

MARY BALDWIN

M A G A Z I N E

VOL. 35 NO. 1 SPRING 2024

Looking to the Future

With a new president and reimagined undergraduate learning experience, the university focuses on student success and launching the leaders of tomorrow.

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MARY BALDWIN

MAGAZINE

VOL. 35 NO. 1 SPRING 2024

Features

30 **Listen Intently and Ask Good Questions: The Steins' First Months in Staunton**

A year ago, Jeff and Chrissy Stein were living in North Carolina, working, teaching, and getting ready to serve at the head of the university. These first few months at MBU have been energetic, enthusiastic, and exciting — and they're just getting started.

39 **Strengthening the Liberal Arts for Tomorrow's World**

Mary Baldwin is looking to the future and building a new curriculum that unites students' needs with the university's rich history of liberal arts education.



On the cover: This spring, Miranda Dith (Murphy Deming '25), Molly Martinez-Collins (S&P '23, '24), and Isaiah Minns (Murphy Deming '26) [pictured l-r] attended the annual Sankofa Leadership Conference. “Sankofa,” meaning “to learn from the past,” featured Mary Baldwin alumni speakers returning to campus to share their wisdom with the students of the present. The event was headlined by a keynote address from alumna Nerissa Stewart '06.

Mary Baldwin University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender (*see exceptions for admission to programs within the College for Women), nor does the university discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, color, age, disability, religion, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in its educational programs, admissions, co-curricular or other activities, or employment practices. Inquiries may be directed to the Director of Human Resources, 540-887-7367, Student Activities Center 311, Mary Baldwin University, Staunton, Virginia 24401. *Exceptions within the College for Women: Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership, Program for the Exceptionally Gifted. (November 2017)

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Remembering the lives of those the MBU community has lost.

From Nuclear Subs to Broadway

Dear Mary Baldwin Community,

For just a moment, let's turn from FAFSA delays and other strains on small, private institutions to celebrate how students and alumni are making their mark — from the depths of nuclear submarines to the stages of Broadway — and proving that transformational education is thriving and worth championing at Mary Baldwin.

During **Capstone Festival 2024**, seniors showcased inspiring research and creative projects, highlighting the faculty mentoring and experiential learning at the heart of a classic liberal arts education made fresh with student curiosity into issues of the day. After Commencement, Chemistry major and VWIL cadet Katelin Whitcomb '24 — who presented the “Effects of Flavoring Chemicals in E-Cigarettes,” advised by Dr. Peter Ruiz-Haas — will not only be commissioned in the Navy's ranks but will train on ... nuclear submarines.

Similarly, Stori Ayers '09 taught Chrissy and me the power of Mary Baldwin to elevate the leaders of tomorrow. Like most of our students, scholarships, grants, and loans made college affordable for Stori, and peers, staff, and faculty added powerful mentoring. With her mix of joy and grit, Stori has excelled as a writer, producer, director, and actor on stage and TV. This May, she makes her Broadway acting debut in *Home*. I urge you to join the MBU family **in NYC for Stori's debut** and to listen to her interview on MBU's new podcast, **Bluestocking Stories**.

From nuclear subs to Broadway, students and alumni — tomorrow's leaders — are changing the world. And your engagement and support — which has been overwhelming this year — are foundational in fostering student transformation and buoying Mary Baldwin as we face rising costs, deferred

maintenance, and decreasing numbers of college-going students. We are committed to enhancing alumni connections and are working quickly to support your advocacy and involvement through new alumni chapters and networks. Look for news in May announcing the establishment of a new Alumni Advisory Council and requests for assistance in connecting students to internships and jobs. Your voices in the **Mary Baldwin 2035 strategic plan** listening sessions and survey are invaluable as we chart an ambitious and sustainable course forward.

You also helped us to memorialize the loss this year of Mary Baldwin legends, Professor Emerita of Theatre Virginia Royster “Ginny” Francisco '64 and President Emerita Dr. Cynthia Haldenby Tyson, whose legacies continue to resonate across campus and beyond and are celebrated in this issue on **page 59**.

Chrissy and I are grateful to the entire community for extending such a warm welcome and for your support. We appreciate your input, service, and generosity. Thank you! We look forward to hosting you on campus next October 18–20 for inauguration and Homecoming!

All in for Mary Baldwin,



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Jeff Stein". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Jeff Stein
President



MBU Hosts Internationally-Renowned Pianist

Mary Baldwin hosted Cyrus Chestnut, one of the most sought-after jazz pianists today, to open the 2023–24 Broman Concert Series. Chestnut, who has appeared on over 100 recordings including more than 30 solo albums, was joined by lauded jazz bassist Herman Burney Jr. and DC-based drummer Kelton Norris.



DNP Accreditation

Murphy Deming’s doctor of nursing practice programs received full accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The DNP program joined the previously-accredited RN-to-BSN and master of science in nursing programs.



Men’s Basketball Team Helps at Local Elementary

For the past few fall semesters, the Mary Baldwin men’s basketball team has been getting their hands dirty in the name of community, camaraderie, and K-12 outdoor learning. The team has lent their cooperation (and muscle) to help build an accessible trail in the woods around Staunton’s Bessie Weller Elementary, complete with “investigation stations” for kids to experience and learn from.



British Stage Legend Shares Expertise with Shakespeare Students

Sir Trevor Nunn (seated), known for directing the greats of British theatre at the Royal Shakespeare Company along with the original London stagings of *Les Misérables* and *Cats*, visited Staunton for the 2023 Blackfriars Conference, co-hosted by MBU. Afterwards, he conducted an afternoon performance masterclass for Shakespeare and Performance students.



The Intersection of AI and Higher Ed

President Jeff Stein added his name to the list of global education leaders supporting the statement on Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence from Elon University, which was adopted by the United Nations at the 18th annual UN Internet Governance Forum in Kyoto, Japan.



*Kate Simon shares her experience documenting “This is Home” on the new **Bluestocking Stories Podcast.***

“This Is Home” Finds Home in Carpenter Academic

Kate Simon studied sociology at Mary Baldwin before pursuing her passion for photography. Now, through a partnership with the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge and courtesy of a donation from foundation president/CEO Dan Layman and Mary Baldwin President Emerita Pamela Fox, her photo series “This Is Home” has been permanently installed in the Susan Warfield Caples social work classroom in Carpenter Academic Hall. Simon (right) is pictured with MBU social work faculty Dr. Mary Clay Thomas (middle) and Dr. Lora Cantwell (left).



Environmental Scholar Brings Progressive Approach to MBU

Dr. Max Liboiron, associate professor of geography at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada, presented a series of lectures and workshops as the 2023–24 Doenges Scholar. Liboiron’s award-winning work combines environmentalism and indigenous research with a socially-conscious approach that has influenced Canadian national policy.



Senior Secures Future in Laboratory Science

Senior Lauren Hall (second from left) was named as one of two recipients of an Augusta Health School of Medical Laboratory Science scholarship that allows students to advance their careers in a role inside local labs. In addition to educational support, the program assures two years of employment at Augusta Health.



Leading Sustainability in the Shenandoah Valley

Grace Gardner '24, a double major in studio art and business sustainability, helped to organize and host a regional conference on sustainable development in action, focusing on "Innovative Approaches to Addressing Hunger in Our Community."



Ambitious Undergraduate Earns Publication

Gerardo Escalera Cardoso '24, a political science and economics double major, had his paper "When Logic Trumped Anger: A Case Study of Political Rhetoric's Impact on the Outcome of NAFTA Renegotiation" published in the *Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics*. Cardoso, a Harrisonburg native, hopes to advance his education at law school.



OT Faculty Wins Award

Dr. Liz Richardson, associate professor in the occupational therapy doctoral program, received the Educator of Merit Award at the Virginia Occupational Therapy Conference (VOTC). The VOTC recognized her as a “collaborative and compassionate colleague, leader of leaders, and agent of advancement in the profession.”

National Faculty Seminars

Three professors participated in Council of Independent Colleges seminars designed to broaden faculty members’ knowledge and perspective of their respective disciplines. MBU representatives included Assistant Professor of Art History Kerry Mills, Associate Professor of Religion Katie Low, and Professor of History Amy Tillerson-Brown.





Two Grants Give Students Hands-On Research Experience

Associate Professor of Biology Rebecca Haberman (pictured) and Assistant Professor of Psychology Robin Hopkins received grants that give students a unique opportunity to experience the research process and develop career skills.



Exercise Science Presentations

Three students and both faculty members of MBU's exercise science programs presented posters at the annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine. Jordan Jester '24 (second from right) received the Exceptional Undergraduate Citation for his poster.



Volleyball Team Displays Sportsmanship. The Fighting Squirrels volleyball team was awarded the 2023 fall season all-conference sportsmanship award from the USA South Conference. Jaisley Tibayan '27, the team's libero, was named to the conference all-sportsmanship team.



Advocating for Education Funding in Richmond

Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership (VWIL) cadets and Commandant Brig. Gen. Terry Djuric visited the Virginia General Assembly to campaign for VWIL students to receive equitable grant funding for their education. They visited cadets' representatives and were announced from the floor during legislative sessions.

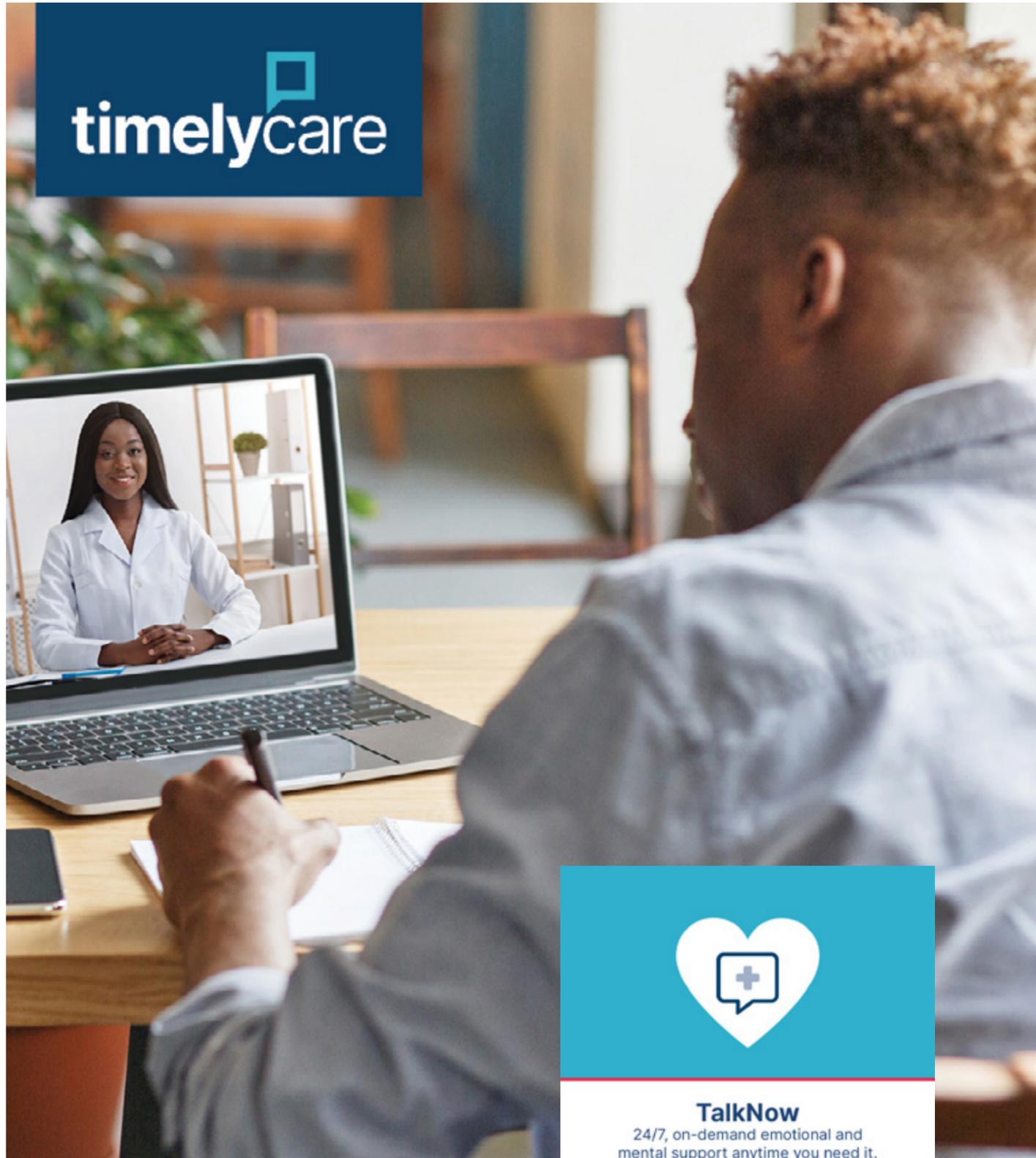
MBU Chosen for National Initiative Promoting Excellence in Undergraduate Education

MBU entered into a partnership with the John N. Gardner Institute to focus on the first two years of the collegiate experience, aiming to improve student retention, success, and equity.

This five-year initiative addresses



the diverse needs of MBU's student body, which includes a high percentage of first-generation students, students of color, and low-income students, by enhancing educational frameworks and outcomes. The collaboration seeks to challenge the impact of demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds on student success, moving toward a more equitable educational landscape.



Timely Care

In the fall, MBU announced its partnership with TimelyCare to offer all students free, 24/7 access to mental health support. TimelyCare serves more than two million students at 300 campuses nationwide, providing a comprehensive suite of services, including mental health counseling, on-demand emotional support, a peer support community, and self-guided wellness tools.

Through TimelyCare on their phone or other device, MBU students can access virtual care options from licensed physicians and counselors in all 50 states — at no cost and without the barrier of traditional insurance. The partnership extends the MBU Student Counseling Services’ resources, and the university will continue to offer in-person counseling options in addition to TimelyCare.

Three-quarters of college students who accessed virtual mental health and well-being interventions through TimelyCare reported mental health improvements. More than half (53%) of all students who have sought mental health support through TimelyCare said they would have done nothing if the service were not available.

“TimelyCare is proud to serve as an extension of MBU Student Counseling Services to create a comprehensive, whole-student care solution that empowers students to seek care in a way that feels comfortable and convenient for them,” said Luke Hejl, TimelyCare CEO and co-founder.



AWS Agreement

This year, Mary Baldwin University joined the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Academy to help bridge growing workforce gaps around cloud computing.

AWS Academy provides higher education institutions with a ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculum that prepares students to pursue industry-recognized certifications and in-demand cloud jobs.

“We are proud to make the AWS Academy curriculum available to our students,” said Will Webb, Chief Growth Officer. “The rapid rise of cloud computing is creating a growing number of high-quality jobs at organizations around the world, and the technical skills that students develop through this program will position them well for their careers today and in the future.”

The AWS Academy content gives students a competitive advantage in an industry that’s experiencing explosive growth, and MBU’s status as an AWS Academy member illustrates the university’s growing focus on career-connected learning, employer partnerships, and higher education innovation.

“The data tells us cloud computing skills are the number-one hard skill sought by companies right now,” Webb said. “Preparing our students and educators with industry-recognized cloud certifications is one way we are showing our commitment to workforce and career development for our students.”

“Preparing our students and educators with industry-recognized cloud certifications is one way we are showing our commitment to workforce and career development for our students.”

— Will Webb, Chief Growth Officer



“So they don’t struggle the way I had to struggle.”

Rally in the Valley

The social work department attended the 2023 Rally in the Valley, a meeting of social work programs from around the commonwealth for a weekend of networking, community building, and peer-teaching.

Senior Connie Ralston, who traveled from Michigan to Richmond to join her classmates at the event, the mission of social work is a personal one:

“What drew me to social work was my life experience. I was homeless for a year and a half, so I really got to see different programs and resources and what’s out there and not out there. I realized I wanted to work with teenagers and young adults to give them a better toolbox to work with than I had, so they don’t struggle the way I had to struggle.”

The conference means more to young social workers in Virginia than a meeting of the minds. For Ralston, who overcame a lot to attend Mary Baldwin and has dedicated herself to the aid of others, it means security and hope.

“No matter where you are, you can take experience with you and the knowledge that there are so many people out there that have the same goal and the same mission to help people around us,” Ralston said. “So the main thing I take from Rally in the Valley is that we are all a team. Across the state and across the country, social workers are everywhere, and I’ll always have that team wherever I am.”

Business Students Tee-Up New Plans for Local Non-Profit



Every fall semester, Dr. Calvin Chung, associate professor of business, has invited local organizations to partner with his students in Business Administration 400: Strategy and Sustainability in Business Decisions. Chung designed the course to expose seniors in MBU’s business program to real-world strategic planning and sustainable development issues. In turn, local businesses and nonprofits — including past partners the Staunton Innovation Hub, Peg’s Salt, and the Arcadia Project — get to benefit from students’ learning.

This semester, 17 students of business administration and arts management worked on strategic planning with First Tee to help advance their mission of integrating a life-skills curriculum with the game of golf, introducing children to an athletic outlet, and teaching them lessons for life.

Jackie Peraza, a senior in business with a focus on sustainability, is one of the students working with First Tee.

“We realized we could leverage resources like MBU’s clubs that have requirements for 10 hours of community service,” she said. “This way we can help First Tee establish volunteer connections that have longevity.”

For Peraza, who is planning a future in law school and advocating for labor and immigration rights, business sustainability is always a top priority.

“I think sustainability is looking at a company that is able to manage not only financial stability but also having a social impact,” she said. “For me, if a business is profiting from a community, they should be able to give back to that community and keep the needs of the environment in mind.”



From Atlanta to Queens: Two Students' Quest for Identity and Purpose at Mary Baldwin

TyRon Simmons and Anneka Russ never thought they'd find a home in performance. The MBU community brought it out of them.

Sometimes, Mary Baldwin students have no idea how interested they are in something until they try it. That's been the story for MBU students for 182 years now, and it's no different for Anneka Russ '27 and TyRon Simmons '27. Together, and at the behest of some critical faculty members, they've discovered an interest in performance and a world of creative possibilities.

It all started with choosing Mary Baldwin.

"Coming here and seeing the area, meeting the people, I instantly could see myself here for four years," Russ recalled. "I always thought I would go to a bigger school, but I realized over time that I wanted something smaller."

Russ grew up in Atlanta, but she went to high school in Richmond. There, she had an influential teacher, Joella Saffore '09, an alumna who encouraged her to give MBU a chance.

Simmons hails from farther away – Queens, New York. He came up through the Eagle Academy, which is the only all-male public school in New York City. According to Simmons, "It's made to ensure that young minority men in urban areas get to have the opportunities that they might not have if the academy never existed."

He adds, "The Eagle Academy's dream is to stop the school-to-prison pipeline that exists for so many minorities in America."

Mary Baldwin has partnered with the Eagle Academy, which is a seven-year program from sixth to 12th grade, since 2022. This partnership aims to carry on that dream by offering high-quality higher education to graduates of the program.

President Jeff Stein visited the Eagle Academy this past fall, and it was on a similar MBU visit in 2022 that Simmons decided to give Mary Baldwin a chance.

“I never wanted anything to do with acting and singing. I grew up dancing, but I never thought about performing in ways like that.”

– Anneka Russ '27



For both Russ and Simmons, it was a human connection that drew them to Mary Baldwin, and that human connection has helped them thrive here, too.

Both students are heavily involved in extracurricular activities on campus – particularly those connected to minority clubs and organizations. Russ explains, “A lot of what I’ve gotten involved in has been through the **Ida B. Wells Living Learning Community**. Remix the Hymn, Kwanzaa, a lot of stuff with Rev. Scott.”

Reverend Andrea Cornett-Scott, Mary Baldwin’s chief diversity officer, plays an important role in the lives of students like Simmons and Russ.

Coming to a small town and a small college from one of the world’s most developed metropolises can mean a difficult adjustment. Luckily for Simmons, MBU was there for him: “What’s really been helpful for me is the **Office of Inclusive Excellence** (OIE). They’ve made sure that I have support, that I have a community, and all of those programs under Rev. Scott and [OIE Director] Destiny Woodall have been so instrumental. But also encouraging me to meet people who don’t look like me, which is a great balance of comfort and stepping out of your comfort zone.”

Together, Simmons and Russ performed in this year’s Kwanzaa celebration in a performance called “This Life Ain’t Free.” It was a spoken-word piece, an adaptation of a song from Kendrick Lamar’s Grammy-winning album *To Pimp a Butterfly*. Their experience with performing in these events during their freshman year has inspired both students to seek out more performance opportunities.

“I never wanted anything to do with acting and singing. I grew up dancing, but I never thought about performing in ways like that,” Russ said.

Simmons said the same, “I’ve never been in a play or anything before. I did take an acting class last semester and that showed me I could do it.”

“What’s really been helpful for me is the Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE). They’ve made sure that I have support, that I have a community, and all of those programs under Rev. Scott and [OIE Director] Destiny Woodall have been so instrumental.”

– TyRon Simmons '27



*TyRon Simmons talks the transition from NYC to MBU, and why he wants to become an educator. Listen on **Bluestocking Stories Podcast.***

Russ’ next step was to audition for the spring play. “Rev. Scott recommended that we in the Ida B. Wells community go for auditions with JP.” That’s JP Schiedler, associate professor of theatre and Shakespeare and Performance. Schiedler, along with Associate Dean Dr. Kerry Cooke and Assistant Professor Molly Seremet, has been leading the charge to diversify the undergraduate theatre.

That diversification means partnering with MBU’s African American theatre group, Kuumba Players, and producing plays that are inclusive of MBU’s already diverse campus.

MBU Theatre produced *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage, famed Black playwright and two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. And, in this play, Simmons and Russ have found their part.

It was a surprise for Simmons, who explained, “A few of my friends got me to audition for *Intimate Apparel* with them.”

“Lo and behold I got the callback and then I came in and read the play. And I was like ‘I’m not sure if I can do this.’ But then the more I thought about it the more it made sense.”

While Kwanzaa, *Intimate Apparel*, and other performance events have been enlightening for them, these commitments are still supplements to their goals at MBU.

Russ intends to be a science major. “My current main track I’m leaning toward is biology with a biomedical emphasis,” Russ reports. “The plan would be to go to medical school and to take a DO track, doctor of osteopathic medicine, and focus on women’s health.”

Simmons is a little more committal with his plans – despite being a freshman, he’s already declared his major in elementary education.

“I didn’t have my first Black male teacher until I was a freshman in high school,” Simmons recalls. “Students should be able to see themselves on the other side of the classroom. I want to go back to New York to teach at Eagle and be that person for them.”



These Squirrels Can Fight (and Dance)

The Fighting Squirrels men's basketball team played a historic season, inspired the community, and scored a trip to the Big Dance.

In just their third year as an NCAA Division III program, the Mary Baldwin University men's basketball team inspired and impressed, claiming a conference championship and putting up a memorable fight in the NCAA Division III Tournament.

The Fighting Squirrels traveled to Cleveland for a March 1 matchup against No. 1 seed and host Case Western Reserve University. The

season ended in the first round after a heroic 66-51 loss against the Spartans. The showing against a DIII powerhouse that averaged more than 75 points-per-game in the regular season solidified a historic season for the Fighting Squirrels.



USA South Conference Coach of the Year Matt Griggs

As Mary Baldwin's fifth-ever team to qualify for an NCAA championship tournament (following the 2006 volleyball team and cross-country All-American Sophia Stone '12), the basketball team garnered support from the MBU community and beyond – spurred by the inspiring underdog story unfolding on campus.

Before the tournament hype came



After their conference championship win, men's basketball advanced to the NCAA Division III Tournament in Cleveland.



the team records for conference wins in a season and regular season (non-conference) wins. Under the leadership of Head Coach Matt Griggs, the Fighting Squirrels finished the season 15-10 (11-3 in-league). This total earned them the USA South regular-season conference title and the first-seed placement in the USA South playoffs.

Then, the awards rained down: the conference recognized Griggs as Coach of the Year, sophomore Luke Ogle's 174 rebounds and 46 blocked shots earned him a first-team all-conference nod, and seniors Quentin Hart and Vernon Fraley were both named to the second-team all-conference.

The basketball team impressed in the classroom as well as on the court with an average grade point average (GPA) of 3.888 and two student-athletes posting a 4.0 GPA. The young team also spent many hours volunteering at Bessie Weller Elementary School in Staunton, helping to build an accessible trail in the woods around the school, complete with "investigation stations" for kids to experience and learn from.



The McCree Center Prepares Students for the Great Unknown

Preparation for great lives and careers requires learning in and out of the classroom. Sure, students want to learn the skills and knowledge associated with their majors, but they also want to learn the latest technologies, the art of balancing life and professional deadline, and the interpersonal skills that make good coworkers great.

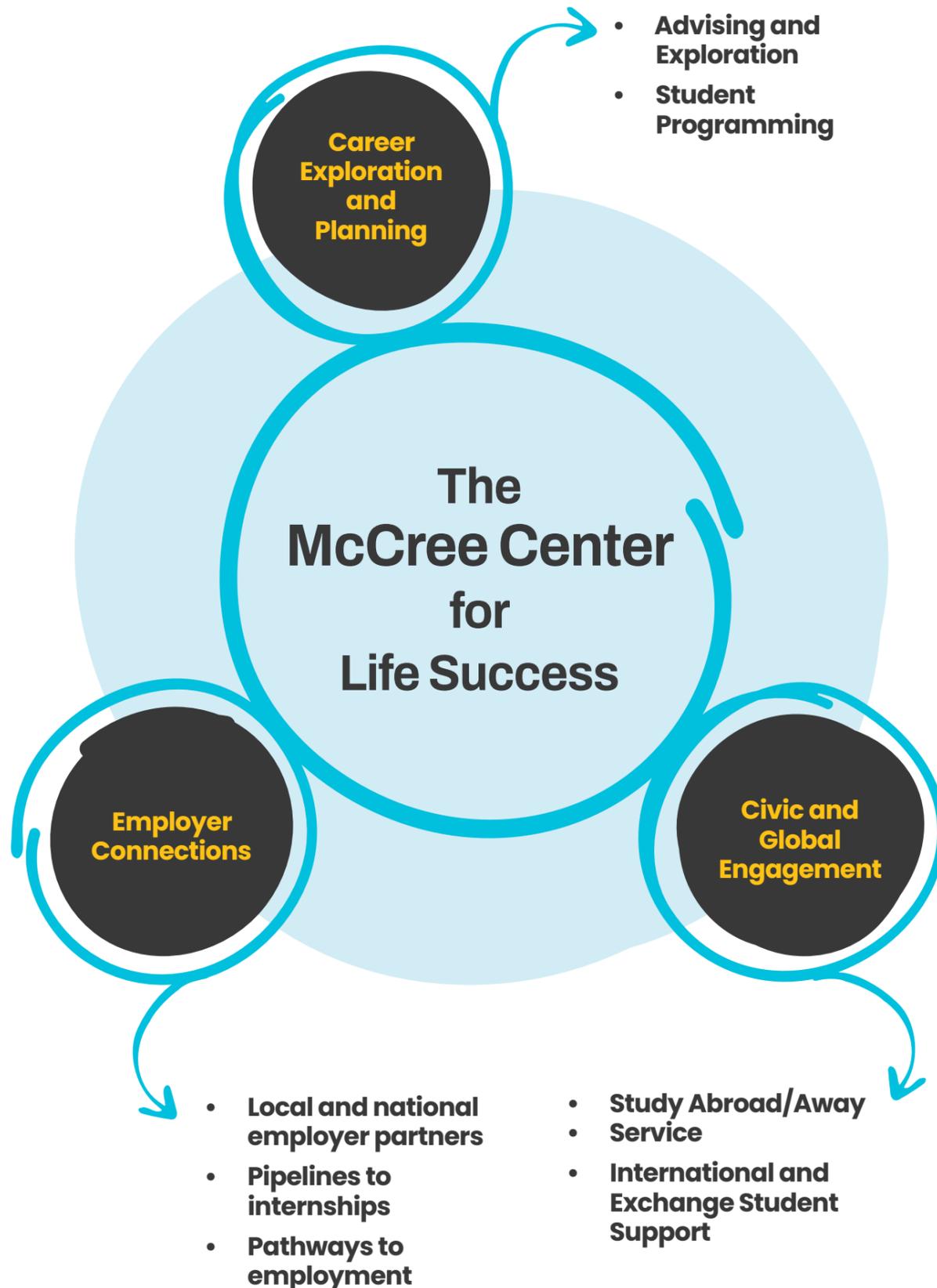
Not only will a student's first few years in the classroom look a little different in the near future, but MBU is also reshaping their time outside the classroom.

Mary Baldwin is addressing this issue for students by re-invigorating college-to-career connections. While students should be well-prepared by the new general education curriculum ([read more on page 39](#)), MBU's new vision for experiential learning will change the way students prepare for life after college. And this vision is not only limited to undergraduate students, but will also include support for MBU graduate students and alumni.

The team leading the charge is the **McCree Center for Life Success**, founded with support from MBU Board Chair Gabby McCree '83 and husband Don McCree. Headed up by Executive Director Thy Nguyen and supported by a group of experts on career-building and experiential learning, the McCree Center is focused on giving students the skills they need to navigate a rapidly changing workplace and world.

Instead of gesturing to innovation, MBU is committed to turning experiential learning into an essential part of its student experience.

"We will connect with them all four years," Senior Director Dr. Rachel Hirsch explains. "And the focus is always going to be on 'what can you do with your major and everything you've gained from MBU?'"



One way that students can benefit from experiential learning is through an enhanced network of internships.

“These internships are typically an eight-plus week program, where students are able to learn day-to-day how the workplace operates, and they’re usually placed with a mentor,” says Hirsch. Students can struggle to find time to balance an internship with coursework and their personal lives, so the McCree Center has accounted for that in its planning. “While we’re looking now for opportunities that students can sustain during the year, summer is where we want to focus. An eight-week internship placement over the summer is what students will benefit most from.”

Micro-internships offer another opportunity for students to build skills outside the classroom. Instead of spending a few months with an organization, micro-internships give students a role in a single project at an organization to see through from beginning to end. This type of embedded learning is shorter in span and smaller in scope, but still teaches students those unteachable skills that will help them thrive in their careers.

The McCree Center is also supporting students during the school year with mentorship programs. Through a partnership with Tern Mentoring, it’s connecting students with alumni with relevant interests – whether they work in their desired field, had shared experiences in college, or are simply found to be a good match personally.

With Tern’s 10-week curriculum of life-skills lessons in areas like resiliency, decision-making, and self-improvement, mentors and mentees meet for 30 minutes every 10 days in a system that respects the time of students and mentors alike.

Hirsch is also exploring the idea of building regional hubs to support students in placements outside of the Shenandoah Valley. Places like Richmond and Roanoke, where MBU can provide on-the-ground support for students participating in internships during their junior and senior years.



Sourcing a network of local connections is a major focus of the McCree Center’s mission: to connect students to the communities of Staunton, Waynesboro, Augusta County, and the greater Shenandoah Valley and re-invest in MBU’s community-oriented roots.

Tackling this portion of the project is Suzie Dull, who joined the McCree Center staff at the beginning of 2024. Dull comes to MBU from Blue Ridge Community College, where she was business development manager and oversaw workforce and continuing education. Before that, she worked as a commercial banker and was director of membership development and communications for the Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Dull brings to the team her experience with businesses in the Shenandoah Valley and a honed sense for what makes a university partnership intriguing for potential partners.

Part of that equation is assessing the needs of the local area and recognizing the most available opportunities. For Dull, that means engaging with industries that are often overlooked or misunderstood by college graduates.

“We will connect with them all four years. And the focus is always going to be on ‘what can you do with your major and everything you’ve gained from MBU?’”

**– Dr. Rachel Hirsch,
Senior Director**

“We have to understand the opportunity given to us. We are in the heart of manufacturing,” Dull explains the opportunities as she sees them. “People don’t realize how much falls under that umbrella. Every big manufacturer has learning and development departments, human resources, finance and accounting, operations, IT, the list goes on and on. Those are opportunities that have sometimes been



Students connected with top area businesses at the MBU Career Fair in March.

overlooked, but knowing what I know from the business side of things, I've seen how meaningful these jobs can be."

The other half of Dull's job involves people on campus: "Of course I'm on the business partnership side, but I'm also building relationships with students, faculty, and campus groups. I want to see how I can support the fantastic work they're doing and also how I can assist them. I'd like to be a part of their existing connections, but sometimes they might need a connection. I'm ready to give them that."

The McCree Center's multifaceted-engagement is more than just a balancing act – it's the reality of life for the modern college student. The center approaches all its work with that in mind.

"We know that MBU is a launchpad, and we want to make sure it's the best stepping stone possible because we want to propel our students to a lifetime of fulfilling employment,"

"We are in the heart of manufacturing ... Every big manufacturer has learning and development departments, human resources, finance and accounting, operations, IT, the list goes on and on."

**– Suzie Dull,
Director of Employer Relations and Workforce Development**

Hirsch summarizes the McCree Center mission. "We want to think of our students as emerging professionals and how we can make them standouts in the field. The McCree Center centralizes it all."

For community partners, the McCree Center can represent access to some of the freshest and brightest minds available.

For students, the McCree Center is a resource: a bridge to the future they envision for themselves and a bastion of what's possible for anyone working toward their goals at Mary Baldwin.



All in

FOR MARY BALDWIN

Drawing from an MBU rallying cry coined by President Jeff Stein on his very first day as university president, the “All In” giving campaign has carried Mary Baldwin through most of 2023 and into 2024. As of April 1, 2024, the All In Campaign has raised more than \$5 million since July 2023.

“We have set out this year to build engagement and trust within the alumni and donor community. We are asking our community to re-commit and be intentionally involved in Mary Baldwin’s future,” said Mary Harvey, who was named vice president of advancement this past winter. “Our alumni and donors will be an integral part of MBU’s strategic planning process, and we are excited to offer new ways to give back that are not just financial.”



Day of Giving 2024 was a resounding success, with **752 gifts** from **630 donors**.

The All In Campaign turned out to be no gamble: This year’s Day of Giving was the university’s most successful in history, with 752 gifts from 630 donors and a total of \$692,556 raised. Amounting to an increase of over 30% from last year’s dollars raised, this Day of Giving proved that All In is more than a catchy slogan.

The generosity of our community will bring outstanding students here and give them the tools and environment they need to thrive.

– Joseph Debraggio,
Director of Annual Giving

The campaign is focused on four main areas of support:

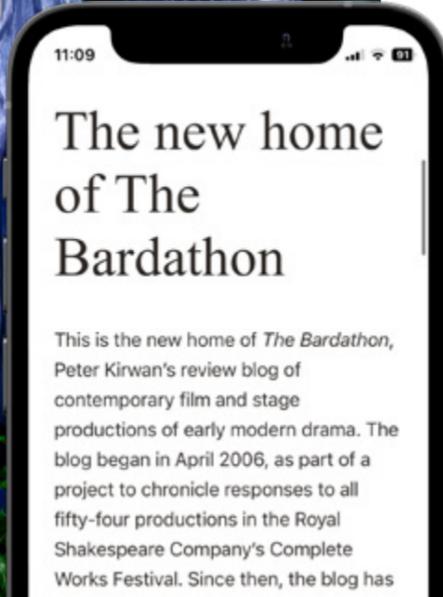
- **Scholarships:** To ensure smart, driven students can afford to pursue a Mary Baldwin education
- **MBU’s campus home:** To provide spaces that meet the modern educational and residential needs of the community
- **Internship grants:** To cover funding for housing, meals, transportation, and summer wages while students receive first-hand experience in their career field
- **The Empowers Fund:** To support critical and current needs for the university, and enhance the student experience

Through these areas of support, All In enables the donor community to make the greatest impact for MBU’s current and future students, and for enhancing this historic institution with future-forward initiatives.

According to Joseph Debraggio, director of annual giving, this year has been especially exciting for MBU: “By offering the opportunity to support more specific priority areas, we were hoping that supporters would resonate with our needs, and they have. The generosity of our community will bring outstanding students here and give them the tools and environment they need to thrive.”



Early Modern Theatre Scholar Dr. Peter Kirwan (and His Bardathon) Come to Staunton



Ages ago, in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon, an incredible and impressive legacy was born. Not the birth of the Bard, which came centuries before, but instead, the birth of the *Bardathon*.

The Bardathon began as a timely event, intended to record one student’s reactions to every production in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 2006 Complete Works Festival. Now, the project has become timeless; the Bardathon is a living account of productions past and an invaluable resource for the international Shakespeare community. “Timeless” might feel grandiose for a blog less than 20 years running, but the blog’s sheer output and volume are testament to its gravity.

“The Bardathon started as a master’s project in 2006, when the Royal Shakespeare Company was producing a complete works festival in Stratford-upon-Avon over the course of the year and I could blog my reviews as they went,” Dr. Peter Kirwan, associate professor of Shakespeare and Performance, recounts the start of his blog, the Bardathon. “And as far as I know, it is the longest-running theatre review blog in the world.”

Kirwan came to Staunton to join Mary Baldwin’s Shakespeare and Performance (S&P) faculty in the fall of 2022, **and he brought his Bardathon with him**. But, of course, there was a different bardathon already here.

The S&P program produces an extraordinary amount of Early Modern theatre (“Early Modern” refers to the period after the Medieval era, when Shakespeare and his contemporaries lived). The master of fine arts (MFA) company alone produces at least five plays each school year, acted, directed, and produced almost entirely by the students themselves.

Add to this count the second-year productions, a REN 531 performance (a one-night-only, full-length play culmination of master of letters (MLitt) students’ work in their first year), and countless staged



Listen to the **Bluestocking Stories Podcast** featuring Dr. Peter Kirwan today!

play readings that fill out the year, and the fit between S&P and Kirwan becomes increasingly obvious.

Since its beginning, Shakespeare and Performance has experienced several metamorphoses – the program now has more than 60 students across its two-degree, three-year curriculum and has grown through several program directors, a mantle now shared by longtime S&P faculty associate professor Doreen Bechtol and associate professor Dr. Matt Davies. Bechtol and Davies worked alongside former director and now-Provost Dr. Paul Menzer for over a decade and, together, gave shape to the program’s current form.

“Pete’s stellar professional career as a Shakespeare scholar, an award-winning educator, editor of a premiere journal, and celebrated theatre reviewer are without doubt impressive,” Bechtol explains. “However, it is the consistent care and collegiality that he offers to students and colleagues that makes our work in the Shakespeare and Performance program better and, in turn, supports our inclusive, community-minded environment.”

One thing that has remained constant with S&P is the “page-meets-stage” ethos first embodied by S&P co-founder and renowned Shakespearean Dr. Ralph Alan Cohen, who began to retire from teaching in 2021.

Cohen’s retirement sparked a worldwide search for a successor who could carry on the torch of academic excellence with a dedication to the innovative performance of these English classics. The only man for the job was Kirwan, the Bardathon runner himself.

Bechtol continues:

“One of Pete’s hopes when he joined our program was to blur the lines between how we define ourselves as scholars and practitioners as we work to integrate our various skills in service of creating, writing about, researching, and practicing how we engage with Shakespeare and his contemporaries in today’s culture. Simply put, he is shaping our program in exciting ways that makes what we already do well, even better.”

Kirwan received his PhD in English Literature from the University of Warwick in England and taught Early Modern drama for more than a decade at the University of Nottingham before moving to Staunton over the summer of 2022.



“Coming to Mary Baldwin lets me work with students who are also practitioners, and neatly combines my research and teaching interests in one place,” Kirwan explains about what drew him to MBU.

“And I will say, Shakespeare and Performance at Mary Baldwin is internationally famous. I used to teach my students back in Nottingham about this program and its relationship with the American Shakespeare Center. It’s the gold standard for how a theatre company and a theatre-training higher education establishment can work together.”

Kirwan’s approach is unique, and the energy implied by the name of his blog is not lost in his practice as an educator and theatre practitioner: “A day in my life is a long day,” he jokes.

“In the morning, I’m usually on our main campus teaching classes, supervising students on their theses, or meeting with students and fellow faculty. But then in the evenings, depending on the time of year, I’m in some form of rehearsal or performance. I always used to think I saw a lot of theatre before I got here.”

Kirwan’s mission with Mary Baldwin’s students is to embed himself in their rehearsals and performances in order to provide a detailed and nuanced perspective on their theatrical choices. In this way, he combines his expertise as a theatre reviewer with his knowledge as a Shakespeare academic.

In addition to working with students, Kirwan is grateful for the cast of colleagues and fellow bardathoners he is surrounded by at MBU: “For example, I’ve been really excited to learn from Doreen Bechtol, who is a movement expert, and from Matt Davies and Molly Seremet (assistant professor of theatre), who work in professional theatre, direct with our students, and perform all at once.”

“I’m in a room full of some of the most intelligent, creative, wonderfully generous theatre practitioners and scholars I’ve ever met. It’s such a privilege to be here.”

Visit the Bardathon and read Dr. Peter Kirwan’s review of the MFA company’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.



Signature Ball

Students celebrated with a masquerade theme for the annual Signature Ball, held on January 27 at Staunton's Blackburn Inn.

2024



Listen Intently and Ask Good Questions: The Steins' First Months in Staunton

By Keith Taylor

“It’ll be Thursday, 2:30 in Atlanta,” President Jeff Stein buzzed out of his office and shared the broad strokes of his phone call with Cameron Shirley, chief of staff, and Amber Ocasio ’14 MS ’22, executive assistant.

Sitting in the lobby with MBU’s Chrissy Stein, the president’s wife and partner-in-chief, I was amazed at his energy for planning yet another trip in a seemingly interminable campaign for Mary Baldwin.

Just as quickly as he exited the office, he shifted into the manner of a host, offering coffee and water before welcoming us in and ushering me to the couch.

The space is separated into three areas — one for sitting with armchairs and a couch, one for working (the president uses a standing desk), and one for business with a large conference table and chairs.



President's House Tour with Jeff & Chrissy Stein



“It’s hard to be a good leader if you don’t know your place and your people.”

– MBU President Jeffrey Stein



The office itself is lightly adorned — an hourglass (two, in fact) on a credenza, four renderings of campus throughout the years arranged on one wall, and Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (a favorite of Stein’s, it came with him to Staunton).

I wouldn’t know this until after our conversation, but I was sitting beneath a literal Mary Baldwin treasure – her graduation certificate from Augusta Female Seminary, framed in a slightly less ancient setting of wood and light metal. After our visit, I can’t help but wonder how many times President Stein read over my shoulder the handwritten “Miss Mary Julia Baldwin first among equals.”

The President’s House

I first met Dr. Jeff Stein for one in a series of interviews in the search for Mary Baldwin’s 10th president, while I was finishing my master of fine arts in MBU’s Shakespeare and Performance program. He visited campus in the spring of 2023, and together with students from across the community, we spoke in the dining room of the President’s House on Cannon Hill — the building he and Chrissy now call their home.

The interview was as pleasant as anyone who knows Stein might expect: he listened intently, he sought to understand the questions, complaints, and concerns of the students in front of him, and he asked good questions.

Everyone I’ve spoken to about their interactions with Stein has said the same thing. He truly connects with everyone he speaks with. From freshmen arriving on campus to seniors saying farewell, from staff



in the kitchen to faculty in the science lab, and from alumni in Texas to the citizens of Staunton, everyone agrees that they were heard.

The Steins have been listening since they got to Staunton, and exploring the community both on campus and off. They’ve discovered local favorites and hidden gems, and met people from downtown, out-of-town, and all around.

“It’s hard to be a good leader if you don’t know your place and your people,” Stein reminds me, after all.

Speaking of the house, the Steins moved in on July 1.

“Of course, it’s an honor to call it home now,” Stein explains. “But on top of that, it’s a beautiful and warm space for hosting: we’ve had sports teams, VWIL, student groups, alumni, and faculty/staff.”

Chrissy, who served as an English faculty member at Elon University and a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya, interjects, “We even hosted families who live in the neighborhoods around campus. They’re part of this community, too, and we want them to feel comfortable joining us on the hill and celebrating this beautiful place.”

Hosting in the President’s House could be tricky — it’s their home and a revolving door of students, faculty, staff, and alumni could wear on any couple after a while. Luckily, the Steins have found the house cozy.

“You’d be surprised at how private the upstairs, which is really the ‘residence’ part, feels from the rest of the house,” Chrissy explains.

Stein recalls just how cozy the house can become:

“One night, after a reception for local residents who live in homes surrounding campus, we had food left over. It was the start of fall break, so



we put out the call to the coaches and VWIL — the students who might still be on campus — and invited them to come grab some food.”

Chrissy continues, “We just said ‘grab and go, come take a sandwich.’ But so many of them stayed! Instead of grabbing-and-going, some of the students stuck around to hang out by the fireplace. It was beautiful to see these students come together and find a place to relax.”



The First Family

The Steins are more than just Chrissy and Jeff. Their children, Lena and Benny, are grown and pursuing their own careers. Lena, who earned English and Latin American studies majors at Carleton College, lives in Chicago and works as a public benefits navigator. Benny, a film graduate of Wesleyan University, lives in Los Angeles and works with

Apple and Amazon promoting their film productions, and hopes to break into screenwriting.

As for their relationship with MBU and Staunton, both kids have visited and love it. Benny particularly liked the Visulite’s unpretentious cinematic experience and joined his parents for “Much Ado About Nothing” at the Blackfriars Playhouse and enjoyed the show equally well. Lena helped her parents find new hikes in Shenandoah National Park and wineries in the area.

“They were sort of overwhelmed by the house,” Stein remembers. “We lived in the same house for 21 years in North Carolina, and it was nowhere near the size and grandeur of the President’s House.”



“But I think they quickly found the warmth on campus and the beauty of the surroundings made it a really relaxing place for them,” Chrissy continues. “They loved the proximity to downtown. Benny, coming from the un-walkability of LA, particularly liked that he could walk down and buy a coffee.”

The Steins are an outdoorsy family, and tackled a section of the Appalachian Trail while they were all here together.

Stein and Chrissy have tried their best to get out into the community between presidential duties and campus commitments. They’ve eaten at almost every restaurant in downtown Staunton and, of course, loved them all.

Venturing out of Staunton, the couple were taken with their experience at the Virginia Film Festival in Charlottesville, where, they saw the US premiere of *Origin*, Ava Duvernay’s most recent film, and were particularly excited to see Duvernay speak in conjunction with the screening.

After our conversation for this feature, Stein went straight into a call with former Board Chair and current Trustee Jane Harding Miller ’76 and then had a meeting with a student, Asia Patterson ’24, regarding the upcoming Phi Alpha Honor Society induction ceremony. Following those meetings were check-ins with staff across campus, including members of the Board of Trustees, vice presidents, and program directors.

Stein doesn’t only fill his time with meetings, though. Before the week’s end, he attended the VWIL Honors Ceremony and the undergraduate production of *Intimate Apparel*. Rolling into the weekend,



Stein was in the crowd for both the men’s and women’s basketball games, the VWIL Stair Ceremony, and, on Sunday, he drove to Northern Virginia for a conversation with the parents of Air Force Lt. Sarah Small ’02, the first VWIL alumna to lose her life in service of her country.

Where In the World Are Jeff and Chrissy Stein?

Serving as president of a university comes with a lot of responsibility, and one of the most exhausting must be the amount of required travel.

In just the first half-year of their time at MBU, the Steins have visited Charlottesville, Richmond, Alexandria, South Boston, Raleigh, Atlanta (twice), Florida, Dallas, and New York City (twice). These were all official visits to meet with alumni and engage with our national Mary Baldwin community.

Stein isn’t daunted or even exhausted by the travel. In fact, he seems to be thriving on it.

“From the very first day I took this job, and Chrissy and I took on this responsibility, we realized: Mary Baldwin is now our last name — we get to represent this wonderful institution. It’s an incredible opportunity to bring the news of Mary Baldwin to every state and city we can. And, of course, to bring alum’s stories back to Mary Baldwin is an honor.”

Shortly after my first sit-down with the pair, I met them again for a photoshoot at the President’s House on campus. Chrissy was there waiting for us while Stein was still in the office, running a little late.

Late for good reason, however — he was distracted on the way by his sense of commitment and service to the MBU community. He had



run into John Nolde, former Mary Baldwin Board of Trustees member and Staunton Military Academy (SMA) graduate. Nolde was in town for the annual SMA/VWIL reunion and taking in the sights of campus when Stein spotted him, walked with him to the President’s House, and proudly introduced Nolde to Chrissy, myself, and the others preparing for the photoshoot.

Before long, we were talking about travel again. Travel has been a hallmark of the Steins’ relationship, it turns out. Leading us into the den, where the walls are lined with books and artifacts from their adventures around the world, the pair regaled us with stories of times abroad.

First, they explain, was Chrissy’s time in Kenya as a member of the Peace Corps. From 1991 to 1993, she served a remote village where the tribe’s elders gifted her a spear, a *mkuki*, and a club, a *rungu*, to protect herself from lions or other dangers on the plains.

Next was a beautiful beaded necklace, called an *nklasit*, crafted for Chrissy by the oldest woman in the village and bestowed as a token of the tribe’s gratitude for her service.

While in Kenya, Chrissy had to visit the capitol, Nairobi, every three months for updated vaccinations. On these brief trips into the city, she would wait in line at the telecom company for an opportunity to make a three-minute phone call. Sometimes, her parents were the first call she’d make and other times, it was her then-boyfriend, Jeff Stein.

More artifacts abounded in the den, like the dial, a model of one from a Buddhist temple with traditional lotus blossom style. This came during their time together teaching in Pundang (Bundang-gu), South Korea, from 1995 to 1996.





“He taught the older students and the adults,” Chrissy remembered. “But he also taught the pre-schoolers. And he was just so cute with those kids! I wish you could’ve seen him. He would come up with these adorable songs for them and little dances to go with them.”

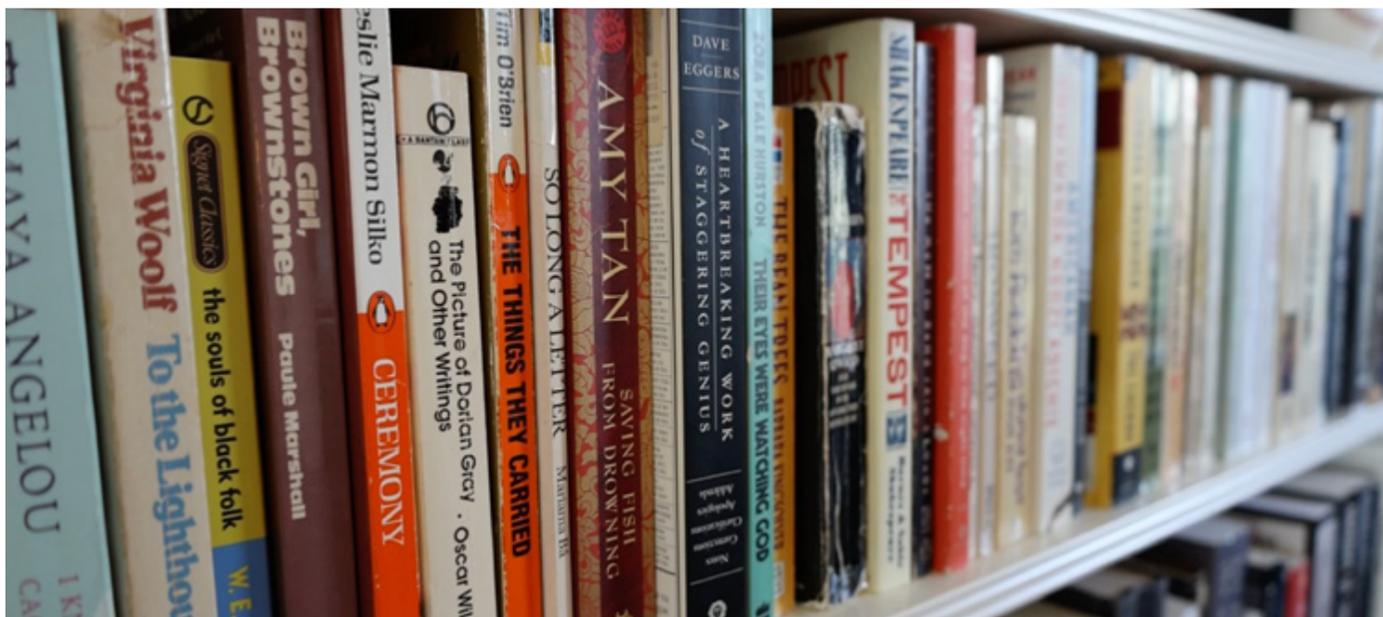
By this time, the Steins were married and in their late twenties. They recalled several instances where locals disapproved of their scooter etiquette.

Chrissy, the taller of the couple, would sit in front on the scooter — a stylish black Suzuki Address V100 — while Stein occupied the back seat.

“Korean men would shout out and stop us to explain that Jeff should be on the front. You see, women had just won the right to drive in Korea when we were there, and we were disturbing a lot of gender norms. But I was the taller one, so of course I needed to be in front!” Chrissy told the story with a laugh.

It was then that a siren came within earshot from a fire engine somewhere nearby. The Steins were captivated by it — tracking it by ear from the station on North Augusta Street and determining it was headed past campus, to the other side of Staunton by way of Prospect Street. Apparently, this feat of echolocation is a common pastime at the President’s House, where noises from around the hill make their way up with surprising clarity.

While they explained the sirens’ movements, I examined the bookshelf. Replete with recognizable titles (*Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell and the *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*) and others that the Steins clearly hold dear (a number of Holocaust remembrances and a





noticeably well-worn copy of *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison). Down at the bottom of the shelves, where eyes rarely wander were a handful of publications by one Jeff Stein.

Throughout this second meeting with the Steins, I couldn't forget the first questions Dr. Stein asked Chrissy after his demanding day: "Did you hear from Benny today? How about Lena?" For the Steins, family always comes first.

The job of a university president is a busy one, and my interview with the Steins was just another stop in his seemingly interminable march for Mary Baldwin (though, I hope, they might call it their time with me a reprieve).

It's easy to imagine, with all this coming and going and attending and meeting, that someone in Stein's position might feel stretched thin. If there's one lesson to learn from Stein's first half-year in office, it's that there is no burnout when your passion for an institution like MBU is ignited. Stein is carrying the torch, now, and it's burning bright.

Keith Taylor (he/him) MBU '20, MLitt '22, MFA '23 came to Mary Baldwin as one of the first co-educational residential students. After completing his BA, MLitt, and MFA in the Shakespeare and Performance Program at MBU, Keith joined the Office of Integrated Communication in November 2023.

Strengthening the Liberal Arts for Tomorrow's World

Efforts are underway to optimize the academic experience and support students from their arrival in Staunton to the day they graduate, and give them a solid return on their investment in an MBU education.

A New Vision for Mary Baldwin and the Future of Education

In the fall of 2025, the incoming first-year class will embark on a new experience in and out of the classroom at MBU, one that dares to imagine the best strategies for preparing students for a rapidly changing world while preserving the liberal arts that make a Mary Baldwin education timeless and powerful.

"The best of the liberal arts fueled by deep mentoring and combined with industry-aligned outcomes and skills," as President Jeff Stein has described it.

There's excitement at breaking ground on this cutting-edge, new approach to higher education. With unflappable ingenuity, faculty and staff are developing a common curriculum, skills portfolio, academic neighborhoods, mentoring relationships, and residential colleges that change the shape of the student experience, prioritizing universally-applicable skills and preparing students to graduate with more than a degree.

A Truly Common Curriculum

The university's general education, or common, curriculum works to ensure a well-rounded education and provides a host of opportunities: students broaden their horizons, experiment outside of their chosen field of study (or discover their field of study to begin with), and potentially find lifelong passions they might never have realized interested them otherwise.

As part of the reimagined academic experience, the new gen-ed suite will provide all this and more.

"Now it will be a truly *common* curriculum," said Dr. Amy Diduch, vice president and dean of the Gold College of Arts and Sciences and professor of economics. "What





Data



Composition



Documents



Discovery



Creativity



Decisions



Ethics



Representation



Environments



Connections

Every single student at Mary Baldwin will take the same 10 courses across their first two years.

we've had previously is a distributed system where there were tons of choices but it led to no two students taking the same path. Now, there's going to be a core, and students will have an opportunity to connect with each other because they're having a common experience."

Starting in the fall of 2025, *every single student* at Mary Baldwin will take the same 10 courses across their first two years. They will begin their college journey together, creating strong bonds through academic exploration in scaffolded courses designed to build students' preparation and skills along the way.

These courses are innovative in their scope and strategy: Diduch compares the new gen-ed to "bringing honors classes to every student."

For one, they are born of a philosophy that thinks beyond disciplines. These classes are meant to be taken before students have declared their major, so it only makes sense that they aren't called things like "Introduction to..." or "Survey of..." This inter-disciplinary thinking allows students to focus on building a skills portfolio that will benefit them no matter where their careers or lives take them.

To put it plainly, the new gen-ed model is flexible.

And the flexibility is embedded in the course names: Data, Composition, Documents, Discovery, Creativity, Decisions, Ethics, Representation, Environments, and Connections. Each reflects foundational liberal arts skills needed to navigate the world into which students will graduate.

For Dr. Paul Deeble, associate dean and director of the school of science and professor of biology, the new curriculum represents an opportunity to connect with students like never before.

"This curriculum's ability to engage with a well-connected, intentional liberal arts approach that really shows you how to apply those historical disciplines to real life skills, and the ability to engage at the freshman and sophomore level with our students is the exciting part to me."

Discovery For Your Lifetime

Let's take a look at the Discovery course, one of these new gen-eds that lies in the purview of the science department, but reaches far beyond in scope. Dr. Rebecca Haberman, assistant professor of biology, developed the prototype syllabus with her colleagues. Its subtitle, "*How we know what we know*," elegantly summarizes the course's mission.

Students enrolled in Discovery will finish the semester with "the ability to assess the validity and salience of experimentation" and "the appreciation of how data are acquired, displayed, analyzed," to quote just two of the course's learning outcomes.

All students, from those studying business to those interested in mathematics, will take this course, not only benefitting from the expertise of their professors, but also the indispensable insight of their peers across disciplines.

Students stepping out of their comfort zones with a course like Discovery, perhaps an aspiring English major who never liked physics or chemistry in high school, are going to be encouraged to apply these lessons to any field. That's the thing about liberal arts – nothing is ever inapplicable to a student's interests. Students just need a course like this to realize *how*.

Additionally, the faculty designing these courses are minding the importance of teaching extremely contemporary information. The course revolves around reading assignments from a recent, popular nonfiction book and extends to consider the particular challenges of the



information age. Discovery even ends with a research and presentation assignment aimed at "busting conspiracy theories."

Curriculum Builds Community

Students will take these courses with their peers from across the MBU community, an incredible boon for learners and professors alike.

When asked about her hopes for the new system, Diduch had a clear image in mind: "I want students in our gen-ed courses to be talking about them with each other. That interaction of 'hey, what did your section of that class figure out last week? What did your section get up to?'"

Because not only will the aspiring English major grow from a course focused on scientific discovery, they will also benefit from exposure to the perspectives of psychology, mathematics, and biology majors with whom they will share these experiences.

And any biology major could tell you about the importance of cross-pollination to a healthy ecosystem.

Dr. Kerry Mills, assistant professor of art history, summarized the redesign's multifaceted vision, saying "I'm specifically excited about the Creativity courses and Representation because I think they will open up these areas to everyone.

The study of these things can apply to all majors – that's probably the most exciting thing. No matter what major you go into, these classes will be supportive because the themes of them and the skills baked into them are useful. I don't think we're going to have any more of the 'why do I have to take these gen-eds?'"



Putting together this all-encompassing vision was no easy feat. As a member of the redesign committee, Mills recalls, “it was a challenge, but I’m always excited about a challenge, about innovation, and things that respond to a changing environment that we can’t control.”

“We can’t change that higher-ed is moving in a particular direction. We could try to resist it and stay where we are, or we can be leaders and try to jump out ahead of it and make something innovative and exciting.”

A Major Change: Blending Discipline with Development

“It is a fact that if the parents of current students had come to Mary Baldwin, they would be taking almost the same curriculum,” said Dr. Paul Menzer, provost and professor of Shakespeare and Performance. “We have a curriculum that is their parents’, and in a lot of ways, their grandparents’ curriculum.”



Menzer chairs the Academic Portfolio Creative Team tasked with reassessing Mary Baldwin’s existing undergraduate curriculum – across all colleges, majors, and minors – and redesigning them for the modern student. Comprised of faculty, staff, deans, and board members, they convened over the course of nearly a year. After racking his own memory and consulting colleagues like Diduch, Dr. Edward Scott, and Dr. Roderic Owen, professors emeriti of philosophy, Menzer concluded that “a redesign of the curriculum on this scale has not happened in more than 40 years.”

Forty years is a long time. Forty years ago, Michael Jackson released *Thriller* and Mikhail Gorbachev had not yet risen to lead the USSR. For some perspective – Mary Baldwin’s current freshmen, the

class of 2027, were predominantly born in 2005 – the year of Hurricane Katrina and the launch of YouTube.

The last time something as dramatic as this redesign happened to the undergraduate curriculum was with the initiation of the criminal justice major in the 1970s. Many at the time, raised and steeped in the liberal arts tradition, didn’t believe that this sort of “professional studies” major belonged on a college campus.

Now, three-quarters of Mary Baldwin’s most popular majors are so-called “professional studies” fields, including business, social work, education, health sciences, and criminal justice. Over the years, students have voted with their feet.

Primarily, the committee took a look at the current MBU student journey. How could the university optimize the academic experience to support students from their arrival to Staunton to the day they graduate, and give them a solid return on their investment in an MBU education?

Menzer states the creative team’s determination: “What employers care most about are the skills that come from a liberal arts education.”

From the newly-conceptualized gen-ed foundation of skills, students will pursue degrees in a catalog of 18 new, continuing, and re-envisioned majors, all designed for the modern world.

The new suite of majors at Mary Baldwin envisions connecting students with their studies as much as with each other, like a Mary Baldwin village. Within this village, each area of interest comprises its own neighborhood and will have a corresponding residential experience. From a metaphorical bird’s eye view, students will be able to see the entire village and the four neighborhoods they live and study in, all united by a town commons at its heart – the new common core curriculum.

THE MBU UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Common curriculum | skills portfolio | immersive residential academic experience | pathways to graduate programs, careers, and other strong first destinations.

COMMON CURRICULUM

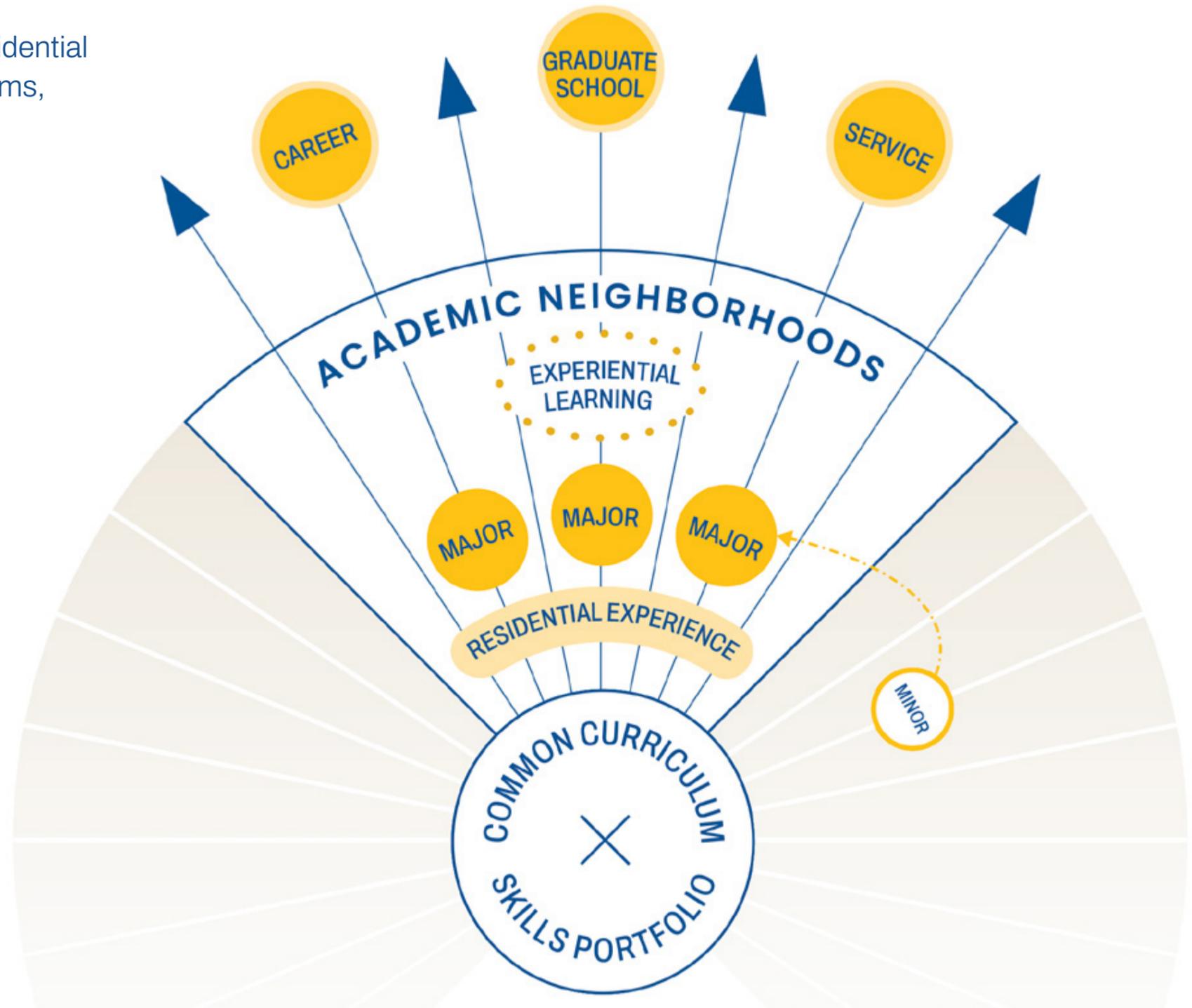
Every student will complete 10 common multidisciplinary liberal arts courses

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Composition | Environments |
| Ethics | Data |
| Change | Representation |
| Documents | Creativity |
| Discovery | Decisions |

SKILLS PORTFOLIO

Every student will be able to articulate how they have developed six skills

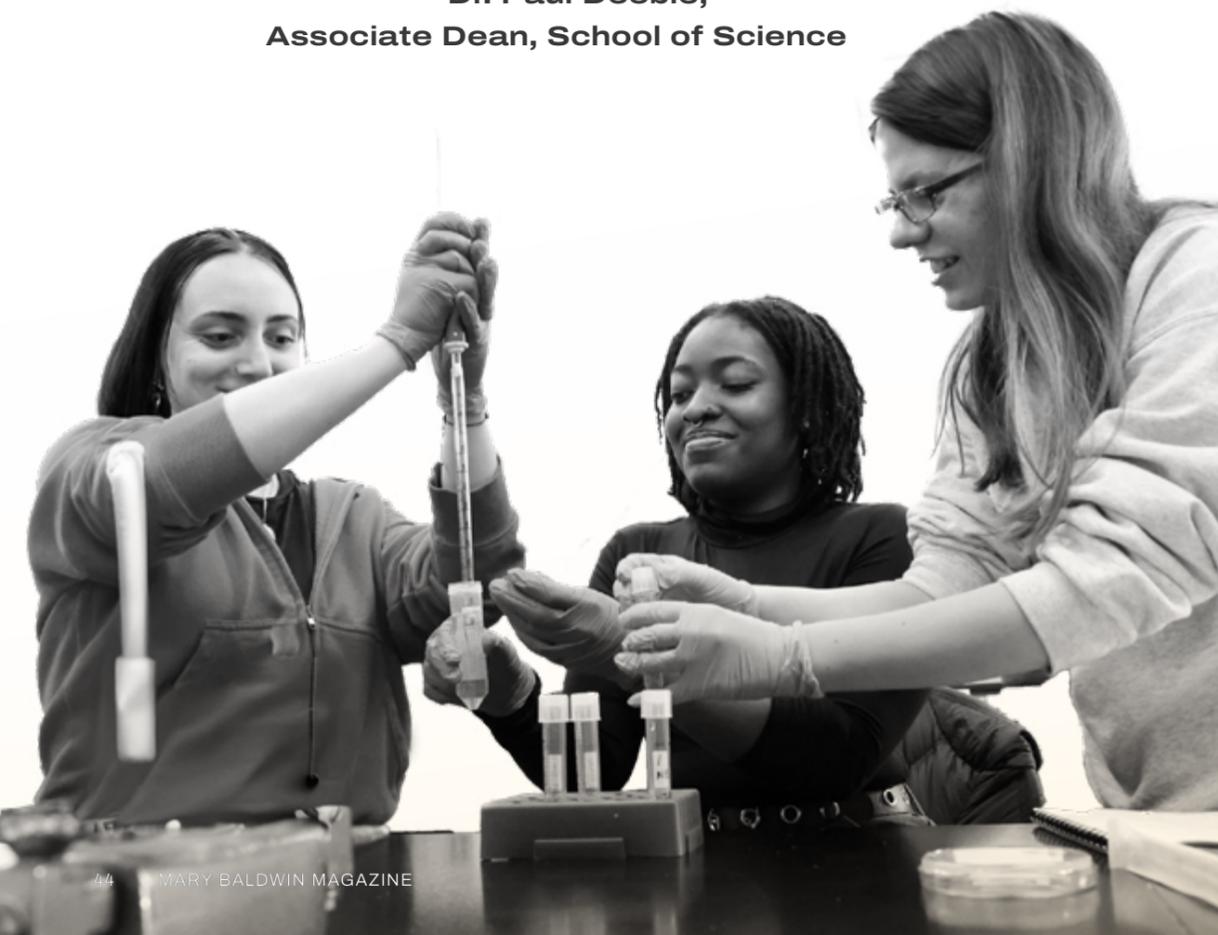
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Inclusion, Equity, and Reflection
- Global Perspectives and Local Responsibility
- Data and Technology Fluency





“This new curriculum is a way we’re trying to formalize curiosity, and getting students comfortable with pursuing their own curiosities.”

— Dr. Paul Deeble,
Associate Dean, School of Science



Welcome to the Neighborhood

Business and Technology includes the business, marketing and communications, applied mathematics, and information technology majors. Business and communications are perennially popular across higher education, and while applied mathematics and information technology have not always been Mary Baldwin’s bread and butter, these are majors in critical alignment with the movement of industry and society. Together, these majors are responsible for shaping the world of tomorrow.

Speaking of society, **Education and Society** turns an eye toward the civil difference-makers in the world. Under its umbrella are education, social work, psychology, criminal justice, public policy, and history. These disciplines are the curriculum of politicians, law enforcers, therapists, social workers, and teachers. The students of the Education and Society neighborhood keep the wheels turning in communities far and wide, with a focus on people and their wellbeing.

Entertainers, designers, writers, and creatives all around will have a home in **Creativity and Design**. This neighborhood brings together the existing theatre and performance major, the reimaged English and professional writing major, and the new digital media and design major to serve as a hub for all things driven by imagination and creativity.

The **Health and Science** neighborhood is an exciting evolution for the sciences at Mary Baldwin. Biology remains at the center of science education while health sciences, exercise science, nursing, and clinical laboratory science serve as specializations for students sure of their interests. Chemistry and bio-chemistry courses will provide knowledge geared for various scientific industries, or for graduate school. Given the significant overlap in their focus, health sciences will work closely with the Murphy Deming Colleges of Health Sciences, and Murphy Deming will provide a clear path forward for students interested in pursuing a career in healthcare.

Remember, while these neighborhoods are divided to put students in close contact with their like-minded peers, every single student at MBU, regardless of

major or neighborhood, will take the same 10 core-curriculum courses in their first two years. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to pursue minors from outside of their major.

Phoebe West, associate vice president of brand strategy and creative direction, puts it simply: “Maybe you visit the Health Sciences neighborhood for a fascinating lecture, but return to your neighborhood for your major classes in business, and for your people. After all, like MBU, a neighborhood is about people – this is all about academics as much as it’s about the human interaction that makes the college experience.”

And the roads out of these neighborhoods are just as easy to find as the links among neighborhoods themselves. Students in Health Sciences will have a clear path to postgraduate study at Murphy Deming, Creativity and Design graduates might find their next home in Shakespeare and Performance, and every student from every neighborhood will have a clear place to call home if they choose to continue their education at MBU.

In addition to the support granted by their neighborhood, students’ major requirements will be integrated with professional development, focusing on learning by doing. Supported by Mary Baldwin’s McCree Center for Life Success, students will learn on the job with internships, micro-internships, immersion programs, field courses, research and community projects, and much more.

For more on the growth of professional development at MBU, read the news story on [the McCree Center for Life Success](#).



The Fruits of the Labor

Liberal arts has always been about exploration, experimentation, and curiosity. Deeble envisions that as a major influence on the work the Academic Portfolio Creative Team has done. He explains, “This new curriculum is a way we’re trying to formalize curiosity, and getting students comfortable with pursuing their own curiosities.”

So, from Mary Baldwin’s deeply-ingrained liberal arts tradition arises a redesign that is groundbreaking for our university and higher education at large. Menzer explains the MBU advantage, “What we’ve done with the MBU curriculum is classic but fresh. It will give us a distinctive undergraduate experience that grounds students in the liberal arts, mentoring relationships, a scaffolded liberal arts foundation, and career and life preparation.”

Thanks to the profound effort of the Academic Portfolio Team, these efforts have borne fruit.

This kind of evolutionary change comes from asking (and answering) tough questions about how to prepare students for success in an age of remote work, generative artificial intelligence, constant communication, and all of the complications of the modern world.

“Most universities differentiate themselves at the peripherals,” Menzer notes. “But by putting the most important thing – the student experience – first with this common curriculum, Mary Baldwin is differentiating itself at the core.”

Class Columns

Judith Godwin '52, who passed away in 2021, has been recognized for her contribution to art in two exhibitions: “Judith Godwin: A Modern Woman” at Berry Campbell Gallery in New York City, and “Expressions of Life” at the Pippy Houldsworth Gallery in London.

“Yum” Lewis Arnold '69 was recently designated as the 2024 chair for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s Board of Directors in Atlanta, GA.

Leslie Granberry '84 and her husband, Marc, were recognized in local media for their entrepreneurship with their company, Roof Rejuvenate, in western Tennessee.

Laura Weaver '84 has been named as the vice president of the Mission Enterprise Division at FaithSearch Partners.

Karen Wood Woodson '92 was named school board auditor by the Virginia Beach School Board.

Dr. Noshua Watson '95 was appointed as Catawba College’s sustainability executive in residence in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Lisa Sprinkel '99 was named permanent vice president of Carillion Mental Health.

Amanda Lynch '02, mindfulness teacher and trauma-informed trainer, lost her husband to a random act of gun violence in October 2022. This fall, she released her ninth book, *A Million Little Stars*, written for children and families dealing with and moving through grief.

Sarah Baumgardner '04 was recognized as the executive and artistic director at Matthews Playhouse of the Performing Arts.

Katie Seidel '04 has been named the director of people and culture for Wilmington-based Thomas Construction Company.

Nerissa Davis Stewart '06 recently acquired and became the CEO of Bariatric Society, an organization that connects weight loss surgery patients to resources and more.



Your gift makes the future possible, and it's your choice where your donation goes. With All In, you can give to:



THE MBU EMPOWERS FUND for **unrestricted giving**



OUR CAMPUS HOME for maintaining and updating the **historic campus**



THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND for making education **possible** for **everyone**



THE INTERNSHIP FUND for turning students' **educations** into **vocations**



To make a difference, **visit marybaldwin.edu/give**



Save the Date

OCT. 18 2024

For the Inauguration of
Dr. Jeffrey P. Stein

Mary Baldwin University's 10th President



10 a.m. on Friday, October 18
Barbara Kares Page Terrace
Staunton, Virginia

Invitation to follow

All alumni are invited to attend Homecoming 2024,
held on the same weekend as inauguration, October 18-20.

Nicole Brenner '07 was named to *Virginia Lawyers Weekly's* 2024, "Influential Women in Law" list.

Joshua Toney '07, RN, BSN, is the new administrator for Warm Hearth at Home, a home-care branch of Warm Hearth Village in Montgomery County.

Jolene Kidd '08 won the prestigious Leonard Sandridge Award at the University of Virginia.

Stori Ayers '09, actor, writer, director, and teacher, makes her Broadway acting debut this spring, and directed Mosaic Theater Company's production of *Confederates* this past fall.

Jerrica Brown Seay '11 was promoted to assistant vice president, operations officer for the Bank of Botetourt's Buchanan location.

Matthew Frick '14, a former custom cabinetmaker, has been named Salem's 2024 Teacher of the Year for his outstanding work with first graders at East Salem Elementary School.

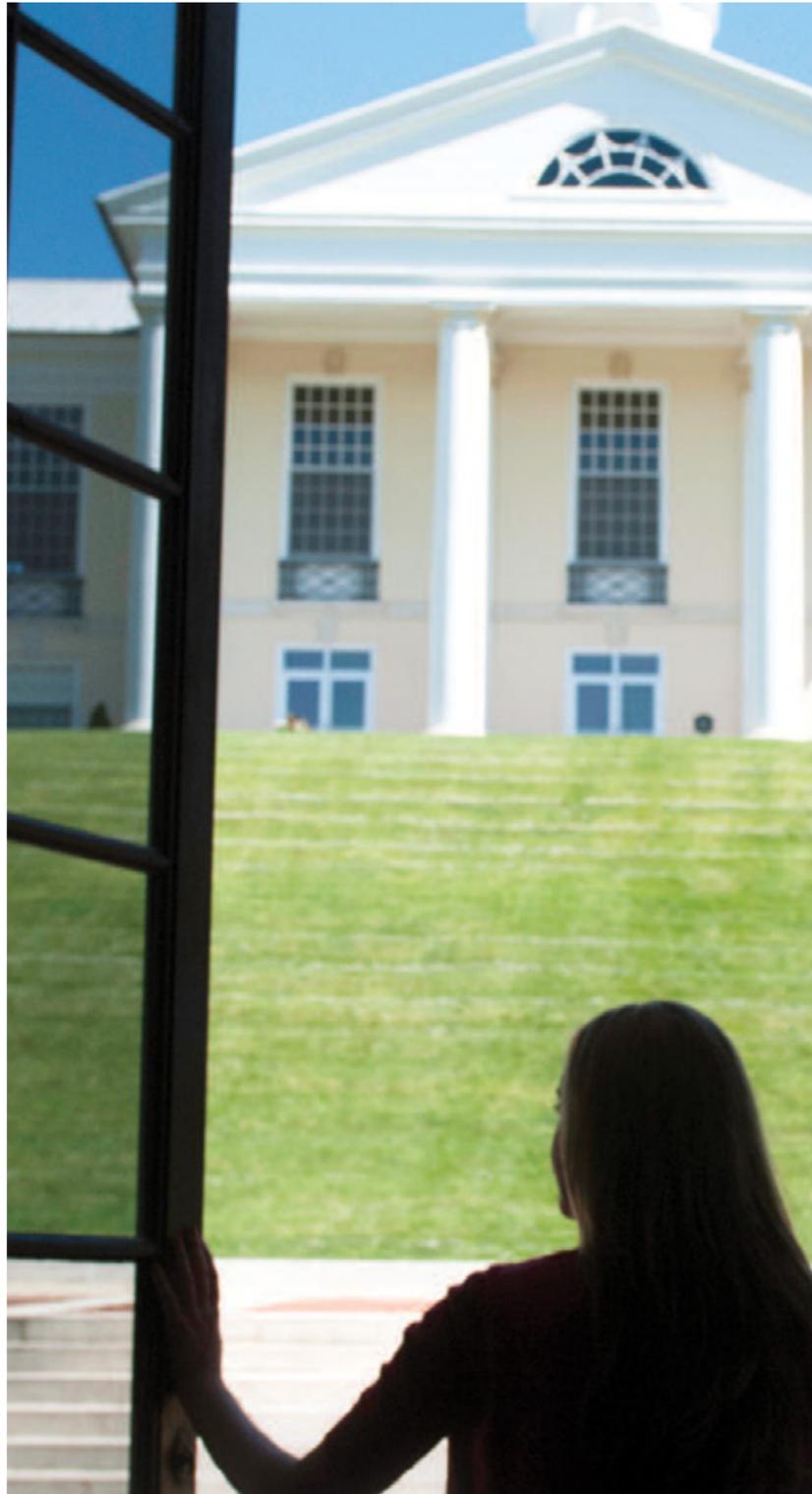
Dine Imbriani '14, owner of Mountain Shepherd Adventure School, was recognized on The Roanoaker's 20 over 50 list for 2024.

Aubrey Whitlock MLitt '14, MFA '15 was named the director of education programs at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton.

Dr. Jess Hamlet MLitt '15, English professor at Alvernia University in Pennsylvania, is teaching a literature class dedicated to the study and analysis of Taylor Swift's discography.

Liza Saunders '15 is the new director of marketing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Katherine Narvaez Mena '16, MD candidate at SUNY Upstate Medical University and immigration advocate, had an op-ed published about the challenges facing medical professionals who are willing and able to work, but prevented by some states' restrictive immigration laws.



CONTRIBUTE YOUR VOICE TO THE MBU Oral History Project!

The Office of Alumni Engagement is collaborating with Publishing Concepts, LP, to gather stories from alumni. This project will bring together voices from throughout Mary Baldwin's history to create an exceptional oral history archive that unites different generations, careers, geographies, and life experiences.

We cordially invite you to prepare your Mary Baldwin memories, consider defining moments in your career, remember those campus connections that turned into lifelong friendships, and reminisce over pieces of local, national, and world history that you lived through while at the college.

Watch your mail and email for details on how to participate!

Molly Seremet MLitt '16, MFA '17, assistant professor of theatre at Mary Baldwin, has been named to the 2024 play-reading committee for New York City's Hedgepig Ensemble Theatre.

Sarah Lawson '19 will help administer the new doctor of veterinary medicine curriculum for the Cummings School at Tufts University, proposed to start in August 2024.

Natesha Ross '21 was named on The Roanoker's 40 under 40 list.

Hannah Buren '23 was one of fifty-two new state troopers to graduate from the Virginia State Police Academy.

Join the Exciting Revival of MBU Alumni Regional Networks!

As a Regional Network Ambassador, you'll:



Participate in community service and volunteering events that make a real difference



Engage with fellow alumni right in your own backyard through social events, professional development opportunities, and more



Help plan and create memorable events that bring Mary Baldwin graduates together



Support **ALUMNI-OWNED** Businesses

Check out the directory of alumni-owned businesses to celebrate and support our Mary Baldwin entrepreneurs! A featured business will also be included in the Alumni Engagement newsletter each month.

Would you like to share your business with alums?
Let us know here!

MB Campus Store

Need your fix of Mary Baldwin gear but can't make it to the campus store?

YOU CAN SHOP ONLINE!

The Mary Baldwin Campus Store has merchandise for all your needs, like:



Legacy MBC merch featuring that nostalgic green-and-gold



Stickers, drinkware, and accessories to show your Mary Baldwin pride



From Fighting Squirrels athletic gear to Murphy Deming business-casual



More squirrel stuff than you can shake a stick at!

Shop Today. Celebrate Forever.

Place your order today at store.marybaldwin.edu

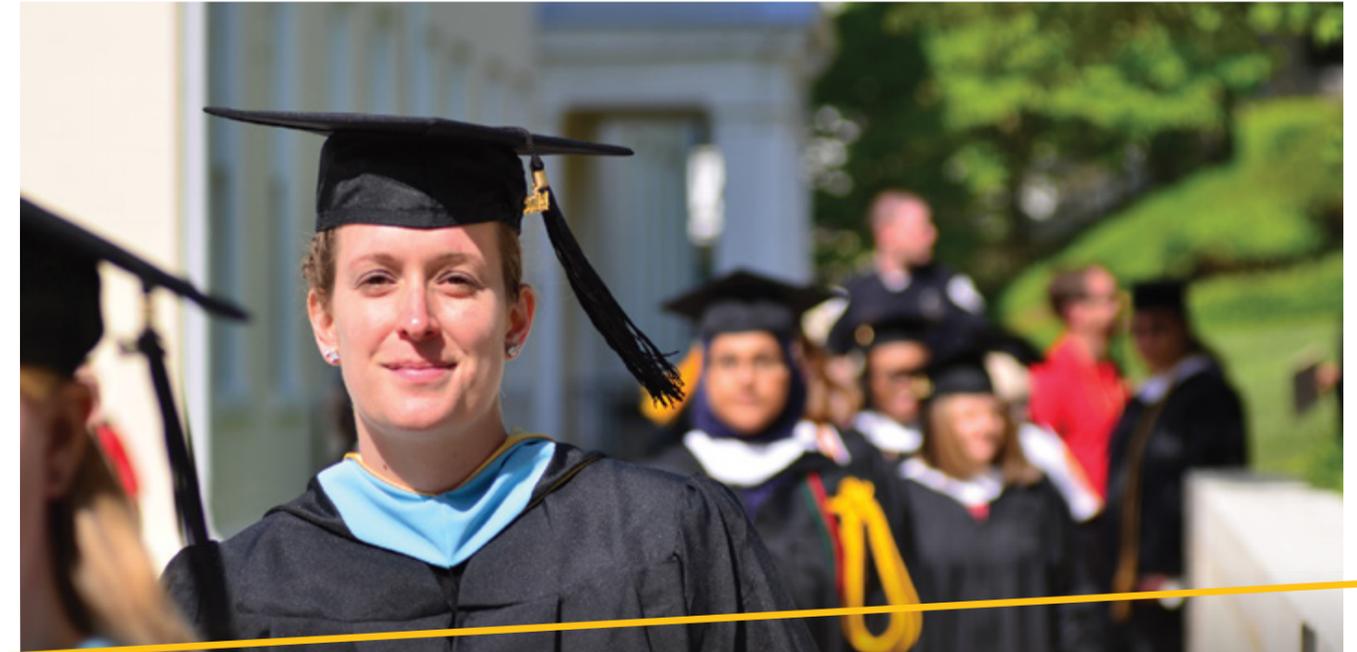
Office of Alumni Engagement News and Events

Volunteer Opportunities

As we work together to shape Mary Baldwin's future, the Office of Alumni Engagement invites you to join in several upcoming initiatives that will continue the university's commitment to transformational education for women and the underrepresented. We hope that you will consider volunteering your time, talent, ties, and testimony to support Mary Baldwin.

Be a Mentor: Alumni are needed to serve as volunteers for MBU students through a personalized mentorship program. This partnership with Tern Mentoring, will be time-bound totaling 6-8 hours of time commitment in the spring semester. [Interest form](#)

Alumni Regional Volunteers: Your role as on-the-ground ambassadors is crucial in connecting MBU alumni worldwide. Serve as a Mary Baldwin Alumni Regional Leader to facilitate meaningful connections and engagement in your area. Together, we strengthen our community and foster valuable relationships with alumni, parents, and friends. You are essential to our shared mission. [Learn more](#)



Mary Baldwin Is Your University for Life

THAT MEANS LEARNING DOESN'T NEED TO STOP WHEN YOU LEAVE CAMPUS!

As a Mary Baldwin alum, you have access to:

- An **exclusive discount on online classes**, provided to help you level up your career by earning an online graduate degree or certificate from your alma mater.
- Access to the **MBU Lifelong Learning programming**, free of charge! This incredible series connects you with faculty experts for finely curated, wholly enriching learning experiences.

Mary Baldwin is committed to providing an education **not for time**, but for **eternity**.

Presidential Welcome: New York City

All alumni and their guests are invited to join us for the 7 p.m. showing of *Home* at the Todd Haines Theatre, and enjoy a pre-show reception at BEA Restaurant. Meet President Jeff Stein and his wife, Chrissy, along with remarkable alumna Stori Ayers '09, who's making her Broadway debut.

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

5:30 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. show

[Event registration](#)

Save the Date: Upcoming Alumni Events

June 29

Mary Baldwin Night at The Diamond:
Richmond Flying Squirrels

July 26

Salem Red Sox Baseball Night

August 9

Mary Baldwin Washington Nationals
Alumni Game Night

[Register here for alumni events](#)

September 6

Mary Baldwin Norfolk Tide Alumni
Game Night

October 18-20

Homecoming and Inauguration —
All alumni are invited for a weekend
of exciting Homecoming activities,
and the presidential inauguration of
Dr. Jeff Stein.

Bluestocking *Stories*

Introducing Bluestocking Stories, Mary Baldwin's new podcast showcasing the people and stories that make our community.

Season 1: Made for Creativity

Season 1's theme is Creativity, talking with MBU community members from both creative and less-obviously-creative fields about how they use creativity in their lives.

You'll hear:

- Alumni experiences and stories of their accomplishments
- Faculty and staff sharing expertise and lessons from their fields
- Student perspectives on their time at MBU, and how they're approaching life through and after college

 [Listen on Apple Podcasts](#)

 [Listen on Spotify](#)

 [Listen online](#)

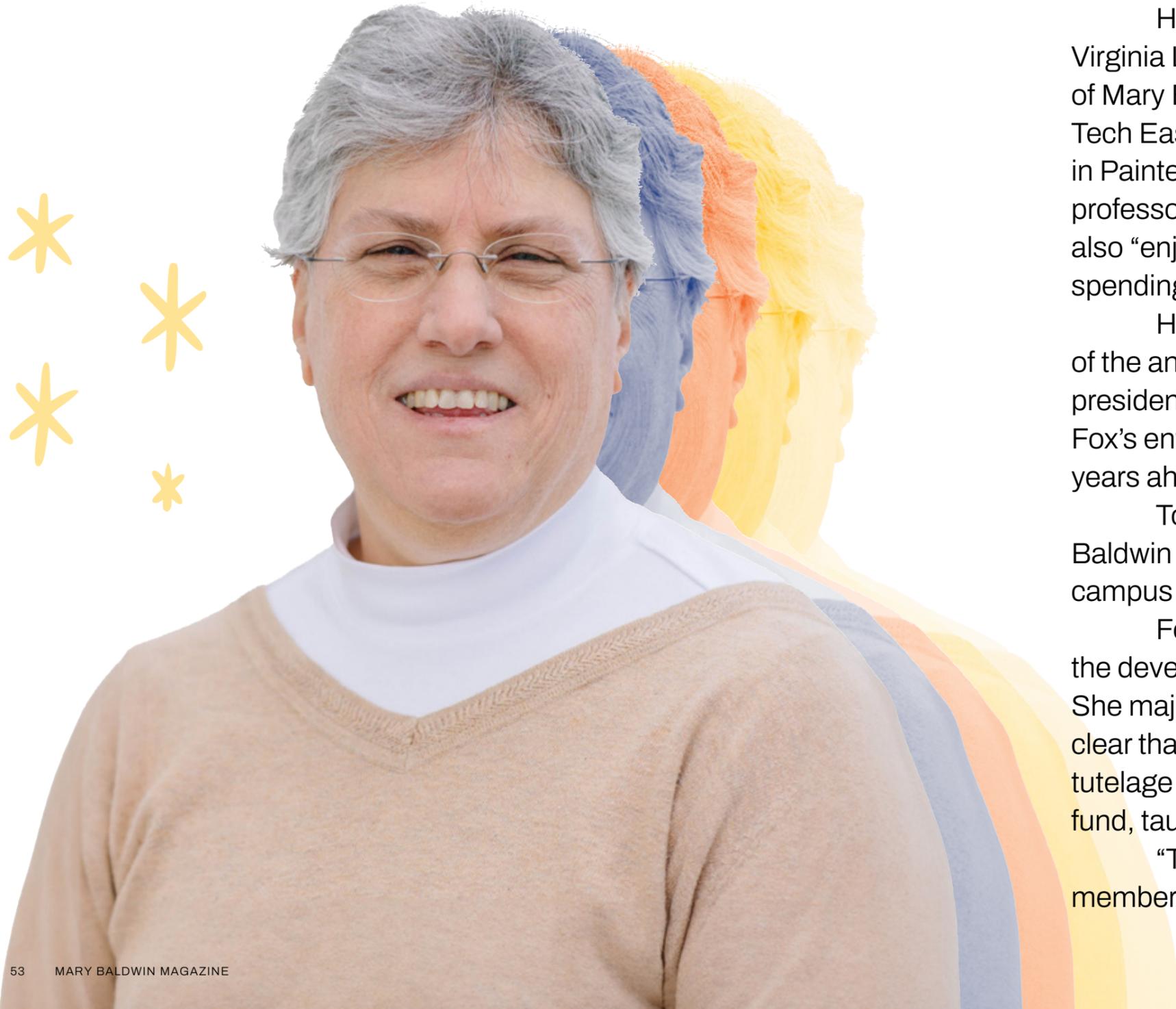


2023-24 Presidential Tour

For Dr. Jeff Stein, meeting and understanding the MBU community is the ultimate honor in his position as president. That's why he spent the past months traveling far and wide to meet the MBU community – wherever they've settled!



Anne Holland Makes Mary Baldwin Magic



Mary Baldwin offers a transformational experience to everyone that walks on the hill, but for Anne Holland '88, this journey has culminated with a role as director of leadership annual giving – and led to some transformative gifts for the university itself.

Holland attended Mary Baldwin in the mid-eighties, when Dr. Virginia Lester was wrapping up her tenure as the seventh president of Mary Baldwin. After school, Holland began working for the Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Painter under the direction of Dr. Henry P. Wilson, who was a professor of weed science. In this stint away from Staunton, she also “enjoyed sailing, helping a friend in his peach orchard as well as spending quality time with her family.”

Holland returned to her alma mater as the associate director of the annual fund in 1989 with Dr. Cynthia Haldenby Tyson as president. She continued to work at Mary Baldwin for Dr. Pamela Fox’s entire presidency, and she is looking forward to many more years ahead under the leadership of President Jeff Stein.

To make a long story short, Holland has been here to see Mary Baldwin change. And you would be hard pressed to find anyone on campus more “all in” than her.

For most of her Mary Baldwin career, Holland has worked in the development office – now the Office of University Advancement. She majored in history and minored in Asian studies, but she makes clear that her student internship in the development office under the tutelage of Maureen Kelley and Jack Burkhalter, director of the annual fund, taught her the most.

“They were simply the best teachers, they treated me like a member of the staff. I won’t say I started the phone-a-thon, but it was



definitely my first big project, and I am proud of how much I got done with it.”

In her nearly 40 years at Mary Baldwin, Holland has developed relationships with countless alumni, faculty, and staff. “If you had asked me whether I’d be around this long, I would’ve said no. But I’ve met so many people and made so many friendships.”

This element of her personality – her desire to seek out new experiences and new friends among these hills we share – is what makes Holland who she is. This disposition made her especially well-suited to her newest role, director of leadership annual giving.

According to Mary Harvey, vice president of university advancement, Holland was a clear fit for the role: “Anne is one of the greatest examples of who we hope our alumni become. She embraces diverse thought and embraces change, lives her life in service to others, inspires loyalty in all who know her, and she is one heck of a fundraiser.”

“She knows how to genuinely connect to others and work with our alumni and donors to further our beloved institution,” Harvey continued about Holland’s aptitude in her new role. “Since August, Anne has been directly involved in nearly \$1M in fundraising for Mary Baldwin. That figure represents the dedication Anne has to her alma mater and serves as proof of the indelible mark she makes every day with our alumni and supporters.”



Class of 1988



“Anne is one of the greatest examples of who we hope our alumni become.”

— Mary Harvey,
Vice President of
University Advancement

In this position, Holland gets to spend her days speaking with alumni about how they can continue to contribute to Mary Baldwin’s legacy. More importantly for Holland, she gets to keep in touch with more alumni than any other staff member at MBU.

“Janie Satterfield from the class of 1970 calls it the ‘Mary Baldwin magic,’” Holland explained in a nod to one of those alums to whom she has grown so close. “We all have it but don’t know how we got it. It means we’re all here for each other. You can’t describe it to someone unless they have it and if you’ve been here for any time, you know what I mean.”

One of the hardest things about Holland’s job is translating the change Mary Baldwin has undergone to her former classmates and fellow alumni. For her, it has all been a thrill.

“I will never ever forget the first time I walked into the pub, now the University Cafe, and there were men, and there were women, and they were just talking and interacting and having the same great time I remember having in school. I just thought, ‘I wish everyone could see this.’”

“I feel like I’ve grown up at Mary Baldwin,” Holland reflected. “What am I most grateful for? I’m most grateful that Mary Baldwin believed in me.”

One of the biggest changes Holland witnessed was Mary Baldwin College’s evolution into Mary Baldwin University.

“I always wish I had time to get a graduate degree. Maybe I will. But nothing would make me more proud than to have two diplomas – from Mary Baldwin College and from Mary Baldwin University.”

Generous Bequest Continues Col. Melissa Patrick's Thoughtful Support of MBU



As MBU begins a new chapter in its history, supported by the All In for Mary Baldwin Campaign, Colonel Melissa Patrick '78 has made a generous bequest to her alma mater that will ensure generations of students can develop the skills and leadership traits needed to chart their own path to success.

“My approach to this donation is that there’s a need for balance between unrestricted giving and growing the endowment. I understand that both those things need to be done, and I’ve tried to support both aspects. I’m hoping that others will follow and look at their investments.”

Mary Baldwin has benefitted from Patrick’s longstanding support, including recurring donations through a monthly allotment upon joining the military, and gifts to an endowed scholarship — named for her father the beloved late chemistry professor James Patrick — ever since graduating.

“At the time I started giving, I didn’t fully understand how much scholarship support goes to Mary Baldwin students, that practically every single student has part of their bill paid by donor support. That’s so important to know and to contribute to after you graduate.”

Patrick’s decorated 28-year career in the U.S. Army included deployments in Germany, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Korea, and Afghanistan. She jumped out of 65 airplanes as a master parachutist, and received the Legion of Merit for her service. Often, she stood out as the only woman among her many career achievements.

She returned to Staunton in 2006 and, starting in 2012, served for two years as deputy commandant for the Virginia Women’s Institute for Leadership. She remains close to the corps and helps mentor cadets on their career goals in both the public and private sectors.

“Mary Baldwin gave me a strong sense of self-confidence, and a belief that I could compete with anybody. That feeling has never left me.”

MBU Alumna Invents First-Ever Oral Treatment for Postpartum Depression



When Shawn Brown Thompson '83 was an undergrad at MBU, she was impressed by the number of adults from the local community who audited classes there, for no other reason than they enjoyed learning new things.

One woman, Cornelia, not only audited a religion class Thompson was taking, but ended up being a great friend, too.

“That was a moment that triggered the idea of being a lifelong learner,” Thompson said. “I feel Mary Baldwin also encouraged such, but Cornelia with her bright red shoes in my religion class made a big impression!”

Since then, Thompson, a biology major, has spent most of her career exploring and learning various subfields in the psychiatric sciences. After a few years with Abbott Labs in their adult nutritional division, Thompson worked with psychiatrists in

the neurohealth division of GlaxoSmithKline for 22 years, before moving to the neuroscience division of Japanese pharmaceutical firm Otsuka.

Today, Thompson is one of only seven senior therapeutic business specialists for Sage Therapeutics, which just had the first-ever oral pill for postpartum depression (PPD) approved by the FDA in August of this year. *Time Magazine* named their drug Zurzuvae as one of the best inventions of 2023.

The new treatment had previously been available only as an intravenous injection.

“We have had the infusion drug to treat postpartum depression,” Thompson said, “but the infusion is a 60-hour inpatient procedure, and it’s not available everywhere in the country.”

Approximately one in every seven women will get a perinatal mood disorder like postpartum depression. Whereas up to 75% of new moms may feel depressed, anxious, or even angry a few days after giving birth — the so-called “baby blues” — they usually go away within a week or so.

However, for more than 10% of mothers, PPD is a serious disease that can last a year after childbirth. It can interfere with a mother’s ability to take care of and bond with her baby, as well as

harm the child's development and safety. In rare cases, new mothers have harmed themselves and sometimes their babies. That's why it's so crucial to identify and treat PPD as quickly as possible.

Thompson's role at Sage is to help do just that — increase awareness about postpartum depression, urging clinicians to screen for and identify mothers who might be suffering from it. Once identified, Thompson is also involved in letting them know what the treatment options are.

Similar to her friend Cornelia so many years ago, Thompson's own predilection for lifelong learning has led her from one interesting opportunity to the next throughout her career — and Sage Therapeutics' pioneering treatment for PPD is among them.

"When I was working with the injectable antipsychotics for Otsuka, I thought that was very interesting," Thompson said, "but one day I was just reading online about new therapies and what's going on in psychiatry, and I came across this drug for postpartum depression."

"And I'm like, oh, my gosh, that's an area no one's touched," Thompson added. "That's going to be my job — no one knows psychiatry like I do in Oklahoma."

Thompson immediately started networking via social media, reaching out to a woman who had just been hired by Sage Therapeutics, and they became fast friends.

When the woman left Sage a couple of years later during the COVID pandemic, Thompson contacted the company again, gained an interview, and secured her position as senior therapeutic business specialist.

Sage Therapeutics' oral pill, Zurzuvae, became available in December 2023, and Thompson is both relieved that the treatment is more widely available and excited that she gets to continue and educate and advocate for even more new mothers.

"My position to represent the first oral treatment to treat postpartum depression is an opportunity to educate clinicians and increase awareness about an under-diagnosed and often misunderstood condition," Thompson said. "And like its infusion predecessor, this product will be life-changing for appropriate moms and their families."

"My position to represent the first oral treatment to treat postpartum depression is an opportunity to educate clinicians and increase awareness about an under-diagnosed and often misunderstood condition."

– Shawn Brown Thompson '83

Remembering Dr. Cynthia Haldenby Tyson, MBU's Eighth President



President Emerita Cynthia Haldenby Tyson led Mary Baldwin from 1985 to 2003, and forged a legacy of expansion for signature academic programs and the campus footprint. She passed away on Jan. 7 in Charlotte, N.C., at the age of 86.

Throughout her 18 years at the helm, she created partnerships, constructed and renovated campus buildings, enlarged and diversified the student body, set fundraising records, and drew national publicity.

“During her presidency, Dr. Tyson was able to both effect great change and connect to students, faculty, and staff with respect, warmth, and affection.

This is a rare and outstanding gift, and one which I deeply admire in her life and work,” said President Jeff Stein. “From what I’ve learned about Dr. Tyson’s remarkable service to Mary Baldwin, she stands out as a thoughtful, approachable, and dynamic leader who made a tremendous impact on the institution while never forgetting to appreciate and elevate the people

“Her energy, dedication, and love for Mary Baldwin was always present.”

– Susie Kierson Miller '91

Dr. Tyson Chosen to Lead Mary Baldwin

Cynthia Hadden Tyson was selected as the eighth president of Mary Baldwin College during a meeting of the MBC Board of Trustees April 21 in Staunton. Dr. Tyson, who is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Queens College in Chatham, N.C., will succeed Virginia L. Lester as president and assume her duties on July 1.

The president-elect, 47, is a native of Luton, Bedfordshire, England. She received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Medieval English Literature from the University of Leeds and has received two certificates in Management Development for College and University Administrators from Harvard University.

A naturalized U.S. citizen, she came to this country in 1979 as a Fulbright Lecturer at the University of Tennessee. Before moving to Charlotte in 1983, she was an assistant professor of English at Queens



College in Charlotte. She said, "It is the church that helps set our tone, philosophy and the content of our mission, out of which everything we achieve is done."

Dr. Tyson said she takes a particular interest in the College's faculty, as she herself has been a faculty member for a number of years.

"The faculty is central, and I see my role as that which helps to create an environment in which the faculty can do its work well, because they are scholarly, creative people and do what they do best."

"At this particular time, I know there are issues to resolve," she continued. "But here, there always are. The issue we face, we face together, and we will resolve them together."

Dr. Tyson has been listed in the World Who's Who of Women in Education and the World Who's Who of Women.



1985

Elected to serve as Mary Baldwin's eighth president

1986

Tyson, here with representatives from Japan's Sakae Institute, expanded cultural immersion programs.



1991

Dr. Samuel Spencer, Tyson's predecessor, was a major advocate for her selection as president.



1990s

Two presidents, Jimmy Carter and Tyson, met in Washington, D.C.

who worked and studied on these hills. Her legacy of academic excellence and entrepreneurial spirit still influences the university today and is carried forward by our students and alumni across the world."

Born and raised in a small English village, Tyson learned the value of tight-knit communities, and devoted herself to reading and studying language. Her favorite discipline when she was young was elocution, and she continued to love the spoken word throughout her life.

The University of Leeds was the backdrop for Tyson's higher education, where she earned her bachelor's, master's, and PhD in English language and medieval English literature. In her graduate studies, she focused on the intersection of medieval literature and phonics, especially unique features of local dialects. Some of her recordings on the subject are still held in the British Museum.

Crossing the pond, Tyson served as a Fulbright scholar-teacher at the University of Tennessee, where she picked up a life-long love of country music alongside teaching undergraduates. She went on to a distinguished career in higher education in this country, eventually becoming a U.S. citizen.

Before coming to Mary Baldwin, she served as a faculty member and as vice president for academic affairs and chief academic officer at Queens University of Charlotte in North Carolina from 1969 to 1985.

"This amazing woman who touched the lives of so many – but in particular the students of MBC – taught us much about not only living with humility and grace, but with humor and leadership."

– Janaan Hashim '89

"She was a remarkable woman, who, at the same time was a warm, compassionate person with a delightful sense of humor. I treasured her leadership and her friendship."

– Sara James '69, Professor Emerita of Art History



1992

With Board of Trustees Chair Charles Luck at the dedication of the Pannill Center and Tyson Terrace



1993

Major news coverage surrounded the announcement of the Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership.



1995

Tyson's regalia represented her PhD in English language and medieval English literature from the University of Leeds.

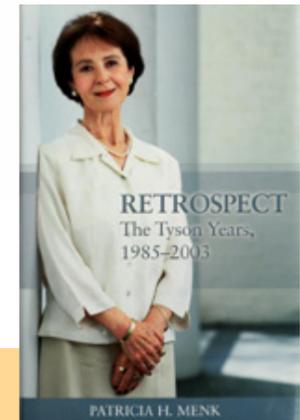
Her arrival on campus coincided with the first class for the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted (PEG), and a key characteristic of her tenure became the development of distinctive student-centered programs at Mary Baldwin.

In 1993, she made the decision at the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia to establish the Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership (VWIL), the nation's only women's cadet corps, which welcomed its first class of students in August 1995. Over the years, VWIL has graduated more than 500 cadets and earned a national reputation as a leadership development program for students pursuing both military and civilian careers.

"Dr. Tyson was instrumental not only to the growth of VWIL as a program, but also to the growth of cadets on an individual level," said Dr. Trimble Bailey Spitzer '99, a current MBU Trustee who served as VWIL's first cadet first captain and graduated with the corps' inaugural class. "I remember she gave the address at our very first parade, and in her speech she said 'I am very proud of you' in her British accent many times over. But she really was incredibly proud of us as young women. She was a special person and a monumental leader."

In 1996, Tyson supported the creation of the first dedicated office at Mary Baldwin for promoting diversity and inclusion resources, programming, and opportunities.

"During Dr. Tyson's presidency careful attention was given to the special needs of underrepresented students," said Andrea Cornett-Scott, chief diversity officer. "Through her leadership, the Office of African American and Multicultural Affairs was launched, transforming the cultural identity of the Mary Baldwin community."



Browse the history

Retrospect: The Tyson Years 1985-2003 by Patricia H. Menk



1996

Tyson advocated for the status of VWIL before the U.S. Supreme Court with VWIL director Brenda Bryant.



2000

With a student and noted journalist Cokie Roberts, who delivered that year's Smyth Leadership Lecture.



2001

Tyson favored calling MBC a "mini university" with the addition of programs like the MLitt/MFA in Shakespeare and the MA in teaching.

Tyson enabled the founding of the Shakespeare and Performance program in 2001, which continues to offer a unique course of graduate study in partnership with Staunton's American Shakespeare Center (ASC). To recognize Tyson's contributions, the first-floor rehearsal room at ASC's Blackfriars Playhouse is named for her.

Professor Emeritus of Shakespeare and Performance and ASC co-founder Ralph Alan Cohen shared a memory of Tyson receiving one of the organization's most prestigious awards: "In 2013, the American Shakespeare Center awarded Dr. Tyson our Robin Goodfellow Award; she stood by me as I began to read my carefully composed speech in her honor, and I wasn't a sentence into it before she grabbed my arm and said, 'Nice, Ralph, but let's talk about you.' Everyone laughed, and I tried to start over, but she grabbed my arm again and interrupted: 'Isn't this a wonderful theatre?' she asked the guests. Again, huge laughter, as she basically and endearingly stole the show every time I started to say something. I never was able to finish that speech, but because of her it was the most memorable I ever made."

Many additional academic opportunities were initiated during the Tyson years, as Mary Baldwin added the bachelor of science as a degree option, and the option of a minor in addition to a major; offered more career-oriented majors in subjects like healthcare administration, marketing communication, and arts management; and organized study abroad trips to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, and China during May Term. Her tenure also saw the establishment of interfaith program Quest, which is still very active on campus today.

"I will never forget her words at freshmen orientation — 'we work hard and we play hard.'"

– Windsor Johnson '02

"She was a constant presence around the college and was never too busy to say hello."

– Kara Neumann '04



2000s

Even after her tenure as president, Tyson continued to take on speaking engagements and support causes for higher education.



2003

Upon her retirement, Tyson's extraordinary contributions were chronicled in a special magazine feature.

For non-traditional students, Tyson expanded the then-named Adult Degree Program to satellite locations throughout Virginia, to increase access to a college education for those who were often juggling coursework, careers, and family responsibilities.

Campus buildings and grounds grew and transformed during Tyson's tenure: she led the renovation to Carpenter Academic Hall in the 1990s, which was rededicated in honor of alumna Leona Bowman Carpenter '35 and a significant grant from the Carpenter Foundation. She spearheaded the purchase of the Staunton YMCA, which became the Physical Activities Center.

The William G. Pannill Student Center was constructed in 1992 as a dedicated space for students to gather. The patio joining Pannill with Kable House and the Student Activities Center is named in Tyson's honor, given by former Board Chair Charles S. Luck III and his family.

Toward the end of her tenure, she led the way for the construction of a residence hall and home base for PEG students, which in 2021 was renamed Cynthia Haldenby Tyson Hall in her honor.

Upon her retirement as president in 2003, the Legislature of Virginia recognized her distinguished service to the Commonwealth by legislative commendation, and the U.S. Congress likewise voted to recognize her accomplishments. Mary Baldwin also named her an honorary doctor of humane letters at her final Commencement ceremony.

Despite the significant transformations at MBU during the 18 years of her presidency, Tyson created enduring connections and loyalty among

“Dr. Tyson had a talent for fostering community at Mary Baldwin. I fondly remember the weekly afternoon teas held in the upper back gallery of the administration building and as I watched her memorial service online, I raised my tea cup in her honor.”

**– Amy Diduch,
Vice President/Dean,
Gold College of
Arts and Sciences**



2016

University investment renewed Tyson Terrace with brickwork, furniture, and a dedicatory compass – the 2016 class gift.



2021

The PEG Center, constructed during Tyson’s tenure, was renamed in her honor.



2022

Watch the 2022 recording **“Four Decades of Leadership” with former president Pamela Fox and Tyson.**

students, faculty, and staff. Many remember that her leadership style involved being out and about on campus as much as possible, attending athletic and arts events, student government meetings, orientations, and formal dances, and stationing herself at a lunch table in Hunt Dining Hall so students could share what was on their minds.

For Dr. Edward Scott, associate professor emeritus of philosophy, Tyson had a particularly strong grasp of personal details among members of the Mary Baldwin community.

“She knew our spouses and our children by name, our origins of town, country, and kin,” Scott recalled. “It always moved me to hear her call my name with affection, so much so that I could never bring myself to call her Cynthia. I called her President Tyson from the beginning until the very end and thus shall she ever remain, so fondly remembered beyond the veil.”

Chaplain Emerita Pat Hunt, who joined Mary Baldwin the same year as Tyson, remembers how she led with equity and compassion: “I said to her once, ‘There are surely people you like better than others and even people you don’t like at all. How do you handle that?’ She said, ‘Oh, I just think of them as characters in *Canterbury Tales*.’ I had to laugh. Good advice and an insight into the source of her patience with us.”

Also highly respected in the larger Staunton community, Tyson was named the first female president of the Rotary Club; was an elder at First Presbyterian Church; and served on numerous boards including those of the Frontier Culture Museum, Shenandoah Shakespeare, and the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge.

“To me, she crafted a college for women that inspired us all to be the best version of ourselves. She will be in my heart forever.”

– Jacqui Elliott '93

“We have generations of strong women, guided into our best selves, from Dr. Tyson’s influence.”

– Kristen Barner '90



Memorial Fund

To give in memory of President Emerita Cynthia Haldeby Tyson, **visit the MBU giving site** and select “Dr. Cynthia Tyson Memorial Fund” in the drop-down menu.

An enthusiastic and accomplished public speaker, she spoke at the 259th Anniversary of the Birth of Thomas Jefferson Ceremony and Dedication of the Jefferson Library at Monticello in 2002.

During her career, she gave her talents to many professional associations including as president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and in leadership roles for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges; and the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia.

Tyson most recently served as president of the Robert Haywood Morrison Foundation, a non-profit, charitable organization based in Charlotte, that supports higher education, the arts and culture, and the natural environment.

She is survived by her son, Marcus James Tyson, of Winterton, U.K. and her daughter, Alexandra Elizabeth Butler, of Charlotte; grandchildren, Hannah Elizabeth Butler MacLeod, her husband, Ian, and Christopher Michael Butler; and great grandchildren, Kiera Lily MacLeod and Jack Hilton MacLeod.

“One of a kind who was loved by so many of us at MBC.”

– Caroline Wright '98

“Dr. Tyson was such an inspiration to all of us. Just a wonderful person.”

– Tierra Hucke '05

“Dr. Tyson shaped a generation of women leaders.”

– Robin Wilson von Seldeneck '92



Tyrone Stuart

Mary Baldwin University honors the life of Tyrone Stuart, a dedicated and skilled member of the dining services team, who passed away on July 26 at his home. Stuart, a life-long Staunton resident, was 57 years old.

MBU Catering Manager Ben Diemer recalled a special moment of sharing local history. “We were at a spot on West Beverley Street, and Tyrone was just talking about all the old places downtown where he used to frequent,” said Diemer. “It was a warm glowing vision of days gone by, but then Tyrone always did that for me. He lent warmth to my heart.”

Stuart especially enjoyed being with family and friends, including his wife, Sandra, and their seven children. Some of his favorite pastimes outside of the kitchen were playing cornhole and horseshoes with loved ones.

Smoogle Bell, data entry specialist in MBU’s advancement office and Stuart’s sister-in-law, has fond memories of spending time with him and their family.

“In the days when we were all together, Tyrone was always just a funny, funny guy,” Bell said. “He always had everyone laughing ‘to tears,’ and was there to cheer up anyone who was feeling down. He was just a great person and a hard worker.”

“We were at a spot on West Beverley Street, and Tyrone was just talking about all the old places downtown where he used to frequent. It was a warm glowing vision of days gone by, but then Tyrone always did that for me. He lent warmth to my heart.”

– Ben Diemer,
MBU Catering Manager



“Virginia Francisco was formidable but gentle. She was fierce but soft. She was sophisticated and sentimental all at once.”

**– Dr. Edward Scott,
Associate Professor Emeritus of Philosophy**

Virginia Royster “Ginny” Francisco ’64

Professor Emerita of Theatre Virginia Royster “Ginny” Francisco ’64 passed away on September 21 at the age of 80 after a prolonged battle with Alzheimer’s disease. An alumna of Mary Baldwin, Francisco was a professor of theatre at MBU from 1970 until her retirement in 2010.

Also affectionately known as “Dr. Fran,” Francisco taught courses in theatre history and literature and directed over 50 plays. Her career included several years of service as an associate dean for special programs.

Francisco also believed in the transformative power of art. She promoted classical music for the Staunton Music Festival and was one of the founders of the Oak Grove Folk Music Festival in Verona. For Virginia attorney and MBU alumna Frost Burnett Telegadas ’83, Francisco was a mentor. “She gave me excellent life advice which I followed as I went to law school and began a career,” Telegadas said, “I’m a devoted fan of live theater because of her influence.”

Since her time as a Mary Baldwin student, she was involved in Oak Grove Theater and Theater Wagon productions as well. On her retirement, Francisco’s expertise in history and architecture prompted her to work with Staunton Guided Tours. Associate Professor Emeritus of Philosophy Dr. Edward Scott summarized: “Virginia Francisco was formidable but gentle. She was fierce but soft. She was sophisticated and sentimental all at once.”

In Memoriam

1940s

Ms. Martha Persinger Nowlin '48, 12/6/2023
 Ms. Helen Atkeson Phillips '48, 12/4/2023
 Mrs. Mildred Landram Smiley '48, 2/15/2024
 Mrs. Ann Ashby Helms '49, 11/12/2023
 Mrs. Bettie Thomas Jacobsen '49, 12/30/2023

1950s

Mrs. Margaret Kyle Hopkins '52, 2/12/2024
 Mrs. Althea Higginbotham Pace '52, 11/30/2023
 Mrs. Rebecca Beasley Burr '54, 11/30/2023
 Mrs. Mary Beale Black '56, 3/3/2024
 Mrs. Virginia Peter Hoover '57, 11/16/23
 Mrs. Carol Connery Sellon '57, 12/24/2023
 Mrs. Jettie Bergman Johnston '58, 11/9/2023
 Mrs. Margaret Hammack Neblett '58, 12/5/2023
 Ms. Lucy Forsyth Brantly '59, 1/12/2024
 Mrs. Sue Scott Hukari '59, 11/26/2023

1960s

Ms. Elizabeth Allan Collins '61, 12/9/2023
 Ms. Roberta "Brucie" Bruce Gill Hefler '63,
 1/8/2024
 Mrs. Holly Hanson Hill '63, 12/24/2023
 Mrs. Mary Shelor Cason '64, 1/1/2024
 Mrs. Nancy Rowe Cramer '64, 11/28/2023
 Mrs. Anne Corbin Evick '64, 11/25/23
 Mrs. Patricia Fryfogle Hartley '68, 11/5/23
 Mrs. Susan Vaughan Henry '68, 2/23/2024
 Mrs. Anne Emmert Thompson '69, 12/1/2023

1970s

Mrs. Barbara Griffon Wiltshire '70, 1/1/2024
 Ms. Mary Pease '71, 11/10/2023
 Dr. Nancy Nowak Insco '75, 1/28/2024
 Mrs. Lavalette Lacy Jennings '78, 2/11/2024

1980s

Mrs. Douglas Moncure Butler '81, 2/13/2024
 Mrs. Sylvia Back Lynn '83, 12/13/2023
 Mrs. Elizabeth "Betsy" Jones Hiatt '88,
 2/24/2024

2000s

Ms. Brynda Cayton Merritt '07, 11/28/2023

Faculty/Trustees/Friends

Dr. Jean Fleming, former regional Adult Degree
 Program director, 11/7/2023
 Mr. William Hawkins, father of Christyn Howell
 '93, 11/18/2023
 Mr. Andrew Garry, spouse of Mary Garry '64,
 12/14/2023
 Ms. Elaine McCarrick, retiree, 12/15/2023
 Mr. Frank Mack, spouse of Nina Reid Mack '72,
 12/16/2023
 Mr. William J. Winter, former professor, 1/1/2024
 Dr. Cynthia Haldenby Tyson, president emerita,
 1/7/2024
 Dr. Nancy Gillett, former psychology professor,
 1/27/2024
 Dr. Hampton H. Hairfield Jr., former part-time
 chemistry lab instructor, 4/2/2024

