track & field team won its record 13th outdoor NCAA III title in May. UW-L's 25-point margin of victory was the largest in NCAA III since the Eagles captured the title over State University of New York-Cortland in 2007. Along with a record

17 indoor national titles, the Eagles also won outdoor crowns in 1988, 1991-93, 1997, 2001-04, 2006-07, and 2013. Men's indoor team placed second, losing by two points at the 2015 NCAA III indoor championship in March.

Outdoor sweep ties records

The UW-L men's and women's outdoor NCAA III titles in May were record setting. It was only the third time in NCAA III history that a university captured both the women's and men's titles in the same year. Lincoln University (Pa.) won the women's and men's crowns in 1990 and 2000.

NEW LEADERSHIP: Blum heading up Athletics



Kim Blum was named UW-L's Director of Athletics March 18 following a national search. She had served as interim director of athletics since July 2014. Blum is in her 11th year at UW-L, serving as deputy director of athletics in 2013-14. She was associate athletic director from 2004-13.



Patrolling the pitch

ALUM IS WORLD-CLASS RUGBY REFEREE

Leah Berard, '01, is most relaxed when officiating a scrum of athletes on the rugby pitch. "It's a great feeling," says Berard, "I have the best seat in the house and can feel the emotions of the players."

Berard first fell in love with the full contact sport her sophomore year at UW-L, after friends talked it up. She played for the next three years, serving as team captain for two of those years.

For the past nine years she's been refereeing Rugby matches. For the last three years, Berard has been one of the most in-demand officials on the international circuit.

"It's pretty crazy. I have to remind myself how lucky I am," explains Berard. Her time ensuring fair play has taken



Leah Berard, left, refs a rugby match between the U.S. and Canada.

"It's a great feeling. I have the best seat in the house and can feel the emotions of the players."

Leah Berard, '01

her to matches on six of the seven continents. Jokingly, she's looking forward to overseeing a match in Antarctica.

In 2015, she's been overseeing World Series matches. Now her eyes are set on the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, where her sport is coming back for the first time since 1932. "The odds are pretty good I'll be there," notes Berard.

In the meantime, Berard will continue to referee as long as she can. "It's been a whirlwind the past three years since I've been involved," she says. "But I hope it's just the tip of the iceberg."



Leah Berard, in the white shirt, oversees the 2013 Women's World Cup Finals. Berard is one of the most in-demand officials on the international circuit.

Eagle anecdotes

ALUMNI RECRUITING NETWORK LAUNCHED

It's a time we can all remember: looking at potentially hundreds of colleges, trying to make the right choice of where to spend four years of our lives.

UW-L has a new program to help guide prospective students toward Old Main – and it includes using those who have already been there.

“I think it makes a big difference to hear from somebody who's not there as a job, but as an alum who still feels a strong connection even after graduating 15 years ago. I think that goes a long way with students and parents.”

Jason Welke, '01

“Alums have valuable knowledge,” explains Kaylin Duncan, an Admissions counselor. “I may know our admissions numbers, but they are passionate and know about the experience.”

The university recently started the Eagle Alumni Recruiting Network. Former Vanguarders are joining admissions counselors at college fairs



Admissions counselor Kaylin Duncan is tapping the campus experience of alums to form a new recruiting network.



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?
contact kduncan@uwlax.edu

in Milwaukee and the Twin Cities areas. “It paints a full picture,” says Duncan.

That's exactly what Jason Welke, '01, did at two events this spring.

“I think it makes a big difference to hear from somebody who's not there as a job, but as an alum who still feels a strong connection even after graduat-

ing 15 years ago,” says Welke. “I think that goes a long way with students and parents.”

Duncan hopes to expand the program to more areas and eventually establish a network of at least 50 alums.

“I'll do as many as I can,” says Welke. “Bragging about UW-L is something I love doing.”

Hosea's Heart

Mary-Kate Martin, '10, starts non-profit in Swaziland to free girls from sexual slavery



Mary-Kate Martin, '10, (in pink shirt), a secondary education major, is co-founder of the non-profit organization Hosea's Heart. Here she is pictured with the girls from the girl's home she co-founded in Swaziland.

After graduating from UW-L, Mary-Kate Martin became a volunteer teacher in Swaziland. It wasn't long before girls — some as young as 12 — came to her with horror stories of sexual abuse. One girl's stepmother was selling her to men by night. She ran away, only to have to sell herself again to survive.

"After nine months of trying to help her and girls like her, it was clear they couldn't escape their lifestyles because there was no place of safety — no place to call home," says Martin.

That's when Martin co-founded the non-profit organization Hosea's Heart in Swaziland with a friend from high school. They opened a girls' home in 2013 with six girls. It is now full with 14 girls and one baby boy. The organization empowers girls to achieve freedom from

"Had I not worked with these people and learned about leadership, community and team-building, I would not have the abilities or the willingness to run an entire project/non-profit."

Mary-Kate Martin, '10

sexual slavery by getting them off the streets and out of abusive situations.

Martin, who now lives in Swaziland, is grateful for college experiences — La Crosse CRU, Roncalli Newman Parish and

being a resident assistant — that gave her skills and character to pursue her mission. The RA team she worked with impacted her immensely.

"Had I not worked with these people and learned about leadership, community and team-building, I would not have the abilities or the willingness to run an entire project/non-profit," says Martin.

She's also grateful for a class project she did for Robert Richardson, professor emeritus of Educational Studies, where she had to create her "ideal school."

"I had to do a lot of research, planning, dreaming, working and writing in order to complete the project," she says. "The amount of work that went into his class caused many to complain, but it was by far the most valuable class I had in my entire college career."

UW-L ALUMS AT HOSEA'S HEART:

Garret Martin, '14, Mary-Kate Martin's brother and media relations manager; Rachael Schaefer, current UW-L student, administrative director; and Emily McNeil, managing director, who studied at UW-L for two years. Some volunteers also have UW-L ties.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.HOSEASHEART.ORG



Dan Davies, '88, (center)
on the set of "Tempting Fate."

NOLLYWOOD MEETS HOLLYWOOD

Alum stars in Nigerian movie production

"It's taken a lot of time for me to get to this point, but that's what I learned from my friends and others at UW-L," he says. "Never quit. Don't ever quit."

Dan Davies, '88

A movie premiere is nothing new for Dan Davies. But a red-carpet event in Lagos, Nigeria, is definitely a first.

Davies, '88, costarred in the film "Tempting Fate," one of the first Nollywood — referring to the Nigerian film industry — meets Hollywood features created. Nollywood has grown to be the second largest film market in the world, behind only India-based Bollywood.

"I play an eastern European bank robber who's just evil," explains Davies. He, along with members of the cast and crew, started a two-week tour of theaters in Nigeria and Ghana on July 5. It will be his first time on the continent.

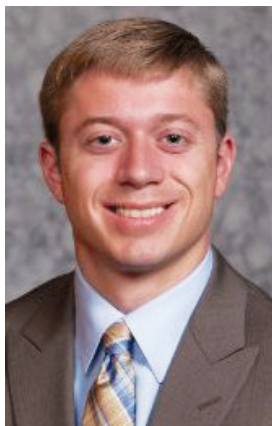
"Nollywood is a young market," says Davies. "The talent is starting to come up to Hollywood standards, which made it easy for the cast and crew to mix and match. The biggest difference is the budgets aren't as big for Nollywood films."

Davies has been acting professionally for 21 years. This year he has three films coming out. "West of Thunder" is expected to be on some premium movie channels this fall. "Flim, the Movie" is heading to some major cities in the U.S.

"It's taken a lot of time for me to get to this point, but that's what I learned from my friends and others at UW-L," he says. "Never quit. Don't ever quit."

Carrying the legal lantern

Track speedster keeping lawmakers, lobbyists in the legal lane



FAR LEFT: Mike Queensland during his time at UW-L as a member of three UW-L Track and Field national championship teams.

LEFT: As a member of the Wisconsin Legislative Council, Mike Queensland helps state lawmakers make legal decisions.

Mike Queensland is the guy Wisconsin lawmakers turn to, to make sure they're staying within their legal limits. He's an attorney for the non-partisan Wisconsin Legislative Council.

"I help with committees ranging from public safety to veterans affairs to agriculture," says Queensland, '07.

He also provides training for new legislators and staff coming to Madison. "I didn't know this job existed when I left UW-L," admits Queensland. "When I saw what they did, I decided to go to law school because I knew the importance of the work and that it was the job for me."

Queensland transferred to UW-L for his final two years of college. "It was one of the

"There's proof that UW-L is such a great place to go based on the sheer number of people who work in the capitol, and the great reputation the alums have earned."

Mike Queensland, '07

best decisions I ever made," he said. He wanted to run track.

And he was quick. Queensland was part of three

national championship teams and earned three individual All-American titles. Until this past spring, he was the last Eagle to win the 200m dash.

"It's been a great experience for me to draw on when facing challenges," explains Queensland.

Queensland stays connected to UW-L through the annual alumni track meet and a number of Alumni Association events in Madison.

"There's proof that UW-L is such a great place to go based on the sheer number of people who work in the capitol, and the great reputation the alums have earned," says Queensland.

Leaving a legacy

JIM PRUDHOME '70

Jim Prudhome was dedicated. The 1970s grad returned to serve on committees, boards and helped establish the Silver Eagles alumni group. Prudhome, 68, of La Crosse, died May 23, 2014. But his commitment to UW-L continues.

A \$195,000 estate gift has established the James Prudhome Scholarship Endowment Fund in Economics. Two College of Business Administration juniors or seniors majoring or minoring in economics will receive \$4,000 scholarships beginning in 2016-17. For 2015-16, one \$2,500 scholarship will be given.

"We very much appreciate Jim's thoughtful gift," says TJ Brooks, Economics Department chair. "I know he was always a staunch supporter of the university and cared very deeply for our students."

Prudhome was president of Silver Eagles for nearly a decade. He was its representative on the UW-L Alumni Association Board of Directors for nine years.

After his Silver Eagles board term expired, Prudhome continued to be involved with the CBA's Take An Eagle to Lunch. He attended the Foundation's scholarship reception annually. He enjoyed meeting recipients, says Janie Morgan, Alumni Association executive director.

"Jim loved the students, and was so proud of the College of Business Administration," says Morgan. "He lit up when he talked about the students he met and the impact the scholarship dollars were having on their lives."

LEAVE YOUR OWN LEGACY

There are many ways to create a scholarship fund to help future generations of UW-L students. Please contact Greg Reichert at **608.785.8672** or greichert@uwlax.edu



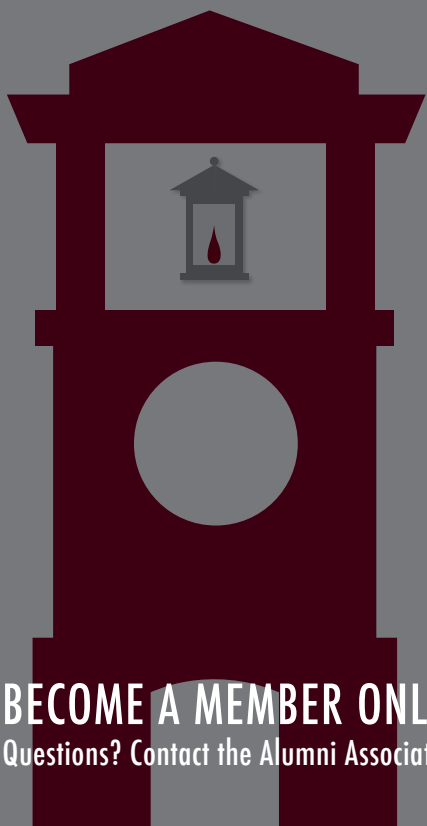
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