

BLUFFTON

A magazine for Bluffton University alumni and friends | Fall 2024 | Vol. 21 No. 2



**CELEBRATING
125 YEARS OF
STRONG ROOTS**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



There is so much energy and excitement on campus! We welcomed a strong first-year class and had a beautiful September for them to enjoy our vibrant campus. We kicked off our first home football game under the lights and fall is now in full swing.

In this issue of “Bluffton” you will enjoy the highlights from Homecoming Weekend, including the President’s Banquet where donors were recognized for their lifetime giving achievements, and we revealed our upcoming new (old!) name. Bluffton also honored alumni with the Outstanding Young Alumni Award and Faculty/Staff Service Award and inducted two alumni into the Athletics Hall of Fame.

Our first-year students returned from the fourth Great Adventure. That means in May, our graduates will have fully experienced the Bluffton Blueprint from start to finish for the first time! The Great Adventure is fully donor funded, and we are grateful for your continued support of this mission-critical experience!

Undergraduate enrollment remains steady, and we doubled the enrollment in the new, joint Master of Social Work program with Goshen College. The higher education landscape continues to be challenging, and we are entering the first year of the “enrollment cliff.” Bluffton University continues its mission for graduating servant leaders through the lens of the peace church despite these challenges, but we must remain nimble and innovative.

We continue to collaborate with University of Findlay on the proposed merger and plan to submit our official application in May 2025. We are pleased to share that Bluffton will retain its own mission even after the merger is complete! This is a significant step towards our true partnership with UF. Please remember that Bluffton will retain its identity through (but not limited) to:

- Keeping/returning to our longstanding name, Bluffton College;
- Keeping our peace church mission and remaining affiliated with MC USA;
- Continuing to play NCAA DIII sports as the Bluffton Beavers;
- Continuing the Mennonite Archives and Historical Collections;
- Embracing The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center;
- Continuing the wonderful tradition of singing Handel's "Messiah" during the holidays.

You can stay up to date by visiting our joint website – www.findlayblufftonfuture.com – and submit any questions you may have.

It is an honor to be leading Bluffton University/College’s legacy into 2025. Please consider an end of year gift in order to help us continue to provide the best Great Adventure—a four-year education at Bluffton University/College.

Blessings for the holiday season,

Jane M. Wood, Ph.D.
President



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Fall 2024 Vol. 21 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.

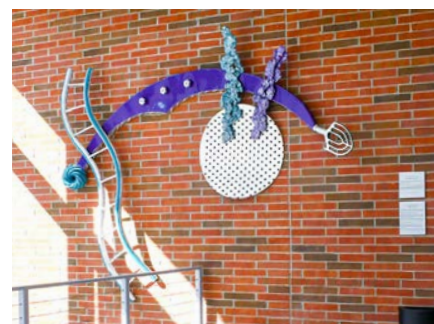
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We welcome your comments!

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On the cover: College Hall 2024

Photo by Olivia Zuercher





RETURNING TO OUR ROOTS

A highlight of this year's Homecoming Weekend was the annual President's Society Banquet, where Dr. Jane Wood, Bluffton University president, and Dr. Katherine Fell, University of Findlay president, announced the Bluffton campus name post-merger will be Bluffton College.

Approved unanimously by Bluffton University and University of Findlay Board of Trustees, and pending approvals from the Higher Learning Commission, U.S. Department of Education and Ohio Department of Education, the Bluffton campus will be renamed Bluffton College and continue its peace church heritage. This name change was at the request of the Bluffton Board of Trustees, which Findlay's board supported.

Returning to Bluffton College helps ensure Bluffton's identity and mission remain, and our heritage continues to live on in the next generation of students.

"No matter if our beloved campus is a 'college' or 'university,' it will always be distinctively Bluffton," said Dr. Wood. "Returning to our previous name is another example of the commitment from Findlay to honor our history and heritage."

Positive change will happen in many areas, but there are values that will endure beyond the merger. Under the umbrella of University of Findlay's mission to equip students for meaningful lives and productive careers, Bluffton's current

mission, which seeks to prepare all students for vocation, responsible citizenship and service to God's kingdom, will be maintained, and its legacy will continue.

Bluffton will also maintain its Mennonite Church USA affiliation, Beaver athletics in the NCAA Division III, celebrating our alumni at Homecoming, and providing Bluffton students with the quality of education expected from our institution.

"For 125 years, Bluffton has nurtured and educated students with care and commitment, discovery and community, respect and service," said Dr. Wood. "Bluffton will continue to honor the legacy that's been built while moving forward into a future of collaboration with University of Findlay."

To submit questions and to keep up to date on merger activity visit www.findlayblufftonfuture.com



TIMELINE

While our original plan was to merge by fall 2025, we now know the process is lengthier and more complex than imagined due to new federal regulations. The process consists of several state and federal checkpoints and begins with filing a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Change of Control application.



125TH CELEBRATION OF BLUFFTON'S HERITAGE

FORMAL APPLICATION STEP 1

- We will submit our application for the HLC Change of Control in May 2025.
- This submission date will place us on the agenda for the November 2025 HLC board meeting.
- We hope to receive a positive response from HLC in December 2025; at that point, UF will assume financial and legal responsibility for Bluffton.



FORMAL APPLICATION STEP 2

- Additional approvals will be needed at the state and federal levels as part of this step. Exact dates are to be determined.

FORMAL APPLICATION STEP 3

- Once those approvals are granted, we can move to the next stage (merger). This requires a second set of HLC, state and federal approvals. Exact dates are to be determined.



Note from the Board Chair

As the Bluffton University Board of Trustees Chairperson, I am excited we will reclaim our Bluffton College name to honor our history and core commitments to future generations as we establish a new relationship with University of Findlay. I say with great confidence that Bluffton's mission is moving forward. In today's higher education landscape, we must find innovative ways for Bluffton to endure. Higher education institutions are closing at a rate of one-per-week.

I invite all who value the mission of Bluffton University to support our campus community through your prayers, encouragement to faculty and staff, and financial support for this mission to endure. As Bluffton's first president, Noah C. Hirschy said while the cornerstone was laid for our first building, "Let us expect great things."

Cheryl Hacker '81, Bluffton University Board of Trustees Chairperson



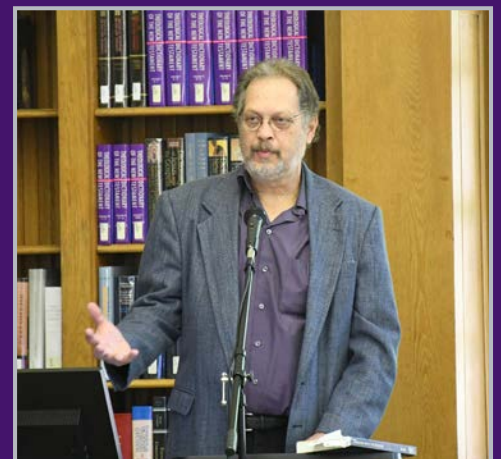
125 *years*



1899

2024

BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING





125 YEARS CELEBRATED!

A full weekend of celebrating 125 years of Bluffton University was capped off by Bluffton's 37-9 football win.

- Several events were held during the weekend including a history presentation of Bluffton University from Dr. Perry Bush, a John Mishler art dedication and a hike in the Nature Preserve with Dr. Jacob Buchanan.
- A range of reunions, from the Alumni Baseball Banana Ball Game to Reunion Zero for the class of 2024 to even a 1980's Beaver Bash, brought Beavers together.



OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD

Dr. Tsedey Biru-Williams '11

2024
ALUMNI
AWARD
RECIPIENT

Biology and Pre-Medicine

Dr. Tsedey Biru-Williams is completing a neurology fellowship at University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.



Passion for success

For as long as she could remember, Tsedey Biru-Williams wanted to do something in the medical field. Her experience growing up seeing the impacts improper healthcare treatment can have on individuals led her to seek out change in healthcare.

“I wanted to make sure I could help change somebody else’s future, so they don’t have to see the impacts of poor healthcare,” said Biru-Williams.

Biru-Williams moved from Ethiopia to the United States when she was in high school. After having only lived in the U.S. for a few years, Biru-Williams came to Bluffton University and developed a passion for healthcare.

“If it wasn’t for Bluffton, I don’t think I would be where I am today,” said Biru-Williams. “I was able to be in a small community in which my professors knew me, supported me and provided me with opportunities to help me succeed.”

Discerning the path

After graduation, Biru-Williams worked at Ohio Health Riverside Hospital in Columbus for three years. During this time Biru-Williams tried to discern which career path of health care she wanted to pursue. Attending medical school was the path Biru-Williams chose. She graduated from Ohio University in 2020 with a doctorate in osteopathic medicine, focusing on neurology.

Path to success

A driving factor Biru-Williams credits for her success today is a student organization she co-founded in medical school. Biru-Williams and a classmate started this student led group, Future Physicians for Patients, with the goal of gaining education and advocacy for patients in healthcare.

“Being a part of this student group allowed me to try to make changes in patient care to help understand where patients are coming from,” said Biru-Williams. “I was really passionate about making sure everyone who graduated from medical school was educated on the factors which impact our patients.”

After graduating from Ohio University, Biru-Williams began rotations near Dayton. Biru-Williams took what she learned from co-founding the group in medical school to kick start another organization in the Dayton area. This organization focused on bridging the gap between patients that are underserved and healthcare.

“We wanted to make sure we were reaching out to the community in the way in which they felt heard and had their questions answered,” said Biru-Williams.

Biru-Williams now lives near Cincinnati area with her husband, Aaron, and their new daughter Abrielle.



Professor emeritus of business and founder of Bluffton MBA program
Dr. George Lehman served the Bluffton community for more than 25 years.

Love for Bluffton

Dr. George Lehman received his undergraduate degree from Bluffton in 1969. Lehman chose to attend Bluffton because of the pure love he had for the institution. He was the third person in his family to attend Bluffton, so coming here just felt "right." From the campus to academics and everything in between, Lehman knew there was something special about Bluffton and a place he could call home forever.

"I love Bluffton," said Lehman. "I had a very good experience during my time here. I made many friends and had great experiences with my professors. Just the spirit on campus is so good."

In 1994, Lehman received a call from the academic dean at Bluffton about a job opening in the business department. Lehman knew he had to take this opportunity to teach at his alma mater. After 25 years, Lehman retired from Bluffton in 2020 and earned the title professor emeritus of business.

Passion for business

When Lehman began at Bluffton, the business degree completion program (BCOMP) for undergraduate students was just beginning. This program drew Lehman to Bluffton because of its uniqueness.

Lehman founded Bluffton's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program. Bluffton's MBA is a cohort-based program. Lehman says this type of program is unique because you are with the same group of students throughout the entire program.

"The students in this program really develop a strong sense of community," said Lehman. "Our MBA program is designed to teach students they don't go through it alone but rather they have an entire support system encouraging them."

Because of the community the program built, the program saw much success and high retention. Lehman credits the support the students gave each other for the initial success of the program.

Lehman said this program was a mutual learning experience for both the students and the professor. Learning from the adult students in this program, Lehman said, was a key and special component of the program. In 2001, Lehman became chair of the business department.

"We really developed a close set of relationships within the business department," said Lehman. "The most effective staff



trainings we ever had were being able to talk about the challenges we were facing."

Active in community

Even after retiring from Bluffton, Lehman has remained active in the community. Lehman frequently presents workshops to area businesses on emotional intelligence (EQ). Lehman has also been involved in a village of Bluffton planning committee called Bluffton Center for Entrepreneurs. Lehman remains active on Bluffton's campus and can be seen at many athletic events.

"When I go to these emotional intelligence trainings, I see Bluffton graduates I had in the MBA program," said Lehman. "Seeing the students I taught in the program now working in leadership positions feels really good and makes me feel proud of the MBA program we started at Bluffton."





**BLUFFTON
UNIVERSITY**

ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

INDUCTION CEREMONY, OCT. 5, 2024



HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Bruce Wasem '68



1968 graduate Bruce Wasem was inducted into the 2024 Athletics Hall of Fame for achievements in football and track and field as well as achievements in collegiate coaching. A four-year member of the football team and a two-year member of the track and field team, Wasem earned

the A.C. Burcky award at Bluffton in 1968.

A history and political science double major, Wasem is now an instructor of physical education at University of Virginia's College at Wise. Wasem has a successful history as a football and baseball coach. He has coached 43 years to date. He coached six years in public schools in Ohio, then went on to coach

collegiately. Wasem coached 17 years at Wilmington College. After Wilmington, Wasem helped found the football program at Clinch Valley College/University of Virginia's College at Wise and has coached there 20 years, serving as head coach the last eight. In 2006, Wasem was named Mid-South Conference Coach-of-the-Year. That same year, Wasem's team received the NAIA Champions of Character award.

"Work hard to be the best person you can be at everything. Work hard to be the best student, work hard to be the best athlete, but most importantly, work hard to be the best person you can be. People will remember you more for who you were as a person than how many touchdowns you scored."

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Janelle (Stanek '97) Wyant



A powerhouse on the volleyball court, Janelle (Stanek) Wyant was inducted into the 2024 Athletics Hall of Fame for her achievements in volleyball. She played on the women's team from 1993-97 under Coach Kim Fischer. Wyant is tied for the most sets played in a season with 158 and

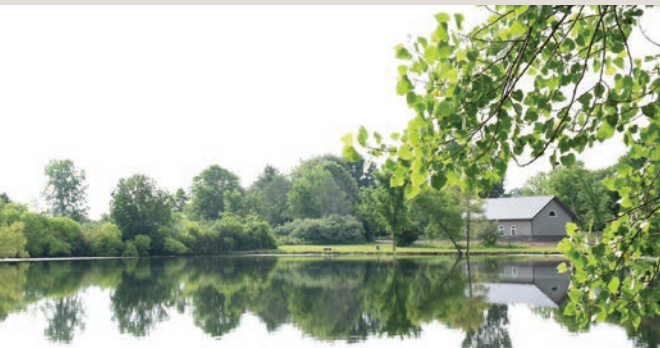
is the fourth highest in career sets played with 523. In 1996, she had a record breaking 201 blocks in one season, which eventually lead her to be second all-time with 481 career blocks. She was also part of the team's trip to the NCAA tournament in 1994 and 1996. Wyant credits her team for helping her achieve successes on and off the court. She also won the Kathryn E. Little award in 1997.

A 1997 graduate in elementary education, Wyant is now a sixth grade English language arts teacher in Lexington, Ohio. She has been no stranger to the volleyball court since graduating from Bluffton. She has coached volleyball for 12 years. She has been the head coach at Lexington for nine years and coached club swim previously for 12 years. For two straight years, Wyant was named Division II Northwest District Coach-of-the-Year. Along with her coaching career, she also has been a high school volleyball official for the past 20 years. Wyant has been married to her husband, John, for 27 years. They live in Lexington with their three kids, Jadon, 21; Jack, 19; and Julia, 17.

"Bluffton taught me that it is all about relationships. We don't remember the score of a match or game, but we remember the people we are with and the relationships we built."



ALONG THE RILEY



BioBlitz

Bluffton University and University of Findlay biology faculty and friends hosted a BioBlitz on Saturday, July 13. The event started at UF's Rieck Center of Habitat Studies in Mt. Blanchard, Ohio, then proceeded to Spurgat Land Conservancy. The group then met at the Bluffton University Nature Preserve and a reception with light refreshments was held at the Moyer Nature Center. The group had over 900 observations and listed 368 species on iNaturalist, an app which helps with plant and species identification. Dr. Jacob Buchanan, M'Della Moon endowed chair in botany and environmental science, helped lead the event as part of his habitat restoration process at the Bluffton University Nature Preserve.



Opening Convocation

Bluffton University welcomed its 125th class of students as official members of the campus community during opening convocation on Aug. 20, 2024. During convocation, Dr. Sarah Fedirka, associate professor and English department chair at University of Findlay, provided the address "Becoming Rooted." Fedirka shared with the incoming

class how in letting go they can become rooted. "The first step in becoming rooted is self-awareness," said Fedirka. "Gaining awareness of ourselves allows us to become aware of ourselves in our community. Letting go is a first step to becoming rooted in this new community." Practicing curiosity and kindness, Fedirka suggested, are two key steps in becoming rooted. Fedirka also referenced how our hardest moments can change us for the better as highlighted in the first-year reading "Big Feelings." The book explores how to be ok when things are not ok. "Uncertainty is a big feeling. One I don't particularly like," said Fedirka. "Like a plant repotted into a container too large for it, when I feel uncertain, I reach my "roots" out for an edge, a boundary, something certain. Thankfully we are less like single plants and more like trees in a forest."

U.S. News and World Report

Bluffton University has once again been named to the top tier of Midwest Regional Colleges in the "U.S. News & World Report" rankings.

The 2025 edition of the magazine's "Best Colleges" guidebook ranks Bluffton 29th among comparable institutions in the Midwest region. Now featured in the "U.S. News" rankings for 27 consecutive years, Bluffton has consistently ranked in the top tier of Midwest colleges. Bluffton was also ranked 11th for Top Performers for Social Mobility in Midwest Regional Colleges.

"Bluffton University is proud to be honored once again by 'U.S. News and World Report' as an outstanding higher education institution," said Claire Kleman, interim vice president for advancement and enrollment management. "We are grateful for our faculty, staff and students who help make this achievement possible. This ranking simply shows the world what we already knew: Bluffton alumni are successful in their fields, acting as leaders at home, at work and in their communities."



State of the University

During the annual State of the University Forum, Dr. Jane Wood, president of Bluffton University, and Dr. Katherine Fell, president of University of Findlay, discussed the state of Bluffton University in the context of the proposed merger with University of Findlay. President Wood displayed a graph with the number of mergers or closures of public and private non-profit universities. Since 2015, the numbers have accelerated greatly. On average, one small, private institution closes each week. Bluffton University and University of Findlay are 17 miles apart. Wood says a merger will allow Bluffton and Findlay to collaborate, rather than compete, to enhance the lives of students. President Fell spoke about the commonalities Bluffton University, affiliated with Mennonite Church USA, and University of Findlay, affiliated with Churches of God, General Conference, already share. Wood and Fell shared an updated timeline for the proposed merger. In May 2025 the application for the initial stage of the process will be sent to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Pending a positive review, phase one of combining the universities will occur in December 2025 which will be followed by an application for federal approval. At that point, the universities will move into the second phase of the merger process; timeline to be determined.





Bonhoeffer

“Bonhoeffer: Cell 92,” a cinematic theatre production created by Jerry Holsopple and Justin Poole from Eastern Mennonite University, came to Bluffton University Thursday, Sept. 26, and Friday, Sept. 27, in Yoder Recital Hall. The cinematic theater production is based on the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and leader in opposition to Hitler and the Nazi regime. Using a variety of primary sources, including letters, diaries and eyewitness historical accounts, this play examines the tensions between Bonhoeffer’s pacifistic ideals and his moral obligation to protect the oppressed by engaging in conspiratorial activities. This one man-show incorporates cinematic screens that project flashbacks and imagery.



Physical Education major returns

Bluffton University students now have the opportunity to major in physical education. The four-year degree allows students to receive a multi-age license (Pre-K-12) to teach health and physical education.

“At Bluffton University, you can now combine your love of physical activity, building relationships and working with children and youth with a bachelor’s degree in health and physical education,” said Dr. Joyce Jackson, assistant professor of education. “With two specializations, you



Dietetic Interns

Our Master of Nutrition and Dietetics (MND) students returned to campus to complete their classes and clinicals. Bethany Dario '05 will serve as the new program director. This is the second cohort of MND students and enrollment remains steady.

can become a preschool to grade 12 teacher licensed in Ohio or a specialist who builds unique programs that give children and youth a love of a physically active lifestyle.”

The health and physical education major will help address the issue of under qualified teachers teaching health and physical education courses. According to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce in 2021-22, 4.8% of high school health education courses were taught by teachers without proper certification, 4.4% of middle school physical education courses and 4.6% of high school physical education courses were taught by teachers without proper certification. Three new courses, Health Methods, Physical Education Methods and Drug Education were developed to meet the needs of the major and help prepare students for life as well as vocation.

“Through our nationally accredited education department, Bluffton University will significantly help the health and physical education field with the addition of this new major for current and incoming students,” said Claire Kleman, interim vice president

of advancement and enrollment management. “With the interest and demand of health and physical education on the rise, there is no better time to add this major.”



Handel's Messiah

Bluffton University will present its 130th performance of Handel’s “Messiah” at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Dec. 6, in Yoder Recital Hall, Bluffton University, and its 131st performance at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7, in Winebrenner Auditorium, University of Findlay. Dr. SeaHwa Jung, associate professor of music and chair of visual and performing arts at University of Findlay, will conduct the oratorio.



FACE FORWARD



**BETHNY
RICKS**

RECLAIMING HOPE

WHEN **EVERYTHING** FALLS APART



FACE FORWARD

Bethny Ricks '06, Bluffton University trustee and distinguished senior business executive, has published her first book, "Face Forward: Reclaiming Hope When Everything Falls Apart." The book is a guide to finding strength and resilience when life feels overwhelming. Through personal stories and practical insights, Ricks' book helps readers let go of the past, embrace inner strength and take steps toward a future filled with hope. It's a roadmap for anyone feeling lost or stuck, showing that by facing forward, healing and growth are within reach.

"'Face Forward' was born out of a deeply personal journey," said Ricks. "I've experienced moments when everything seemed to crumble around me—when the future I envisioned was no longer within reach. The turning point came when I realized that true strength isn't about avoiding challenges but facing them head-on."

Ricks attributes much of her professional success to what she learned during her time here at Bluffton. Ricks said her professors taught her the importance of leadership and that her voice matters, which propelled her in the corporate work environment.

After having led multiple billion-dollar business transformations over 18 years as a business executive, Ricks has now transitioned her focus to writing, speaking and coaching others to succeed in their pursuits. During her corporate career, she received numerous awards and accolades including being named one of Savoy's Most Influential African American Women in the U.S. and one of Ohio's Most Influential and Powerful Women.

"If there's one thing I want people to take away from 'Face Forward', it's that hope isn't something you find—it's something you reclaim," said Ricks. "No matter how shattered your circumstances may feel, there's always a way to piece together a future that's worth looking forward to. It's about choosing to face forward, even when the road is foggy, and trusting that every small step will lead you closer to a place of renewal and strength."

Ricks' book can be purchased at most major retailers such as Target, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon. More information about Ricks and "Face Forward" can be found on her website at www.bethnyricks.com.

Bethny Ricks



THE BLUFFTON SPIRIT



Bluffton University's institutional saga is 125 years old. Throughout its long history there have been periods of disruption to life and education from World War I in the early years to the COVID-19 pandemic most recently. However, Bluffton showed resilience in its religious principles and stayed true to its mission. Disruptions like this have given way to growth in the university as it continually adjusts to students' needs and sense of vocation while remaining true to its mission.

With support from a grant from NetVue, Samantha Shrider '12, director of institutional research and grants, spent the last two years interviewing faculty, staff, alumni and students. The project was intended to reframe and update our saga through the lens of the people who experienced Bluffton's rich history and students who lived through a pandemic.

The following are short selections from the original recordings. They have been edited for readability. A full record of all transcripts can be found on Bluffton University Memory by scanning the QR code.





Peace Church Traditions

Bluffton University was founded on the principles of peace and nonviolence connected to our Mennonite heritage. Throughout its 125 years, Bluffton has maintained that peace and nonviolence commitment so much so that students have left Bluffton so impacted that they chose to continue to live out those principles in their own lives.

Mary Anne (Bertsche) Moser, a 1950 graduate, spent time working with refugees through the “Sanctuary Movement.” This movement was built by churches who sponsored refugees. There was also support from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) where missionaries, her son included, were working for churches in Honduras for those who were fleeing El Salvador.

“While we were there, [my son] took us into his shed and opened up this box. It was MCC quilts that had been shipped down there. Soldiers guarded the camps in Honduras, so people, once they were in, they weren't allowed to leave. And MCC wasn't the only one; there were other groups with them that we were helping, too. I also visited the border and the group of sanctuary churches that's right there on the border.”

The Sanctuary Movement and Moser's work with refugees reflects her personal and Mennonite faith.

“We're supposed to take care of people that need taken care of. I think it gave me a broader outlook. I think it makes me much more empathetic to other cultures.”

Even younger graduates have looked at conflict studies in more modern landscapes.

Hannah (Kehr '07) Heinzekehr credited her passion for peace and conflict studies most notably in her cross cultural experience to Northern Ireland.

“Studying conflict transformation in a place that's really experienced lived conflict for certain sticks with me. I did my internship during that experience at a local community organization, which was a place for reconciliation dialogue right on the coast.”

Heinzekehr said that growing up in a Mennonite community, and being part of Mennonite congregations that talk often about peace theology, was really helpful during her time in a country that is known for conflicts.

Any graduate of Bluffton will know the quote “It's all about relationships.” Recited first by former dean of students, Dr. Don Schwiengruber, it's a phrase that **David Glick '07** will never forget. Now a pastor, Glick credits Bluffton faculty and staff for living out that phrase.

“I think I've learned a lot about how to love people after seeing it done on a daily basis at Bluffton. I'll never forget how they took care of me when they didn't have to and that was really cool.”

“If you're making a choice for peace, you're making it very intentionally because of a real possibility of violence or conflict.”

-Hannah (Kehr '07) Heinzekehr

Excellence in all Programs

Excellence in academic programs comes not only from the curriculum but from the faculty who teach it. While many have come and gone through Bluffton's history, the one thing that always remains is the quality relationships both in and out of the classroom between students and faculty.

Von Hardesty, a 1961 graduate, transferred to Bluffton in 1959.

Hardesty became a professor at the university where he was known for his engaging lectures on European intellectual history. He was also given the Professional Achievement Award from Bluffton in 1987.

“ Bluffton had a wonderful academic climate, so it was inspirational for me – the real turning point for me, really. Studying under Bob Kreider, of course, was a real inspiration because he had such an interest in the past and what he brought was a real vivid sense of history and the importance of it. I became quite dedicated to that as a discipline.”

-Von Hardesty '61





George Rable graduated in 1971 and credited all of his success to John Unruh.

“He took somebody from a very modest background—someone who needed all kinds of advice—and he saw something in me that was worth cultivating. Anything I’ve achieved I would always trace it back to John Unruh’s influence.”

A history major, Rable was pushed to graduate school by Unruh and felt very prepared for it after taking Unruh’s classes.

“John was an extremely nice man, but a very demanding teacher. Like my wife [Kay (Kohli ’72) Rable] and I always say, he changed our lives.”

Brea Quellhorst-Barrett ’12, MAEd ’22 was a social studies education major at Bluffton. After teaching for a few years, she felt called to special education. She returned to Bluffton to earn her intervention specialist licensure, but ended up getting her master’s as well.

Her master’s journey was difficult due to some requirements from her school district, but her Bluffton professors supported her the entire way.

“I remember Professor Tim Byers saying ‘you are doing the absolute best you can. You’re doing something a lot of people wouldn’t have the courage to do – just hang in there.’”

Dr. Gayle Trollinger was also impactful to Quellhorst-Barrett’s experience.

“My Bluffton professors were there to support me, and make sure that I knew I was doing what I was supposed to. I am forever grateful for their support through that time.”

Some alumni, like **Larry Milan ’73**, used his educational knowledge from Bluffton to jump start his career.

“The maturity factor in Bluffton and also the discipline of study where I really learned to embrace and enjoy my academic studies was a challenge I had to overcome. I really got excited about English literature and applying it to life. Health courses weren’t just about sports, but we learned about human anatomy and physiology, and it led to me becoming an athletic director and an athletic trainer for the varsity sports.”

Passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion, Milan spent much of his time at Bluffton advocating for black students.

“**The campus is not only for black students but for the education and cultural enrichment of the entire campus and the entire Bluffton College/University community.**”

-Larry Milan ’73



Life and Vocation

Part of Bluffton's mission is to prepare students for life as well as vocation. This can take many forms, but ultimately, the student experience at Bluffton allows them to lean into their environment.

Faculty and staff impact students' vocations in and out of the classroom. **Angong Dhol Acuil '05** credits Dr. Perry Bush, emeritus professor of history, with helping Angong explore and find her need for service and advocacy. Several Bluffton employees pushed Angong outside her comfort zone to pursue what she loved, and she ended up applying for Mennonite Central Committee. The position with MCC took Angong to Washington, D.C., where she worked in advocacy for three years before she landed a job in foreign service working for the South Sudan Embassy.

"If I didn't have that background in MCC, it would be very difficult for me to interact now with the State Department or Congress. It is still the same line of work, but now I'm presenting the interest of my country and my people."

Dan '05 and **Holly '05, MBA '21 Metzger's** world drastically grew and their vocation in relationship building became more prevalent through their Bluffton experience.

They believed as first-year students, their world was much smaller. Meeting others on campus taught them how to create space for relationships. Specifically, Dan was impacted by J. Denny Weaver's religion courses because it instilled the idea of thinking on your own. It was about challenging the ideas of others while not deteriorating a relationship.

Makenzie Speakman '21, found her vocation through student teaching. As an education major, students have to both take courses on campus and complete a student teaching experience.

"The most important thing Bluffton taught me is balance. You learn that balance is a huge part of life."

Makenzie found her first full-time position as an educator at the same school she did her student teaching placement. In fact, she is working with her cooperating teacher from student teaching now as a professional in the classroom.

As part of the Bluffton Blueprint experience, students finish their general education curriculum with the course "Enduring Values Capstone." The material in the course poses this question to students: "What then shall we do?"

Katie Kuntz-Wineland '13, MDiv., states that this course was a helpful exercise for her as a senior.

"I loved that exercise—thinking about a life that is shaped by simple living and sustainably building a community where you are fostering connection. Those are things, along with peace and justice, that we can't stop talking about."

Katie credits that Capstone conversation to shaping her life as it is today. Katie currently serves as the community minister at The Belonging Table and as community outreach coordinator at Bittersweet Farms in Toledo, Ohio.



“ The relationships people formed with us allowed them to speak truths and allowed us to say that the world’s big enough for these differences because the relationships were so important and valuable. It let differences exist.”

-Dan Metzger '05





God's Universal Kingdom

Bluffton aims to prepare students through life's twists and turns for service in God's Universal Kingdom. While the challenges students have faced may have changed over the decade, each still find ways to connect their experiences at Bluffton to how they live out God's calling.

Baldemar Valesquez '69, was one of the first Mexican American students to attend Bluffton. It's where he met his wife Sarah and met Dr. Lawrence Templin, an anti-war activist and English professor.

Dr. Templin wasn't an extroverted activist, but lived out his beliefs through his lifestyle. This was impactful on Baldemar.

"I grew up angry, but the people at Bluffton taught me there is another way. Nonviolence became a big interest of mine—especially in how people fight and how we can engage in a struggle through nonviolence."

During his time at Bluffton, Baldemar became active in peaceful protests and civil rights activities of the time. He was even invited to help plan a Civil Rights campaign in Atlanta, Ga., by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The Civil Rights Movement was not just the black movement; it was a class movement in which all poor people were marginalized."

Originally a business major, **Glenn Baughman '63** felt he was called to do more than accounting. Graduating in the

midst of the Vietnam War, Baughman knew he would have to be deployed. However, a connection with his professor, Dr. Howard Raid, allowed him to get a job with Mennonite Central Committee as an office manager.

It was there he found himself fascinated by the mental health of his colleagues and developed a strong interest in social work.

"There were a few people who came who were struggling in their home community; personal struggles which we knew nothing about because they were volunteering at MCC. Once they got there they would crash mentally, and I became very interested in mental health through this job."

Baughman championed for discussion about mental health, holding weeklong seminars and consulting with human relations in the office setting, something quite rare for the 1960s.

Once he completed his service with MCC, Baughman went to pursue his degree in social work and received an internship with the National Institute of Mental Health.

Baughman credits Dr. Raid with opening the door to his opportunity to serve others in ways he never imagined he would. "Going back and working with the people that have similar values and helping as much as you can; I don't think you can go wrong with that."





Johanna (Dickey '77) Rian has lived out her medical career in multiple communities but had an “uncomfortable feeling that she wasn’t doing much to change people’s lives.”

After reading some studies about the benefits of healing through coping skills related to the arts, Johanna started teaching people “narrative medicine.” She credits Bluffton for her ability to adapt her skillset to impact the lives of those in her healthcare community.

“ Bluffton taught me to think about not so much seeking an answer to something but to think about how to craft the right question. Bluffton encouraged me to experiment—to try and not be afraid to fail. It took me to some unexpected places.”

-Johanna (Dickey '77) Rian

Through her work at the Mayo Clinic, Johanna invited professional actors and teaching artists to come in and work with patients. They taught the patients coping skills, and it became a way for those in the medical field to use the arts as a complement to their medical studies.

ALUMNOTES

1960-69

Allan Newhart '62, Williamstown, W. Va., retired from teaching mathematics at West Virginia University-Parkersburg after 50 years.

Robert L. Hewitt '69, Chambersburg, Pa., and his wife Nicole, were awarded the Lifetime Excel Award from the Chambersburg Rotary Club, in recognition of their long history of teaching, training and community service in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, organizational and community change. Bob and Nicole also co-presented a workshop at the 2024 Community Action Association Program (CAAP) DEI Summit at Harrisburg University titled "Including the Voices of Historically Underrepresented and Marginalized Groups in a Borough Comprehensive Planning Process: The Wins & Losses in One Small Town."

1970-79

John Slater '76, Apple Creek, Ohio, recently retired as CPA and partner from the public accounting firm of Himes, Slater and Hershberger, LLC.

1980-89

Randy Keeler '80, Bluffton, Ohio, retired from Bluffton University after 32 years of service. Randy and his wife Karen are enjoying retirement as a time to spend camping, going to Phillies' games, spending time with their four children and seven grandchildren and being involved in the Bluffton community.

Tatia (Farthing x88) Langston and Eric Burdette '04, Eugene, Ore., worked in the same office for several months before they realized that they both had attended Bluffton. Tatia is a family coach and Eric is an eligibility worker, and the two

Bluffton alumni work for the Oregon Department of Human Services. They assist vulnerable individuals in the community and help them get access to benefits and services.

2000-09

Lori (Scheer '02) Planchon, Cutler Bay, Fla., and her husband Ryan welcomed their second child in July 2024. Lori and Ryan celebrated 11 years of marriage in July. Lori continues to work with her family at Mounting Solutions Plus.

Craig Brown '06, Stow, Ohio, and his wife welcomed their first child, Joanna, in February 2024.

2010-19

Jonathan Cunningham '12, MBA '17, Findlay, Ohio, and his wife Kari welcomed their second child, Caden, on June 7, 2024.



OUR LEGACY

Bluffton alumni in the world

Morgan Smith '23, has fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a professional athlete. After countless injuries through high school and college, Smith was uncertain how she would be able to make this dream a reality. After placing her trust in God to redirect her future, Smith came in contact with a professional basketball agent and got her first contract to play professional basketball.

Since graduating, Smith has done her fair share of traveling the world and has played professional basketball for three teams in three different countries. Smith has played for the Den Helder Suns in the Netherlands and Eintracht Braunschweig Lionpride in Germany. Smith will now move to Portugal to play for Maia Basket.



Scott '13 and Allison (Trent '13) Troyer, Grand Rapids, Mich., welcomed their first child, Fen Troyer, on Aug. 17, 2024. Allison works as a library page for Grand Rapids Public Library and Scott works as a school coordinator for Kent School Services Network.

Kerry (Bush '15) Roseberry, Bluefield, W. Va., launched a new career as a stay-at-home mom on Sept. 2 when she and her husband Jeff welcomed twins, Elysia Carolyn Jean and Jeffrey Wayne, into the world. Emeritus professor of history, Perry Bush, and wife, Elysia Bush '15, are embracing their roles as grandparents with much joy.

Emily (Short '17) Hunsbaker, Millersburg, Ind., is the communications director for Anabaptist Disabilities Network and program administrator for Amigo Centre.

Austin '18 and Shelby (Koenig '19) Buchholz, Ottoville, Ohio, welcomed their first child, a baby girl, in March 2024.

Claire (Clay '18, MBA '20) Kleman, Findlay, Ohio, married Luke Kleman on July 13, 2024. Claire is an interim vice president at Bluffton, and Luke is a doctor of physical therapy at Lima Memorial Health System and the head swim and dive coach at Bluffton.

2020-PRESENT

Sienna (Sullivan '21) Pineault, Dublin, Ohio, graduated from Capital University School of Law in May 2024.

Matt DeRitter '24, Bluffton, Ohio, started his career as a graphic designer at University of Findlay.

IN MEMORIAM

Evelyn Reese '46, Pandora, Ohio, passed away Aug. 1, 2024, at the age of 99.

Winnifred (Fett '49) Schmuck, Riverton, Wyo., passed away Aug. 1, 2024, at the age of 100.

Dallas Glick '50, Battle Creek, Minn., passed away July 8, 2024, at the age of 95.

Dorothy (Clemens '52) Spencer, Madison, Ala., passed away June 8, 2024, at the age of 93.

Robert Kauffman '58, Bloomington, Ill., passed away Sept. 11, 2024, at the age of 92.

Ronald Ropp '58, Normal, Ill., passed away June 4, 2024, at the age of 87.

David Bower '63, Woodbury, Minn., passed away April 18, 2024, at the age of 82.

Melissa (Kelley '63) Bowman, Charlotte, N.C. passed away April 4, 2024, at the age of 81.

Sara Eberhard '63, Findlay, Ohio, passed away July 14, 2024, at the age of 83.

Lynda Detterman '66, Rocky River, Ohio, passed away June 5, 2024, at the age of 79.

Joanne Frye '66, Wooster, Ohio, passed away July 22, 2024, at the age of 79.

Shirley (Sprunger '67) King, Goshen, Ind., passed away Aug. 31, 2024, at the age of 78.

Petra (Hedger '71) Hackler, Richland, Wash., passed away Aug. 22, 2024, at the age of 74.

Gloria (Bricker '72) Yoh, Kidron, Ohio, passed away Aug. 18, 2024, at the age of 74.

Roger "Hawk" Hoffman '74, Tavares, Fla., passed away Sept. 1, 2024, at the age of 72.

Jolene Oxender '77, Bluffton, Ohio, passed away Aug. 18, 2024, at the age of 69.

Karen Andrews '80, Lima, Ohio, passed away June 9, 2024, at the age of 76.

Robert "Bobby" Frazier '80, Lima, Ohio, passed away April 29, 2024, at the age of 86.

Kathy Meihls '83, Lima, Ohio, passed away June 27, 2024, at the age of 75.

David Day 'x84, Port Clinton, Ohio, passed away Sept. 6, 2024, at the age of 62.

Kelly Dye '88, Van Wert, Ohio, passed away May 20, 2024, at the age of 58.

Mark Betts '89, Lima, Ohio, passed away July 1, 2024, at the age of 58.

Jeffery "Jeff" Wyant '94, Columbus Grove, Ohio, passed away April 24, 2024 at the age of 62.

William Ray '01, Covington, Ohio, passed away Aug. 15, 2024, at the age of 54.

James Wagner '02, Defiance, Ohio, passed away Sept. 6, 2024, at the age of 44.

Michael "Mike" Kingsley x06, Bluffton, Ohio, passed away May 6, 2024, at the age of 42.

Stay connected! Visit www.bluffton.edu/update to stay in touch!



FACULTY 360

Dr. Gerald Mast

What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is the name of a spiritual and social movement arising from the Bible-centered activism of the 16th century European Reformation—especially in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. On Jan. 21, 1525, a Bible study group meeting in Zurich, Switzerland, defied the city authorities by renouncing their baptism into Christendom and receiving baptism upon confession of faith. Next year we commemorate the 500th anniversary of this ceremony that is considered the beginning of the Anabaptist movement and the church denominations that derive from it such as the Amish, Mennonites, Brethren, Hutterites, Baptists and Apostolic churches. The primary teachings of Anabaptism are focused on following Jesus Christ in a voluntary community of faith grounded in peace with both God and neighbors.

How has it shaped Bluffton's 125 years?

Bluffton was founded by one branch of Anabaptism—the Mennonite church, which is likely the single most important influence on Bluffton's character and priorities throughout its history. For example, our four enduring values are expressions of Anabaptist values of community relationships, service to others, respect for the creation and truth discovery. Our mission statement is framed by the commitment to historic peace church teachings—which is why there are many peace activities on campus: The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center, a peace oratorical contest, two annual peace lectures, cross-cultural experiences, signature general education courses on "War, Peace and Nonviolence" and "Mennonite History and Thought," —to name just a few examples.

What has your work been with the Anabaptist community Bible?

In 2022 I was appointed to the Anabaptism at 500 advisory group, whose task was to provide support and discernment for MennoMedia's publishing projects in connection with Anabaptism's 500th anniversary year. The centerpiece of those anniversary projects is the Anabaptist Community Bible. I helped gather quotations from early Anabaptist sources and wrote a short essay on Anabaptists and the Apocrypha that will be printed in the back of the Bible with other essays on Anabaptist biblical interpretation. I also led a group of Bluffton students in my religious communication class in a Bible study that contributed to the crowd-sourced notes.

How can people continue to build on the peace church tradition today?

The historic peace church tradition initially emerged as a group of churches—such as the Quakers, Brethren and Mennonites—who opposed war and conscription as part of their Christian witness. But this opposition to participation in war was rooted in a deeper commitment to respecting the image of God in all human beings. We can build on this tradition of Christian faith and hospitality by helping to make our communities genuinely welcoming for all people, especially those who are vulnerable: immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities and all who struggle to belong. At Bluffton, we can build on the peace church tradition by working hard to welcome and support all our students—who come from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds and who are looking for a place not just to study but to belong.

Dr. Gerald Mast is a professor of communication.





THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Bluffton University has always valued personal growth. Since our beginning 125 years ago, students have been encouraged to take on leadership roles and explore new opportunities, including taking full advantage of the Bluffton Blueprint. This year is the fourth Great Adventure Bluffton University has sponsored.

Our May graduates will be the first Bluffton Alumni who have experienced the full Bluffton Blueprint, including the Great Adventure, Learning in Community, Cross Cultural experience and the Enduring Values Capstone course!

Returning just a few weeks ago, nearly 200 first-year students spent a few days of their fall break in the Great Smoky Mountains. Led by faculty and mentors, the first-year students spent the retreat weekend surrounded by vast natural beauty and were challenged to reflect upon themselves and answer the question, “Who am I?”

Each year, alumni and donors fully fund the Great Adventure so students can enjoy the experience at no cost to them. It is time to raise funds for the fall 2025 adventure!

Invest in Bluffton students and faculty by helping us raise \$125,000 for the Great Adventure by Dec. 31, 2024.

The academic, spiritual and cultural experiences of the Bluffton University education is significantly enhanced by donor support.

Please support the Great Adventure by making a gift in the return envelope in this issue or by going online to www.bluffton.edu/give and selecting the Great Adventure campaign.

Thank you for your continued generosity. Go Beavers!



Claire Kleman

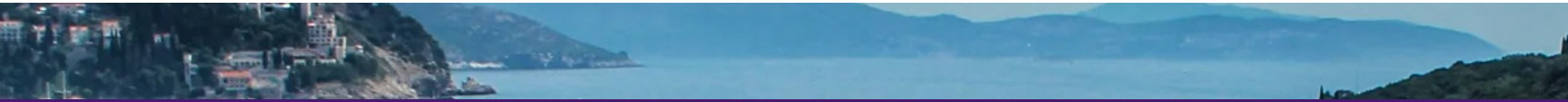
Claire Kleman '18, MBA '20
*Interim vice president of advancement
and enrollment management*





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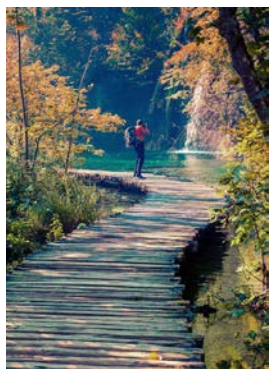
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TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

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- Zadar
- Plitvice Lakes National Park
- Old Town Ljubljana

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