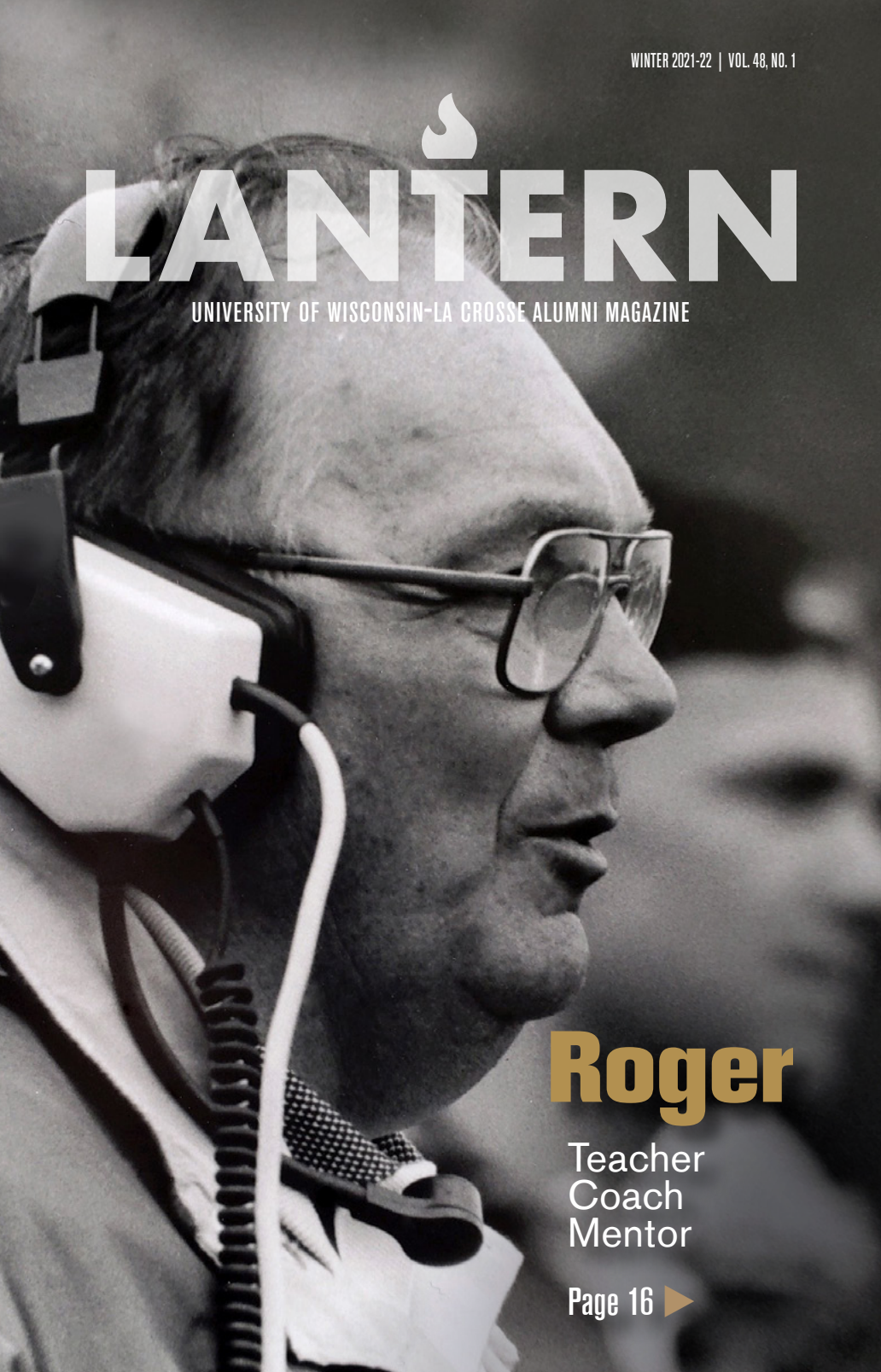




# LANTERN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE ALUMNI MAGAZINE



## Roger

Teacher  
Coach  
Mentor

Page 16 ►

# FEATURES

**On the cover:** Roger Harring, '58 & '62, accomplished a lot in his 31 years as UWL's head football coach. But the true measure of his impact is best reflected in the number of lives he touched.



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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



SEE THE CURRENT ONLINE LANTERN  
[UWLAX.EDU/ALUMNI/LANTERN](http://UWLAX.EDU/ALUMNI/LANTERN)

# LANTERN

UWL-LA CROSSE ALUMNI MAGAZINE WINTER 2021-22 | VOL. 48, NO.1

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## CLASS NOTES ONLINE

Go to [uwlax.edu/alumni](http://uwlax.edu/alumni) for complete class notes each quarter. Click on "News," then "Class Notes."

Class notes policy: The UWL Alumni Association publishes class notes and obituaries online in January, April, July and October. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the quarterly posting. See [uwlax.edu/alumni](http://uwlax.edu/alumni) for details.

### REMEMBERING ROGER HARRING, OUR COACH AND FRIEND

**F**ew college football coaches will travel halfway across the world to see one of their former players.

Yet, that's what Roger Haring did in 1997-98, when I was playing football in Italy for the Ancona Dolphins.

The week Coach Haring stayed with me in Italy, he shared countless stories. A common thread throughout the stories was how genuinely proud Coach was of his former players. He would speak of their accomplishments as caring and loving husbands, fathers and/or productive members of communities throughout Wisconsin, across the nation and around the world.

For Coach Haring, football was about much more than winning games — even though his teams' successes on the gridiron are undeniable. It was about the people.

Those of us who played for Coach Haring felt the bitter sting and sincere heartache when we learned of his passing on Aug. 12, 2021. But the memories and lessons he was so eager to share continue to stick with us.

Coach Haring was known for providing teachable moments throughout any given

practice. The lessons were not exclusively about football — he would communicate about how to be successful in all phases of life.

It was not uncommon for Coach to talk about the importance of reaching out to your family back home, remaining committed to your studies and working diligently through difficult circumstances. We would frequently end these sessions by having the team “bounce one off the bluff.” Through his mini-lessons, Coach Haring revealed the pathway to not only being better football players, but ultimately being better human beings.

When talking with fellow players, a variety of emotions and stories inevitably surface from our days at UWL. Yet, the resounding sentiment is a feeling of being profoundly fortunate.

We all feel fortunate that circumstances allowed us to know, learn from and play football for a tremendous person with profound character and mentorship — our coach and friend, Roger Haring.

#### **Dr. Troy D. Harcey, '98**

*Associate Superintendent of Instruction,  
School District of La Crosse  
Wide receiver, 1993-96*



# RECORD-SETTING CLASS



UWL welcomed its largest first-year class fall 2021 as it continued to rebound from the pandemic. The 2,207 first-year student record topped 2,194 in fall 2019. Overall enrollment dropped 1.5%, mirroring UW trends. The fall headcount was 10,314, down from 10,468 in fall 2020. One factor drawing new and returning students was the return of in-person classes. UWL far exceeded the 75% in-person courses goal for UWs, holding 90% of courses fully in person, with 4% in a hybrid setting.



## Changing business plan

Wait for it... Wait for it... The College of Business Administration hoped to celebrate 50 years the last two fall semesters, but COVID-19 concerns have ended hopes of an in-person celebration. Instead, look for a Wittich Hall ribbon cutting in spring 2022. Until then, look for videos from alumni, faculty and friends sharing CBA memories in an online celebration. See updates at: [www.uwlax.edu/cba/50th-anniversary](http://www.uwlax.edu/cba/50th-anniversary)

## STILL THE



UWL remains Wisconsin's top-ranked public university among peers according to U.S. News & World Report's 2022 America's Best Colleges listing. It's the 21st year in a row as the state's top-ranked comprehensive UW campus. The magazine also gives UWL the highest mark among UW campuses for Best Undergraduate Teaching.



# A **VAX** VICTORY

More than 80% of UWL students completed COVID-19 vaccinations by Oct. 31 to be considered for scholarships in the UW System's 70 for 70 vaccination campaign. UWL was the first system school in the competition to reach 70% vaccination a week before classes began Sept. 7. Vaxers became eligible for scholarships, hoodies and more.



# HELP WANTED: **ADVOCATES**

College of Science and Health faculty and students need help in landing more advocates to promote Prairie Springs Science Center Phase II. UWL once again will strive to get the badly needed project in the state's biennial budget. Be part of the PSSCII Crew: [uwlax.edu/go/pssc2](http://uwlax.edu/go/pssc2)

# LAST CALL

Terry and Tom Wirkus announced for the UWL marching band for 50 years. That tradition ended in November.

*Terry Wirkus, '79 & '88, has hung up his clipboard after 25 years announcing for the UWL Screaming Eagles Marching Band during home football games. He followed the footsteps of his father, Tom Wirkus, (pictured at right) who had announced for the band from 1968-93.*



SEE PERFORMANCES BY WIRKUS DUO:  
[UWLAX.EDU/ALUMNI/LANTERN](http://UWLAX.EDU/ALUMNI/LANTERN)

**M**any people follow in their parents' footsteps. Terry Wirkus practically walked in his father's shoes.

Wirkus, the distance learning technology coordinator at UWL, has traced the life and career of his late father, Tom, almost to a T.

Both studied speech in college and went on to work at radio stations.

Both left their media jobs for a position at UWL, where they both taught communication courses.

And both spent exactly 25 years announcing for the UWL marching band during home football games — a family tradition that ended Nov. 13 when Wirkus announced for the final time.

"The parallelism of our careers brought us closer," says Wirkus, '79 & '88, who will retire sometime in 2022. "He never said a lot directly to me about it, but my mother has shared that he was extremely proud."

For this branch of the Wirkus family tree, announcing for the marching band is the perfect pastime. It combines three things central to their lives: communication, music and UWL.



It started in fall 1968, when then band director Ralph Wall was looking for an announcer. Tom was recommended for the job — one he would dutifully perform until his retirement in 1993.

According to Wirkus, his father's only regret was he did not start a year earlier. If he had, he would have been at the most famous NFL game in history, the 1967 Ice Bowl, where the UWL marching band attempted to perform at halftime.

"Attempted" is the operative word. The performance was cancelled after band members complained that frigid temperatures caused their instruments to stick to their lips.

When Wirkus returned to UWL in 1996, it seemed only fitting that he continue the family tradition.

In the 25 years since, has not earned a dime announcing, but he has accumulated a trove of memories.

He's been at Roger Harring Stadium at Veterans Memorial Field Sports Complex for every home game but one. But some of his favorite memories came at Lambeau Field.

At one game, Wirkus ad-libbed: "From Bill Schroeder's alma mater, it's the UW-La Crosse Screaming Eagles Marching Band!"

Schroeder proceeded to fumble the opening kickoff of the second half.

Another time, the band was set to do a "fifth quarter performance." As announcer, Wirkus was permitted to stand on the sidelines after the two-minute warning. The Packers, trailing by four to the Minnesota Vikings, had the ball.

"With 10 seconds left, Brett Favre throws a perfect ball to receiver Corey Bradford in the end zone. Touchdown Green Bay!" Wirkus remembers. "The Packers bench erupted in front of me. Wow! I was high on adrenaline when I announced for the band that day."

More than the individual memories, Wirkus has cherished the opportunity to make his father proud.

Taking after him, Wirkus says, "has meant everything to me."

# ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WELCOMES NEW OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS

## New officers for 2022



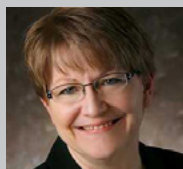
**Chair** | Lynda Kohler, '83  
Recreation Leadership



**Past Chair** | Tim Behling, '88  
Management



**Vice Chair** | John Stangler, '05 & '12  
Sports Management, Sport Administration

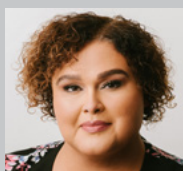


**Treasurer** | Sandy Jensen, '01  
Accountancy

## New directors beginning 2022



**Carolyn Scott, '85**  
Therapeutic Recreation



**Jamie McClendon, '02**  
Political Science



**Darrin Utnyk, '98**  
Sports Management



**Jake Meckstroth, '12**  
Accountancy



## WHPE CONVENTION ATTRACTS ALUMS



Alumni got together when the Wisconsin Health and Physical Education annual conference was held in Wisconsin Dells Oct. 27-29, 2021.

## Multicultural Student Services sets 50th

The Office of Multicultural Student Services will celebrate 50 years this spring. The 50th Celebration is set, tentatively, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, April 9, on campus. Plans include brunch, time for networking and a campus tour. Watch for details and stay informed at [uwlax.edu/multicultural-student-services](http://uwlax.edu/multicultural-student-services).

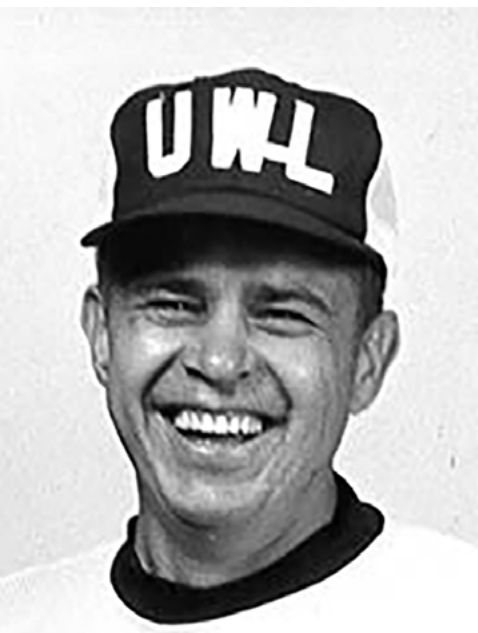
By the numbers...

**80,188**

UWL bachelor's degrees  
awarded through 2020-21

**15,586**

UWL graduate degrees  
awarded through 2020-21



# Former Head Baseball Coach Bill Terry dies

Former UWL Head Baseball Coach and Instructor Bill Terry, 90, died Oct. 8 at the Spring Brook Assisted Living Center in Onalaska. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, and one son, Larry.

Terry served as UWL's head baseball coach from 1969-79, finishing 199-144 (.580) in 11 seasons — third in school history and 10th in WIAC history. His teams recorded nine winning seasons, including a then school-record 26 games in 1977. They won seven conference and four NAIA District titles.

UWL made six appearances in NAIA playoffs ('72, '75, '76, '77, '78, '79). The team advanced to the NAIA World Series in 1979, placing fifth. A total of 34 players earned all-conference honors under Terry.

Inducted into the UWL Wall of Fame in 1994, Terry was an assistant UWL football coach from 1961-67. Ten of his players signed professional baseball or football contracts. Along with coaching, he assisted the student teaching program from 1968-89.

Terry was inducted into the State Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame in 1986 and the La Crosse Area Baseball Hall of Fame in 2019. In June 2009, UWL announced plans to cut the sport and Terry spearheaded an effort raising more than \$175,000 to save the program. He was the 2010 La Crosse Tribune Sportsperson of the Year for those efforts.

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## ATHLETES EARN ACADEMIC ACCOLADES

UWL student-athletes earned the 2020-21 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference All-Academic Award. They compiled a 3.433 cumulative grade point average with the overall student body at 3.356. It's the 19th time in 20 years the UWL student-athlete GPA was higher than the combined student GPA. The Eagles have the highest combined GPA in the WIAC in 19 of the last 22 years. UWL had 415 student-athletes with a cumulative GPA of 3.000 or higher in 2020-21.



# ANOTHER EAGLE OLYMPIAN

## NATALIE SIMS, '21, AT PARALYMPIC GAMES TOKYO

UWL's Natalie Sims represented the U.S. at the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 in summer 2021. Sims placed seventh in the 100 freestyle (1:03.85) and eighth in the 400 freestyle (4:58.55). She was the lone U.S. swimmer to compete in the 100 freestyle final. She also competed in the 200 I.M. preliminaries (2:43.95).

It was her second appearance in the Paralympic Games after finishing eighth in the 400 freestyle in 2016. Sims also swam in the 100 backstroke, 100 freestyle and 100 butterfly there.

Sims attended Edina, Minnesota, High School and competed on the YWCA's Minneapolis Otters, where she first qualified for the Paralympics. She was named to the U.S. Paralympic Swimming Emerging

Team and competed in the 2014 Can-Am Paralympic Championships.

Sims earned a bachelor's degree from UWL in May 2021, majoring in communications and minoring in sociology and leadership development. She competed in the 50, 200 and 500 freestyle, as well as the 100 butterfly and 200 I.M. for the Eagles.

International competition isn't new to Sims. She earned four medals at the Lima 2019 Para Pan American Games, including a gold in the 100-meter freestyle. She was on the 4x100-meter relay that earned a silver and secured two individual bronze medals in the 100-meter butterfly and 200-meter individual medley.

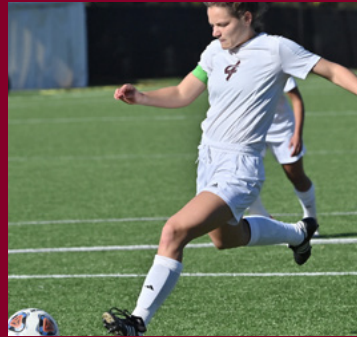


## RYGIEWICZ: NCAA WOMAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEE

Former UWL track & field standout Savannah Rygiewicz was named the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference nominee for the 2021 NCAA Woman of the Year Award. The Wind Lake native earned three career NCAA III All-America outdoor and four career indoor honors. She earned 18 USTFCCCA All-Midwest Region career accolades. She was one of 152 conference-level nominees for the 2021 NCAA Woman of the Year Award.

# 2021 FALL TEAM FINISHES

TEAM	WIAC FINISH	NCAA III FINISH
WOMEN'S GOLF	2ND	---
WOMEN'S TENNIS	3RD	---
WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY	1ST	11TH
MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY	1ST	10TH
SOCCER	2ND	QUARTERFINALS
VOLLEYBALL	TIED 3RD	---
FOOTBALL	2ND	SECOND ROUND



# FACULTY FAVES | MARCIE WYCOFF-HORN

Dean, School of Education, Professional, and Continuing Education | Began at UWL: 2007  
 Degrees: BS, University of Iowa; MEd, PhD, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

- **Favorite class to teach:** Methods and Student Teaching Seminar - Students came together with excitement and energy around their chosen career as future teachers. We learned together in a community where trust, vulnerability, and courage were demonstrated as we explored, problem solved, and differentiated instruction to support all learners. Now as UWL alums these teachers are making a difference in the lives of students every single day.
- **Favorite class in college:** There are so many that I can't pick just one! I have always loved learning. As a first-generation college student, I knew it was a big deal to be attending college and I had a degree to complete (or three!).
- **Favorite UWL spot:** Morris Hall — The School of Education Dean's office relocated back to Morris in January 2021. It is great to be back in what used to be the Campus School. In 1974, the Campus School was renamed Thomas Morris Hall and has housed education programs since.
- **Favorite pastime when not working:** Exploring and embracing new adventures with my partner, Scott, and our 11-year-old daughter, Riley.
- **Hobbies:** Exercising, reading, listening to podcasts, traveling near and far.

See more of her faves:  
[uwlax.edu/alumni/lantern](http://uwlax.edu/alumni/lantern)





# MAKING GIFTS, LAUNCHING CAREERS

Joe and Suzanne Toce reflect on importance of giving

**J**oe and Suzanne Toce came to La Crosse later in life, but they have still made a profound impact on students.

Joe, a retired chemistry and biochemistry professor at UWL, and Suzanne, a retired neonatologist at Gundersen Health System, have contributed more than \$212,000 to the UWL Foundation — most of which has funded scholarships and research opportunities.

“Supporting that research really helps students get to the next level,” Joe says. “We believe this is the best way for students to bolster their resumes and show employers that they have prowess beyond just the classroom.”

Sara Gonske, a May 2021 biochemistry graduate, received the Joseph & Suzanne Toce Dean’s Distinguished Fellowship and the Toce Graduating Senior Award in Biochemistry. The awards allowed her to focus on her studies, positioning hers for success.

“Saving that time and getting those experiences was so valuable,” explains Gonske, who is pursuing her doctorate at the University of Washington. “That really adds to your resume and prepares you for the next level.”

*Suzanne and Joe Toce have created scholarships and research opportunities for students.*

# ALUMS NOMINATED

## 4 TAKE SEATS ON UWL FOUNDATION BOARD

These four alumni began serving on the UWL Foundation Board of Directors in January 2022.



### **Autumn (Tellier) Kletzien, '04**

- Senior director of accounting at Performance Food Group (formerly Reinhart Foodservice).
- Cashton native; currently lives in Holmen with her family.
- Majored in accountancy; Jake and Janet Hoeschler Award, 2004



### **Neva Moga, '97**

- Instructional technology supervisor for the Milwaukee Public Schools.
- Majored in elementary education; master's degrees from Cardinal Stritch University and National Louis University.



### **Kelly Rusch, '86**

- Associate chair and professor, Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering at North Dakota State University.
- Awarded Rada Distinguished Alumni Award; scholarship endowment fund holder with the UWL Foundation.
- Majored in biology and chemistry; master's (1989) and doctorate (1992) in civil engineering from Louisiana State University.



### **Joe Zoellner, '05**

- Chief sales officer and Wisconsin market president, Coulee Bank, La Crosse.
- Lifelong resident of La Crosse, active in the community.
- Majored in finance and economics.

---

## **UWL Foundation Board Officers**

**Jenny Kuderer Radcliffe, '03**, Chair

**Todd Taylor, '80**, Vice Chair

**Bill Colclough**, Treasurer

**Mike McGinley, '82**, Secretary





# ROGER HARRING

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## UWL COMMUNITY REMEMBERS REMARKABLE COACH, TEACHER, FRIEND

**R**oger Harring, '58 & '62, accomplished a lot in his 31 years as UWL's head football coach: 261 victories, 15 conference titles, three national championships.

But the true measure of his impact is best reflected in the number of lives he touched — the countless people he helped or inspired throughout his outstanding career.

To celebrate this legacy, colleagues, friends, former students and athletes shared their favorite stories and lasting impressions of Roger Harring. Together, they reveal how the man known simply as “Coach” was in reality so much more.

### **Roger Jaeger, '76 & '78**

*Offensive line coach*

---

I was a young coach working with the offensive linemen. We had a player that made the same mistake more than once. In a staff meeting, Coach Harring asked me why he continued making that mistake. My response was, “I don't know. I have told him many times how he needed to do the job.” Coach Harring's response was, “You told him?” I said, “Yes, sir.” Coach said, “Your job is not to tell him what to do. Your job is to teach him what to do.” I became a better coach that day. I learned that when a player, child or employee makes a mistake, I need to search for another way to teach what I want to have done. I have never forgotten that lesson.

*Continued on next page*



*Harring and his trademark bike on campus.*

**Mick Miyamoto, '79**

*Offensive lineman*

---

Roger embodied the expression, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” The players knew that Roger cared deeply about them well beyond what talents they brought to the team. I, too, went on and coached football for 28 years (mostly at the DIII level), and the lessons I learned from Roger and his staff that I tried to incorporate into my craft had nothing to do with X’s and O’s and everything to do with building relationships. I would often tell people, “I’m not coaching football, but rather young men through football.” That, I learned in a profound way from Roger.

There’s an old quote that says, “A good coach can change the outcome of a game. A great coach can change the outcome of lives.” Roger did just that by always understanding that he was first and foremost an educator. We often associate football coaches with four-letter words. The only one that comes to mind when I think of Coach Harring is “love.”

**Mary Sullivan**

*Secretary/assistant*

---

I worked as Coach’s secretary/assistant for my work-study job for two years. Coach was a graduate of an all-boys high school in Green Bay, and I was a graduate of an all-girls high school in Green Bay, St. Joseph Academy. He introduced me to anybody that came into the office as his “Academy girl.” Unless you were from Green Bay, you had no idea what he was talking about. He was always curious about my brother, who was a football player he tried to recruit to come to La Crosse. I ran into Coach 10 years after I left La Crosse, and he still called me his

“Academy girl” and wanted to know what was up with my brother. It was wonderful to have a Green Bay connection when I was far from home. I loved Coach!

### **Tony Jennison, '98**

*Defensive back*

---

Coach Harring was the first person in my life who encouraged me (all of us on the team) to tell our parents we love them. It was a common thing he said at the end of practice ... to remember to tell your parents you love them. Something small, but it gets to the essence of who he was as a man. Football wasn't the most important part of his life. It was important, and hard work was expected. But he taught us to have the proper priorities.

### **James Parker**

*Professor emeritus*

---

What not nearly enough people know about Roger is that, from the time he arrived at UWL, he was committed to diversity and acceptance.

When UWL created the third Pre-College Program in the nation in 1974, we did so on a shoestring budget. I asked Roger if he would be interested in providing recreational opportunities for the 25 incoming first-year students, who were students of color and white kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. I told him it was a seven-day-a-week, six-week commitment for very low pay. Roger did not hesitate to join us and was there for weekend events as well.

In 1975 and 1976, when we were building relationships with Historically Black Colleges North Carolina Central and North Carolina A&T, he quickly agreed to participate and

embarked on a weeklong exchange program for UWL. He successfully recruited African American grad students who then enrolled in UWL's master's programs. His devotion to diversifying his student-athletes in football has been attested to repeatedly and with emotion.

Roger worked with many other pioneering programs we developed through the years. He was a stalwart leader in creating a vibrant and vital set of programs for students of color and all students, and his role should never be forgotten or underestimated. He was a delight and will be sorely missed by all whose lives he affected.

### **Caroline Norelius**

*Former director of alumni relations*

---

Having worked the chain gang on both sides of the field, I will always remember the stark differences in what went on during the games. We didn't often lose, but there were a number of close games. The other team's coaching staff seemed to deteriorate as the game went along, less than positive to their players, officials and staff. I will always remember how Roger kept the team and coaches focused on positive actions, language and outcomes during the games.

Roger had a partner in this football gig from the beginning of his coaching career in high school. His wife, Mary, was the person that supported him and kept him grounded. My favorite story took place during a postseason Saturday. Roger was leaving home to go to coach's meetings. As he headed out the door, Mary said, "Roger, don't forget to take out the trash." He responded, "Mary, I'm trying to win a national championship!" Her response, "Take out the trash, Roger." He did.

*Continued on next page*

### **Steven King, '77 & '92**

*Defensive back, current defensive line coach*

---

Coach Harring was always a very positive coach who demanded and received the best from his athletes. We looked up to him and played not only for ourselves, but for UWL and the community.

Coach was very influential in not only my professional life, but also in my personal life. His influence helped make me into the person that I am today. One quote that I remember from Coach was, "If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life."

### **Roger Masarik, '93 & '06**

My favorite memory of Roger was seeing him bike around campus during my four-plus years there. He would always wave to students even if he didn't know you. He made you feel like you were part of the campus family.

### **John Stanek, '75**

*Linebacker*

---

I started as linebacker for Coach Harring from 1972 to 1975. In 2001, I was inducted into the UWL Hall of Fame, and in 2011, I was named to the WIAC All-Time Centennial Football team. I hold the WIAC record for career tackles at 482. None of those accomplishments would have been possible if Coach Harring hadn't seen potential in a local recruit from Aquinas High School.

I graduated in business and stayed in the La Crosse area and ran Stanek Electric,

our family business. Roger and I never lost touch, and he always had a story to tell about my playing days. Although, as I always said, Roger never forgot any of his players, and you didn't need to be a starter.

He was a great coach, a great mentor and a great friend.

### **Dave Borchardt, '80**

*Offensive lineman*

---

Approximately halfway through the 1978 season, Coach Harring did something I've never forgotten. We had a team meeting Monday to review film of the previous game — only, instead of game film, Coach played a short film about a physically and mentally challenged young man. He lived with his mother on a farm and rode their small tractor into town each day to sell pencils and do what he could to help support them. When his mother passed, the man continued to ride in each day and do what he could to support himself. When the film ended, Coach Harring said with emotion cracking in his voice, "I dare you to use your abilities to the same extent as this man — I dare you!" and walked out of the room.

That offseason, I trained harder, ate more healthy foods and came back the following fall 20 pounds heavier and in the best shape of my life. My senior year, I went on to receive First-Team All-Conference, First-Team All-District and Honorable Mention All-American honors, in addition to team recognition. With Coach Harring, it wasn't about X's and O's. It was about character and doing the best you could with the gifts and abilities you were given.



Roger Haring, '58 & '62, is carried on the shoulders of his players following one of three national titles.

### **Darrell Broten, '73**

*Tight end*

---

My favorite memory of Coach Haring is when he let me suit up for our homecoming game in 1970. I had been on the freshman football team and joined varsity as a sophomore but was not good enough to play at all. I was relegated to scrimmage duty, which I took very seriously. I wanted to dress for the game and impress a girl I was taking to homecoming, so I played like a demon to earn a spot on the sideline. Two days before the game, I went to Coach Haring and asked to suit up. He said "yes." I will always think Coach was impressed with my scrimmage effort (the first stringers simply pounded me) and was thrilled when he let me run out onto the field. I will always remember that, and the lesson that someone always recognizes sincere effort.

### **Janie Morgan, '85 & '86**

*Executive director of the UWL Alumni Association*

---

I enjoyed working with Roger on the many championship football team alumni reunions over the years. He was always determined to

do whatever we could to make it a valuable experience for the players. He was so proud of his alums. He readily shared their successes and was honored to have coached them and be a part of their lives.

When he talked about his wife, Mary, he lit up. You could see how much he loved her. They were true partners and raised a beautiful family together.

I would see Roger and the "coffee clutch" over at Cartwright or now at the Student Union. He always invited me to sit down and join them. He was inclusive, enjoyed hearing others' stories and wanted to continue to be part of the campus community.

I will miss seeing him in the suites during home football games. I will miss his calls when it was time for a reunion. I will miss his smile. And I will miss his love for his alma mater. Roger Haring was one of the best. I feel very blessed to have worked with him and, more importantly, to call him a friend.

**See more reflections of Haring:**  
[uwlax.edu/alumni/lantern](http://uwlax.edu/alumni/lantern)

**Honor Roger Haring with a donation to a scholarship in his name:**  
[uwlax.edu/foundation](http://uwlax.edu/foundation)

# PLAY IT FORWARD

## Rec Sports: 100 years of playing



*Those gearing up for Rec Sport's 100th anniversary include, from left, retired Director Sue White, '85, current Director Jeff Keenan, '12, and Associate Director Mo McAlpine, '91.*

It's not a matter of whether you could take part in UWL Rec Sports. It's a question of if you did — and how many activities.

Recreational Sports began in the early 1920s, shortly after the campus opened in 1909. Activity stepped up when Physical Education Professor Emma Lou Wilder founded the Women's Athletic Association to promote intramurals in 1923.

For 100 years, Rec Sports has enhanced the UWL experience by offering diverse programs, innovative services, employment growth and welcoming facilities, says Jeff Keenan, '12, Rec Sports director.

"That's a century of working toward our vision of a thriving community enjoying active and healthy lives," he says. "We've helped hundreds of thousands of students play, and that's definitely something worth celebrating."

Keenan says Rec Sports has been integral in making the university's motto, *Mens Corpusque*, Latin for "mind and body," a reality for countless students.

"No matter what you are interested in, Rec Sports has a way to get you engaged and active," he says.

Keenan worked in recreational sports at four other institutions before returning to UWL in July 2021. He says UWL is unique.

“At no other institution has recreation been so centered,” he notes. “Students and administrators alike value recreation and understand its benefits. UWL sees campus recreation as an integral component of the student experience, which leads to academic success. It also provides individuals with the opportunity to belong to a community and develop lifelong, physically active habits.”

Retired director Sandy Price agrees recreational activity is key.

“There needs to be an opportunity for students to release tension from the stresses of their academic career,” Price explains. “Sport and activity are wonderful ways to do that and to make friends.”

The Rec Sports centennial is an excellent opportunity to share the story of the program’s origin, growth and evolution, says Keenan, adding that it also set the stage for the future.

“Our focus will remain on providing welcoming facilities, programs and services for the campus community,” says Keenan. “We will continue to evolve to meet these students where they want to play.”

# 100th celebration planned

“Play it Forward,” an on campus celebration for Rec Sports, is set for Saturday, April 30. Alums can gather virtually or in person. Virtual activities, contests and more are planned. Stay connected at: [uwlax.edu/recsports](http://uwlax.edu/recsports).



*A campus Women’s Athletics Association group posed for this photo in 1926. Physical Education Professor Emma Lou Wilder founded the Women’s Athletic Association to promote intramurals in 1923. Photo courtesy Murphy Library Special Collections/ARC.*



*A smiling group of intramural participants with their prized T-shirts is one of the benefits of winning in Rec Sports. This group is from the early 2000s. Photo courtesy Murphy Library Special Collections/ARC.*

# 'SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF'

With \$200K endowment, Schoenberger reflects on evolution of CBA

**D**ick Schoenberger remembers when the College of Business Administration was in its infancy.

"I came here in January of 1973 ... when we were just the School of Business," says Schoenberger, longtime Economics Department faculty member. "There was no dean, just a couple of departments. All of our offices were spread out. The most challenging time was when the CBA was just trying to get going."

Today, the CBA is celebrating 50 years of excellence — with strong and growing enrollment, a wide array of programs, and a state-of-the-art home in newly renovated Wittich Hall.

And thanks to Schoenberger and his wife, Susan, '78 & '79, CBA students will have even more opportunities to thrive. (Susan also had a long and successful career at UWL, retiring as the assistant chancellor for Budget Planning and Control.)

The couple has created a \$200,000 endowment that will support two \$3,000 scholarships annually — one for an economics student and one for an accountancy student. The endowment awards its first scholarships during the 2023-24 academic year.

The gift comes as no surprise given Schoenberger's passion for teaching and supporting students. That passion continues to burn nearly 30 years after his retirement.

"I had some excellent students," he notes. "I miss the teaching, and I miss the students. I don't miss all the meetings we had to attend."

Much has changed in the CBA since Schoenberger's retirement in 1993. Much more has changed since his arrival on campus nearly 50 years ago.

Then, the CBA was struggling to find its footing and build its reputation.

In 1974, Schoenberger's second year on campus, many CBA offices moved

into the newly constructed North (now Wimberly) Hall.

"That changed an awful lot," he says. "The facilities were better. The audio equipment was better. The faculty was better, and it just kept getting better. I think we took pleasure in the idea that we were part of something that was finally getting off the ground and had high expectations for the future. It was an exciting time."

In the '80s and '90s, the CBA continued to hire more qualified faculty. Many had doctorate degrees — a rarity when the college first opened.

Schoenberger left his mark on the growing Economics Department, serving as the department chair for a number of years. During this stint, he wrote many of the department's bylaws, some of which became university bylaws and he suspects are still in effect.

More importantly, he made a positive impression on countless students.





*Thanks to Dick Schoenberger and his wife, Susan, '78 & '79, CBA students will have even more opportunities to thrive. The couple has created an endowment that will support two \$3,000 scholarships annually — one for an economics student and one for an accountancy student. Both had long, successful careers at UWL.*

Once, when he was out of town presenting a paper, one of his former students approached him and invited him and his wife to lunch. She had gone on to earn her Ph.D. in economics, and had landed a job with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

“She and her mother took Susan and I out to lunch, at Chinatown in San Francisco,” Schoenberger remembers. “I said, ‘I’ll have anything you order.’ We had a wonderful meal, and she wrote me a number of times after that.”

Looking back on his career, Schoenberger is most proud

of what the CBA — and so many of his students — have become.

“You take a certain amount of pride starting out, grassroots, and something turns out as wonderful as this and as large as this,” he says. “It’s something to be proud of, I think.”



# COVID CHAMPION

Bridget Pfaff reflects on work with Gundersen Health System amid pandemic

**B**ridget Pfaff has seen it all over her 20-plus years in healthcare.

Seasonal conditions such as Lyme disease. Suspicious packages at the height of the 2001 anthrax scare. The rise and fall of H1N1 and other

viral outbreaks. And now, a global pandemic.

"There is a group of us who reflect on March 7, 2020 — the first day we had a suspect patient — and remember how all of our days have been impacted since then," says Pfaff, '97 & '07,

clinical operations director for Gundersen Health System in La Crosse. "I think the better question is: 'How hasn't life changed?'"

Pfaff has adjusted in countless ways, personally and professionally, during COVID-19.

*Bridget Pfaff, '97 & '07, clinical operations director for La Crosse's Gundersen Health System, adjusted in countless ways, personally and professionally, during COVID-19. She partnered with colleagues to create a COVID-19 dashboard tracking testing, positivity rates and immunization trends in the La Crosse area.*

She switched up her hands-off leadership style and embraced a more active role within Gundersen's Infection Control team.

She procured personal protective equipment for essential workers on the frontline.

And she partnered with colleagues to create a COVID-19 dashboard tracking testing, positivity rates and immunization trends in the La Crosse area.

Pfaff also set more boundaries regarding her workload and availability.

"I had always had pride in the fact that I returned emails in a timely fashion and, no matter what role I was in, I answered my own phone and managed my own calendar," she explains. "In 2020, for the first time, I found myself saying 'no' or 'not right now' when people emailed, called or sent me a text.

"Waiting for the next surprise from COVID-19 was exhausting," Pfaff continues. "In healthcare, we are seeing the impact of that in terms of burnout among those on the frontline."

Pfaff originally planned on a career in marketing. But she was drawn to healthcare after getting a part-time pharmacy job during college.

She soon learned that some hospitals offer tuition reimbursement for students going into healthcare careers.

After earning a bachelor's degree in microbiology, she began her first job with Franciscan Skemp Medical Center in La Crosse, part of Mayo Clinic Health System. She had just \$8,000 of student debt thanks to the tuition investment program in her bachelor's and master's program.

And, thanks to her UWL education and experiences, she had all the tools she needed to launch her career in infection control.

In fact, many UWL microbiology and public health students have gone on to successful careers in that field, including some Pfaff has studied or worked with:

- Leah Bomesberger, '19, Centers for Disease Control
- Megan Buechel, '20, Gundersen

- Josalyn (Lester) Curl, '01 Houston Methodist
- Michelle Schmitz, '96, UW Health

"I am so blessed to have had the support from the UWL community to shape the professional I am today," Pfaff says. Her mentors include current and former professors Robert Burns, Allen Nelson, Marc Rott, Daniel Sutherland, Thomas Volk, Michael Winfrey and Luanne Wolfram. "I was never the smartest student in any of my classes, but I have had many blessings in my career based upon the foundation provided by these incredible faculty."

Pfaff loves working in healthcare for the same reason she enjoyed her time at UWL: the people.

"I have had the opportunity to work with amazing people through my years there," she says. "As I reflect on my years at Gundersen, I am very humbled to have this amazing opportunity to be a voice with hospital and community leadership when it comes to the pandemic response."

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## Thomas Harris: A driving force for social justice

**W**hen Thomas Harris was graduating with a bachelor's degree, three of his UW-Stevens Point mentors told him he had what it takes to make a difference among college students.

Harris drove to La Crosse in August 1988 to discover how to do that through UWL's college student personnel master's program. He started classes that fall — beginning a 30-year UWL career of mentoring thousands and impacting a community.

"I stayed because the longer I remained connected with the off-campus community, the more opportunities, options, and assistance I was able to engage, offer, and provide for UWL students, faculty, staff, and individuals and organizations across the region," explains Harris.

The recipient of the 2021 Academic Staff Excellence Award, which recognizes excellence in performance and service, credits supervisors in Residence Life and Multicultural Student Services — the two office areas he worked on campus — for his UWL longevity and career growth.

Harris says working with community and regional events and initiatives linked to equity,

access, inclusion and social justice compelled him to stay.

"In more recent years, my community activism role has been to build genuine relationships across racial and power structural lines, especially with open-minded white folks willing to recognize that they have the power, privilege, and capability to act to create positive equity improvements when it comes to interactions and partnerships with people of color and Indigenous people," he explains.

Harris specifically points to those who came with an open mind and used their privilege to make change benefitting everyone, not only the white majority.

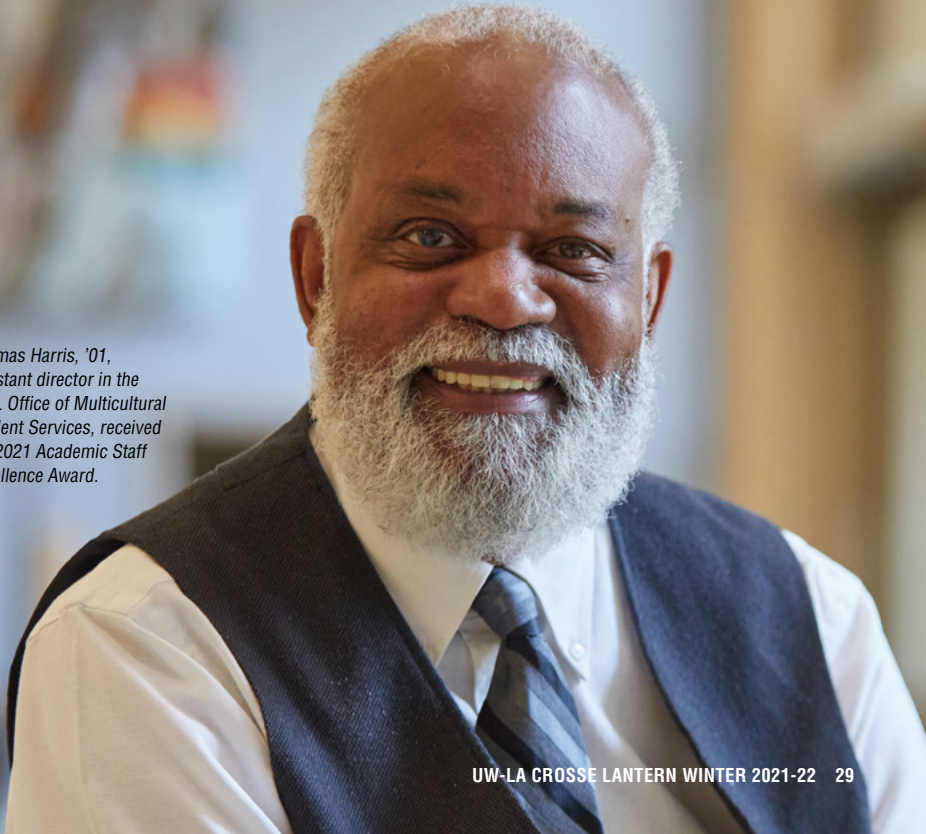
"This critical shortcoming in the La Crosse area has provided me an opportunity, as a Black man, to play a unique role to welcome white individuals at every level to learn, reimagine and participate intentionally cross culturally," he says.

With more than 20 local organizations now promoting equity, access, inclusion and social justice, Harris shares pride in achieving success. But, he knows efforts must continue.

## The Thomas Harris file

- Assistant director in the UWL Office of Multicultural Student Services 2003- 2021; assistant coordinator in the Housing Office, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2002-03; various positions in OMSS, Admissions, and Residence Life offices, UWL, 1988-2001.
- La Crosse Area Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Award, 2009; CouleeCap People Helping People Award for La Crosse County, 2010; UWL Rada Distinguished Alumni Award, 2012; UWL Parker Distinguished Multicultural Award, 2018.
- UWL residence hall students establish the Thomas Harris Student Involvement Award Scholarship to annually recognize outstanding student dedication and commitment to Residence Life excellence, 2001.
- WURHA Advisor of the Year Award renamed by UW System student leaders the “Thomas Harris Advisor of the Year Award,” 2000.
- Bachelor’s in political science/public administration and policy analysis, UW-Stevens Point, 1988; master’s in college student personnel, UWL, 2001.

*Thomas Harris, '01, assistant director in the UWL Office of Multicultural Student Services, received the 2021 Academic Staff Excellence Award.*



# UNEXPECTED GIFT TOUCHING GENERATIONS



**GARY JON ISAKSON, '81**

**H**e was quiet and private. Friends valued his intelligence, keen insights and lacerating wit. Now, he's known as the alum helping students get through college without loads of debt.

History major Gary Jon Isakson, '81, has left \$1.325 million to the UWL Foundation to create scholarships in the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. Awards of more than \$50,000 will be given annually to students in CASSH and the Self-Sufficiency Program, along with those in study abroad programs.

"He really wanted to help our students in the liberal arts," says Vice Chancellor for University Advancement Greg Reichert. "It's easy to see how he thought a broad education was key for students to find success."

Reichert says the generous estate funding was unexpected. It was Isakson's court-appointed special administrator who found his will on the floor in the back of Isakson's vehicle. Isakson had outlined specifics about how the UWL Foundation should utilize his estate more than 20 years ago. It was key that he named the UWL Foundation, not UWL, to receive the funds.

"The generous gift came as a complete surprise to us and we are very grateful," notes Reichert. "It's really a wonderful, touching way to help a countless number of students in perpetuity."

Isakson's half-sister, Anita R. Lebakken, a 1959 School of Education graduate who lived in Stoughton, was also in UWL Foundation's Legacy Society.

Isakson died unexpectedly April 24, 2020, in his Cass Street apartment in La Crosse. He graduated from West Salem High School in 1971 and served four years in the U.S. Air Force.

When Isakson returned to the Coulee Region and following college, he was a financial administrator at Maple Grove Country Club before earning a certified nursing assistant degree. He worked the night shift at Hillview Health Care Center from 1996 until his death. Hillview co-workers remember him as a tireless worker who was always willing to help.

Isakson touched many lives at Hillview. Through his generous donation, he will continue touching others for generations to come.

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## The Gary Isakson Scholarship Program

Awards will be given to CASSH majors and minors based on financial need and an essay about diversity. Annual allocations include:

- Up to \$10,000 for two \$5,000 scholarships for Self-Sufficiency Program participants. The program helps single parents and other adults prepare for college success.
- Up to \$12,000 for four \$3,000 scholarships for students participating in study-abroad programs.
- Up to \$30,000 for \$7,500 scholarships that can be renewed for four years.

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# STADIUM SPLENDOR

Fall. It's often the seasonal choice among alums.  
This early October image shows why.

*Photo by Michael Lieurance, '02*

EXTRA  
CREDIT

