

# BuildingBridges

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## Kwik quip

Meet the witty voice of Wisconsin's favorite convenience store

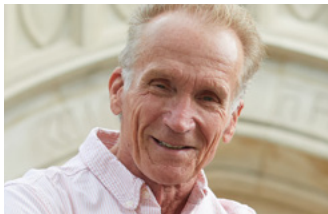
# BuildingBridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse



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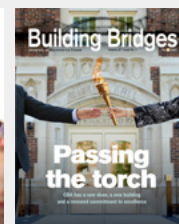


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# CBA adapts plans for 50th celebration

**BROOKS HIGHLIGHTS ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**

**W**ith the arrival of fall and the changing of the leaves on campus, the College of Business Administration has been preparing for a large celebration of the CBA's 50th anniversary and the official opening of our new home in Wittich Hall in the very heart of campus.

However, we've come to realize through many conversations with our alumni, emeriti, donors, and friends that now is not right time for such a celebration. So, with this note I'm letting you know that we are canceling the events surrounding the 50th scheduled for Oct. 22nd and 23.

We know this will come as a relief to some, and a disappointment to others, and we share all these emotions. However, we will be working to reschedule the Wittich Hall ribbon-cutting and the celebration of student success. Our hope is to do so some time in the spring when the flowers are blooming, the leaves return, and excitement of the semester's end is upon us.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary for the college will take a different form, and we hope you will be a participant over the next several months. We plan to release a series of videos that we've been capturing from alumni, faculty, and friends who have been sharing their memories about the CBA — its past and present, and their hopes for the future.

I hope that you'll visit the website often to see the new messages we share, and I hope that you'll also participate by sharing your own memories. To do that, please follow this [link](#) where you can find instructions about how to submit a video. We hope you will join us in celebrating the 50th in this new way.

Then, our promise to you is that sometime in the near future, as we continue to plan events when the time is right, we will have that big celebration so that we can honor the successes of the CBA as we ENGAGE > TRANSFORM > TRANSCEND in the 50 years forward. We look forward to lighting that lantern and welcoming you back.

**Taggart (TJ) Brooks**

*Interim Dean of CBA*

# High on b

Imagine having a book you want to read delivered right to your home. For free.

That's a reality for Milwaukee-area residents thanks to a UW-La Crosse alum who's helping get books into people's hands — especially appealing during a pandemic.

“The goal of Helium Books is straightforward: to elevate others through the power of reading,” says Jacob Carlson, '17, who majored in business management and minored in sustainable business. “Our brand is meeting people in many different spaces in hopes that we can elevate their lives through reading and showcase all that reading has to offer. Helium Books is essentially cultivating a community of readers.”

Carlson, who was working in automotive customer service, says his business partner and co-founder, Ian Buchanan, came up with the idea for Helium Books in 2017, after getting

frustrated walking into a library unable to check out his intended reading list. Some of the books he wanted were at other library locations.

Buchanan left with an idea: bring library books directly to the consumer. Since, Helium Books has been focused on removing burdensome obstacles to reading — time, money and inconvenience — through its on-demand library-sourced book delivery system.

Carlson, a Whitefish Bay native, says Helium Books is helping Milwaukee readers in myriad ways. Along with an on-demand library-sourced book delivery service, Helium Books has a monthly book club, an Elevation Partner program that donates \$1 per book order placed to local organizations, and its own podcast, *Journeymen*.

“We have had tremendous feedback from our customers, who we call our Helium Family,” notes Carlson. “Overall, Heli-

# ooks



um Books has been very well received not only by the people who use it, but even from friends and family members who are outside of our operating zone and cannot reap library books being delivered to their doorstep on-demand.”

Carlson says Helium Books has been operating with a “free-mium” approach, offering its main service for free. They plan to create interest, traction, and volume before introducing a formal pricing structure.

With a pricing structure in mind and on the horizon, the company also plans to roll out a new offering this summer and get into the educational space.

“These three will be primary drivers of revenue for our organization,” Carlson explains, “although there are other explored routes we can, and will, tap into as well.”

Carlson says he tapped into classroom studies, along with work he did directly with a La Crosse-area company, to effectively serve as co-founder.

“While I didn’t appreciate how neat of an opportunity it was to work on a project for Organic Valley at the time, I can say without a doubt I do now,” says Carlson. “Being able to strategize and implement strategies required lots of hat-wearing, to put it simply.”

Carlson says it has been a gift to tap into this project, as well as his many other classes.

“I say gift because obtaining my undergraduate degree, let alone attending a university, is without a doubt a gift and a privilege,” he says. “Without that degree, I may not be where I am today, and for that I am grateful.”



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*Helium Books’ Jacob Carlson, ‘17, left, and business partner and co-founder, Ian Buchanan. They came up with the idea for the company after having trouble checking out books from the library. Their business grew during the pandemic.*



# Kwikquip

How Paige Forde helped build Kwik Trip's passionate fan base



**E**very time a rainbow appears over a Wisconsin town, the messages start rolling in.

“People love sending us photos of Kwik Trip at the end of a rainbow. We’ll get about 50 of them,” says Paige Forde, ’19, a social media specialist for the La Crosse-based convenience store chain. “It’s awesome to see people reaching out that way. The love we get from our followers is just crazy.”

Kwik Trip has long been a convenience store of choice in Wisconsin, and it continues to make inroads in Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. But over the past few years, the Kwik Trip brand has become something more — a symbol for the Midwestern way of life, an institution of which Wisconsinites are unusually proud and fiercely protective.

And that’s in part thanks to Forde.

She is the voice behind Kwik Trip’s social media, which have garnered large and loyal followings on Facebook (600,000 likes), Instagram (88,000 followers), TikTok (76,000 followers) and Twitter (67,000 followers).

Three years ago, most of the company’s posts were run-of-the-mill promotions — deals for eggs and butter, discounts on fuel.

When Forde joined the team as an intern in January 2019, she met with her boss and fellow UWL alum, Kendra Nedegaard, ’17, to rethink their strategy.

“We actually have the same sense of humor, and from there we just solidified the voice,” Forde explains. “We started with Twitter — Wendy’s kind of created the trend of brands being clever on Twitter — and then we took the Twitter voice and moved it to Instagram.”

**By giving Kwik Trip's social media accounts a new and engaging voice, Forde has helped grow the company's following on Facebook (600,000 likes), Instagram (88,000 followers), TikTok (76,000 followers) and Twitter (67,000 followers).**

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Forde and Nedegaard worried that memes and sarcasm would be less effective on Facebook, given the older audience.

They started with a safe one. With a blizzard in the forecast, they posted a meme of Luke Skywalker riding a Tauntaun through the snow with the caption: "I'm going to Kwik Trip. Need anything?"

"It just took off," Forde remembers. "We had this huge follower bump."

In the months that followed, she posted more memes and pop culture references ranging from "The Office" to "The Avengers" to "Forrest Gump."

Some poked fun at rival gas stations.

Some alluded to Midwestern peculiarities such as long good-byes and an obsession with camo.

Many paid homage to Kwik Trip's signature items: glazers, cheesy breadsticks and Nature's Touch milk and ice cream.

"We're still doing the same promotions," Forde says. "We're just doing it in a fun, clever way."

The foundation of Forde's social media approach was laid at UWL.

After considering degrees in biology and teaching, she changed her major to marketing and was immediately hooked.

"I loved UWL and all my professors — Ken Graham, Gwen Achenreiner, Stephen Brokaw," says Forde, noting that lessons on social media advertising and celebrity endorsements were particularly impactful. "Brokaw's lectures were just mind-blowing. I'd get out of class, and my brain would just be gone."

Forde is somewhat of a contradiction: She says she's not particularly interesting on her personal social media, yet she feels right at home speaking for Kwik Trip — even if it means stepping in front of the camera.

Examples can be found on TikTok, where Forde gives followers not just a steady stream of memes and jokes, but also a peek inside her work with the company.

In one video, she ventures from her cubicle to the "Kwik Trip inside Kwik Trip" — a fully stocked store inside company headquarters.

In another, she takes an intern, Hunter, on a surprise tour of the company's legendary banana-ripening facility.

"My favorite part of my job is the variety," she says. "When I show up in the morning, I never know what we'll have to hop on, what trends we'll have to do. Every day is different."

Wisconsin's reverence for Kwik Trip seems to know no bounds.

Brides and grooms do Kwik Trip photoshoots on their wedding day. Once, an entire wedding party took pictures in a Kwik Trip beer cave.

People buy Kwik Trip-themed merchandise: shirts, hats, sandals and baby clothes. Even underwear.

On social media, customers engage in good-natured battles with other convenience store chains, defending Kwik Trip at every turn.

One man, Brent Erdmann of New London, is so fond of Kwik Trip he visited 615 unique locations in 2020 — an unofficial but almost certain record.

Forde admits there is an unknown quality about Wisconsin's infatuation with Kwik Trip.

It seems odd, in theory, that a convenience store would inspire this level of passion. It's utilitarian by nature — a place to fill your gas tank on the way to work and pick up a few groceries on the way back home.

Maybe that's the point.

A relationship with a convenience store is the simplest kind of love. It is never complicated or messy, and it is always there when you need it.

"It becomes a part of people's lives and routines," Forde says. "I mean, if you want to get a quick snack on your wedding day, where else are you going to go?"

“It changed  
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and it fueled  
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that included  
international  
business”

**Ron Gillies**





# Major gift for a major milestone

Ron Gillies, '84, donates \$50,000 for CBA's 50th

**T**o mark a major milestone, Ron Gillies made a major gift.

Gillies, '84, is Sr. Vice President Sales and Global Service for Printronix, an industrial printing company in Irvine, California.

To mark the 50th year of UWL's College of Business Administration, Gillies is donating \$50,000 to help increase international education and engagement within the CBA. This will include grants supporting CBA study abroad students, as well as courses and programs that help connect CBA students and faculty members with global partners. The fund also provides flexibility for the CBA to address the changing needs of students and faculty members.

"As the CBA celebrates 50 years of serving students and building amazing educational foundations, I wanted to give back and pay it forward to those who want to grow their international business experiences but may not have the means to do so," Gillies explains. "I hope this gift will give students the opportunity to explore and grow, and encourage other alumni to open their hearts

and pocketbooks so motivated UWL students can feel supported."

Gillies, a native of Trempealeau, Wisconsin, says UWL was instrumental in his development personally and professionally.

As a marketing major, he was inspired by a UWL-sponsored international business course he took in Munich, Germany — an experience that helped launch his career.

"It changed my perspective on business, and it fueled my passion to pursue a career that included international business," Gillies notes. "It was a life-changing experience."

After college, Gillies moved to San Diego and took a sales manager position at Proxima Corporation, a company that designs, manufactures and distributes a range of LCD-based technologies.

Over the next dozen years, he held a number of leadership roles with various software and technology companies, before joining Printronix in 2011.

Gillies' career has opened many doors for him across the globe, including a stint when

he lived and worked in Maastricht, The Netherlands. He has also managed teams and businesses across Asia and Latin America.

"My career has taken me to over 60 countries, meeting and working with customers and colleagues around the world," he says. "But I never forget that my life's journey was all built on the solid educational foundation I received from UWL."

This UWL connection can also be seen in Gillies' position on the CBA Board of Advisors, which he has held since 2004.

He adds that he's fortunate to be in a position to give back to UWL, and he encourages those who are able to do the same.

"I feel it is so important that we all care and all give back some of the fortunes we have been able to accumulate in our business careers," he says.

# Lack of workers



## Management prof shares strategies for leadership as millions leave their jobs

**T**ake a walk downtown, and you may notice an uptick in “Now Hiring” signs. Finding and keeping workers after the pandemic has proved challenging. A record 4 million people quit their jobs in April, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. This mass exodus of employees is what some economists are calling the “The Great Resignation.” Employees are leaving for a variety of reasons. For some, the pandemic gave them a taste of

a new way of living or a new dream. Others experienced a cultural breakdown at work that never improved. Many delayed searching for new jobs, waiting for a more stable moment to make a move.

The struggles to keep employees engaged and employed as workplaces return to some resemblance of normalcy shines a light on the importance of leadership and employee well-being, says Christa Kiersch, UWL as-

sociate professor of management. Kiersch, along with Nicole Gullekson, UWL; and Teresa Bubbers, Viterbo University; conducted a “Leadership Amid Covid” survey of three Seven Rivers Region businesses and two school districts, finding employee well-being to be an important concern across sectors.

Survey responses indicate that during COVID, workers had much less personal/social time, and about the same amount of work time.



Christa Kiersch, UWL associate professor of management

Those who were caregivers were also likely to be spending more time caregiving for dependents than prior to the pandemic. Employees had just as much work to do (if not more), but often were forced to shift how that work got done. These situations can lead to higher stress, and some organizations reported nearly half of employees feeling “some” or “a great deal” of stress.

The UWL and Viterbo University survey data align with the broader research highlighting increased employee experiences of stress and burnout, while also supporting the role of effective leadership in employee well-being and engagement. Many studies link leadership to employee well-being such as this meta-analysis on “Leadership, followers’ mental health and job performance in organizations” in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

## A record 4 million people quit their jobs in April, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The key to keeping employees engaged, says Kiersch, is focusing on leadership strategies that enhance employee well-being. Many studies have shown that workers who are happy and well are more engaged and productive.\* To help them be well, leaders can support a balance between demands and resources in the workplace. If the scale tips to heavily toward demands such as workload, work-life conflict, a negative work culture or lack of equipment to complete work, then employees feel stress and become “burnt out.” Harmful and excess demands (e.g., negative work culture) should be eliminated and any necessary demands (e.g., workload and responsibility) should be balanced with resources and support from the employer.

*\*Wright, T. A., & Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 84–94. doi: 10.1037/1076-8998.5.1.84)*

### **Get tips to retain employees amid unprecedented turnover**

Find six tips to help leadership prepare for the Great Resignation at [www.uwlax.edu/currents](http://www.uwlax.edu/currents)

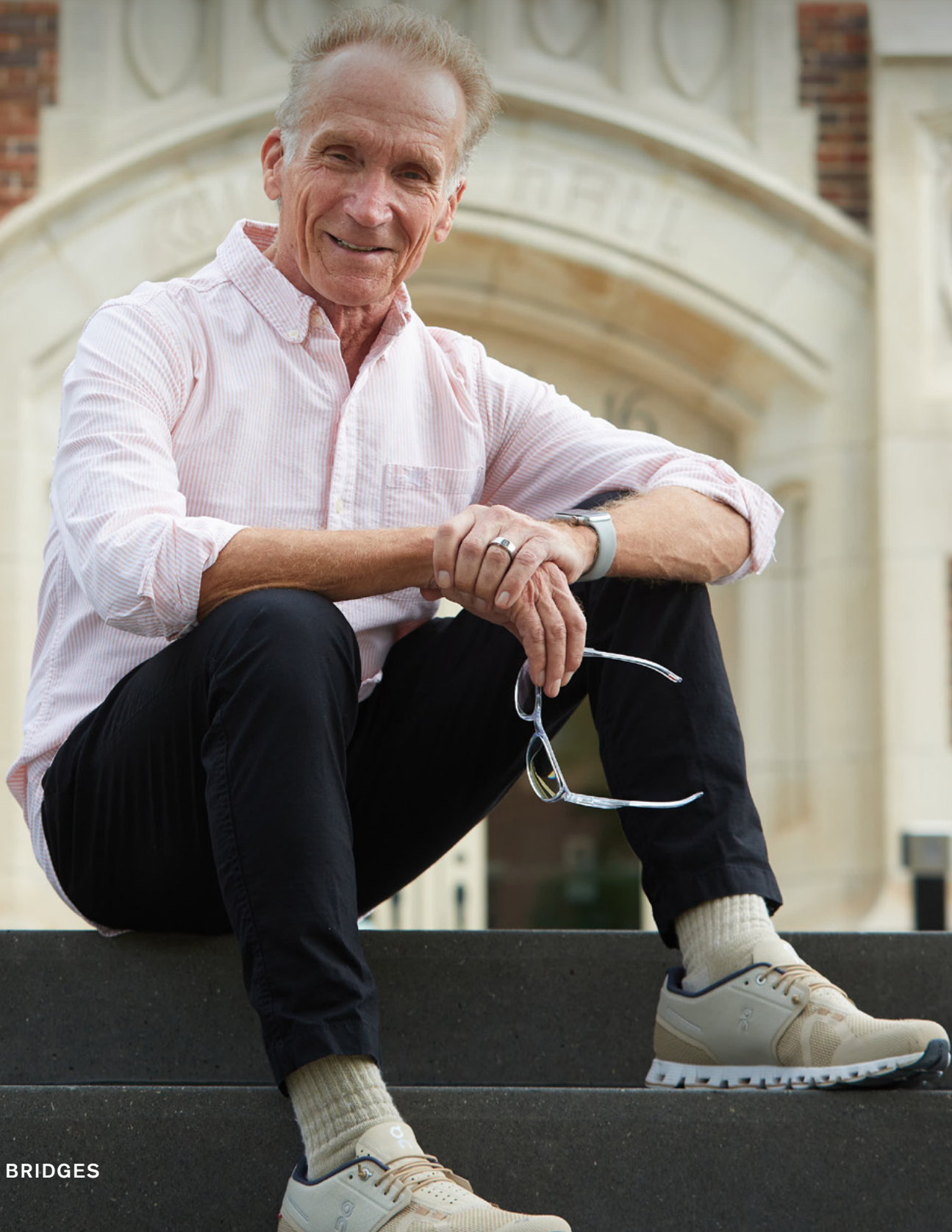
### **Is remote work here to stay?**

Wondering whether remote work will continue post-pandemic? Visit [www.uwlax.edu/currents](http://www.uwlax.edu/currents) where Christa Kiersch, UWL associate professor of management, discusses whether this trend will take hold and transform the workforce.



# EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE

Ralph Heath to bring business knowledge to the classroom



**W**hen Ralph Heath was 12 years old, he returned from his first day delivering newspapers and proclaimed to his father: “I found 50 of my 54 customers. I only have four papers left over.”

His father was not impressed with his son’s first attempt at customer service and implored him to get back out there and find the remaining customers. It was Heath’s first lesson in customer service and helped him realize the customer should be the highest priority.

Heath applied those lessons throughout his career as founder and president of Ovation Marketing, a La Crosse-based advertising agency from 1978 to 2009. Heath continued in leadership positions with non-profits ORA Trails, La Crosse Promise, and Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

Heath is looking forward to sharing his knowledge with the next generation of business owners and entrepreneurs, serving as the College of Business Administration’s inaugural executive in residence.

“The essential thing is to find work you’re passionate about,” Heath notes. “I can’t think of anything worse than going to a job where you’re not happy, where you’re not excited every day to get up and come into work.”

For Heath, who graduated from UWL with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communications in (1973), that calling was marketing.

Heath came to UWL with a physical education major but quickly learned that a position with campus radio station WLSU-FM held more allure than an early-morning gym class. He switched his major to mass communications, and for his final project, presented on

how to start a progressive rock radio station. Upon graduating, he used that project to land a job with WSPL-Fm, which took Heath’s advice and transitioned from E-Z Listening to progressive rock.

Heath loved producing ads and commercials no matter the format — TV, radio, print — and soon launched an ad agency to pursue his passion.

Ovation Marketing started small, with a handful of employees and a modest stable of local clients.

That all changed when the owner of the La Crosse-based Company Store, which primarily sold down comforters and coats to department stores, came to Heath with a revolutionary idea.

**“The essential thing is to find work you’re passionate about”**

**Ralph Heath**

“He asked us to create an ad and run it in the New York Times so they could sell down comforters direct (to the consumer),” Heath says. “This was way before Amazon. Back then, if you wanted a down comforter, you went to a department store. It worked beyond anyone’s wildest imagination. The phones rang off the hook.”

Soon, Ovation was creating direct-response advertising not just for the Company

Store, but for many large companies including State Farm, Budweiser, Betty Crocker and Microsoft.

Almost overnight, Heath says, Ovation was producing millions of dollars’ worth of advertising, and had grown from five employees to 60.

“The whole agency was nearly a financial failure in the beginning. I was entertaining other job offers until the agency found a different twist, a niche,” he explains. “Rather than trying to have a company that was marketing all things to all people, we became experts at selling direct to the consumer, and that made the difference.”

Rapid growth created new challenges.

Ovation needed the staff and the flexibility to meet the demands of its steadily growing clientele.

Budweiser, for example, wanted to create close relationships with retailers selling its beer. This required Ovation staff to embed themselves with Budweiser’s retailers — attending wholesale conventions, providing an array of marketing opportunities for Budweiser swag and merchandise, and brainstorming ways the retailers could grow their business.

“We positioned ourselves as direct marketing experts from this little town in La Crosse, Wisconsin,” Heath explains. “It resonated with people who didn’t think they could find that same specialized service in a bigger city.”

Heath also had rapidly growing staff to recruit, maintain, and manage.

Determined to create the best possible work environment, he implemented many outside-the-box ideas:

*CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE*





**As the inaugural CBA executive in residence, Heath will once again be breaking new ground as he finds ways to help the CBA, its faculty, students and leadership. Some of his activities will include one-on-one sessions advising students on prospective career choices, speaking in classes, meeting with CBA student groups, helping the CBA engage with the local business community, and consulting with faculty on curricular changes.**

- Selling 40% of the company to the employees
- Bringing in health care professionals for regular free employee and their families health screenings
- Building a company gymnasium so employees could blow off steam at the time of day of their choosing.
- Granting employees time off to volunteer for nonprofit organizations of their choosing.

Ralph Heath, '73, was the founder and president of Ovation Marketing in La Crosse from 1978 to 2009. Now, Heath is sharing his knowledge with the CBA as the college's inaugural executive in residence.

“Our company was extremely people-oriented,” says Heath, noting as an example the gratitude expressed for the health screenings. “Every year after the health screenings, without fail, an employee would come into my office, close the door and say something like: ‘I just wanted to thank you. My spouse found out they have X, Y, Z health problem, and now we can monitor and fix the problem.’ They’re just so grateful. You do that kind of thing repeatedly for people, and they become extremely loyal.”

Heath says his diverse experience at UWL — which included acting in theatre productions and working with the campus radio station — helped him discover his passion.

He’s excited, he says, to re-engage with his alma mater and bring his business experiences into the classroom.

His most important piece of advice is for students is to push past fears of failure and take risks.

“That’s what separates entrepreneurs who execute successfully from entrepreneurs who never really get out of the starting block,” Heath says. “We should celebrate that students are here on campus trying to learn and attempting to implement bold new ideas. They’re not going to excel at every subject or every idea, but you take away what you can and make continuous improvements. Eventually, you will either be successful or back at square one trying the next big idea.”





# HOESCHLER AWARD

## Troy De Bruin recognized for academic excellence, community service

Troy De Bruin didn't take long to fall in love with UW-La Crosse.

He visited several times as a high-schooler — first for the WIAA State Track Meet and again for a college visit — and immediately knew “this was where I wanted to spend my next four years.”

De Bruin, who graduated in May 2021, made the most of his UWL experience, finishing with a 4.0 GPA, starring on the men's track team and making a positive community impact.

His achievements in and out of the classroom earned him the 2021 Hoeschler Award, given each year to the top senior from the College of Business Administration.

“When I found out I was the recipient of the Jake and Janet Hoeschler Award for Excellence, I was very honored knowing that all of my hard work over the years had paid off,” says De Bruin, who earned his bachelor's degree in accountancy and finance. “The idea that this award goes to one of the CBA's most prestigious students made me feel accomplished and successful, especially considering the large number of deserving students that were eligible for this recognition.”

During his time at UWL, De Bruin received five business-related scholarships, along with the Joe Laux Family CBA Top Scholar Award.

In spring 2021, he helped the Eagles men's track team win the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championship in the 4x100m relay, while breaking the school record.

And he volunteered with numerous organizations and events. Among them: the Veterans Day Breakfast, the Children's Museum of La Crosse, the Down Syndrome Awareness Walk, Live Generously and other athletic activities.

In September, De Bruin will begin working full-time at Baker Tilly in Appleton, Wisconsin, as part of its Construction and Real Estate Audit Team. The native of Little Chute, Wisconsin hopes to become a fraud investigator or CFO.

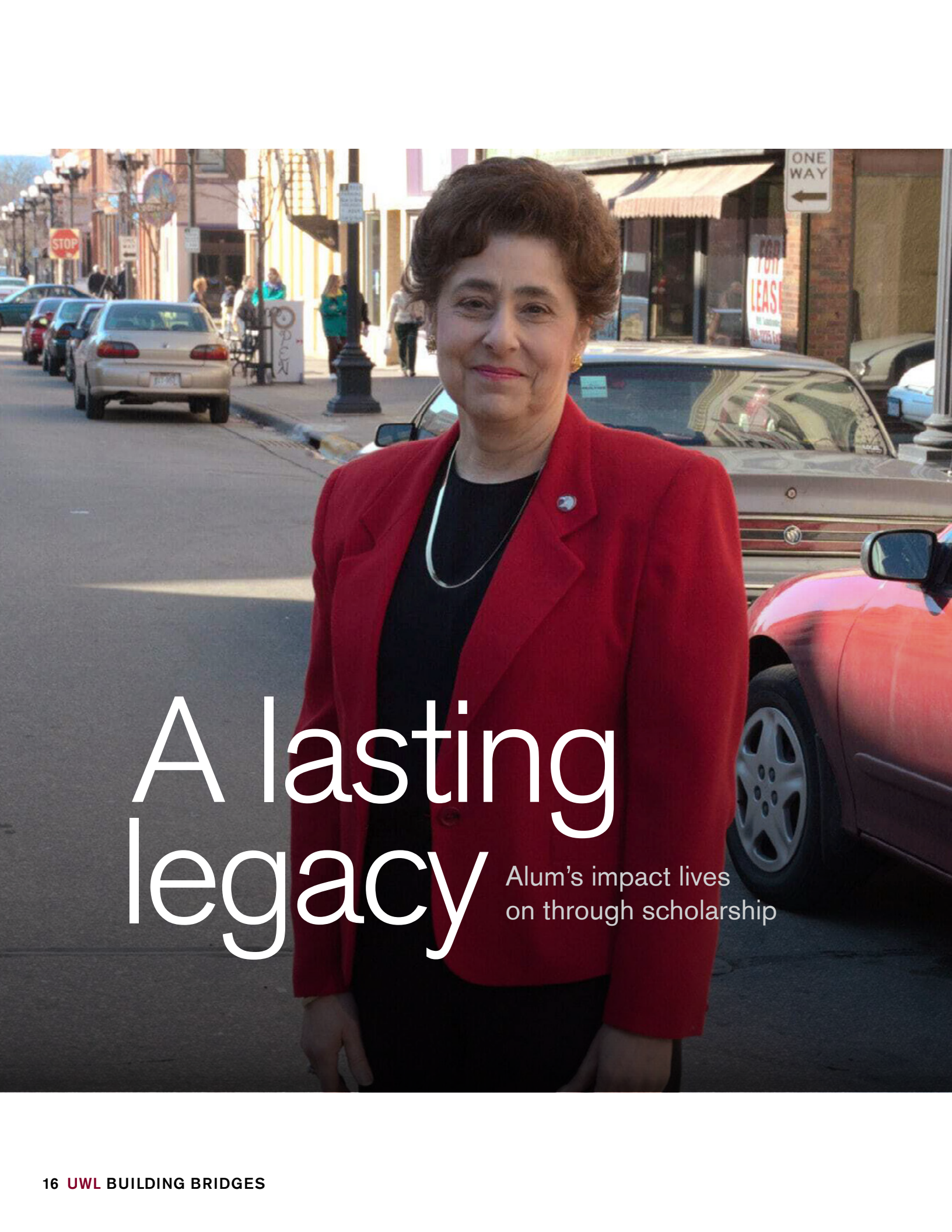
UWL, he says, offered many valuable experiences that will serve him well in his career.

“I just want to say thank you to all of the supportive professors, friends, coaches, teammates and scholarship donors who helped me throughout my college journey,” he says. “Although I will miss UWL, I am very excited to see what the future has in store.”

### About the award

The Jake and Janet Hoeschler Award for Excellence recognizes a College of Business Administration graduate for academic accomplishment and leadership on campus and in the community.

Janet Hoeschler, a 1940 graduate, established the award in 1992 to signify a business-university partnership.



# A lasting legacy

Alum's impact lives on through scholarship



**A** new scholarship for UW-La Crosse marketing and management students honors a successful business owner who was one of the first women to graduate from the College of Business Administration.

Charlotte Markos, '69, was a trailblazer in the truest sense of the word. While earning her business degree from UWL — rare for women at the time — she continued to work at the family business, Salem Markos & Sons, Inc., at 313-315 Pearl Street in La Crosse.

**“Charlotte was an intelligent, successful, generous and modest woman who made a difference in the lives she touched”**

#### **Joan R. Markos-Horejs**

After an outstanding career and active retirement, Charlotte died on April 28, 2020. She leaves a legacy of kindness, generosity and community involvement that serves as an example for future business leaders.

“Charlotte was an intelligent, successful, generous and modest woman who made a difference in the lives she touched,” says her sister Joan R. Markos-Horejs on behalf of the family. “Charlotte made a positive impact on her family, friends, church and the La Crosse community.”

Through the Charlotte M. Markos Scholarship Endowment Fund in the College of Business Administration at UW-La Crosse, that positive impact will continue.

The fund, created by Charlotte, endows three \$1,000 scholarships for marketing or management students each year. Recipients must be enrolled full-time at UWL, be a junior or senior, have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher and be female. Special consideration will be given to students actively involved on the UWL campus and/or in the La Crosse community.

“Charlotte valued the education she earned at UWL and wanted to give back by establishing this scholarship endowment fund,” Joan notes.

Joan recalls Charlotte saying, “My hope is for the recipients of this scholarship to be proud of their accomplishments and to become successful and happy in their lives.”

Many knew Charlotte from her time as vice president and co-manager of the Salem Markos & Sons, Inc., retail clothing stores. She co-owned the three stores at Pearl Street and Valley View Mall in La Crosse and Center 90 in Onalaska with her brother, Salem, and sisters Regina, Jane and Joan.

Charlotte and her siblings were the last generation to continue to operate the family business. When they retired in 2005, the business retired with them.

“Charlotte often remarked that she and her siblings’ greatest joy was serving four generations of customers, many with whom they developed and nurtured long-lasting friendships,” Joan says. Joan remembers Charlotte saying, “We took pride in the family business and what we were able to accomplish.”

Beyond her career, Charlotte’s legacy lies in her campus and community involvement. She was a member of the International Fraternity of Delta Sigma (Eta Rho chapter), served on the CBA’s Advisory Board and was a charter member of the Silver Eagles, a group of 25-year CBA graduates.

Through her work with the Silver Eagles, Charlotte participated in the CBA’s Take an Eagle to Lunch program, mentoring young women pursuing degrees and careers in business.

“She was pleased to support and encourage them to earn their degrees and pursue their career paths,” Joan explains. “By sharing her experiences and expertise in the business world, she was able to provide guidance and instill confidence in those she mentored.”

Charlotte’s parents, Mark S. and Julia M. Markos, believed in the value of a good education. Her father, brother, Salem M. Markos II, and sisters Regina M. Kilbey, Jane M. Simmons and Joan R. Markos-Horejs all attended UWL.

Joan earned her master’s degree in education, graduated magna cum laude and taught education courses at UWL.

Joan stated, “Charlotte’s life was truly an example of a life well lived. The Charlotte M. Markos Scholarship Endowment Fund will continue her legacy.”



Cameron Neader, '20, says his international business master's program in Madrid, Spain, was a transformative experience that changed him personally and professionally.

**C**ameron Neader didn't travel far for college. The La Crosse native and Central High School graduate did his undergraduate studies at UW-La Crosse.

The same can't be said of his master's program, which took him halfway across the world.

Neader recently earned his master's in international business from EAE Business School in Madrid, Spain — a transformative experience both personally and professionally.

"The best part of the university was the professors. We had incredible professors from around the world that were incredibly knowledgeable and worked hard to get to know us individually," says Neader, '20. "I think my favorite part of the experience was getting to move abroad on my own and build a life for myself in Madrid. Even though I'm back in the United States, I'm still in contact with my friends daily and I'm still dreaming in Spanish."

Neader has always wanted to travel.

In high school, he spent two years studying abroad through Rotary Youth Exchange — his junior year in Denmark and a gap year in Turkey.

Neader also lived in Madrid for two months while pursuing his bachelor's degree, sparking his love of the Spanish capital.

When he took an international management course with Associate Professor Nicole Gullekson, he realized international business was an attractive career path. That was a turning point, he says, which opened a world of opportunities.

"UWL was an incredible experience for me, and I've realized this even more in retrospect," notes Neader, who majored in communication studies and minored in international business and economics. "My international business courses at UWL built a strong foundation that allowed me to excel in graduate school, and my communication courses greatly helped my writing and presentation skills."

Visiting Madrid for the second time, for graduate school, was supposed to be far less intimidating. After all, Neader had a reasonable grasp of the language and culture, and he knew his way around the city.

But the pandemic introduced an entirely new set of challenges.

Due to travel restrictions, Neader completed the first trimester of his master's program remotely from his home in the U.S. When the program transitioned to in-person instruction, many of his classmates ran into visa issues and had to defer their enrollment. Neader was one of the fortunate few who made it to Spain.

But there was a silver lining.

"With a smaller class size, we were all able to build strong relationships with our professors and get one-on-one attention," Neader explains. "The people in my class really became a family. We shared such a unique experience together."

Madrid's 11 p.m. curfew also limited distractions, allowing Neader to focus on his studies.

But that's not to say he had a sheltered experience.

Neader was still able to explore the city. There were many great shops and restaurants within walking distance of his downtown apartment.

"By the end, I had significantly improved my Spanish and knew every corner of Madrid," he notes. "Saying goodbye wasn't only for my friends, but also for the neighborhood grocery store cashier and the restaurant owner across the street."

Neader left Madrid with a deeper appreciation of the city's culture, and a clearer understanding of the intricacies of international business.

Over summer 2021, he worked with an international startup travel company and served on the international business development team for Gathered Foods, a plant-based food producer based in Heath, Ohio.

He's weighing his long-term career options and plans to move to New York City in the fall.

Wherever his career takes him, Neader knows his study abroad experiences will serve him well.

"One of my favorite parts about living abroad has been getting to know people from around the world and learning their cultures. (This) also translates to understanding how culture impacts doing business internationally," he says. "With the world becoming more interconnected, I fully believe that internationalization is not only the future for business — it's already a necessity."



# International inspiration

Alum grows personally, professionally  
while studying in Madrid





Brianna Graw, a 2021 UW-La Crosse graduate, has created a photo project illustrating how La Crosse landmarks have changed through the decades.

# La Crosse then and now

Grad's photo project shows city through the decades



**A**

photo might say a thousand words, but rarely does it capture how a community has changed over 100 years.

UW-La Crosse graduate Brianna Graw, '21, set out to do exactly that with her project "La Crosse, Wisconsin: Then & Now" — a collection of new and historic photographs taken in the same locations throughout the city.

"I thought it would be interesting to see how these locations have changed, or haven't changed, from 'then' to 'now,'" says Graw, who majored in marketing and minored in art, with an emphasis in photography and graphic design. "I grew up in the La Crosse area, but I had never really paid much attention to the city's many historic buildings and landmarks."

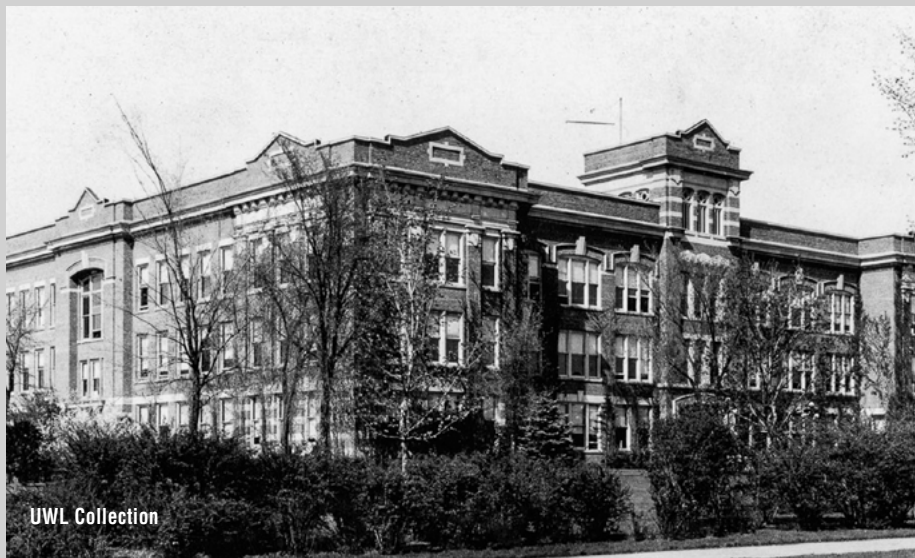
Graw's collection includes photos of 30 sites, including Grandad Bluff, Riverside Park, UWL's Graff Main Hall and several locations downtown.

She began her project by collecting old photographs taken by her grandfather, Ron Graw, as well as sifting through the UWL Murphy Library Digital Collections and the UW-La Crosse Historic Photographs Collection.

Once she selected her points of interest, she visited the locations with her digital camera and tried to set up the perfect shot, using the original photograph as a reference.

"Some locations only took three or four tries," she notes. "While others, I stood there for half an hour trying to get the lighting and angle just right."

Her favorite photo is a view from Grandad Bluff. The original shot, taken in 1904, shows a well-dressed family surveying an open expanse of land — which is now occu-



Top: La Crosse State Normal School, 1927  
Bottom: UWL Graff Main Hall, 2021

ped by neighborhoods and the north end of UWL's campus, as shown in Graw's version.

"To compare the original photo to what it looks like today is just crazy to think about," she says. "It was a very surreal experience to put myself in their shoes, to stand in the same spot that they stood more than 100 years ago."

The collection also illustrates the evolution of La Crosse's business community.

Over the decades, the department stores that lined Fifth Avenue were replaced by offices, and the carriages that brought shoppers up and down Pearl Street were replaced by a different kind of horsepower.

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Murphy Library



Brianna Graw

Left: 300 block of Pearl Street, 1900

Right: 300 block of Pearl Street, 2021

One location that is mostly unchanged is the Rivoli Theatre, where the clearest sign of the times is on the marquee, which promoted Kirk Douglas' "For Love or Money" in 1963 and "Godzilla vs. Kong" in 2021.

Graw also included then-and-now photos with personal significance, such as her mother's birthplace and her grandparents' old house.

The family element is particularly meaningful, she says, since it was her family who first sparked her interest in photography.

"My uncle is big into photography and design, as well as my grandpa and my dad," Graw explains. "Growing up, they were always taking my photo and having me pose

for the camera. As I grew older, that interest grew for me, too."

Art Professor Linda Levinson, who helped guide Graw through her project as part of a Special Projects in Photography course, says Graw was an ideal student.

"Her classmates were inspired by her process, her attention to detail and her persistent commitment to her vision," Levinson notes. "What separates Brianna's work from other re-photographic projects is her uncanny concept for inserting her own personal images among the historical photos, which speaks to her life in La Crosse. She transforms them from iconic events or architectural sites into projections of her psyche."

Throughout her time at UWL, Graw noticed the many connections between her two passions: marketing and art.

Now, in her new role as a communications technician with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, she's putting both her major and minor to good use.

"Initially, I wanted to pursue an art minor in addition to my marketing major because I thought it would set me apart from other students," she says. "Now, after working in the industry, I truly understand how much marketing and design are interrelated. There's so much creativity involved when promoting and marketing something, which is what I think really drew me to this career."

Top right: View from Grandad Bluff, 2021

Bottom right: View from Grandad Bluff, 1904





Brianna Graw





# retirees



**Stephen Brokaw**  
**Professor & Chair**  
**(12 years), Marketing**  
**Years at UWL: 30.5**  
**Retired: July 2020**

**Favorite part of work:** “The students. The relationship between faculty and students is why the institution exists; all else is a support function to that. This interaction is the only part I miss.”



**Laura Milner**  
**Dean, CBA**  
**Years at UWL: 5**  
**Retired: August 2020**

**Favorite part of work:** “The faculty, staff, students, and donors of the College of Business Administration. To misquote Tina Turner: ‘They are simply the best, better than all the rest, better than anyone, anyone I ever met.’”



**Curt Brye**  
**Lecturer, Finance**  
**Years at UWL: 10**  
**Retired: January 2020**

**Favorite part of work:** “Was working with the students and helping to bridge the academia with the work world. I particularly enjoyed advising students for their coursework for internships and career opportunities.”



**Wahhab Khandker**  
**Professor, Economics**  
**Years at UWL: 37**  
**Retired: May 2020**

**Favorite part of work:** “Principles of Economics: both Microeconomics and Public Policy and Global Macroeconomics. I also felt deep satisfaction teaching International Financial Economics, especially the topic “Government monetary and fiscal policies and their impact on domestic and foreign economies under different capital mobilities” in an open economy using our (with another professor) own designed software.”



**Joe Chilsen**  
**Senior Lecturer, Marketing**  
**Years at UWL: 27**  
**Retired: September 2020**

**Favorite part of work:** “I always delighted in being an advocate for the students and their learning. Additionally, I brought real-life business experience because of my past business ownerships and many business community contacts. I hope that my advocacy assisted in some small way to the development of our students.”