

BLUFFTON

A magazine for Bluffton University alumni and friends | Fall 2020 | Vol. 17 No. 2



**ADAPTING AND
FLOURISHING**



This issue of Bluffton focuses on our current reality of living and learning during a pandemic. Our goal is to give you a sense of what students are experiencing on campus and how our faculty and staff have worked so diligently to make our in-person learning possible. I think Dr. Lamar Nisly, vice president and dean of academic affairs, describes this semester succinctly on page 6 as both “simultaneously exhausting and amazing.”

However, we truly remain impressed by the creativity and resiliency of our students, faculty and staff. While it’s a challenging time in higher education, this is also an opportunity to explore new and exciting ways to advance ourselves and the university.

I am excited as we move forward with launching “We Flourish,” our new strategic plan and vision that will guide and define Bluffton University during the next five years.

We spent the 2019-20 academic year listening and dreaming with the entire campus community, as well as inviting feedback from our community partners. We learned that we are highly regarded both internally and externally, but we need to shine our light a bit brighter so that more people know about Bluffton.

We also further defined what we already do well here at our university, and we designed strategic initiatives that build on our existing strengths so that we will become even more distinctive in a competitive higher education environment. The areas of strength that we will focus on include emotional intelligence or “EQ;” the Bluffton Blueprint; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; the Corporate and Education Partners Program; and Virtue-Driven Athletics. As we imagined what our students will need to live meaningful lives in the decades to come, we also ensured that we were carrying foundations of the liberal arts experiences forward with us.

For example, Aristotle believed we could reach the pinnacle of humanity by achieving Eudaimonia. The word Eudaimonia is not easily translated into English, but it is sometimes described as living a life well lived or human flourishing. According to Aristotle, the path to flourishing is through virtuous habits, or skills that are developed through practice and experience.

At Bluffton, the idea of flourishing is being lifted up through the various initiatives of our strategic plan.

In the photograph above, I’m speaking with members of our football team following their Homecoming Day victory against Adrian College. These students-athletes completed weeks of altered practice schedules and were tested multiple times for COVID-19 only to have Governor DeWine’s travel restrictions prevent them from competing in their first contest in Indiana.

However, these student-athletes chose not to give up after that initial setback, and were rewarded with a victory one week later on our home field. Our Virtue-Driven Athletics program is one of four key initiatives we are focusing on this year through the strategic plan. Our football team truly exemplified the idea of flourishing that day.

Our students continue to excel in the classroom as well, and we will continue to seek ways to strive and flourish, and to prepare students “for life as well as vocation, for service to all people’s and, ultimately, for the purposes of God’s universal kingdom.”

May you and those you love be well, and we thank you for your generosity, your words of encouragement and your prayers.

Jane M. Wood

Jane M. Wood, Ph.D.
President



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Fall 2020 Vol. 17 No. 2

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BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY MISSION:

*Bluffton University seeks to prepare students
of all backgrounds for life as well as vocation,
for responsible citizenship, for service to all
peoples and ultimately for the purposes of
God's universal kingdom.*

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We welcome your comments!

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On the cover: Roommates Leslie Diaz Valdiviezo '22, Bluffton, Ohio, and Luisa Rivera '23, Yoro, Yoro, Honduras, wear face masks as they leave Mussleman Library this fall. Behind them, Naoki Edasawa, Tokyo, Japan, heads toward College Hall. All three are wearing face masks. The use of facial coverings is one part of a detailed plan to keep campus open this fall. For details on Bluffton's Comprehensive Health Strategy, visit www.bluffton.edu/protectthedam.

Photo by Claire Clay '18, MBA '20





#ProtectTheDam

From the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bluffton University's administration, faculty and staff have sought advice and rethought campus operations to reopen and welcome back students while prioritizing health and safety. Based on guidelines from resources including the CDC and the Ohio Department of Higher Education, a comprehensive health strategy and compliance campaign was developed called Protect The Dam. The plan has been key to reopening campus while reducing the spread of COVID-19 at Bluffton.

Protect the Dam Comprehensive Health Strategy

With 16 weeks in the fall semester, students were welcomed back to class on Aug. 17, two weeks earlier than originally announced so winter break could begin at Thanksgiving. This change allows students to spend the holidays with family without the risk of bringing COVID-19 back to campus after traveling.

The main components of Bluffton's Comprehensive Health Strategy include:



Daily personal symptom monitoring

Students complete and electronically submit COVID-19 symptom checks each morning. Contactless temperature scanners were installed on each residence hall floor for students, and professional medical staff review and make contact with students who are reporting illnesses.



Social distancing

Six feet of social distancing is being modeled in all aspects of campus life, such as using larger spaces for classes and implementing new protocols for dining.



Wearing of facial coverings

The university provided a reusable face mask and face shield to all students and employees. Facial coverings are required in all indoor spaces, except a student's personal residence hall room, and outside when six feet of distance cannot be maintained.



Cleaning and sanitation

Strict disinfection and cleaning protocols are being maintained in all public spaces and residence halls. Professional cleaners have been contracted and the university has increased cleaning supplies. Students disinfect their personal learning spaces before each class.



Health care support

In addition to consultations provided through the Student Health Center, numerous health care providers in the Village of Bluffton are working with the university to offer walk-in services for students and testing opportunities.



Testing

Blanchard Valley Health System is providing testing for students referred to them based on daily symptom monitoring and contact tracing. Student-athletes are also routinely tested for COVID-19 based on NCAA resocialization guidelines for athletics.



Contact tracing, isolation and quarantine

Residence hall space is reserved to quarantine students awaiting COVID-19 test results. University-owned houses are available for students who test positive. Contact tracing is being handled by Bluffton's partners at Allen County Public Health.



“Our students have been phenomenal. They grasp the values of Bluffton University: Discovery, Community, Respect and Service, and because they take those values seriously, they have become the mortar that’s holding the bricks of our plan together.”

– Dr. Sherri Winegardner

DIRECTOR OF NURSING AND
CHAIR OF THE STUDENT
HEALTH AND COVID-19
STEERING COMMITTEE





“Being back on campus allows me to ask questions right then and there in the lab. That’s been huge for me and my peers. We all had the same struggles when we went back home, and now that we’re all back together, we can put our minds together. I feel like working in community really benefits us all.”

– Zac Nobis '22

**BIOLOGY MAJOR
BRYAN, OHIO**



“I think Bluffton has done a great job adapting to the current circumstances and set up a good precedent for other schools and the future.”

– Sergio Alvarez '20

**BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
ACWORTH, GA.**

Academics

Like all aspects of life in a pandemic, bringing students back to a classroom setting took a bit of creativity. The registrar’s office began the work this summer by determining how many students could occupy each space, mapping out classrooms for six feet of social distance, and converting new spaces into classrooms. In total, about a dozen spaces have been converted to classroom use including Musselman Library’s Reading Room, Marbeck Center’s Kreider Room and the stage of Founders Hall.

“We’ve set up new equipment, brought in white boards and projection equipment, and have provided microphones for faculty who want them because it’s harder to be heard in some of the spread out spaces,” explained Dr. Lamar Nisly, vice president and dean of academic affairs.

Masks are also required of both faculty and students, class times have been slightly altered to reduce crowded hallways, and students are asked to clean their personal space before each class session. Because of all the changes, more than 95 percent of classes are being taught in person. Still, Nisly admits that the fall 2020 semester has been simultaneously exhausting and amazing.

“I am continuously impressed by the creativity and resiliency of our faculty. They are in a situation that honestly is creating a barrier to the best kind of teaching, where students can be close together and easily interact,” said Nisly. “Yet, they’re being successful. Learning is happening and students are staying connected. This isn’t ideal, but students and staff have really embraced the idea that they have to adapt to these changes if they want to continue to learn amongst their peers and instructors.”





The Arts

When students returned home to finish their classes remotely during the spring 2020 semester, there was no choice but to cancel the May Day Musical. When choosing the fall play, Dr. Melissa Friesen, Mary Nord and Joseph Ignat endowed chair in theatre, was determined that the show must go on. So, the fall production “Alone, Together” featured a series of short plays written specifically for Zoom and was available through an online streaming service.

“One thing I love about theatre is that every production provides an opportunity for creativity and problem solving,” said Friesen. “This year, our parameters were: what looks good from a little web cam, how can we improve sound quality, how do we deal with spotty Wi-Fi?”

For music faculty, the planning for a safer return to performing was exhaustive—from breaking large performance groups into smaller ensembles to purchasing high-quality air filters and face masks for singing.

“We are better prepared this semester to change our plans at a moment’s notice,” explained Dr. Crystal Sellers Battle, music department chair. “Non-music majors are still able to take part in our performance groups, but we are trying to reduce the number of people in our students’ bubbles.”

Concerts are being pre-recorded and are available at the same date and time they were originally scheduled, but instead through streaming instead of in person.

As for fine art, classroom and work spaces are spread out, equipment is being sanitized or for individual use and receptions are taking place online.

Art shows are still being held in the Grace Albrecht Gallery, but are only available for in-person viewing by students, faculty and staff. Community members and guests are instead invited to view the exhibits through the art department’s social media pages.



“I think this semester has gone really well, and I think we’ve done a lot at Bluffton to keep everyone safe. It’s different, but we’re trying to keep everything as normal as possible. We’re doing vocals in face masks and shields, but I’m just thankful to be able to sing.”

– Evan Burden ’22

MUSIC EDUCATION
SIDNEY, OHIO





“We’re taking it one step at a time like everyone else. I’m just happy we can play football.”

– Darian Greeley '21

CRIMINAL JUSTICE
BELLEVILLE, MICH.



“This year specifically, golf has been quite an outlet for me. I’ll go to the course, and I can just leave everything behind.”

– Haley Gill '23

NUTRITION AND DIETETICS
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

Athletics

For President Jane Wood, a fall intercollegiate athletics experience was “important for the physical and mental health of our student-athletes.” So when the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference moved all conference games to the spring semester, Bluffton moved forward with a non-conference fall season by following NCAA Resocialization of Sport mandates including regular COVID-19 testing of student-athletes.

For some teams, competing was easier than others. Golf had a relatively normal season because of its low-contact nature and competed against many DII and NAIA teams.

However, the week football planned to play Trine University in Angola, Ind., a travel advisory to the state of Indiana was issued by Ohio’s Governor DeWine, because of high COVID-19 positive testing rates.

The team had to choose between playing and quarantining for 14 days or canceling the game. The decision to cancel was made during an emotional team meeting.

“We had done a lot as a team to follow the NCAA guidelines closely, and for us to miss out on this opportunity because of no fault of our own was difficult,” explained Aaron Krepps, head football coach. “Overall, the guys decided it was not in their best interest to travel to Trine. The team showed a lot of resiliency, maturity and growth in that moment.”

The Beavers beat Adrian College 28-21 the following week on campus for Homecoming.

“Homecoming was a lot of fun for our students,” said Phill Talavinia, vice president of student affairs and athletics. “We had food trucks and activities out at the stadium. Football won, volleyball won—it was a really good day.”

This fall, Bluffton football, volleyball, soccer, baseball, softball, cross country and golf had the opportunity to compete.





Student and Spiritual Life

From Marbeck After Dark events being held under the stars in Bassett Plaza to Chapel primarily taking place on the Library lawn, students are spending a lot of time outdoors.

To keep students on campus and engaged, Bluffton's Student Life Office and Marbeck Center Board tripled their offerings for the fall 2020 semester.

“We decided to ramp up the events we are doing on campus to maintain some sense of normalcy for our students,” explained Kevin White, assistant director of the Student Life. “We knew if they were going to be asked to stay on campus, they would get bored easily.”

So the university purchased an inflatable movie screen, created new intramural offerings (such as tennis ball golf, sand volleyball and bocce ball tournaments) and partnered with a company that provides virtual events.

“We’ve also seen students who have never taken part in our events before have a great time,” said White.

On the spiritual life side, the ministry team is adapting to location changes and restrictions with resilience.

“I’m really proud of the ministry team for finding creative ways to keep spiritual life active on campus, said Dr. Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, interim campus pastor. “We aren’t able to sing in Chapel, and everybody misses that, but we’re exploring new ways to gather and worship.”

For example, a monthly “God-sighting” moment has been instituted in Chapel where participants can share the ways they’ve seen God at work in their lives and on campus.

“That was an idea one of our Chapel planning coordinators brought from her own congregation, and it’s been really well received,” said Wyse-Rhodes.



“With the university asking students to stay on campus due to COVID-19, MCB has come up with more events to keep students entertained. It has definitely been challenging, but it has also been extremely gratifying to see how much students are enjoying the events.”

– Bri Baker ’21

MATHEMATICS
DEFIANCE, OHIO



WE FLOURISH

A GUIDE TO LIVING OUT THE BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY MISSION 2020-25

After a year of planning and discussion, Bluffton University is excited to move forward with implementing a five-year strategic plan.

“We Flourish: A Guide to Living Out the Bluffton University Mission is a vital step forward for our campus community and essential for preparing our students to serve in our region and the world,” said President Jane Wood.

At the core of Bluffton’s strategic plan framework (shown on page 11), is a vision statement which serves as a verbal representation of the university’s overarching goals.



Bluffton University will become a leader in community-responsive academic programs and experiential learning that focus on well-being and emotional intelligence; our students will graduate as discerning thinkers with resilient hearts for social justice and advocacy.

The five-year plan was developed to meet the needs of Gen Z students while retaining a focus on Bluffton’s overall mission.

“Bluffton University has been here since 1899, and we want to make sure that we are still here in 2099,” said Wood.

“Through this strategic plan, we are creating a shared vision of how Bluffton will live out our mission. Times change and we need to focus on addressing the needs of our current students.”

President Wood has been preparing for the strategic plan process since she was inaugurated in 2018. During her first year, she developed a bridge plan with campus stakeholders called Momentum Makers. She also spent the year listening and learning more about the campus community. Then in the spring and summer of 2019, Credo, a higher education consulting firm, was selected to help organize initiatives and develop a framework for implementation. Meetings were also held with community partners, faculty and staff, and Bluffton’s Board of Trustees to generate ideas for areas of institutional growth.



VISION

Bluffton University will become a leader in community-responsive academic programs and experiential learning that focus on well-being and emotional intelligence; our students will graduate as discerning thinkers with resilient hearts for social justice and advocacy.

Leaders in Learning

EXPERIENTIAL, PURPOSEFUL
AND GEN Z FOCUSED

Develop New and Relevant Programs

Invest in Programs and
Faculty/Staff Development

Increase Net Tuition Revenue

Expand/Strengthen
Existing Programs

Increase Faculty/Staff Training
and Engagement

Engaging at Home

VIBRANT, VITAL AND DIVERSE

Provide Wellness Opportunities for Students and Community

Invest in People

Increase Partnership Revenue

Focus on Compelling and Collaborative
Integration for Student Success

Create Vibrant Campus Spaces

Building our Future

DYNAMIC, SUSTAINABLE AND
MISSION-FOCUSED

Broaden Experiential/Entrepreneurial Student/Faculty Initiatives

Invest in Focused Data Analysis

Grow Margin for Mission

Strengthen Operational
Effectiveness

Expand Stewardship

BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY'S MISSION *"Shaped by the historic peace church tradition and nourished by a desire for excellence in all phases of its programs, Bluffton University seeks to prepare students of all backgrounds for life as well as vocation, for responsible citizenship, for service to all peoples and, ultimately, for the purposes of God's universal kingdom."*

"It was interesting to see what ideas rose to the top for each of the three groups—to learn more about what was important to business leaders who hire our graduates, to our faculty and staff who interact with students on a daily basis, and to our Board of Trustees who are making vital decisions as they lead Bluffton into the future," said Karen Bontrager '04, director of president's office and institutional planning.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, the campus community is undertaking a softer launch of the strategic plan than originally envisioned.

"COVID-19, of course reframed everything we do, but the university is still moving forward. There's work to be done and we're figuring out slightly different ways of doing it," said Bontrager. "COVID-19 is making us more creative."

For the 2020-21 academic year, strategic plan implementation teams are focused on four key initiatives:

- **The Bluffton Blueprint**
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
- **Virtue-Driven Athletics**
- **Corporate and Education Partnerships**

After finalizing the plan this summer, launching initiatives were identified and groups of faculty, staff and students are currently engaged in bringing the ideas to fruition.

"These initiatives will provide a way for us to say, here's how we are distinctive. This is what Bluffton does incredibly well," said Wood. "I'm so excited to actively engage in this work and to experience where Bluffton will be in five years."



THE BLUFFTON BLUEPRINT

Four general education experiences which are carefully crafted to help our students develop resiliency and emotional intelligence. Featuring both traditional learning and experiential components, each course supports one of Bluffton's enduring values of Discovery, Community, Respect and Service.

"We're working to strengthen our general education experience by adding a new component called "Design Your Life." This curriculum is being piloted in two Becoming a Scholar classes this fall, and we are excited by the potential we see for this approach to improve how we collectively help students design lives with coherence in life as well as vocation."

Marathana Prothro, LAUNCH LEADER
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The new diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) committee at Bluffton is developing priorities to support our student-focused, anti-racist and peace-filled mission. Led by Tyson Goings '01, director of DEI, the committee is focused on providing a welcoming environment and increasing support for students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds. For the 2020-21 academic year, the bulk of the committee's work will focus on initiatives to support Black students, faculty and staff.

"Big picture, we want to create an atmosphere for all members of our campus community to feel like they belong at Bluffton. One of the first outcomes of our committee work was developing eight goals to becoming an anti-racist institution. We're excited about the work we've started, but we also understand this is a process that will take time."

Tyson Goings, LAUNCH LEADER
DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



Tyson Goings
Director of diversity,
equity and inclusion and
director of residence life



Dr. LaShonda Gurley
Director of the Center
for Career and Vocation



DeVan Hill
Assistant football coach



Quincy Salcido
Admissions counselor



Dr. Crystal Sellers Battle
Professor of music,
music department chair



Dr. Alex Sider
Professor of religion,
director of peace and
conflict studies

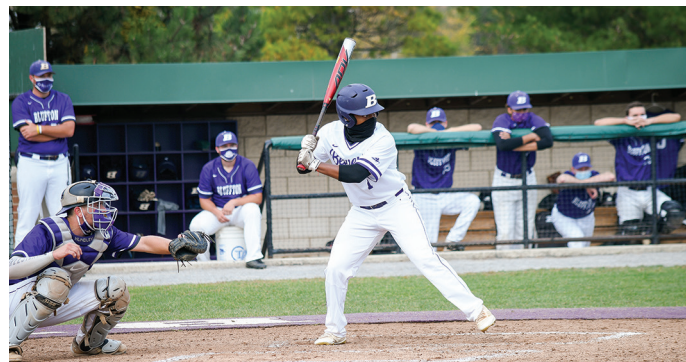


VIRTUE-DRIVEN ATHLETICS

As an NCAA DIII school, Bluffton coaches and student-athletes not only perform well in competition, but focus their team culture around character building, community and service. As part of our Virtue-Driven Athletics program, we are lifting up habits of excellence and developing a shared framework that all Bluffton athletes will encounter.

“We are excited to put a name to the character-building work our coaches have already been doing with each of their teams individually. This initiative is also helping us develop a stronger identity as a cohesive athletics department in ways that will benefit all athletes at Bluffton.”

Kim Schimmoeller, CO-LAUNCH LEADER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS



CORPORATE AND EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

We are growing a network of Corporate and Education Partnerships in northwest Ohio to support the workforce development needs of our region with values-based education. These partnerships provide 20 percent tuition discounts to benefit-eligible employees (and their immediate family members) of our partner corporations and K-12 schools for degree-completion and master's degree programs.

“These partnerships help established adults in northwest Ohio advance in their careers and thrive in their communities. They also allow our local businesses and K-12 schools to grow their pool of talent from within. We’re excited to increase opportunities for adult students while strengthening our relationships with major employers in our region.”

Shelby Koenig, LAUNCH LEADER
ENROLLMENT COUNSELOR FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Corporate Partners

- Wannemacher Total Logistics
- Stolly Insurance Group
- Crown Equipment Corporation
- Owens Community College
- The Union Bank Co.
- Northwest State Community College
- North Star BlueScope Steel LLC
- HCF Management

Education Partners

- Ada Exempted Village Schools
- Allen East Local Schools
- Benjamin Logan Local Schools
- Bluffton Exempted Village Schools
- Elida Local Schools
- Kenton City Schools
- Lima City Schools
- Riverdale Local Schools
- Shawnee Local Schools



ALONG THE RILEY



Enrollment growth

Undergraduate enrollment numbers are on the rise at Bluffton for the 2020-21 academic year. A solid incoming class combined with successful retention efforts account for a 21-student increase over 2019-20 enrollment.

Bluffton's first-year class includes 195 students. Thirty-one percent are considered American minority, a seven percent increase over last year's incoming class.

Total full time enrollment, which includes adult and graduate studies, is up by 25 students.

"Bluffton University is thrilled to increase enrollment for the 2020-21 academic year," said Robin Bowlus, vice president of advancement and enrollment management. "Our first-year class is not as large as it was last year, but these figures are excellent considering the many unexpected obstacles we have faced since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a true joy to have students safely back on campus as they prepare for their life and vocation."

Last year's incoming class was Bluffton's largest in 6 years and retained at 72 percent, Bluffton's highest retention rate in a number of years. Transfer and MBA enrollment also increased.

Rankings tout value, social mobility

The 2021 edition of the "Best Colleges" guidebook from "U.S. News and World Report" ranks Bluffton 28 among 76

comparable institutions in 12 Midwest states. Now listed in the "U.S. News" rankings for 23 consecutive years, Bluffton has consistently ranked in the top tier of Midwest colleges.

Bluffton also ranks 18 in Best Value Schools (up from 19) and 13 in Top Performers in Social Mobility (up from 26) among Midwest colleges. According to "U.S. News," the Best Value calculation takes into account a school's academic quality, as indicated by its 2021 ranking, and the 2019-20 net cost of attendance for a student who received the average level of need-based financial aid. Top Performers in Social Mobility are ranked for their success in advancing social mobility by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded with Pell Grants.



"Through innovative programs such as the Bluffton Blueprint, our faculty prepare students not just for their future vocations but also for the challenges that come with life," said Robin Bowlus, vice president of advancement and enrollment management. "We are pleased to once again be recognized for our purposeful approach to education and our commitments to affordability and social mobility."

Best in Ohio Business

Bluffton University was recently recognized by "Ohio Business" magazine's 2020 Best in Ohio Business Awards for Best Graduate School Program.



In its inaugural year, the Best in Ohio Business Awards featured Ohio businesses and non-profits in a range of categories from education to health care. According to its website, the awards served as a way to promote the state at a crucial time.

Bluffton University offers graduate degrees in business administration, education and organizational management.

"Our graduate programs focus on leadership development not only within our students' professional worlds but in their personal lives and within their communities," said Robin Bowlus, vice president of advancement and enrollment management. "We've increased our commitment to improving access to quality graduate degrees through initiatives such as the Alumni Master's Degree Grant and the Corporate Partners Program."



Student roundtable with Governor DeWine

Kai Smith '22, a social work and pre-art therapy double major from Washington, D.C., was selected to represent Bluffton in a roundtable discussion with Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Higher Education Chancellor Randy Gardner. Smith, along



with college students representing other private, public and community colleges from across the state, shared how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their lives and education.

“The governor opened up by asking us our concerns. He was there to listen which was very nice,” said Smith. “I think, even when there is not a crisis, things like this should happen. It was an amazing opportunity.”

A range of topics were addressed, but the overarching area of concern was mental health issues—from concerns about funding on campuses to the struggle to adjust to changes caused by the pandemic.

Smith is a resident advisor in Ropp Hall and program director of 96.1 The Wit. He is involved in Multicultural Student Organization and International Connection.

Two new vice presidents appointed



Robin Bowlus was appointed as Bluffton University's vice president of advancement and enrollment management in August.

Bowlus earned her bachelor's degree from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, and MBA from Bluffton. Her professional experience includes work at Suburban News Publications in Columbus; and as the volunteer, events and marketing coordinator at both the Kennedy Museum of Art in Athens, Ohio, and at the Kelton House Museum and Garden in Columbus, Ohio. Before coming to Bluffton, she was the director of development at the Kappa Kappa Gamma Foundation in Columbus, Ohio. She joined Bluffton University in 2003 as a regional development officer and then became the director of public relations in 2004. Bowlus was appointed senior director



Creating vibrant campus spaces

John Boyd '21, an exercise science major from Muncie, Ind., Flor Avilez '22, a criminal justice major from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and Sergio Alvarez '20, a business administration major from Acworth, Ga., enjoy the newly redecorated Multicultural Student Organization office/lounge. The interior design upgrades are part of a strategic plan initiative to create more vibrant spaces on campus. Students are also enjoying new outdoor patio furniture for Hirschy Annex and new living-room-style furniture in Ropp Hall.

for advancement operations in September of 2016. She was then appointed as the interim vice president for enrollment management in the fall of 2018 before being named vice president in April 2019. Bowlus is an active volunteer with a variety of non-profits helping with communication, fundraising and non-profit management.



Phill Talavinia was appointed as vice president of student affairs and athletics in August. Talavinia graduated from Anderson University in Anderson, Ind.,

with degrees in athletic training and business management. He earned an MBA from Bluffton in 2013. Talavinia started his career

as the school's first full-time sports medicine staff member. During his early years at Bluffton, he also assisted the Chicago Bears athletic training staff for 10 years. Later, he became associate athletic director and head athletic trainer, then athletic director. In his first year as athletics director, Talavinia oversaw the implementation of TEAM Bluffton to help raise money for the athletics program, which continues today. In addition to holding the position of athletic director, Phill was also appointed as the interim vice president for student life in May 2019.



ALUMNOTES

1960-69

Kenneth Fish '66, Dunkirk, Ohio, retired in June after 54 years of teaching. He spent most of those years at Hardin Northern Local Schools, where he also ran the clock at home football games for 46 years, kept the boys basketball score book for 53 years and helped at track meets for 48 years. He served at times as a quiz bowl, yearbook and National Honor Society advisor. Kenneth and his late wife **Christine (Bower '66)** have a daughter **Lisa '93** and a son Brian, who is deceased.

1970-79

Linda (Butler '70) Bratt, Leipsic, Ohio, is a retired teacher, having taught for three years at Bluffton High School before returning later to the field as a substitute teacher. She is a 4-H advisor and volunteers for nursing home activities. Linda enjoys sewing, knitting and rubber stamping/greeting card construction. She and her husband **Ed '72** have two children, **Melissa (Bratt '96) Meyer** and **Brian '98**, and two grandchildren.

Les Stair '70, Tucson, Ariz., was an Air Force fighter pilot for 23 years. He retired as a lieutenant colonel

in 1993. He then became a stock broker for A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. He retired as vice president of investments in 2010. Les and his wife Carin have been married 42 years. They have a son and twin daughters.

Gary Rinehart '71, McComb, Ohio, is in an internship at Church of Great Peace in Findlay, where he preaches and is licensed to conduct marriages. He and his wife Charlene celebrated their second wedding anniversary in July.

Tim Clark '73, Jacksonville, Fla., enjoys reminiscing on his time playing football, wrestling and living with friends in the residence hall at

OUR LEGACY

Bluffton alumni in the world

Schalet Jackson '03, served as an executive producer and actress for the movie "Cadia: The World Within." The film follows the story of three teenagers who journey to a mystical realm. Jackson portrays Principal Cory in the movie, but as a producer she was responsible for all cast, crew and location contracts. She also recruited and secured named talent and ensured it was a SAG production.

Jackson hopes the story "encourages philosophical discussion on how we interact with the world around us."

"In the midst of adversity, Matthew, David and Renee soon discover the importance of mindfulness and how it's key to gaining resilience," explained Jackson. "It is my hope that 'Cadia: The World Within' gifts others with learning experiences that are filled with love and laughter."

The film features actors Corbin Bernsen, ("LA Law," "Major League," "Psych") and James Phelps (Fred Weasley of the "Harry Potter" film series) and was released in September. It is currently available for streaming on Amazon and Vudu.



then Bluffton College. He treasures developing learning habits, life-long friendships and meeting his wife **Susan (Williamson '71)**.

Rosie (Grady '75) Chapman, Washington Township, Mich., is a social worker with Utica Community Schools, the second largest school district in Michigan. Rosie is also an artist and a professional storyteller.

Nancy (Mitchell '77) Harman, Bellefontaine, Ohio, has retired for the last time finding her 43-year teaching journey completed. She first retired in 2007 from teaching grades six and seven for Bellefontaine City Schools. Most recently she taught GED classes through Clark State Community College and Lima City Schools.

1980-89

Terrilynn (Grant '81) Griffith, Dayton, Ohio, retired from the Montgomery County Juvenile Court after 21 years of service. She pastors Sunday mornings at a local senior residential community for the Southern Ohio Church of the Brethren. Terrilynn also volunteers with the Police and Clergy Together Program to support the Dayton Police Department.

Keith Nisly '86, Lancaster Pa., has been the design director at DavCo Advertising for 15 years. He also owns his own photography business, Keith Nisly Photography.

1990-99

Lisa (Taylor '90) McGinnis, Bloomville, Ohio, is director of special education at Buckeye Central. She taught for 25 years

previously at Shelby City Schools. Lisa and her husband Ron celebrated 30 years of marriage in July. They have two children.

Jon C. Perry '90, Cincinnati, Ohio, is the assistant summer camp director for the Philadelphia 76ers. The camp is held in Valley Forge, Pa. He is also midwest director of the Adidas Swarm Nation, the largest youth basketball program in the United States. [Jon's brother-in-law is WWE superstar Mark Henry.]

Jaime (Spann '98) Stewart, Columbus, Ohio, earned a doctorate of education degree in August from The University of Findlay. She is an administrator with Dublin City Schools. Her husband **Spencer '97** is a regional operations manager for Walmart Logistics.

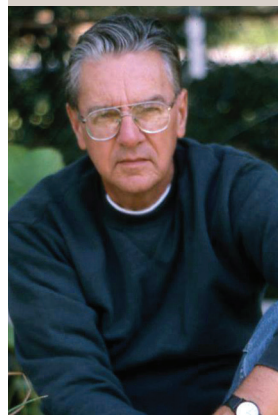
2000-09

Rachel Noirod '04, Bloomington, Ind., is engaged to Andrew Dolgner. The couple plan to exchange vows in fall 2020.

Courtnee Morris '06, Bluffton, Ohio, and his business partner, **Rick Mack '06**, Dayton, Ohio, started a marketing and publishing company, Mack N' Morris Entertainment, in April 2018. They write and illustrate their own books, as well as create designs, videos, photos and other forms of entertainment.

Tom Zink '09 completed his shoulder and elbow fellowship at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. He is now an orthopedic surgeon at Miami Valley North Hospital. Tom and his wife **Vicki (Auer '10)** reside in Troy, Ohio, with their three daughters.

IN MEMORY OF JAYE BUMBAUGH



Jaye Bumbaugh, professor emeritus of art, died on July 25, 2020, at the age of 82. He was a member of the art faculty for 37 years from 1967-2004 and served as department chair for more than 30 of those years.

Bumbaugh was dedicated to higher education, as well as the promotion of art appreciation, the development of Bluffton's art department and the advancement of artistic talent in Bluffton students.

Born in Lorain, Ohio, Bumbaugh graduated from Ohio Northern University in 1959. He was a resident of Lima, Ohio, and taught in junior and senior high schools for a few years before completing his Master of Fine Arts at Bowling Green State University and joining Bluffton's faculty.

A multi-talented artist, Bumbaugh often infused humor and the natural world into his works. He completed sabbaticals in lithography, ceramic sculpture, bronze sculpture and handmade papers.

Students will remember his gentle nudging and challenging assignments, but Bumbaugh also brought the art department into contemporary times by introducing new courses and doing casting and welding. He taught a wide range of classes including drawing, figure drawing, water color, oil painting, and printmaking including serigraphy and intaglio.

He won statewide awards for his art and sent many Bluffton graduates far and wide as art teachers. Bumbaugh also brought thousands of art students on campus through the Scholarstic Art Awards. Two of Bumbaugh's sculptures, "Peacesounds" and "Running Dog with Monkey," are featured on campus.

Bumbaugh is survived by his wife, **Susan '72**, assistant professor emerita of education; children, **Michael x92**, Johnstown, Ohio; **Lisa x86** (David) **Vottero**, Columbus, Ohio; and **Kathryn '04** (Nate Ebling), Pickerington, Ohio; and five grandchildren.



IN MEMORY OF JEAN ANN SZABO



Jean Ann Szabo, professor emerita of music, died on Aug. 22, 2020, at the age of 93. She was a member of the music faculty for 27 years from 1965-92. Raised in Jenera and then Bluffton, Ohio, Szabo graduated from Bluffton High School in 1945. After attending Bluffton College for one year, she earned her bachelor's degree from Baldwin Wallace University in 1949 and married E. James Szabo on Sept. 24, 1949.

She taught private piano lessons at home for several years prior to joining the Bluffton faculty in 1965. In 1970, Szabo earned a Master of Music from Bowling Green State University and received tenure in 1974. She completed a sabbatical at the Vienna Conservatory of Music in Vienna, Austria, the same year. Additional sabbatical studies took her to Kingston Polytechnic in London, England, in 1981, and to visits at select universities in Canada and the United States during the winter of 1988-89.

While at Bluffton, she served on several committees and professional organizations, accompanied countless recitals and "Messiah" performances, and served as the chair of the Artist Series Committee for 10 years. Szabo received Bluffton's 2019 Faculty/Staff Service award and was named the Bluffton Lions Club Citizen of the Year in 2000, alongside her husband.

She also performed many recitals and concerts with her family as a member of the Szabo Chamber Ensemble. She was a member of Bluffton Tesis Club and Bluffton First United Methodist Church, where she was organist for more than 60 years.

Szabo was preceded in death by her husband, James, and daughter, Julie Ann.

She is survived by three sons, Jeffrey (Kathleen), Chautauqua, New York; Jeremy (Julia), Bluffton; and Jon (Katie Jacoby), Dublin, Ohio. Also surviving are five grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

2010-19

Brandy (Bidlack '11) and Levi Hahn '12 welcomed a daughter, Nessa Fay, on April 14, 2020. Levi is a special education supervisor at Miami County Education Service Center and Brandy is in her seventh year teaching science at Piqua Junior High School. They live in Piqua, Ohio.

Lauren Canaday '12, Bluffton, Ohio, is in her seventh year as the public services coordinator for the Bluffton Public Library. She and **Jake Johnson x15** were engaged on Feb. 23, 2020.

Tyler '12 and Holly (McClish '12) Johnson, Reynoldsburg, Ohio, welcomed their first child, Sophia Rose, on June 28, 2020. She weighed six pounds, 13 ounces and was 19.5 inches long.

Katie Muhlenkamp '12, Ottawa, Ohio, recently graduated with a Master of Science in Mathematics and is currently teaching high school math at Miller City High School. She lives with her adopted dog, Brew.

Anna Cammarn '18, Warren, Ohio, started graduate school to study clinical mental health counseling at Youngstown State University.

Dean Walters '18, Avon, Ohio, is a medical student in the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences, having recently earned his master's degree. He is also a scribe in the COVID-19 units and emergency room at Promedica Hospital in Toledo. Dean has work published in "The Journal of Immunology."

Alicia Loch '19, Ephrata, Pa., is a microbiologist for Charles River Laboratories. Her medical research work aids pharmaceutical companies to produce various medications

and medical treatments, including successful treatments for COVID-19.

Adam Wagner '19, West Unity, Ohio, and his wife Shirley finalized the adoption process on June 18, 2020, and officially welcomed a daughter, Shawntia, to their family. Adam also completed his MBA at Ashland University in June.

2020

Von Thomas '20, Dayton, Ohio, recently started as a graduate assistant while also working towards a master's degree in higher education at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa.

IN MEMORIAM

Christine (Sherer x39) Cook, Crestline, Ohio, passed away July 12, 2020, at age 102.

Evelyn (Mullett '39) Niswander, North Manchester, Ind., passed away June 15, 2020, at age 102.

Hugh Downs x42, Phoenix, Ariz., passed away July 1, 2020, at age 99.

Jean (Steinman x49) Szabo, Bluffton, Ohio, passed away Aug. 22, 2020, at age 93.

Katherine Austin '50, New Milford, Conn., passed away Jan. 9, 2020, at age 92.

Bob Schertz x50, Metamora, Ill., passed away July 16, 2020, at age 91.

Tjietze Remmert "Bill" Ytsma x51, Bethlehem, Pa., passed away December 21, 2019, at age 89.

Donald G. Wismer '53, Corrales, N.M., passed away Sept. 2, 2019, at age 88.

Adele (Bertsche '55) Reichert, Bremen, Ind., passed away July 11, 2020, at age 87.



Chad Stearns

Owner: Modo Media

Class year: 2000

Major: Music Education

Cody Ridenour

Owner: Modo Media

Class Year: 2008

Major: Music Education

The show must go on for Bluffton's 'Messiah'

As Bluffton students, Chad Stearns and Cody Ridenour both participated in the annual performance of Handel's "Messiah." As alumni, the two will be sharing their talents once again for the 125th performance at Bluffton, but in a unique way. The former music educators are now co-owners of Modo Media, a video and design agency based in Lima, Ohio.

"I think anybody who was in the music department probably has a memory or story about 'Messiah,'" said Ridenour. "We're going to make sure those stories get told and are preserved forever."

Because of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bluffton's music department is partnering with Modo Media and Dean Sound of Findlay, Ohio, to develop a mini-documentary to celebrate the tradition. The video will include reflections from past conductors and performers; archival footage, photographs and recordings; and a socially-distanced performance featuring current students, soloists and a string quartet.

"I love that we are working with the music faculty to pivot and come up with a different way to celebrate the 125th performance of 'Messiah,'" said Stearns. "We're truly honored that we were asked to be part of this. It's good to be back at Bluffton."

Career transitions

Stearns and Ridenour both started their careers as music teachers after graduation. But a few years into his career, Stearns moved to



New York City to play piano in pit orchestras of traveling Broadway productions. After eight years, he decided it was time for a change.

"Cody was ready for a transition, too, after teaching for a few years. As friends, we started talking about what we could do," said Stearns. "We had a pool of talent between the two of us and Cody had developed a lot of relationships in Lima."

About 10 years ago, the two set up shop in downtown Lima and became small business owners. While their careers are quite different than what they may have initially imagined as students, the skills developed in Mosiman and Yoder Recital Hall are serving them well.

"What we do now is still creating art. And by being bosses and managers as well, we're still educating," Ridenour explained. "Our music background has really helped us. We often have to break things down into a series of different elements to make a cohesive video or campaign, and both the music and the liberal arts education has really helped us with that."

A 'Messiah' documentary

To create the video, Stearns and Ridenour are working with current students in University Chorale and Camerata Singers. Community members will not be taking part to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission to students. They're filming the concert portion in Yoder Recital Hall, but with a flipped setup. Performers will be singing from the seating area rather than the stage due to space restrictions. They're also interviewing conductors and long-time participants including former music faculty Dr. Steve Jacoby and Dr. Mark Suderman.

"It's going to be a unique experience that would not have happened except for the need to think creatively because of the pandemic," said Stearns. "We're excited."



The 125th performance of "Messiah" will be streamed at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20, at www.bluffton.edu/mus



IN MEMORY OF WESLEY RICHARD



Dr. Wesley Richard, professor emeritus of communication, died Oct. 6, 2020, at the age of 80. He was a member of Bluffton's faculty for 20 years from 1983-2003. Born in 1939 in Washington County, Iowa, he grew up near Wayland, Iowa. He settled in Goshen, Ind., following retirement.

Richard earned an associate's degree from Hesston College

in 1960, a bachelor's degree from Goshen College in 1962, and a master's degree and Ph.D. from The University of Iowa in 1968 and 1983, respectively. He also attended Goshen College Biblical Seminary.

Richard spent several years in Japan. He attended OMF School of the Japanese Language and taught at Hokusei Gakuen College in Sapporo. He also served with Mennonite Board of Missions as a volunteer teacher and then as overseas missions associate.

During his time at Bluffton, Richard taught a wide range of courses including Interpersonal Communication, English Grammar, Communication and Conflict Transformation, Theories in Peace and Conflict, Writing for the Media and College English. He also served as chair of the English department for 12 years, chair of the communication department for six years and interim dean of academic affairs.

In addition to his many administrative and teaching responsibilities, Richard co-pastored Elm Street Church of the Brethren in Lima, Ohio, with his wife, Sue. His students will remember him as a wise and gentle guide who helped them become better writers, speakers, negotiators, journalists and peacemakers.

Richard is survived by his wife of 50 years Sue (Schlatter); a daughter, **Crystal x85 (Tom) Miller**, Portland, Ore.; a son, **Mark '88 (Stephanie '88)**, Omaha, Neb.; and four grandchildren.

A funeral service was held on Oct. 10 at West Goshen Church of the Brethren.

Virginia L. Lehman '59, Fort Wayne, Ind., passed away July 2, 2020, at age 88.

Joyce (Manning '63) Malainy, Mansfield, Ohio, passed away Aug. 10, 2020, at age 78.

Judith (Salisbury x64) Willcox, North Ridgeville, Ohio, passed away Aug. 8, 2020, at age 78.

David Ripke '67, Wauseon, Ohio, passed away June 11, 2020, at age 75.

Christine (Hutchison '68)

Reichenbach Lewis, North Royalton, Ohio, passed away April 16, 2020, at age 73.

Roberta S. (Strahm '70 MAEd '99) Halker, Pandora, Ohio, passed away July 11, 2020, at age 72.

Thomas Diltz '72, Cloverdale, Ohio, passed away April 29, 2020, at age 73.

Lawrie E. Tighe '75, Norcross, Ga., passed away April 14, 2020, at age 67.

Kevin G. Strahley '80, Highlands Ranch, Colo., passed away May 2, 2020, at age 61.

Robert "Bob" Bash '93, Lima, Ohio, passed away April 29, 2020, at age 71.

Ashley Hicks '03 MBA '06, Troy, Ohio, passed away May 24, 2020, at age 41.

Karl Sizemore '03, Franklin, Tenn., passed away July 24, 2020, at age 63.

Richard "Rick" Reucher '07, Wauseon, Ohio, passed away Aug. 28, 2020, at age 35.

John E. Trochelman '09, Fayetteville, N.C., passed away July 20, 2020, at age 76.

Taylor Steele '17, Bluffton, Ohio, passed away Aug. 31, 2020, at age 27.

TEACHERS, EARN YOUR READING ENDORSEMENT



*Coursework can be completed
in as little as one summer!*

Licensed teachers, who took a phonics class as an undergraduate, can earn a reading endorsement by taking online classes from Bluffton during summer 2021. Afterward, experiential learning hours can be completed in your own classroom or school. The program fulfills the Ohio Assessments for Educators requirements to take the reading endorsement examination.

As an added bonus, teachers who complete the summer reading endorsement program can continue their studies and earn a Master of Arts in Education from Bluffton with just six additional classes.

To learn more, visit www.bluffton.edu/maed





120TH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

Saturday, July 18, 2020



The class of 2020 was celebrated Saturday, July 18, during a socially-distanced, in-person Commencement at Dwight Salzman Stadium. More than 80 percent of the graduating class, and up to two guests each, were in attendance. Each student wore a medallion with Bluffton's presidential seal in recognition of their resiliency.

Dr. David Yost '83, a physician and CDC consultant, shared the address, "On Being Scared."

"You will find out that you will all be scared. I wish I was the kind of graduation speaker who would say, but you are Bluffton Beavers, and you have the perfect skill set to handle any challenge you face without help," Yost said. "But that's not how the world works."

Instead, Yost encouraged the students to lean on mentors during difficult times, including their Bluffton mentors.

Originally scheduled for Sunday, May 3, Commencement was postponed due to stay-at-home orders and the spread of COVID-19. Campus leaders worked extensively with Allen County Public Health to plan the ceremony.



FACULTY 360

Sherri Winegardner, D.N.P.

You are chairing the Student Health and COVID-19 Steering Committee. Tell us a little about the efforts to reopen campus this fall.

We immediately started with the goal of returning to campus. Because of my background in administration, I have some project management skills, so I worked with President Wood and others to develop a project management spreadsheet and RACI chart (Who is Responsible? Who is Accountable? Who are we going to Consult? Who are we going to Inform?). From there, we aligned specific tasks to specific people. Almost every single faculty and staff member was pulled in. COVID-19 has infiltrated everything we do, but we wanted to make sure students could have as normal of an experience as possible.

How did your background in nursing prepare you to lead COVID-19 prevention efforts on campus?

I began my career in the early 80s and AIDS was just coming to the forefront. It was during the AIDS epidemic when universal precautions were developed, and we started treating every patient as potentially infected. That's when we really ramped up the use of personal protective equipment such as gloves, gowns and goggles.

Later when I was a nurse executive, we had the H1N1 pandemic. There was a huge push at that time for preparedness. I spent a lot of time working with a team to develop policies and procedures on how to operate a hospital and keep staff safe during a pandemic. This spring and summer we worked on similar policies.

Nursing is a demanding career. How do you keep from getting overwhelmed?

It's somewhat out of context, but for more years than I can count I've had Psalm 118:24 on my bathroom mirror. "This is the day that the Lord has made; let's rejoice and be glad in it."

I think it's critical to take time each day to find the joy in life. I find peace in taking photographs of nature. This summer, I captured a photograph of a fledgling eagle struggling and then succeeding in his first flight. I call it "The Joy of Flight." To me, he truly looks joyful in that moment.



Dr. Sherri Winegardner is director and associate professor of nursing at Bluffton.



PROTECT THE DAM

for Academics
for The Arts
for Athletics
for Student Life
for Spiritual Life
for Relationship Building...

In true Beaver style, Bluffton students, faculty and staff are remaining resilient in times of change. Your support makes a big difference in our ability to adapt.

This issue of Bluffton magazine has highlighted the many ways our Beavers have adapted and flourished this fall. It is a blessing to see every day how our students are being safe while living and learning on campus and “doing college” in the same way many of us enjoyed our Bluffton experiences.

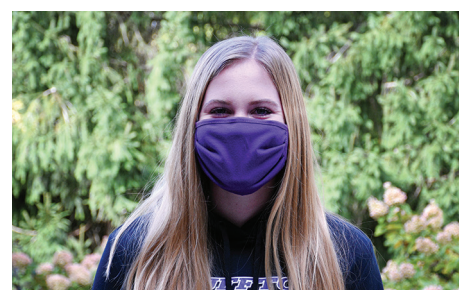
This summer and fall have been very busy for the admissions office. Our campus visits, applications, accepts and deposits for the fall 2021 class are the highest that we have seen in the last four years. Prospective students are telling us that they are looking for small schools, where they can live and learn in community and prepare for life and vocation alongside their faculty while also following health and safety guidelines. I believe that this is an opportunity for re-growth for small schools. We can “do college” in ways that large, state schools cannot.

And while we will all celebrate when the semester comes to an end, on January 20, a new semester will start with similar realities and new challenges. We know students and families will struggle with personal finances as economic unknowns from COVID-19 persist. Increases in expenses for PCR testing for students, cleaning supplies for campus and more remain. **Enclosed in this issue is a giving envelope and I invite you to consider making a year-end contribution before Dec. 31 to help us continue to #ProtectTheDam and work to welcome and graduate the next generation of Bluffton alumni next fall.**



Robin Bowlus

Robin Bowlus, MBA '17
Vice president of advancement
and enrollment management





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