



Annie Gesteland  
CAMPUS CHILD CENTER



Ben O'Connell  
UNIVERSITY CENTERS



Marissa Marino  
STUDENT LIFE



UWL PROUD | MY STORY



## Campus Child Center making her a better teacher

**ANNIE GESTELAND** | EARLY CHILDHOOD/MIDDLE CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Annie Gesteland has helped hundreds of college students grapple with the day-to-day challenges of parenting. And along the way, those students and their children have helped Gesteland get on track as a successful teacher.

When the Burlington, Wisconsin, native arrived on campus as a freshman, she stopped by the Campus Child Center looking for a chance to volunteer. That's what Gesteland did her first semester.

The next semester, Gesteland became a paid teacher assistant. The opportunity not only gave her some needed income, but also helped put her farther along on her career path. "At the Campus Child Center, I have gained so much experience that will benefit me as a teacher one day," she says.

Dawn Hays, director of the Campus Child Center, has helped Gesteland a lot during college. "She has been there for me as a mentor and as a guide in my future career path," notes the early childhood major. "Dawn is an amazing director for the center and she has definitely helped me establish my future career."

Gesteland encourages students to consider working with one of the many Student Affairs programs right on campus – either as participant, volunteer or worker.

"They provide so many different jobs on campus and so much support to students as we go through our college experience," she notes. "They want the best for them as they go throughout their college career."

## Student Association changed my life

**BEN O'CONNELL** | POLITICAL SCIENCE & COMMUNICATION STUDIES

When he transferred to UWL, Ben O'Connell had a hard time adjusting to campus. It was difficult simply getting to know people. That changed when he became a student senator his sophomore year.

"I love serving my fellow students and advocating for them on campus and with local, state and national government," says O'Connell who was elected student body president.

Student Association gave O'Connell motivation to do the most he could for UWL. Along the way, he made some of his best friends. "Student Association transformed my life at UWL and I wouldn't be where I am without it," he says.

University Centers has been at the center of O'Connell's transformation. It houses the Student Senate chambers and it's home to the COVE, the student organization and leadership hub.

O'Connell worked at the COVE during summer and forged new friendships while getting firsthand knowledge of the importance University Centers is for students. He has visited many colleges and confidently says the COVE is unmatched.

Through those experiences, O'Connell has found a mentor in Larry Ringgenberg, University Centers director and Student Association advisor. "He always gives great advice and helps show me and other Student Association representatives how we can accomplish our goals," notes O'Connell.

O'Connell encourages students to discover their passion. "Don't sit on the sidelines and wonder if you should or shouldn't take a chance and join, just do it," he says. "The only way you'll know if you like it or not is if you try."

## From out-of-place to peer leader

**MARISSA MARINO** | EXERCISE AND SPORT SCIENCE-PRE PROFESSIONAL TRACK

As a first-generation college student, Marissa Marino felt out-of-place on campus. She sensed she knew even less than other students whose parents didn't attend college.

So, Marino sought somewhere to connect. That led her to the Office of Student Life, where she eventually became an Eagle Guide — a peer leader for new students.

"This position gave me the opportunity to connect with my peers and faculty members, which has given me a sense of belonging at UWL," explains Marino. "The Student Life Office has continued to open doors to many opportunities and different resources that have been positive."

Marino was challenged to get out of her comfort zone. She found it hard to ask questions. But being an Eagle Guide changed that.

Marino was often asked questions for which she didn't know the answer. She had to reach out to faculty and others to help the first-year students she was mentoring.

"By doing this for other students, it allowed me to feel confident in finding answers for myself," Marino says. "It has since allowed me to have a more successful academic career, as I feel comfortable asking questions I would have been previously nervous to ask."

Marino cites Sarah Joslyn in the Student Life Office as key to helping her grow. "She has shown me that a great idea can start with one person's input and become better with the influence and ideas of others," notes Marino.

Marino adds that programs like this are a great way to meet peers and make a positive impact on incoming first-year students.

# OUR STORIES

## ENRICHING YOUR UWL EXPERIENCE



STUDENT AFFAIRS

149 GRAFF MAIN HALL WWW.UWLAX.EDU/STUDENT-AFFAIRS 608.785.8062



# ENRICHING YOUR UWL EXPERIENCE

Going to college is much more than classes and exams. It's about learning how to live in a community. It's about working with others to make the world a better place to live.

The UWL Division of Student Affairs does this by enriching your educational experience. How? By facilitating personal growth and development. And by collaborating with university and community partners to promote learning, diversity training, cultural competencies, healthy lifestyles and civic engagement.

We help students strengthen these core values:

**Student learning** – We know learning is a lifelong developmental process.

**Inclusive excellence** – We embrace the values and strength that reside in human differences.

**Integrity and professionalism** – We establish an environment characterized by openness, compassion, accountability, respect, modeling and appreciation for our students, colleagues and partners.

**Intentionality and assessment** – We strive to create an environment that improves learning.

**Student wellness** – We believe a healthy mind and body are more than UWL's motto. They are prerequisites for success!

**Collaboration** – We strive to enjoy our work in a supportive and collaborative setting encompassing students, faculty, staff and administration.

Take a look at what our students say. UWL Student Affairs is **Enriching your UWL experience.**

- Athletics
- Campus Child Center
- Counseling & Testing Center
- Recreational Sports
- Residence Life
- Student Health Center
- Student Life Office
- University Centers

WWW.UWLAX.EDU/STUDENT-AFFAIRS 608.785.8062



RESIDENCE LIFE

## Residence Life provides a great support network

**ANDREW JARRETT | GEOGRAPHY**

Andrew Jarrett admits he doesn't like asking for help. But by becoming friends with fellow students he's met through Residence Life, it's a lot easier admitting he needs help — and knowing help is always there.

Residence Life has had a huge impact on Jarrett's college career. Not only did working in Residence Life teach him valuable communication, organization and management skills helpful in class, Jarrett also met people from countless backgrounds he otherwise wouldn't have.

"Some of my best friends today I met while working for Residence Life," notes Jarrett. "They've had a tremendously positive affect on my life."

A lot of people don't consider working for Residence Life because of the extra work. Jarrett says that's true — but only to some extent. The benefits far outweigh the challenges.

"Residence Life also provides an extensive support network to help you get stuff done in the halls and in the classroom," he explains. "So many of my study partners are also resident assistants, desk coordinators or desk assistants."

Jarrett says Megan Pierce, his hall director as a freshman and the first person to hire him, has become a mentor.

"She's a fantastic hall director and I really came out of my shell working under her in an RA position," he says. "She helped me develop organizational skills I didn't have, and was really amazing when it came to teaching diversity and inclusion."

Jarrett encourages students questioning working in Residence Life to give it a try. "If you like helping people and enjoy the connections you make living in the residence halls, the RA or DC positions are something to consider," he advises.



STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

## Health Center is the cure for stress

**CLAIRE FISCHER | RADIATION THERAPY**

Fresh off hip surgery, Claire Fischer took great effort in simply walking across campus. Physical therapy was necessary to get back to normal. And help was just a few steps away in the Student Health Center.

"They got me back to feeling like myself again in a timely fashion," says Fischer. And it was much cheaper than going off-campus.

Without campus PT, Fischer doesn't know what she would have done to overcome that obstacle. But the Student Health Center doesn't stop there. Whether it's a flu shot, ear infection, or another health issue, Fischer's found help. Center physicians even write new prescriptions when she's sick. "It was a convenient option that allowed for less stress in an already stressful situation during the semester," she notes.

Center staff members are extremely comforting and helpful, says Fischer. Physical Therapy Assistant Julie Nelson stood out.

"Julie made sure that I knew what I was doing with each exercise and would watch to make sure I was doing every exercise correctly," says Fischer. "She was incredibly easy to talk to and I looked forward to my sessions each week, which made my experience much more enjoyable."

Any time Fischer had a setback or felt discouraged, Nelson would always give her confidence to keep going. "I could tell just how genuine she was about getting me back to my old self, which made me feel more confident."

Fischer has no problem recommending the Student Health Center. It offers a variety of care, including online options for making appointments and more.

"It is an affordable option that is easily accessible," she says. "The staff is understanding and comforting throughout any type of service they are providing."



INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

## Athletics put her on the track to success

**KEMMESHA THOMAS | PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION**

For Kemesha Thomas, taking part in athletics has helped her hurdle challenges and led her down the track to success.

"It has molded me into a better version of myself," says Thomas. "It has done this by teaching me how to communicate, how to be self-disciplined, how to work with others and much more."

Being on the track & field team helps Thomas overcome challenges, simply by distraction. "There were times when I felt that everything was falling apart except for sport," she explains. "And in those times, it was nice to know at least one thing was going right."

Thomas says being part of the team helps her with challenges. "I had teammates and coaches who I could talk to and know they would give honest feedback, even if it is not what I wanted to hear," she says.

Thomas appreciates the collegiality of a team. "I have the resources to talk to different people about different topics of my life," she says. "I am very grateful for that."

There are many pros and cons of making the time commitment to be a student-athlete. Thomas understands that, but she's glad she suited up.

"I am 100 percent confident to say that if I did not participate in sports at the collegiate level, I would be only part of the person I am at this point in my life," she says. "I would have missed out on so many things if I decided not to try out."



RECREATIONAL SPORTS

## The REC shaped me into who I am today

**HATIM ALRUWAILI | NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGY**

Hatim Alruwaili had more to deal with than just the regular adjustments to college. He was also challenged with improving his English.

The nuclear medicine technology major from Saudi Arabia found nearly instant help interacting with others working in the Recreational Eagle Center (REC).

"With the multitude of interactions with customers, I was able to improve my English skills — one of my biggest challenges," says Alruwaili. "My co-workers were very open-minded and understanding of the challenges I faced during the beginning of my college career. This put me on the right track, by directing my focus to other matters that helped me gain confidence."

Alruwaili says being a member of the REC Sports family has been one of the greatest opportunities he's ever had. "It shaped me into the person I am today," he notes.

REC professional staff members have impacted him too — both in work and life matters. Particularly, he's found a mentor in Mo McAlpine.

"With her generosity, compassion and empathy, I was able to share my ideas with her and my other colleagues without hesitation," he says. "Mo has always been there for me."

Taking part in REC Sports is beneficial for both those working for the department or using their services, says Alruwaili.

"Joining the REC Sports staff is like having another family away from my family," he explains. "Being a part of this organization also contributes greatly to my social life. The experience I gained at the REC through my co-workers is invaluable."



COUNSELING AND TESTING

## My outlook on life has greatly changed

**GRACE WALTON | NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

Adjusting to college was challenging for Grace Walton. She had trouble getting involved in organizations and clubs. The Nuclear Medicine Technology and Psychology double major even had trouble getting off to a good start in her classes each semester.

Then, Walton turned to the Counseling and Testing Center. Staff there helped her work through her apprehensions and fears, and helped her manage her anxiety.

"The support I've received has helped me have a fuller college career," explains Walton. "I have been able to enhance my time in La Crosse by giving back to the community through Special Olympics and volunteering through the Salvation Army — as well as joining UWL clubs and intramural sports. My outlook on life has greatly changed and I now see every day as a blessing instead of a struggle."

Walton says the center is always very comforting with its friendly receptionist and staff. She says that her psychologist, Dr. Gretchen Reinders not only validated her fears and anxieties, but also met her with compassion and care.

"I am always greeted with a warm smile and a handout to learn from," Walton notes. "She has worked with me to push past my challenges and recognize that I should be proud with my accomplishments and where I am in life."

Walton advises students to get connected on campus. "UW-La Crosse has a vast array of resources to take advantage of," she says. "The Counseling and Testing Center offers much more than just therapy sessions. If you are having a stressful day, change the pace and take a breath in their relaxation room. They offer workshops to give students a better skill set to handle their stressful lives."