



# BIGGEST gift ever

# \$2.1 Million

Will provide students hands-on experiences in economics

Cover Story  
on page 4




1971-2021  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

# Building Bridges


University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

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Smartphones:  
not so smart?

**P6**



Connecting  
research to  
practice

**P8**



Charting a new  
course

**P14**



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## Message from the Dean

College of Business Administration Dean Laura Milner highlights a record gift's impact on the CBA.



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# Pulse of the college student

## UW-La Crosse student serving on Great Rivers United Way board

UWL senior Hunter Johnson wants to involve more college students in the mission of Great Rivers United Way. After becoming the only college student — and thought to be the first student — to serve on the local nonprofit's board in September 2018, he launched the Student United Group, with assistance from other United Way board members and employees.

The group is recruiting students from UWL, Western Technical College and Viterbo University. Together they will get involved in United Way events and spread the word about the organization's mission of uniting people and resources to improve lives and strengthen communities.

"This is a way to improve the lives of people around you," says Johnson. "As someone in college, I know how fortunate I am to be here.

This is a way to see others around you in the community and realize that not everyone has the same opportunities."

Johnson, a finance major from West Bend, Wisconsin, says joining the board has made him feel more like a part of the La Crosse community. And having a student on the board brings in fresh ideas from college students, says Mary Kay Wolf, executive director of Great Rivers United Way.

"When I recruit board members, I'm looking for people who come from different backgrounds and have different ways of looking at things," says Wolf. "I believe college students have a huge amount to offer."

## Get involved

The Student United Group is still actively recruiting students. Email Hunter Johnson at [johnson.hunter@uwlax.edu](mailto:johnson.hunter@uwlax.edu) to learn more.

## More non-profit outreach

In order to receive college funding for professional development opportunities, a new requirement for the UWL CBA Council of Presidents & Senators is to develop a relationship with an area non-profit organization. Several student leaders have already begun engaging organizations including The Salvation Army and The Hunger Task Force of La Crosse. UWL CBA Dean Laura Milner created the Council of Presidents & Senators in fall 2016. The group of student senators and presidents of CBA student organizations are the voice for CBA students. They have helped with college decision making from architectural plans to planning after-hours events for college lecture series.

Hunter Johnson, a finance major from West Bend, Wisconsin, serves on the Great Rivers United Way board and is working to involve more college students in the organization's mission.



# BIGGEST gift ever

# \$2.1 Million



The largest single gift ever to UW-La Crosse — \$2.1 million — is a “game-changer” for the university’s College of Business Administration and the region.

The grant supports the establishment of the Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research, which will provide UWL students more opportunity to learn economics through hands-on experiences and community engagement.

“It is quite simply ... amazing ... and the words ‘Thank You’ are just not big enough to express our gratitude,” says UWL CBA Dean Laura Milner.

The gift was announced during UWL Chancellor Joe Gow’s Community Council meeting with area business leaders Thursday, Sept. 19.

“The Menard family gift is a powerful affirmation of the great work our faculty and staff do each day with UWL students,” says Gow. “It will strengthen our students’ collaborative research projects and hands-on learning for many years to come.”

UW-La Crosse Associate Professor of Economics Adam Hoffer works with economics student Kyle VanDeursen.

The Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research will provide

UWL students more opportunity to learn economics through hands-on experiences and community engagement.

Gow says the gift aligns perfectly with the “Advancing Transformational Education” pillar of the university’s “Sustaining Excellence” strategic plan.

“As a result of the Menard family’s extraordinary generosity, our students will have even greater opportunities to have the kinds of dynamic learning experiences that will prepare them well for highly-successful careers,” explains Gow. “The Menard family is making this exceptional gift, the largest in UWL’s 110-year history, because they greatly admire the quality of our students and the teaching and research being done by Dr. Adam Hoffer. We are so very fortunate to have him on our faculty at UWL, and to see our students benefit from his impressive talent and dedication.”

UWL Associate Professor of Economics Adam Hoffer, who launched an experimental economics lab from a Charles Koch Industries grant in 2016, shared his idea for growing the lab and providing more student-learning opportunities to Eau Claire Businessman John Menard earlier this year. Hoffer says Menard remembers his time in college as opening a new world of possibilities through the exchange of ideas.

From humble beginnings, John Menard was a hometown farm kid who used his vision to lead by example, listening to his customers, studying the economy, changing with the times and working closely with his employees.

Following continued success, the Menard family has quietly supported education for years, providing opportunities for hundreds of students to enhance their college experiences and helping them prepare for future success.

“We are pleased to support UW-La Crosse students and scholars as they expand their explorations of the issues impacting the state and the nation,” said the Menard family in a



written statement. “The programs and research undertaken by the university’s center will further the school’s position as a critical resource of knowledge on economic issues.”

Past contributions from the Menard family include donations to a variety of university programs and initiatives, as well as university-sponsored community youth programs. This is the family’s first Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research.

#### **AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE GIFT WILL:**

- Allow UWL to grow its experimental economics lab where UWL students work on answering real-world economics questions in a lab setting.
- Expand the Sports Economics Symposium speaker series launched three years ago into the new Menard Family Public Lecture Series. The series will feature a mix of leading academic researchers who can discuss the findings of academic research in areas like political economy, economics experiments, real estate, and sports.
- Provide scholarships and other unique learning opportunities for students to engage with economic ideas outside of the classroom. “We will have a weekly discussion group and we have the ability to fund students to attend economics conferences and workshops off-campus,” Hoffer notes. “It’s critical that students are the major benefactors of the generous gift.”

Hoffer is excited to better engage the greater La Crosse area with the great work being done on campus and to design programs and market them beyond campus.

Dean Milner calls the gift “profound.” It will have “huge multiplier effects,” she adds. By investing in faculty, the gift directly impacts hundreds — if not thousands — of students. By supporting engagement, more and more people will be drawn into the discussions happening on campus. By investing in research, the gift contributes to the body of literature to support the forward momentum of research from which society prospers, she explains.

“Universities, including ours, don’t merely regurgitate knowledge, we create it in an open atmosphere of honest, sincere and authentic inquiry,” says Milner.

The timing of the gift sets an exciting precursor to the CBA’s 50 Years Forward fundraising campaign, set to kick off next year, to provide long-term support for faculty and students.

“The CBA is filled with amazing faculty who have the privilege of working with incredible students,” Hoffer says. “The Menard Family gift is a clear statement that the UWL CBA is exactly the kind of place that our generous community can invest to build our future.”

[Learn more about the gift.](#)

# SMARTPHONES: NOT SO SMART?

UWL senior studies how presence of smartphones may impact decision making — in an economics sense

Smartphones provide so much. With one touch you can connect to friends, family, business, shopping, entertainment and much more. Yet the world knows very little about what these devices might take away.

With a growing number of smartphone addicts checking their phones dozens, if not hundreds, of times a day, the potential cost of smartphone use is an emerging area of literature two UWL economics researchers are eager to explore.

One study from McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin caught the attention of UWL senior and economics major Kyle VanDeursen. It found that the mere presence of a smartphone within reach reduced that person's available cognitive capacity.

VanDeursen wondered how this research might apply in the field of economics.

With a recent gift from the Menard family, students like VanDeursen don't have to just wonder about economic questions of interest. They can pursue them. The \$2.1 million grant supports the establishment of the Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research, which will provide UWL students more opportunity to learn economics through hands-on experiences and community engagement. Among other initiatives, it will grow UWL's Experimental Economics Lab, a place where students work to answer challenging, real-world economics questions.

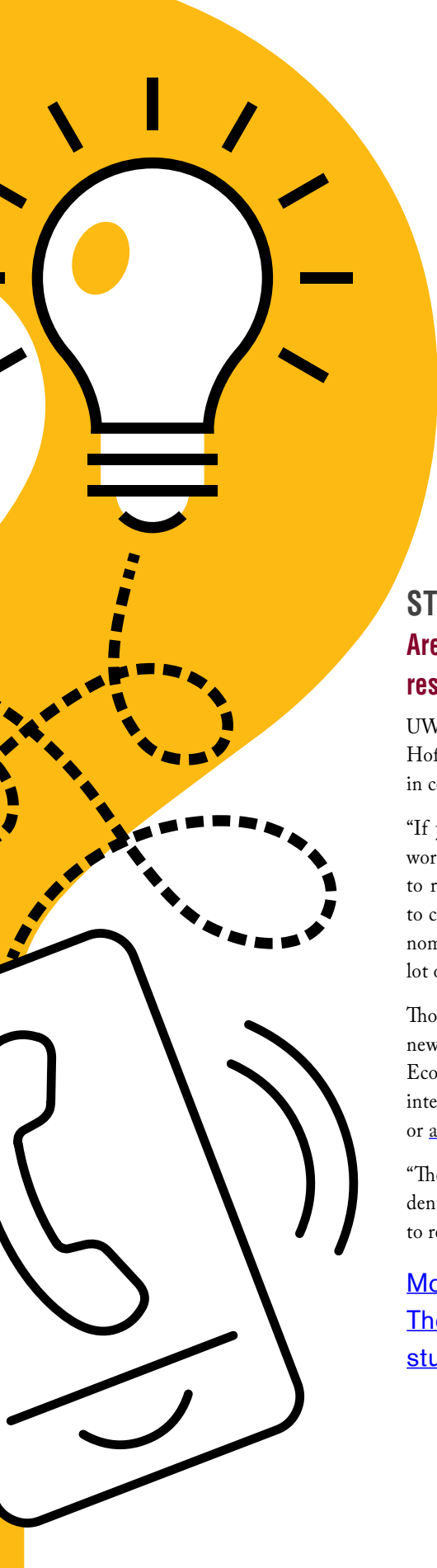
"In the past I've written literature reviews of topics I'm interested in. At the end, you turn in a paper and you're done," explains VanDeursen. "Now, I'll write the paper, and then I'll go out and do it. That is so cool. I find this fun, and maybe it will help

me with my goal to continue on to earn a Ph.D. in economics."

VanDeursen, along with his faculty mentor, Associate Professor of Economics Adam Hoffer, are spending the fall semester studying how the mere presence of a smartphone impacts how people play the Public Goods Game. The game is a standard experimental economics game where participants can choose to allocate tokens to a community pot or a private pot. Previous research on the game's outcome show not everyone participates in the community pot — or public good. Economists are interested in ways to change that. Hoffer and VanDeursen wonder how the smartphone may or may not influence how people play the game, making them more or less likely to cooperate with each other.

Hoffer and VanDeursen plan to roll the experiments out in willing economics classes this fall. Hoffer says it is a way to push this line of smartphone research forward while applying the field of economics.

"We stand on the shoulders of giants when we do research, but, in this particular line of research, there is a long way to go," says Hoffer. "This is going to be an area of research that is studied for years to come."



## STUDENTS:

### Are you interested in economics research?

UWL Associate Professor of Economics Adam Hoffer is looking for students who are interested in conducting economics research.

“If you’re interested in what’s going on in the world around us and the economy and you want to research it, talk about it over dinner, travel to conferences — if you want to engage in economics in any way shape or form — we have a lot of opportunities for you!” says Hoffer.

Those opportunities are available through the new Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research. Students interested can contact Hoffer at 608.785.5293 or [ahoffer@uwlax.edu](mailto:ahoffer@uwlax.edu) to learn more.

“The goal of this project is to affect as many students as we can,” Hoffer says. “I want students to reach out to me.”

[McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin study](#)



## SAVE THE DATE: Celebrate the CBA's 50th

The College of Business Administration celebrates its first half century in 2020. We welcome you back for a full schedule of 50th-anniversary-fun on Oct. 17, 2020. Save the date and look out for more details in the spring 2020 issue of *Building Bridges* and on the CBA website at [www.uwlax.edu/cba](http://www.uwlax.edu/cba)

Update your contact information [HERE](#) to ensure you receive an invitation.

The UWL's CBA is also preparing for its move into a newly renovated Wittich Hall in fall 2020. Join the CBA for a Wittich Hall Ribbon Cutting ceremony tentatively scheduled from 4-5 p.m., Thursday Sept. 3, 2020, with a reception to follow.

Watch for details.

# Connecting research to practice

Students work on solutions to regional, non-profit human resources management challenges



UWL CBA Associate Professor Christa Kiersch and student Kaitlyn Robbeloth stepped in front of a Great Rivers United Way Directors meeting this summer to tell area non-profit leaders about a project a UWL group is working on to help them.

From The Parenting Place to The Salvation Army to The Boys & Girls Club of Greater La Crosse, Kiersch recalls the impact of seeing these leaders all in the same room together.

“This group of organizations does so much good for the community,” she says.

Now Kiersch and UWL students in her Human Resources Management classes are working to help these organizations do even better.

Students in two sections of Kiersch’s MGT 385: Human Resources Management collaborated on teams to address non-profit human resources challenges in partnership with Great Rivers United Way during the

spring 2019 semester. They presented final reports at semester’s end to stakeholders, including Great Rivers United Way’s Community Impact Director Liz Evans.

Evans says hearing students’ presentations was an opportunity to step back from the busy, day-to-day operations and take a look at the some of these issues in more detail — such as challenges with finding and retaining staff or building effective training processes. Having the staff resources and time to investigate them is a challenge for non-profits as many do not have even one full-time staff person dedicated to HR.

Now a group of five students selected from Kiersch’s spring semester class is building on the initial research of their classmates throughout the 2019-20 academic year. The group — the Applied HRM Service Learning Externship Team — aims to provide an overall needs analysis and research-based

The Applied HRM Service Learning Externship Team with its advisor. The team continues HR management outreach to non-profit organizations this semester. From left: Alexa Thurmes; Advisor Christa Kiersch; Ashley Smits; Kaitlyn Robbeloth; Jenna Lee and Morgan Brzank. The team will earn independent study credit and will also write an undergraduate research grant proposal for continuing their work during the spring 2020 semester

tools for Great Rivers United Way partners to address their specific HR needs.

Their work is the Wisconsin Idea in action, the UW principle that university education should influence people’s lives beyond classroom walls. UWL is engaging with community partners in many ways. Learn

**EXTERNSHIP** = experiential learning that happens in partnership with an organization outside of UWL. However, unlike an internship, the work an externship happens at UWL instead of at the organization.



*“I have deep-seated belief that my role as an educator is to provide students more than preparation for careers, but also to help them develop as humans and community members. I want them to take their growing skills and make a positive impact in their communities and for other people.”*

— UWL CBA Associate Professor Christa Kiersch

how to partner with UWL and support experiential learning on page 10.

The skills students build through applied-research experiences like this include teamwork, critical thinking, communication, leadership and more. “Basically they build skills employers continually tell us they need,” explains Kiersch, who is now advising the externship team.

Students say the class project has pushed them to research and write reports at a high level, so they can provide accurate, reliable and meaningful information to organiza-

tions. Instead of relying on Google, they conducted interviews with non-profit leaders, researched the landscape of regional non-profits to better understand their specific challenges and delved into academic search engines and other reliable sources to find evidence-based practices, tools, and processes to address them.

They gained new skillsets such as boiling down complex information into concise, digestible pieces, weeding out unreliable information, and presenting their findings to real clients, they said.

For some, the project made it clear that HR is in their future.

Senior Jenna Lee says taking the class helped her bring fresh ideas into her HR internship at Drexel Building Supply in her hometown this past summer. Now hired to begin a full-time position in HR with the company after her May 2020 graduation, she looks forward to sharing more. “This experience opened my eyes to the theories — to what works and what doesn’t,” she says. “I was able to offer suggestions to the head of HR.”

Ashley Smits was also able to apply what she learned in class to a summer internship with Associated Bank. Although not in HR, she said the same work, researching best practices and communicating information, applied to the work she was doing for the company related to branding and website changes.

Smits likes that the project has them working with real people with the potential to change real lives. The students also said they became more aware of non-profit organizations and the important work they do.

“I have a deep-seated belief that my role as an educator is to provide students more than preparation for careers, but also to help them develop as humans and community members,” says Kiersch. “I want them to take their growing skills and make a positive impact in their communities and for other people.”



Great Rivers United Way’s Community Impact Director Liz Evans, right, initially got involved in the project after Scott Cooper, UWL director of Undergraduate Research and Creativity, attended a Great Rivers United Way meeting with non-profit representatives from throughout the community. When posing the question about needs for student research partnerships, many in the room agreed they had human resources related needs.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## Partners support service learning

The project was initiated through collaborations with the UWL Foundation and generous donors, as well as UWL's Office of Undergraduate Research & Creativity. In summer 2018, the local financial services business Advisors Management Group (AMG) began working with UWL Foundation Officer Jay Scott and UWL Professor Emeritus Ron Rada to support experiential learning through UWL's Margins of Excellence initiative. AMG established an endowment that will provide a financial stipend to students on the externship team.

Jenna Deets, chief compliance officer for AMG, says a conversation with Rada and his wife, Jane, two clients of AMG with a history of financial support for experien-

tial learning at UWL, initially got AMG's management team excited about how their company could make a big mark on the lives of students and the wider La Crosse community with a gift. The La Crosse-based company had seen first-hand the benefits of college students learning through experiences while serving others. In fact, Deets was AMG's first intern. A finance major, she graduated in 2003 after working at AMG during her last two years at UWL.

"I was able to see how the excellent education I got at UWL was applied," says Deets. "At age 22, I feel I was further ahead had I not had that opportunity. When I graduated, I was able to hit the ground running."

Now the company has 10-12 interns a year. By supporting this new experiential learning opportunity, AMG is able to provide even more students the opportunity to

apply theory learned in the classroom to practice in the field and ultimately get a leg up before they start their career.

"We just really liked the idea of being part of something bigger than us," says Deets. "And it can multiply, and other organizations can become a part of the project whether contributing or benefiting."

The gift aligns with AMG's mission to impact how the financial services industry does business with its communities. AMG management believes their success is a consequence of not just the advice they give to clients, but their service to the community.

"We are very blessed to be able to do this, and we feel it is something we should do as a result of our mission to serve other people," says Deets. "If another organization in the city hears about this and decides they want to do it too, that is exciting to us."

Two sections of MGT 385 (Human Resource Management) students worked on 16 course-embedded, team projects in partnership with the Great Rivers United Way (GRUW) and their associated nonprofit organizations such as WAFER, The Salvation Army, and The Boys & Girls Club of Greater La Crosse, during the spring 2019 semester. Here a student presents to a Great Rivers United Way representative and others.



**UGETCONNECTED**  
UNITED IN *Service* / UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN LA CROSSE

Who can be reached on

**Want to partner with UWL?**  
If you have a project and would like to partner with UWL students and faculty, visit UWL's Community Partnership Portal [www.uwlax.edu/info/community-portal](http://www.uwlax.edu/info/community-portal) to learn more about internship, volunteer, and undergraduate research opportunities.  
If you are interested in financially supporting experiential learning opportunities for UWL students in the future, contact the UWL Foundation at [foundation@uwlax.edu](mailto:foundation@uwlax.edu) or 877.895.3863



# Workforce prep with professionals

Community business professionals help students pump up data analytics, communication skills

As the number of jobs that require data literacy and analytical skills are on the rise, UWL CBA courses are adapting to prepare students.

Instructors in 10 sections of “ECO 230: Business & Economics Research & Communication” — a core course for all business students — engaged 30 volunteers from the community businesses to help pump up students’ data analytics and communication skills. They helped with presentation feedback and coaching students in the spring semester.

UWL graduating senior Adam Crotteau was glad he had experiences from the class to share during a job interview. He could discuss using data and descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and data visualization to address business issues. He also gained experience with programming languages such as R, used for statistical computing.

Data is everywhere, so simply being able to interpret it is an advantage in today’s careers. It means not blindly trusting others’ interpretations, explains UWL Senior Alex Jantz.

Left: UWL Senior Alex Jantz, along with a team of economics students in ECO 230, present to local professionals. In an imagined scenario, the students acted as data consultants presenting to a firm’s human resources team. The economics students shared data analytics findings related to the firm’s gender pay equity.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



## AMA IS AMONG THE BEST

UW-La Crosse American Marketing Association students took third place in the AMA 41st Annual International Collegiate Conference, April 10-14, in New Orleans. This was the first year UWL’s chapter made it to the top 10 finalists nationally. UWL’s team, along with other top marketing students across the nation, competed in developing a comprehensive marketing plan for The Wall Street Journal. UWL’s team, from left, Brett Gluth, Jasmine Bogart-Falbo, Bennett Williams, Ellen Fallon and Nick Janco. Erika Ward, who graduated in December, was also on the team but did not present at the conference.



AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION



# Celebrating MAROON TYCOONS

Group of 53 students earned \$10,000 or more during the past year in scholarships

UWL student Emily Swenson is one of the CBA's Maroon Tycoons.

## Maroon what?

Maroon Tycoons are a group of UWL students being recognized for their scholarship earning prowess. During UWL's first ever Maroon Tycoon event at the end of spring semester, students celebrated the achievement of earning \$10,000 or more in UWL Foundation scholarships or other private scholarships from external sources during the past academic year.

Swenson was one of 53 students —and eight in the CBA — to receive the honor.

Scholarships have helped her worry less about making ends meet, so she can focus on school. "I had the opportunity to join campus organizations where I learned various leadership skills and expanded my network as well," she says.

The event is a way of demonstrating that students can pay for an academic year of tuition — less than \$10,000 in tuition and fees for Wisconsin and Minnesota residents — by being persistent and dedicated to the scholarship search and application process, says Josh Bonnell, UWL's scholarship coordinator who helped plan the event.

UWL's Director of Financial Aid Louise Janke had the idea of starting the Maroon Tycoon as a way of raising awareness about the pool of scholarships available to students — including private scholarships.

**THE CBA'S  
MAROON TYCOONS**

Dayna Ball  
John Bauer  
Brittany Do-Mckenzie  
Lexie LeClair  
Reed Powell  
Emily Swenson  
Megan Wiedemeier  
Kao Xiong



EMILY SWENSON

## STUDENT SUPPORT FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

UWL's Scholarship Resource Center, located in 215 Graff Main Hall, is dedicated to encouraging and assisting students with application for scholarships, grants and cash awards. Call 608.785.6680 to schedule an appointment or email the SRC at [uwlscholarships@uwlax.edu](mailto:uwlscholarships@uwlax.edu).

Learn more at:  
[www.uwlax.edu/scholarships](http://www.uwlax.edu/scholarships)

## The UWL Scholarship Resource Center needs your help

The center is looking to increase the number of scholarship opportunities available to UWL students. If you are aware of scholarship opportunities that UWL students may qualify for, please share by emailing [uwlscholarships@uwlax.edu](mailto:uwlscholarships@uwlax.edu).

A man in a purple t-shirt with "URBAN" and "MAYANA" visible on it is speaking to a group of people outdoors. The background is filled with green foliage and a building structure. The text "STEPPING UP SUSTAINABILITY" is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters.

# STEPPING UP SUSTAINABILITY

## Driftless-area educators explore ways to incorporate sustainability into curriculum

Kelly Nowicki, associate lecturer of management, wants students to see how businesses can engage in sustainability practices and still be profitable. This May she found a few examples to bring back to her classes — from UWL's backyard.

Nowicki was one of many educators across the Driftless Region who gathered to see sustainability in action in La Crosse while considering ways of incorporating more concepts of sustainability into their classrooms. An organizing committee of faculty from UWL, Winona State University and Western Technical College collaborated to create the Driftless Region Sustainability Education Project. This is the second year the educators have gathered to participate in workshops, share knowledge and ponder pedagogy. This year's participants included both higher education faculty, as well as those from La Crescent Montessori & STEM School.

Among other activities, the group toured the Hub on Sixth Apartments in downtown La Crosse — a project that transformed a prime downtown location that needed over \$1.3 million in abatement into a new hub of activity. Meanwhile, the development also kept hundreds of tons of construction debris out of the landfill. They also visited the Community Food Forest at the YMCA where an empty lawn became a community space to grow food, rehabilitate the ecosystem, provide educational opportunities and build community.

Maggie McDermott, UWL CBA associate professor of marketing, says the conversations about sustainability that students have in classes will continue after they graduate and enter the workforce. Preparing them for those conversations is necessary, she adds.

"I think it is important for us as a campus community to help move the conversation forward," she says.

As part of the Driftless Region Sustainability Education Project, Judson Steinback, of Coulee Region Ecoscapes, shares information about the Community Food Forest at the YMCA. The workshop provided an opportunity for faculty to reexamine how they are teaching sustainability in classes and think of what more they could be doing.

### WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

UWL faculty members interested in getting involved in the Driftless Region Sustainability Education Project should contact Nadia Carmosini, UWL assistant professor of chemistry, at [ncarmosini@uwlax.edu](mailto:ncarmosini@uwlax.edu) or 608.785.5279.

# Charting a new course

**UWL econ alum, one of the world's top 100 MBAs, shares where he got his grit**



Michael Hilfiker placed five canine treats in a plastic bag and passed it down the line.

It was summer 2008, the start of the Global Financial Crisis, and Hilfiker's family had been handed their third eviction notice that spring. Hilfiker felt discouraged and angst working the assembly line job from 6 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and then busing tables at a local supper club until 10 p.m. while also developing the first local youth track and field program.

He had just completed his first year at UW-Platteville, but he wouldn't be going back. He needed to provide for his family and help them move into a new home.

"It was hard to stay motivated when so many things are not going your way," he recalls.

It's hard to argue things aren't going his way now. Hilfiker, who graduated from UW-La Crosse in 2013 and completed UW-Madison's MBA program in May, was recently listed among Poets&Quants' 100 2019 Best & Brightest MBAs, an annual honor roll of the world's 100 most promising and accomplished MBAs in the graduating class of 2019. In July, he started as an associate at Cornerstone Research in Chicago.

"I think he is going to be a leader in his generation," says Brad Chandler, director, Nicholas Center for Corporate Finance and Investment Banking at UW-Madison.

An undergraduate economics major, his UWL professors remember his grit.

In Air Force training, Hilfiker transitioned from leading a group of 12 airmen to 200. He says his military experience played into the UWL student he became.



Alumnus Michael Hilfiker, '13, was named on an honor roll of the world's 100 most promising and accomplished MBAs in the graduating class of 2019.

"He is curious, ambitious, and hardworking, and anyone who knew him expected great things," says James Murray, CBA associate dean.

### Back to school

After a summer working for minimum wages, Hilfiker resolved to create a new plan for his life. It started with surgically repairing both of his eardrums to be eligible to enlist in the Wisconsin Air National Guard (WI-ANG).

Serving as an Aerospace Propulsion Journeyman would provide him the financial means to return to school.

He started at UWL in fall 2009, feeling fortunate to explore interests in topics like ecological economics and green accounting.

Hilfiker pushed himself academically and began to realize the depth of his determination. At the end of his first year, that grit was tested when his 17-year-old brother, Beau Giacomazzo, tragically passed.

"I'll never forget the phone call I received that evening, surrounded by my five roommates in our shared living space, and dropping to the floor with my head between my knees," Hilfiker recalls.

Hilfiker was due to report for Air Force Basic Training in less than a month. He knew that he could suspend his training during a period of grief, but he was determined not to stop. He didn't want to return to the factory and potentially fail to reach his dream. Heartbroken, he pressed on.

### Applying research to real problems

In Air Force training, Hilfiker transitioned from leading a group of 12 airmen to 200. "That is something I never imagined myself doing," he says.

His persistence in the military ultimately played into the student he became. "It ultimately gave me the confidence to know that I can take on whatever life throws at me," he says.

When Hilfiker returned to UWL in spring 2011, his confidence was evident as he connected more one-on-one with professors, which led to new opportunities outside of class.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

*I am so grateful for the transformative experiences, opportunities, and friendships at UWL, and I reflect back on my time frequently and fondly.*

— UWL alumnus Michael Hilfiker, '13

Under faculty mentor Donna Anderson, Hilfiker transformed his curiosity about a local newspaper opinion piece into a research project. The column made the case that river waterfowl overlooks were a waste of taxpayer money. So, Hilfiker surveyed people at the Brownsville waterfowl overlook and then conducted a regression analysis to calculate the positive economic impact of people who view waterfowl, including their spending in area stores and more.

He then presented that research to various community stakeholders.

Anderson helped Hilfiker find his interest in economics and sustainability. And she gave him his first glimpse of applying knowledge to something tangible.

After UWL, Hilfiker was able to leverage this research experience to land a job as an economic consultant with NERA Economic Consulting. When Hilfiker began graduate school at UW-Madison, he continued to apply his knowledge and ask research questions. During a culminating MBA course, he and his team of fellow graduate students consulted with Amazon on how to value recently enacted U.S. tariffs vis-à-vis Amazon's value chain.

He developed a proprietary model that produced creative insights to inform a strategic recommendation to Amazon. There were no other publicly available models or reports that were able to provide a comparable level of detail and analysis, he explains. Amazon was impressed and followed up with Hilfiker to learn more and leverage the model for in-house use.



Michael Hilfiker with UWL friends who were also groomsmen at his wedding. He says it was not only the professors at UWL who he was able to connect with. Some of his best friends to date are fellow UWL graduates.

Faculty and peers at UW-Madison campaigned for Hilfiker to receive the “Best and Brightest MBA” recognition.

A statement of support from both administrators and students called him the ideal candidate because of his “innate intelligence, strong work ethic, desire to master complex subjects and take on big challenges, leadership skills, willingness to help others and overall positive attitude.”

At Cornerstone Research, Hilfiker is excited to now be working with teams of econo-

mists to provide expert analysis to help solve challenges for attorneys, corporations and government agencies involved in complex litigation and regulatory proceedings.

He has come a long way from working the factory lines, struggling to support his family. And he reflects fondly on the school that helped him discover a new plan.

“I am so grateful for the transformative experiences, opportunities, and friendships at UWL, and I reflect back on my time frequently and fondly,” he says.



# 'My education was a significant milestone'

Alumna, Wisconsin VA secretary grateful for investment in her education



UWL Alumna Mary Kolar, '80, was raised by a single mother after her father's death. Because of federal education benefits, grants and social security benefits, she was able to attend college.

"I'm very grateful for the investment our country made in me — allowing me to graduate nearly debt-free," she says.

Also, an investment in her education from people at UWL helped prepare her for her career. She is now secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs where she leads and manages the department and serves as the chief advocate for the more than 350,000 veterans in Wisconsin and their families.

During a Chancellor's Community Council presentation in May, Kolar said UWL faculty didn't just teach classes, but they also placed an emphasis on serving students. Support from family, friends and her academic advisor helped her persist through challenges and find opportunities.

She traveled abroad and practiced service, leadership and networking as a member of Phi Gamma Nu, a professional business sorority. Overall, the professional skills she learned prepared her well for her career progression and added up to an "incredible education," Kolar explains.

"My education was a significant milestone that allowed me to be appointed as the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs," she says.

## AN EXCELLENT EXAM

Timothy Fallon, '17, an accountancy major, was one of 110 people across the country to receive a prestigious award for outstanding performance on the Certified Public Accountant exam in 2018. Each spring the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) presents the Elijah Watt Sells Award to individuals who obtained a cumulative average score above 95.50 across all four sections of the CPA exam and passed all four sections of the exam on the first attempt. Fallon, who is now employed with KPMG LLP in Minneapolis, says, "My accounting classes prepared me for the exams as there were very few subjects that were unfamiliar."



# NEW TRANSFER AGREEMENT

Western, UWL sign Business  
Pathway agreement, offering  
another transfer option

Officials called it an exciting day for students as they signed a new transfer agreement July 30 that will allow another pathway for students to transfer from Western Technical College to UW-La Crosse.

Western and UWL officials signed a new Business Pathway transfer agreement for students in Western's Associate of Science-Liberal Arts (ASLA) program, beginning with the 2019-20 academic year. Students enrolled in Western's ASLA program can now earn 58-59 credits that will transfer into UWL's College of Business Administration, providing nearly junior status for its Accountancy; Economics; Finance; Finance: Risk, Insurance, and Financial Planning; Information Systems; Management; or Marketing majors.

Western is an important partner with UWL in providing educational opportunities in



The signing of a new transfer agreement between UWL and Western Technical College opens up new pathways for students. From left, UWL CBA Dean Laura Milner, UWL Director of Admissions Corey Sjoquist, UWL Chancellor Joe Gow and Western President Roger Stanford.

the Greater La Crosse Region. No other college or university sends more transfer students to UWL than Western with 84 students transferring from Western to UWL last year.

"Bottom line, this is a great day for students from both institutions," said UWL Chancellor Joe Gow. "We already have a great partnership with Western, and this agreement only strengthens our commitment to our students by providing a clear opportunity for those wishing to transfer into UW-La Crosse."

The ASLA/CBA Transfer Agreement is an example of the work being completed within the UW System and across Wisconsin to promote Seamless Transfer – a priority in the UW System 2020FWD Strategic Framework.

"This is about options. This is about choices. This is about pathways," said Western President Roger Stanford during the signing ceremony. "It is an exciting day for students of this region."

In addition to general education courses, Western students will enroll in a variety of Accounting and Business Law courses at Western, before completing the remaining business classes at UWL.

"Providing more transfer opportunities for our students is critical," said Stanford. "This agreement provides a clear, defined path for students that makes it easy and affordable to transfer into UW-La Crosse's College of Business Administration. We couldn't be more thrilled to work with them to make this agreement happen."

To learn more information about Western's ASLA program, call 608.785.9200 or visit [www.westerntc.edu/associate-of-science-liberal-arts](http://www.westerntc.edu/associate-of-science-liberal-arts). To learn more about UW-La Crosse's College of Business Administration, visit [www.uwlax.edu/cba](http://www.uwlax.edu/cba).

*"This agreement provides a clear, defined path for students that makes it easy and affordable to transfer into UW-La Crosse's College of Business Administration."*

— Western President Roger Stanford



## 2018-19 journal publications from CBA faculty\*

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\*Publications appearing in print, June 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019

# EAGLE TEACHING EX



NILAKSHI  
BORAH

MARY  
HAMMAN

## Two CBA faculty honored with university-wide award for teaching excellence

There is no doubt that CBA faculty make a major difference in the lives and academic experiences of students. Two of the six faculty to receive UWL's 2019 Eagle Teaching Excellence Awards were from the CBA. Nominated by UWL students, the recipients were ultimately selected by a committee and announced at the end of spring semester.

Nilakshi Borah, assistant professor of finance, and Mary Hamman, UWL associate professor of economics, were this year's recipients from the CBA.

Borah enjoys developing interpersonal relationships with "incredible students" in her classes. She enjoys seeing them get intrigued by new topics and apply their knowledge to real-world examples.

"I am privileged to work with extremely curious and thought-provoking students who constantly push me to be a better teacher by asking interesting and challenging questions in the field of finance," she says.

Borah has taught at UWL for five years. Prior to UWL, she worked as a visiting assistant professor of finance at St. Cloud State Univer-

### Past CBA Eagle Teaching Excellence Award winners

Stephen Brokaw (2018)

Gwen Achenreiner (2017)

Betsy Knowles (2016)

Nicole Gullekson (2015)

Vivek Pande (2013)

sity in Minnesota. Borah generally teaches principles of financial management and multinational financial management. This fall she is teaching problems and cases in finance. In addition, she teaches fundamentals of managerial finance in the UW Consortium MBA program. "It is rewarding to help working professionals better understand finance as it applies to their working environment," she says.

Hamman loves working with students on messy data projects or tackling tough policy questions where she can push them to think critically.

"Students don't always like going after problems that are abstract, complex, and require them to clearly acknowledge their assumptions. It can be intimidating," she says. "I like to guide them past that initial inertia and watch them take ownership of their work."

Hamman joined UWL in fall 2013 after teaching at Michigan State University as a visiting assistant professor. She also "full-time mom-ed it" for two years before starting at UWL. Hamman teaches research methods and health economics.

# CELLENCE

## Linda Sherony receives ESSLY Faculty of the Year Award

Linda Sherony, a lecturer in the Accountancy and Finance departments, received the “Faculty of the Year” award at the UWL Intercollegiate Athletics Department 5th Annual ESSLY Awards in April.

ESSLY stands for “Eagle Sport, School, and Life Yearly Awards.” During the event, student-athletes were honored in the areas of sport, school, and life, in addition to other awards including the faculty award.

The ESSLY Faculty/Academic Staff Member of the Year Award is given each year based on nominations from student athletes. Students nominate those they feel stand out as excellent teachers, who connect with their students, who go above and beyond for their students, and who do a good job of getting students engaged in their course material. Faculty Athletic Representatives (FARs), Sue Anglehart and Eric Gansen, review the nominations and recommend an award winner to the athletic director based student nominations.

Athletics enjoys being able to include faculty and staff in the yearly athletic awards event because it is appreciative of the support that student-athletes receive in their academic endeavors, says UWL Director of Athletics Kim Blum.

“Our student-athletes are very driven to excel in academics – in much the same way they are in athletics. It seems only fitting for us to invite those who guide our student-athletes in pursuit of excellence in the classroom,” she says. “We also enjoy sharing all of the amazing things that happen during the year with the larger campus community – we hope they are as impressed with all that our student-athletes do in sport, in school, and in life as we are.”

The CBA is “thrilled” with Sherony’s win, says CBA Dean Laura Milner.

“Given that it’s only the 5th year of the ESSLYs and we are the smallest college, I am guessing Linda’s win is against the odds, so it makes it that much more special,” says Milner.

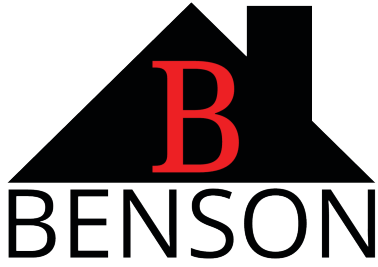


Linda Sherony, a lecturer primarily in finance and accountancy, received this year’s ESSLY Faculty of the Year award.

### CBA Past ESSLY Award Nominees:

- 2016: Maggie McDermott, Marketing
- 2017: Diana Tempski, Finance; Vivek Pande, Accountancy
- 2018: Gwen Achenreiner, Marketing; Stephen Brokaw, Marketing; Vivek Pande, Accountancy
- 2019: Linda Sherony, Accountancy and Finance; and Noel Wilbur, Accountancy





UWL College of Business Administration  
**FIRST FRIDAY**  
LECTURE SERIES

FREE  
PUBLIC  
LECTURE

Friday, Nov. 1, 2019 | 3:30 p.m.

Lecture in Skogen Auditorium – 1400 Centennial Hall  
Reception following lecture in  
Cameron Hall of Nations – 1300 Centennial Hall

# A Journey

**Todd Koss, '87**

Chief Executive Officer, Grande Cheese Co.

Todd Koss serves as the chief executive officer of Grande Cheese Co., with its home office in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and manufacturing/distribution facilities in six additional state locations. In 19 years with the company, Koss served as chief financial officer for 10 years before becoming its leader in 2016.

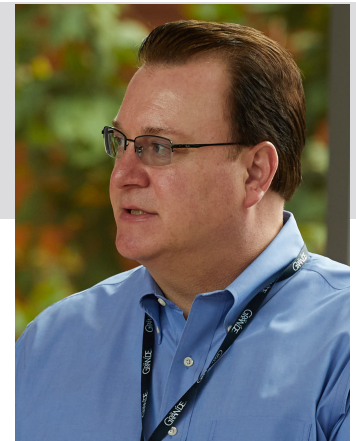
Grande was founded in 1941 by a small group of Italian immigrants who were devoted to the craft of making authentic Italian cheeses. Over the years the company has grown to become an industry leader within the Wisconsin agricultural community, and a nationally established, foodservice brand.

Today, Grande cheeses are a preferred choice of foodservice customers nationwide, primarily of independent pizzerias and Italian casual dining restaurants. Additionally, the Grande Custom Ingredients Group develops whey products to meet the global marketplace demands — adding appeal, functionality, and healthy nutrition to an ever-expanding range of consumer food products.

Grande's rich heritage and culture are visible throughout the enterprise, from associate interactions and engagement to the company's commitment to philanthropic efforts within its communities.

Koss earned a bachelor's degree in business from UWL and an MBA from UW-Madison. He previously worked in the banking industry and at Procter & Gamble in various leadership positions before joining Grande.

Active in the community, Koss has served on the UW-Fond du Lac Foundation Board, the UWL College of Business Administrative Advisory Board and the Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corp.



TODD KOSS



**SCOTT SWENSON**

## Friday, Feb. 7, 2020 | 3:30 p.m.

Lecture in Strzelczyk Great Hall – Cleary Alumni & Friends Center  
Reception following lecture in the  
Gathering Place – Cleary Alumni & Friends Center

### Scott Swenson, '85

Owner, Quest Engineering

Scott Swenson has 35 years of leadership experience in general management, financial and executive roles. Swenson has owned Quest Engineering, a distributor of flow control parts, since 2013. Prior to that, he was a vice president at Polaris Industries where he directed all operations for Polaris Snowmobile, PG&A (parts, garments and accessory), and financial services divisions, which generated more than \$600 million sales and over \$200 million operating income.

Swenson also worked in various financial and management roles for General Electric for eight years and Shell Oil Co. for five years. He is a true entrepreneur, not only running his own business, but also starting up and growing financial services at Polaris to a more than \$30 million operating income.

Swenson holds a bachelor's in accountancy from UWL, along with a CPA certificate. The Minnesota native is married with three daughters.



**LEANN (CARLSON) CARRELL**

## Friday, April 3, 2020 | 3:30 p.m.

Lecture in Skogen Auditorium – 1400 Centennial Hall  
Reception following lecture in  
Cameron Hall of Nations – 1300 Centennial Hall

### LeAnn (Carlson) Carrell, '93

Co-Owner of Undercover Eyewear, a wholesale eyewear company

LeAnn (Carlson) Carrell has 25 years of business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing, sales and operations experience in the subscription-based services and hard-goods sectors. Carrell, originally from St. Paul, Minn., moved to Denver, Colo., after graduating from UWL in 1993 to begin a career marketing for large telecommunications companies. She worked for 10 years in the pre-convergence telecommunications industry, responsible for product development, launch and retention marketing of video, data and voice products.

Carrell's U.S. experience translated into expertise that allowed her to work from 1999-2005 across Europe, Australia and South America, developing, launching, marketing and selling country specific telecommunication products. She honed her marketing talent at TCI Inc. (purchased by AT&T in 1998), Qwest Communications, Chello Broadband and UPC Global. She created a marketing and sales consulting company — B2C Communications, NV — based in Amsterdam.

Back in the U.S. in 2005, Carrell gained 15 years of entrepreneurial experience co-owning Undercover Eyewear, a wholesale eyewear company, where she learned business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing, sales and operations skills in the hard-goods sector. Her company designs, produces and imports eyewear from China and Taiwan with national distribution via independent sales representatives and an online sales channels reaching business-to-business and business-to-consumer customers.

Carrell holds a bachelor's degree in marketing and international business.

# Remembering Rose

Grad's thirst for adventure,  
exploring cultures commemorated  
with study abroad scholarship



Alumna Rose Simonsen Franke was a gymnast and graduated with high honors from UWL in 2017 with a major in economics and a minor in Latin American Studies. She studied abroad in Valparaíso, Chile through API while at UWL.

Rose Simonsen Franke wasn't one to sit out on an adventure. The UWL alumna had a bucket list she was checking off quite readily. As a UWL student studying abroad in Chile in 2016, she learned to surf, hiked Peru's Machu Picchu, immersed herself in the local culture and made many new friends. Although Simonsen Franke died in October 2018 at age 23, her spirit for adventure and love of other cultures lives on through a scholarship created in her name to assist future students in studying abroad in Chile.

The scholarship, the API-Rose Simonsen Franke/La Gringa Loca Memorial Scholarship, is for \$1,500 and will be awarded for the first time in fall 2019. Students can visit the API [blog](#) to learn how to apply for the scholarship in future semesters.

"The scholarship was her brother Luke's idea. We saw it as a way to keep her memory alive and help others experience what she did," says Rose's mother, Amy Simonsen.

Rose was someone who continually looked for new experiences and made her dreams a reality, say Amy and Bob Franke, Rose's parents. The family aims to attract scholarship applicants with that same zest for life.

Rose loved Chile so much that she moved back to the country after graduating from UWL. Within a month of living there, the economics major had secured a full-time career in sales and marketing for an international company. She also volunteered for an organization helping local people with disabilities learn to surf. "Whatever she did, she did it full-steam-ahead," says Amy.

Amy found Rose's bucket list tucked inside her sketchbook after she passed. The family is now looking to complete it. They'll take a trip to Russia, surf in Africa and have a silent auction with a few of Rose's paintings. Rose dreamed of one day selling her artwork and, with those funds, they aim to continue supporting scholarships and other causes in memory of Rose.

[To contribute to the gofundme page.](#)

# Building Bridges



University of Wisconsin-La Crosse