



# Maverick

MERCY UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

FALL 2023

## MERCY UNIVERSITY A New Era





Photo by Danaë Tjionas

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**MERCY UNIVERSITY**

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**MERCY UNIVERSITY**

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Message from President  
Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W.



Photo by John Raiola

Dear Mercy University Community,  
 Since the start of my presidency this summer, there have been many reasons to celebrate. Mercy became a university, opened a School of Nursing (our sixth school), and welcomed a record-breaking class of incoming students.

Now, we go to work in earnest. I have ambitious goals for Mercy University. In this issue, you will read about our history-making launch as Mercy University, a defining moment for the institution, my priorities for Mercy and how we will continue to position our students for success.

I know we are up to the challenge. I know this because our community is as committed to our students and their futures as any I have ever seen.

You will also learn how our Mercy faculty, students, and alumni are making a difference in our communities and beyond. Examples include a faculty expedition to India dedicated to research and teacher training in a special education program, medical missions that immerse students in locations with limited access to health care, Mercy's cybersecurity program, a National Security Agency-designated Center of Academic Excellence, and the achievements of our inaugural dean at the helm of the new School of Nursing.

You have welcomed me with open arms, and for that, I am truly grateful. It is my honor to have joined this community of educators and students who endeavor to make sure that Mercy University is no longer a "best kept secret" but is broadly known as an institution that provides transformative opportunities for success.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W.



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Cover photo by: John Raiola  
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Announcing



**MERCY**  
**UNIVERSITY**

August 22, 2023



“Time Has Come Today” by the Chambers Brothers rang out across the Westchester Campus. Dozens of students poured out of Main Hall, chanting, cheering and throwing confetti, just as the “curtain” went up to reveal the new signage and logo now proudly posted on the front of the building. Students, alumni, faculty, staff and Board members, from throughout its nearly 75-year history, were all celebrating the official transformation of Mercy College to Mercy University. It marked a historic moment for the institution, with Mercy leaders vowing to “reshape higher education for generations of learners to realize their ambitions and write their own futures.”



**Becoming a university is “the natural evolution for our institution, firmly rooted in Mercy’s founding principles,” said President Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W. “It also reflects the magnificent change that is to come.”**

Celebrations happened simultaneously at Mercy’s Bronx and Manhattan Campuses.

Since its founding by the Sisters of Mercy in 1950, Mercy has evolved and expanded to meet the needs of its students and surrounding communities. Today, Mercy is the region’s largest private Hispanic-Serving Institution. The change to university status, approved by the New York State Board of Regents, reflects the breadth of its programs across a wide variety of disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate levels.



Along with the new logo, Mercy unveiled a new seal that reflects both Mercy and The College of New Rochelle (CNR). The seal incorporates the CNR flame, signifying Mercy’s commitment to preserve the legacy of CNR. A symbol of wisdom, learning and knowledge, the CNR flame is intertwined with the two open books which symbolize Mercy’s commitment to the broadening of minds. Signs saying “Made for Mavericks” – a reference to its beloved mascot – have gone up across the tri-state area.



Speakers at the August 22nd event all spoke of their Maverick pride.

As Mercy University, the institution will continue to support its students so they can set new trajectories – not just for themselves, but for the people and communities around them – and for generations of families who come after them.

“I knew coming to Mercy meant I had an opportunity. Mercy created that opportunity for me,” said *Louise Squitieri '65*, an alumna from Mercy’s first graduating class. “Mercy has gone from two rooms to six schools, three campuses, more than 100 programs, undergraduate and graduate degrees. I am honored to be a part of it, and to celebrate the growth that will happen at Mercy University.



“Cindy Lopez '07, M.S. '08, M.S. '11, H.D. '23 and a member of Mercy’s Board of Trustees, reflected on the institution’s ongoing mission of putting students at the center of the experience to educate, care for, and support them. “Whether we know our students’ troubles or not, we accept them, embrace them, care for them and give them the opportunity to succeed in their education and their lives,” Lopez said.

“We listen to our students. We are creative and flexible in finding new ways to help them achieve their goals. I’m so honored to work for an institution that feels this way for all of its students,” said *Susan Moscou*, professor and associate dean of the Post Licensure Nursing Programs, School of Nursing.





MERCY UNIVERSITY

Made for Mavericks

MERCY UNIVERSITY

As a part of the Mercy University announcement, our Made for Mavericks advertisements graced the buildings in Times Square.



# The Inauguration of Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W.

## A New President for a New Era

Mercy University formally inaugurated Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W., as the institution's 13th President on September 22, 2023. Nearly 400 guests including students, faculty, staff, alumni, Mercy Trustees, elected officials, college and university delegates, and community partners attended the inauguration ceremony, held on Mercy's Westchester Campus and livestreamed on its website. The ceremony capped a week of festivities for President Parish, who took the helm as Mercy University welcomed a record-breaking number of new students this fall.

**“ We must become radically student-centered.**

In her inaugural address, Parish laid out her vision for Mercy University, which was a call to arms to greatness.

“We must become radically student-centered,” said Parish. “Doing so means making sure every student has an extraordinary experience and enjoys a true sense of belonging here. This approach offers our best chance to double our on-time graduation rates. This means every student, every encounter across all three campuses – no exceptions.”

“This is a milestone in our history,” said Joe Gantz, Chairman of the Mercy University Board of Trustees, who presented Parish with the President's Medal. “In the past we said, ‘This is Mercy's Moment.’ Today, we proclaim, ‘This is Mercy's Time!’ Just as we make it possible for our students to

write their own stories, today's inauguration of Susan Parish is a chance for Mercy University to continue writing its story of providing transformational education for nearly 75 years.”

“Susan Parish is a remarkable individual who embodies the traits of a strong and productive university president,” said Carmenita D. Higginbotham, Ph.D., dean of the School of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University and Special Assistant to the Provost for VCUarts Qatar, and a former colleague of Parish. “She brings to her position a clarity of purpose and transformative leadership, representing what we critically need in higher education at this time.”

Parish began her presidency at Mercy University on July 1, 2023. Since assuming her role as president, she has met with hundreds of Mercy stakeholders, including faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners, and has participated in dozens of student, athletic, alumni and community events.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer issued a proclamation in President Parish's honor, which was presented to her during the inauguration ceremony.

“It is with a deep sense of respect that I join with Deputy County Executive Kenneth Jenkins, in welcoming Dr. Susan Parish to Mercy University and Westchester County,” Latimer wrote in the proclamation. “Her remarkable career in education and research exemplifies her leadership and educational prowess, which makes her an ideal president for Mercy University.”

Mercy University faculty, alumni and student representatives gave remarks during the ceremony to officially welcome President Parish.





Photos by John Raiola

“We eagerly anticipate the energetic, enthusiastic and excellent leadership of a president already guiding us with a source of inclusion, support of the faculty and students, a willingness to listen and not be afraid of change,” said Matthew Hyland, Ph.D., associate professor, physical therapy and president of the Mercy University Faculty Senate.



“The foundation for my success was laid at Mercy, and I’m sure that the current crop of students will also blossom under President Parish,” said Phillip Grant, M.B.A. '08, CEO of Hunts Point Produce Market. “We

look forward to the evolution of our beloved school under her leadership.”

“I look forward to working with President Parish to make Mercy even better for all students,” said Rita-Marie Masi '26 Student Government Association President. “On behalf of the student-body, welcome to the Mercy family and congratulations on this new beginning.”



Scan this QR code to read more.



Sociology Professor Dorothy M. Cali Balancio '68 and Mathematics Professor Sanjeevani Vaidya



President Parish and Dr. Carmenita D. Higginbotham



President Parish with members of the Mercy Board of Trustees

# Mercy Celebrates Inauguration Week

From September 18-23, the Mercy community celebrated the inauguration of President Parish with a week full of events.

## Coffee and Donuts with President Parish at Bronx, Manhattan and Westchester Campuses



Manhattan Campus



Westchester Campus



Bronx Campus

## Table Tennis with President Parish



## Dedication Event of Sculpture by Martín Rubio

Internationally known Puerto Rican artist Martín Rubio donated a sculpture, made from laminated wood and meant to be both seen and touched, in recognition of Mercy's dedication to advancing Hispanic and first-generation postsecondary student success. Scan this QR code to read more about the event and sculpture.



(Left to right): CNR alumna Laudelina Martínez SAS '63, Martín Rubio, Mercy Provost Eva Fernández, President Susan L. Parish and Mercy Trustee Marlene Tutera CNR SAS '71

## Faculty and Staff Author Recognition with Q&A

Mercy recognized recent publications of faculty and staff during a Q&A panel moderated by School of Liberal Arts Dean Peter West.



Scan this QR code to read more.



Back row: Boria Sax (Senior Lecturer, English), Matthijs Koopmans (Professor, Educational Leadership), Adriana Erin Rivera (Marketing Manager), Robert Murray (Associate Professor, History), Seth Weitzman (Senior Instructor, Educational Leadership), Peter West (Dean, School of Liberal Arts); Front row: Serah Shani (Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences), Marc Palmieri (Assistant Professor, Communication Studies), Celia Reissig (Professor, English), Helge Wasmuth (Professor, Childhood Education)

## Paint the Rock at the Westchester Campus



President Susan L. Parish joins Mercy's Field Hockey during their game against Molloy College.



Photo by Stockton Photo

## Faculty Panel Discussion on Scholarship and Service

Faculty members Professor Kathleen Kenney-Riley, Assistant Professor and Physician Assistant Studies Program Director Lorraine Cashin, M.S. '01, Professor Amanda Gunning and Associate Professor Denise Stefano participated in a panel discussion about their work connecting scholarship and service at Mercy. The panel was moderated by School of Nursing Dean Kenya Beard.



(Left to right): Kenya Beard (Dean, School of Nursing), Lorraine Cashin, M.S. '01 (Assistant Professor, Physician Assistant Studies), Amanda Gunning (Professor, Secondary Education), Kathleen Kenney-Riley (Professor, Nursing), Denise Stefano (Associate Professor, Accounting), President Susan L. Parish

## President Susan L. Parish and Mercy Alumni enjoying the Annual Founders' Festival



Photo by John Raiola





Faculty and students in The Gambia.

# Doing a World of Good

## International Service Trips Provide Unparalleled Learning and Impact Hundreds of Patients

Mercy University is known for hands-on learning and for serving the community. The School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHNS) takes this to the next level with medical missions and international service trips that provide students with valuable, experiential professional experience while giving back to people in under-resourced communities around the world. In 2023, many of these trips – including those to the Dominican Republic, The Gambia, Belize and Guatemala – resumed for the first time since 2019.

In March, students and faculty from SHNS traveled to the Dominican Republic on a five-day trip organized and sponsored by Friends of Lead-Free Children and Continental Food and Beverage Inc./Inca Kola USA. The team – which included a total of 16 students from the Physician Assistant Studies, Physical Therapy, Communication Disorders and Occupational Therapy Assistant Studies programs – provided free medical care to hundreds of people.

“It’s such a win-win situation because the patients get the help they need and the students get to practice being providers,” said Nicole Jarck, M.S. ’23, who recently graduated from the Physician Assistant Studies program. “I just wish we could do more.” Several students, including Jarck, mentioned that service trips were part of why they chose to attend Mercy in the first place.

Over the course of three days, the Mercy team treated patients in three different locations: a school in Santo Domingo Este, a school northwest

of Santo Domingo and a rural clinic near the sugar cane fields in the San Pedro de Macoris region. At each clinic site, people lined up for hours to see the Mercy team.

“It’s such a win-win situation because the patients get the help they need and the students get to practice being providers.”

“I was so proud to see that students were able to apply what they’ve learned with such compassion and empathy,” said Nannette Hyland, P.T., Ph.D., professor and program director of physical therapy. “It’s very different to do an evaluation on the spot when you don’t have a full hour to work with the patient in a fully equipped facility.”

“It took just seconds for students to start working with each other to figure out how to treat each patient,” said Brian Baker, M.D., assistant professor in the Physician Assistant Studies program. “That collaboration is exactly what they’ll have to do once they start practicing because medicine is truly a team sport.”

Two months later, students from the Physician Assistant Studies program traveled to The Gambia. Over the course of five days, the Mercy team – which included 22 students, two alumni and four faculty members – provided free medical care to approximately 750 patients in both a makeshift clinic in Penyem village and the Bundung Maternal



Photo by Brian Baker

and Child Health Hospital. The trip was organized by the African Cultural Exchange.

“Many people hadn’t seen a doctor since the last time Mercy visited four years ago,” said Emily See, M.S. ’24. “There were patients with lots of problems, some of whom we couldn’t help because it was years too late. That was heartbreaking.”

The Mercy team treated a variety of medical needs ranging from basic to emergencies. For example, patients had lacerations, infected abscesses and fungal infections. One person was vomiting blood, a few had seizures while waiting in line and a baby arrived in full respiratory distress. Students also got to see diseases that are rare in the U.S., including syphilis and tuberculosis.

“Students put together pieces from the whole didactic year to formulate diagnoses,” said Lorraine Cashin, M.S. ’01, assistant professor and director of the Physician Assistant Studies program. “There’s such value in them practicing how to use their own observations and patients’ responses to come up with diagnoses as opposed to relying on all the tests and machines that practitioners often use in the U.S.”

See was grateful for all the practice: “Faculty members really let us lead everything with zero judgment, which was amazing. I learned how to think on my feet. I was thinking about not just how to treat a patient but maybe five treatments down the line because we didn’t have access to the first four.”

Mercy students also treat non-human patients. In July, students in Mercy’s Veterinary Technology program traveled to Belize as part of the Small Animal Veterinary Experience course, which is organized and run by the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic. The team – three Mercy students and two faculty members along with seven students from the University of Tennessee – helped provide care to over 100 animals, primarily dogs and cats.

crocodiles, large cats, turtles, coatimundis and tamanduas.

Taylor Battaglia ’23 went on both the July and January trips and described how meaningful they were: “On these trips, I grew my technique and grew as a person. The professors trusted us to take the lead and help the other students. It proved to me that I do know what I’m doing and that this work is everything I want my life to be.”

Though many students returned



Faculty and students in Dominican Republic.

Photo by Brian Baker

The team focused on supporting Seven Miles, a rural village that until recently did not have electricity or running water. Many villagers do not have transportation, so it is challenging for them to get professional care for their pets. Students performed physical exams, provided medications for deworming and fleas, screened pets for infectious diseases and even played an active role as anesthetists and surgical nurses in procedures such as spays and neuters.

“The Mercy students were very impressive and rose to the occasion,” said Sandra Bertholf ’97, M.S. ’18, assistant professor and associate director of the Veterinary Technology program. “It was exciting for me as a teacher to see how well they applied their knowledge and skills to this unusual clinical situation where they didn’t have all the technology they’re used to back in the U.S.”

Every January, students can attend a 10-day trip to locations such as Belize, Guatemala or Peru as part of the Mercy course “Global Veterinary Experience” in which they gain experience in treating wildlife such as monkeys, snakes, iguanas, manatees,



Providing veterinary care in Belize.

Photo by Sandra Bertholf

home from these international trips wishing they could do more to help, several pledged to return on future trips and seek out other ways to volunteer. SHNS’ service-minded students will undoubtedly continue to give back and draw on the lessons they learned on these trips for the rest of their careers.



Photos by Thomas Culhane

# Mercy Students Explore History, Culture and a Sustainable Future in Colombia

“The trip was an amazing deep dive into Colombia – its history, present and future,” said Mercy University student James Marcus ’24, who is majoring in international relations and diplomacy. “People in Medellín do not deny their city’s history, but they have done so much work since then to change its image. I learned how to travel with my heart and mind open to all the possibilities and potential a place might have.”

Marcus is one of the 13 Mercy students who traveled to Medellín, Colombia for a week in May 2023 with Thomas Culhane, Ph.D., senior lecturer in behavioral science, and Stuart Sidle, Ph.D., dean of Mercy’s School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, as part of the course “Contemporary Issues: The Psychology of Environmental

Sustainability and Justice.” In this course, students learn about the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals and explore ways that communities like Medellín, Colombia are trying to achieve these goals.

Sidle first recognized the potential of taking Mercy students to Medellín, a city that markets itself as the sustainable city reinvented. Over the past 20 years, Medellín has transformed itself from one of the most dangerous cities in the world to one of the most innovative and “green” cities in South America. Starting in 2004, the government built aerial cable car lines to connect the low-income neighborhoods on the mountainsides with the city center in the valley, creating economic opportunity. More

recently, the city planted tens of thousands of trees and other native plants across the city. There are recycling and trash bins on many street corners along with posters reminding people to keep their city clean. Colorful murals and public art covered walls, staircases and entire buildings in every direction.

“It’s best that I go and see Colombia for myself rather than listen to what people say,” said Fabiola Thomas ’24, who is majoring in international relations and diplomacy. “The more I learn about other people and their backgrounds and cultures, the better prepared I’ll be for my career as a diplomat.”

Sidle and Culhane were able to secure grants to subsidize the trip’s cost for every student and even give one a full scholarship. Culhane invited students to decide how they wanted to document their learning, so students spent their free moments creating TikTok and Facebook Live videos, writing blog posts and texting updates to classmates who were not able to join the trip.

Some of the itinerary focused on seeing Medellín and exposing students to Colombia’s culture and history. Students toured a coffee plantation where they saw the whole process of producing coffee from planting the seeds to

drying the beans. They went ziplining above the treetops of a cloud forest and visited El Peñón de Guatapé (Rock of Guatapé), a natural rock formation that provides an impressive view of the region. They took the aerial cable cars to visit the lower-income neighborhoods that were the most affected by the violence and paramilitarism of the past. They visited the Museo Casa de la Memoria (House of Memory Museum), an open-air gallery of colorful murals that chronicle Medellín's tumultuous history. All the while, their Colombian tour guide prompted deep discussions about race, gender and inequality.

Thomas recounted a memorable moment that occurred when the group got stuck in an intense thunderstorm while visiting a mountainside neighborhood: "A local saw us standing in the rain and invited us into her house to wait out the storm. We were 15 people in a small room, and she figured out where we could all sit. It really touched my heart."

Other parts of the itinerary focused on exploring how Medellín has transformed into such an environmentally sustainable city and determining how to further support that transformation. While visiting a women's cooperative, students spent the morning separating and weighing the garbage that provides the women with income. The women were very interested when Culhane explained that a biodigester could turn their food waste and toilet waste into fuel and fertilizer – expertise he developed after building biodigesters all around the world – so he plans to build one for them in 2024 with a group of Mercy students. Students also met with EAFIT University to discuss how to scale change at the municipal level.

"When we take these trips and can have heart-to-heart talks about the challenges people face, we find our commonalities and start solving real problems," said Culhane. "This is absolutely the way to teach and the whole point of education."

Culhane has a long history at Mercy and a long history of leading service-learning trips. His mother, Hind Rassam Culhane, associate professor emerita in behavioral science, was the head of Mercy's social and behavioral sciences program starting in the 1970s; his father, John Culhane, was an adjunct professor who taught animation history at

“ When we take these trips and can have heart-to-heart talks about the challenges people face, we find our commonalities and start solving real problems.



Mercy; and Culhane began teaching online courses at Mercy in the early 2000s. In 2012, he returned to Mercy to found a sustainability program and also started the Environmental Sustainability and Justice Club (Envisaj). After experimenting with building biodigesters on Mercy's campus, he began taking students on short trips to build biodigesters in New York State and Pennsylvania. Soon, he was organizing service-learning trips for students to build biodigesters in Israel and Palestine. Once students realized the value of biodigesters, they planned a trip to bring biodigesters to their communities in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. "Pretty soon, we realized that there's not a skill that you can't teach through a travel abroad program," said Culhane. Since 2016, he has

worked for the University of South Florida–Tampa, but he is still teaching four classes per year at Mercy as well as leading Envisaj.

Culhane and Sidle plan to return to Medellín with another group of students over spring break in 2024. With a goal of incorporating more service into the trip, that group will spend at least two days building biodigesters for local organizations.

By the end of the trip, the students spoke of each other as "family." They recognized the depth of community in Medellín as well. "People came together to make a community in Medellín," said Belinda Asare '23, who graduated in the spring with a degree in biology. "In the end, that unity wins. If there's unity among the people, there will always be victory, even if it comes late."



# Setting a Course for Her Presidency

Q&A with President  
Susan L. Parish, Ph.D., M.S.W.



Photo by John Raiola

This summer, Mercy University welcomed its 13th President, Dr. Susan L. Parish, whose formal inauguration took place on September 22nd at the Westchester Campus. What follows are questions and answers excerpted from her first in-depth interview conducted in her new role.

**Q: Welcome, President Parish. What are your priorities as president of Mercy?**

**A:** I've established four priorities, and I've been sharing them with our community. All four are critically important to achieving our mission. First, we must ensure every student, regardless of their background, has an exceptional experience – in the classroom, with advising, in the dining halls, on the shuttle, across campus. Every student, every time – no exceptions. Second, we must double our on-time graduation rates. Across the country, most students do not graduate in four years. This is a travesty. We absolutely must set up the structures to ensure our students graduate on time, so they can enter their

professions and careers faster and with minimal debt. My third priority is to ensure Mercy is an excellent workplace for every employee, regardless of role or position in the institution. I want every faculty member and staff person to feel valued, appreciated, and respected. We need to work hard, but we can also be compassionate and kind to each other. Each of us determines the culture, and we each have a responsibility to create a welcoming workplace. My fourth priority relates to the sustainability of the institution, which I think about in two ways: environmental and financial. On the environmental side, Mercy should be a leader in educating the workforce for a changing economy that includes jobs that are addressing environmental sustainability. We also need to reduce the institution's



contributions to climate change. It is also critically important to address the financial sustainability of the institution.

**Q: Let's stay on the financial sustainability point. Eight private colleges in New York have closed within eight years, with three closing in 2023 alone. How do you think about this issue?**

**A:** In New York and around the country, colleges and universities are closing because they are not adapting to meet the needs and wishes of their students, and some of them have frankly been inadequate stewards of their resources. That will not be Mercy's path. But we must ensure we are radically student-centered, and we meet students where they are.

I intend to build upon the legacy of the leaders who preceded me of prudent management of resources and maintaining healthy enrollments so Mercy can continue to open its doors to future generations of Mavericks. A priority of our students is ensuring our tuition rates remain affordable. As an institution that relies upon those student tuition dollars to fund our operations, that means we must ensure each dollar we spend goes toward providing educational value and a top-notch experience for our students.

These priorities, while distinct, woven together will focus us as we move into the future as Mercy University. At a time when enrollments are declining across the northeast and other private colleges are struggling, it's even more apparent to me that this is what it will take not just to survive but to thrive. This fall at Mercy, we set a record for enrolling incoming full-time, first-year students. Now we must come together – as an engaged faculty and staff – to ensure we retain our students and help them to graduate on time.

**Q: How will you tackle the affordability issue?**

**A:** Part of what attracted me to Mercy was the Board of Trustees' long-standing commitment to keeping our tuition affordable. This means our tuition must remain well below our peers. And we must give students access to institutional aid and scholarships that keep their out-of-pocket expenses after federal and state grants at a minimum. To do this, however, it is imperative for us to work in partnership with alumni and friends to secure additional scholarship funding. We must be innovative about how we bring in revenue and to ensure we're sufficiently diversifying it beyond just the tuition dollars our students can afford to spend. I intend to aggressively leverage my support to ensure we increase the contributions from other sources of revenue, including grant funding, donor contributions and new and innovative programming.

To date, we have had a successful track record of earning state and federal grant funding - averaging \$9M per year - which we use to support faculty research, student scholarships, pilots of innovative student success initiatives, student-focused capital improvements (like the library learning commons or our laboratories). As a Hispanic-Serving Institution and a Minority-Serving Institution, we need to strategically apply for new awards that will support our priorities.

One of the ways we keep college affordable for students is through institutional scholarships, much of which are funded through the generosity of our donors. I've been fortunate to meet many alumni who have shared their

stories of how a Mercy education changed their lives, and often made their careers possible. I hope to build a culture where more alumni financially support scholarships, which in turn will enable us to transform the lives of future generations of Mavericks. To do this, we need to deliver on the value proposition I mentioned earlier as a priority.

**Q: What does student success mean to you?**

**A:** As I've mentioned, we must become radically student-centered, which is the embodiment of Mercy's mission, and confirmation of our beliefs that every student can succeed if given the right supports. Regarding student success, I want us to focus on four-year graduation, very high rates of retention, and meaningful careers with robust wages after graduation. Our students should enter careers in fields that they're excited about where they can have a purpose and fulfill their own goals and achieve their dreams.

Alumni, friends and community partners can be supportive in the latter regard by hiring our students, by providing internships, and by helping us create more experiential learning opportunities. Those things are critical because they help our students to experience the connections between what they're learning in the classroom and the workplace. This experiential strategy is one of the top things a university can do to both retain students and prepare them to be successful in their careers.

**Q: What programs underway at Mercy right now are you excited to continue?**

**A:** I've spent most of my career as a researcher, so I've been highly impressed with the Mercy Student Success Toolkit, which was developed from analysis of effective practices at other institutions. It is now time for us to create the next iteration of the Toolkit, evolving it to incorporate the cutting edge of effective practices in student success. I'm excited we will be hosting several summits this spring to invite faculty and staff to help create the next version of the Toolkit.

**Q: What are your thoughts about the value of a college education?**

**A:** If you read the papers and listen to the news, everyone understands that our country is struggling to believe that earning a college degree is worthwhile. To be honest, this makes me very sad. The research is so clear: earning a college degree is the best way to achieve economic mobility. I'm one of the people whose life was completely transformed by earning my undergraduate degree. The challenge is that higher education has not done a good job of explaining the value proposition, or of sharing the data in ways that are meaningful and understandable. When I was interviewing for this role, I was mesmerized by the hours of video footage available on Mercy's YouTube channel about the heroics of Mercy's students. Each one has a story of the not-so-straight path to college, the challenges they navigated while they were here, their achievements upon graduation, and the impact that had on their families and communities. The transformative power of college has not changed since Mercy opened its doors in 1950, and I've challenged our communications and alumni teams to continue to tell the stories of our students so we can encourage others to use the power of higher education to build their own destiny.



# Meeting the Growing Need for Nurses in Our Region and Beyond

New School. New Dean. New Spotlight on Health Equity.



Dr. Kenya Beard

Photo by John Raiola

This summer, Mercy announced the launch of a new School of Nursing and the appointment of Kenya V. Beard, Ed.D., AGACNP-BC, ANEF, FAAN, as the inaugural dean of the new school. The School of Nursing, which officially launched on July 1, 2023, enables Mercy to further enhance its nursing programs, better serve its students and help meet the growing need for nurses in the tri-state area and across the nation.

The School of Nursing houses Mercy's full suite of nursing programs, which were previously part of the School of Health and Natural Sciences. These include traditional four-year undergraduate prelicensure programs and an accelerated second-degree program for those with existing bachelor's degrees in other fields, and master's programs in Nursing Education, Nursing Administration and Family Nurse Practitioner studies.

"Organizing our Nursing programs within a School enables us to design and deliver more impactful learning opportunities for current and prospective students, and this is truly exciting," said Eva Fernández, Ph.D., provost and vice president of academic affairs for Mercy University. "With her background and expertise, Beard has already begun to enrich the School of Nursing's programs and help our students achieve success."

Beard is a proven leader and educator who has spent more than two decades in higher education working to narrow the academic achievement gap and strengthen workforce diversity in nursing. Prior to her appointment at Mercy, Beard served as associate provost at Chamberlain University. Her vision of strengthening the preparedness of faculty to meet the needs of today's nursing students resulted in the creation of the first Nurse Faculty Residency program in the country. The Harvard Macy Institute's Program for Educators in the Health Professions supports her workshop, "Leading in a Race-Conscious Society," and as a 2012 Macy Faculty Scholar, she founded the Center for Multicultural Education and Health Disparities.

"As an educator and a nurse, I recognize our critical role in preparing future nurses to meet the health care needs of our communities," said Beard.

“As an educator and a nurse, I recognize our critical role in preparing future nurses to meet the health care needs of our communities.”

There is an estimated need for more than 200,000 new registered nurses nationally each year through 2026 to replace retirees and fill new positions according to The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Mercy's School of Nursing programs prepare students to become registered professional nurses who will go on to work in the local community. In fact, many of our graduates go on to work in area hospitals, including Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York Presbyterian, New York University Langone, Northwell Health System, BronxCare Health System, New York City Health and Hospitals



Photo by Leslie Kahan

Corporation, Montefiore, White Plains Hospital and Westchester Medical Center.

Beard believes that nursing schools can help advance health equity by examining their policies around admissions criteria and graduation requirements, and the supports in place to help students graduate. She praised the access, affordable tuition and racial diversity at Mercy University’s School of Nursing as factors that will continue attracting diverse nursing students, which will ultimately help to improve diversity in the health care workforce.

“At Mercy, we value and appreciate difference,” she said, adding that this was one of the reasons she came to Mercy. “We take what students have and build on it. We create an opportunity for students to bring their lived experience into the classroom so that we can all grow and learn, so we can all be better



Photo by Leslie Kahan

and do better.”

Beard is committed to evaluating policies at the School of Nursing to ensure that they truly support student success and ultimately health equity. “I love knowing that Mercy University’s

School of Nursing will be a leader in creating evidence-based policies on best practices in helping students progress and graduate – and sharing them with colleagues across the globe,” she said.



Robert Carr, Eniola Ogunlade '23 and Kathie Carr at Mercy's 2023 Commencement Ceremony

Photo by Grad Images

# Success Over Adversity: “Give Back” Students Shine at Mercy

Eniola Ogunlade '23 has seen adversity. As the child of an incarcerated parent, her life has not been easy, yet she has refused to be defeated or defined by hardship. Instead, Ogunlade has turned her early struggles into a passion for helping others. Among her accomplishments: lobbying for a bill that would provide transportation for family members to visit incarcerated loved ones and working at an after-school program with children of incarcerated parents. “Because of what I experienced, I was always able to provide them with motivating words,” she said.

Ogunlade was already a fierce advocate on behalf of children of incarcerated parents when she was introduced to Give Back, an organization that provides mentoring and programming for high school students who have faced economic hardship and adversity, including foster care, homelessness or the incarceration of a parent. Give Back scholars are

also eligible for a full scholarship to one of its partner colleges. Mercy University is one of Give Back’s three higher education institution partners in New York.

“Getting the scholarship is just a weight lifted off my shoulders,” said Ogunlade. “As a first-generation student, I feel like I had to maneuver everything on my own. The fact that the money aspect was just taken away was a big relief. And I’m always grateful for that.”

President Emeritus Tim Hall, Mercy’s president when the partnership was established, highlighted similarities between the two institutions. “Give Back and Mercy have a lot in common. That’s one of the things that brought us together,” he said. “We’re both working in the area, helping students be successful. It’s not enough just to get them to college anymore. We understand what they want and need. And what we want is for them to graduate.”



Former Board Chairman Bruce Haber, Robert Carr, President Emeritus Tim Hall and Nicoll Baez '19 at the Give Back fund presentation.

Photo by Leslie Kahan

## Paying It Forward

Give Back was founded by Robert O. Carr, a prominent businessman and philanthropist, as a way of paying forward a scholarship he unexpectedly received as he was about to graduate from high school. To date, Give Back has enriched the lives of some 2,000 students across the country – an investment of more than \$85 million that sprang from a single gesture of generosity. In his book, “Profiles in Compassion: Volunteering for a Meaningful Life,” Carr wrote: “When I received the scholarship, it made me feel special [to know] somebody believed in me enough to invest in me. I vowed to myself that if I ever had extra money, I was going to use it for scholarships for other kids who had endured hardship.”

Indeed, the passion and commitment of its founder is reflected in the people who carry on Give Back’s mission. Jamal Williams, Give Back’s New York program manager, is charged with recruiting youth to the program, then connecting them with their dreams, accompanying them on visits to partner schools, and overseeing the mentorship and resources that will help shape their futures. Williams believes his work paves the way for disadvantaged youth to create their own success. “When I was growing up, so many people helped me become the man I am today,” he said. “My mentor told me, ‘You can never pay me back except by paying it forward.’ That’s what I’m trying to do with Give Back.”

## Lives Changed by Opportunity

“One of the greatest supports we provide our students is our PACT mentoring program. Every student that enters Mercy is assigned a personal mentor who makes almost weekly connections with our students,” said Kevin Joyce, Vice President of Student Affairs. “It’s more than just academic advising as it is done in many other schools, where you might see your advisor once or twice a semester. We’re a constant, connecting with students at every step of their education.”



Photo provided by GIVE BACK

Mrs. Robert Drake (right) of Lockport Women’s Club, presents two \$250 monetary scholarship awards to two Lockport Township High School students. Receiving the awards are, Robert Carr and Mary Marco.

Each of Mercy’s Give Back Scholars reveals a common thread: their lives have been changed by opportunities that might otherwise have passed them by. Nursing major Sandra Skwara ’25 remembers when, as a high school student, she longed to enroll in Mercy’s rigorous nursing program, despite knowing she couldn’t afford college without aid. Upon learning she qualified for a Mercy Give Back Scholarship, she said, “That sealed the deal – not having to worry about money. It’s given me a little more freedom so I can primarily focus on school.”

Michael Edosa ’25 has been coding software since middle school. He had hardly dared to dream about a career in software and game development until he became a Mercy Give Back Scholar. “That scholarship saved me and gave me a chance to succeed,” he said. Now in his third year as a mathematics and computer science major, Edosa’s dreams are within reach. “Mercy has helped me grow. I’m not the same person I was when I walked in here,” he said.

Today, Ogunlade has augmented her achievements with plans to pursue a teaching degree. By the time she crossed the Mercy stage to accept her diploma in May of

2023, she had served as Student Government Association president, had won three Mavie Awards for her enthusiastic participation in campus life, and had been tapped to deliver a student address. Her triumph was witnessed by her younger brother Oluwafikayom Ogunlade ’27, who is now a Mercy Give Back Scholar.

“That scholarship saved me and gave me a chance to succeed.”

Her parting words to the 2023 graduating class resonated with wisdom beyond her years. “Always remember that harsh circumstances don’t last,” she told them. “Never doubt your abilities, even in the face of failure. Be kind, speak out in favor of what you believe in, and most importantly, express your gratitude for your community by giving back to it.”

Her words echo the philosophy of her benefactor, Carr, who said: “In doing good for others, we have the chance to change lives – perhaps even save them – as well as nurture our own.”



# Better Patient Outcomes Through Interprofessional Education

A comprehensive approach to preparing future health care practitioners is transforming higher education. Studies have shown that interprofessional education (IPE), which fosters working in multidisciplinary teams in a variety of settings, strengthens core competencies and fosters effective communication. Perhaps most important, IPE results in better outcomes for patients.

Aided by a \$2.1 million grant awarded in 2022 by the U.S. Department of Education, through its Institutional Resilience and Expanded Postsecondary Opportunity (IREPO) program, Mercy launched a new initiative to utilize technology that will make IPE available to more students, more professions and more patients. This work has built upon the efforts of Mercy's IPE Committee, co-chaired by Irina Ellison, Ph.D., associate professor of health sciences and associate dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences; Nannette Hyland, P.T., Ph.D., professor and program director of physical therapy; and Kathleen Kenney-Riley, Ed.D., professor of nursing and a pediatric nurse practitioner. The committee, which has been active since 2015, is charged with designing and implementing Mercy's IPE program, with a long-term goal to grow and sustain the program at Mercy University.

Recently these three educational leaders sat down with Maverick Magazine to talk about their progress.

**Let's start by defining interprofessional education and explaining how it benefits students, practitioners and patient care.**



Photo by John Raiola

**Ellison:** When educators and learners from two or more health disciplines jointly create and foster a collaborative learning environment to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that result

in interprofessional team behaviors and competencies, that's interprofessional education. Through sharing best practices and communicating about each other's

roles and objectives, they learn how to work effectively as a team. The results are greater efficiencies, decreased medical errors and improved patient outcomes. At Mercy, we've introduced IPE concepts for health sciences students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It's never too early to begin grasping IPE's core competencies, such as teamwork, ethics and other valuable traits.

**Why is it important for colleges and universities to develop this educational practice?**

**Ellison:** Working across disciplines and understanding the roles and responsibilities of different providers is more than just a good idea to improve patient outcomes – it's a requirement for accreditation in the health professions.



Photo by John Raiola

**Hyland:** We introduced IPE at Mercy in 2015, shortly after the World Health Organization issued the first IPE standards. Since then, we've undergone specialized training to design programs that

incorporate these principles. We started with the School of Health and Natural Science, which then included nursing, and this year we will work with the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Mercy's new School of Nursing.



Photo provided by Kenney-Riley

**Kenney-Riley:** We've developed a variety of interdisciplinary experiences for hands-on learning, and created practice settings that reflect the world students will navigate

as professionals. Working in teams, the students develop skills in patient assessment, critical thinking, communication and other interventions based on specific patient scenarios.

### ***How is interprofessional education woven throughout the curriculum?***

**Kenney-Riley:** To reach students across all programs and at all levels, we've mapped the curriculum to expose students to IPE at various points in their education. For example, students work with multi-disciplinary teams to practice seamless transitions in health care settings. That's the point at which one shift goes off duty and another comes on. Everyone needs to be clear about roles and responsibilities, whatever their specialty, to avoid mistakes or missed cues.

### ***Aside from the curriculum, what other IPE activities do you employ?***

**Ellison:** We've created learning experiences that mirror the key concepts of IPE, such as the common book read, the poverty simulation exercise, medical missions and simulated medical cases. Each semester we select a nonfiction account of a timely health issue. We invite the School of Health and Natural Sciences community to read the book and we hold a panel discussion made up of members of a multi-disciplinary health care team, including patients and family members, to share their experiences and insights with our students and faculty. There's tremendous value in hearing different perspectives on health issues and in brainstorming ways to improve the experience for everyone.

**Kenney-Riley:** The poverty simulation is an immersion experience that sensitizes participants to the realities of living below the poverty line. Students in the health sciences learn how to work with other disciplines – mental health, social services and more. The activity opens a dialogue about ways to collectively address the problems associated with poverty. Students and faculty in the School of Education and the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences have been invited to participate this year.

**Hyland:** Last spring, we resumed our humanitarian medical missions. Students and faculty from different disciplines formed teams that traveled to the Dominican Republic to provide free medical care in underserved areas.

### ***How is IPE learning applied to clinical rotations?***

**Hyland:** Currently, our Speech and Language Pathology (SLP), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) students conduct their clinical rotations in local practices. Mercy University also has an onsite PT and Speech clinic where students serve the Mercy community. We'd like to introduce an interprofessional clinic with an emphasis on collaboration.

**Ellison:** Simulations offer students the opportunity to practice clinical skills before working on real patients. That can be done virtually or with standardized patients, who are actors trained to display symptoms. Student-practitioner teams perform various duties such as taking health histories or developing discharge plans. Recently

Photo provided by Irina Ellison



we've partnered with Marc Palmieri, assistant professor of communication studies, who also advises the student theatre club at Mercy. Student actors portray patients with symptoms of an illness or injury. It becomes a learning laboratory for everyone involved.

### ***What type of community service are the students doing?***

**Hyland:** We're working with Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), a national program of projects that employ IPE approaches to eliminate health care disparities. We've also partnered with the Yonkers Office of Aging on a project to help elderly, low-income residents who want to age in place.

**Kenney-Riley:** Organizations like the Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions (ASAHP) have helped with the recent launch of our 15-week initiative called Improving the Health of Seniors Through Interprofessional Health Management. Students in the family nurse practitioner (FNP) and physical therapy programs will work with older adults in areas of safety, medications, activities of daily living and so forth.

### ***What does the future hold for Mercy's IPE program?***

**Ellison:** We constantly look for new ways to improve the health of a community, and with each success our work spreads to neighboring communities, too. We're grateful for the various grants that helped us accomplish so much. We hope to continue coordinating our efforts and expanding our reach even further.

**Hyland:** Students learn better with experiential learning, and working with communities often leads them to practice in those communities. One of the beautiful things about Mercy is our diversity, and our program takes aim at the health disparities that threaten diversity.

**Kenney-Riley:** We've done good work so far, launching some important community initiatives that involve more students in interprofessional experiences. We're doing all we can to develop the infrastructure and support we need to build out our IPE program so it can really take off.



# Teaching, Learning and Giving Back 7,000 Miles From Home

Two Mercy professors traveled over 7,000 miles from home in summer of 2023 to bring their expertise to teachers teaching children with autism in India – and return to their roots. In August, Sudha Ramaswamy, Ph.D., associate professor of special education and chair of the School of Education’s Department of Special Education and Educational Leadership, and Roseanne Vallice Levy, Ph.D., the School of Education’s associate dean for academic affairs and assistant professor of special education, traveled to Bangalore, India to conduct training and research at Behavior Momentum India (BMI), a network of private clinics across India that serve children with autism. Given their deep expertise in special education and teacher preparation, BMI’s clinical director invited them to train teachers in India to improve students’ reading performance.

In collaboration with Amy Davies Lackey, Ph.D., executive director of education at the Manhattan Children’s Center, Ramaswamy and Levy trained elementary-level teachers in Reading Mastery, a Direct Instruction program, which is a highly structured instructional

methodology designed to accelerate student learning. “Direct Instruction is evidence-based practice in our field, and we also know from our own experience as special educators that it is highly effective for students,” said Ramaswamy.

Upon arriving in Bangalore, Ramaswamy and Lackey led five days of Reading Mastery training. BMI flew in teachers from the Middle East and throughout South Asia to attend the training in person. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. “The teachers were so enthusiastic and eager to learn about Direct Instruction,” said Ramaswamy. “We made sure that the training was very interactive with a lot of hands-on practice, and I think that was quite different from how the teachers were used to being trained.”

Though experts in their fields, Ramaswamy and Levy intentionally maintained a learning orientation. “We went into this project not only as teacher educators and scholars but also as learners since it’s a brand-new experience for us to work with teachers in India,” explained Levy. “We began by learning about the teachers and their cultures, rather than simply imposing our American mindset about how training works. By doing that work upfront, we were able to ensure that the training addressed the needs

Photo by  
Roseanne Vallice Levy





of the teachers and their students. Even though we teach our teacher candidates at Mercy to do this, it was a much-needed reminder to practice this ourselves.”

Alongside their work with teachers in India, Ramaswamy and Levy took the opportunity to plan two research studies: one led by Ramaswamy on the training’s effect on students’ reading skills and the other led by Levy on teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness and confidence in teaching reading to students with autism.

Levy began the first stage of her study before leaving for India by conducting a survey and a round of virtual interviews with BMI teachers to measure the teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness and confidence teaching reading to students with autism before the training. She will conduct another survey and a second round of interviews midway through the year and a final round at the end of the year to assess the extent to which these perceptions have changed over time.

Ramaswamy gathered baseline student performance data as well and will gather that same data at the end of the year to evaluate the extent to which Reading Mastery training and curriculum made a difference in students’ reading skills.

The trip also offered a unique opportunity for Ramaswamy and Levy to return to the country where their families came from – Ramaswamy’s family from the Tamil Nadu area and Levy’s family from Kerala. They both felt humbled to support Indian teachers and students. “To do important work with teachers and students in India, especially supporting students with disabilities, and to return to our families’ country of origin – this project is a dream come true!” said Levy.

Ramaswamy and Levy were able to fund their trip thanks to two grants – one awarded by the Mercy University Faculty Development Committee and



Photo provided by Sudha Ramaswamy

another by the Engelmann Foundation, which supports the development of educators implementing Direct Instruction with their students. The grants supported the purchase of Reading Mastery kits for the BMI teachers. “We were particularly excited to be able to give kits to the teachers because they are quite expensive to purchase otherwise,” said Ramaswamy. “Though there has been progress in recent years, there are still lots of barriers that affect the educational opportunities of children with autism in India, including a lack of funding.”

**“ Education can help lift children and entire families out of poverty, so the potential reach is huge.**

They hope to inspire Mercy students to find ways to give back in their daily work in schools. “In India, we found a community of learners and teachers who would not have otherwise had access to this type of instruction,” said Ramaswamy. “But teachers encounter marginalized populations everywhere. We must



Photo provided by Roseanne Vallice Levy

teach our teacher candidates to look within themselves to see how they can make the world a better place for the students they support, the parents they interact with and the colleagues they work with. They must think about how to use the skills they gain at Mercy to improve outcomes for marginalized populations no matter where they’re teaching.”

Ramaswamy and Levy are hopeful that their collaboration with BMI clinics will continue and expand over time. “Education can help lift children and entire families out of poverty, so the potential reach is huge,” said Ramaswamy. “This is just the beginning of this project, so we’ll see where things go from here.”



# Securing the Future

## Mercy's Cybersecurity Program Renews its Standing of Excellence

The Mercy Cybersecurity Education Center (MCEC) has been a model of excellence since its inception in 2008. Now that reputation has been reaffirmed by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security. Mercy recently received official redesignation as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Defense Education (CAE-CDE). Two Mercy delegates – Professor Zhixiong Chen, Ph.D., director of the MCEC, and Peter West, Ph.D., dean of the School of Liberal Arts – traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina, to receive the honor and meet with fellow members of the CAE community.



Dean Peter West

Photo by John Raiola

“Mercy is proud to have been awarded this redesignation,” said West. “While it’s a great honor, it also affords Mercy a greater opportunity to contribute to the advancement of our national security.”

This marks the second time the MCEC has undergone the rigorous redesignation process. “The field of cybersecurity is changing rapidly and exponentially,” said Chen, who assumed the role of program director this fall. “Every designated center must constantly review the impact on its community and its curriculum, updating and keeping pace with new knowledge and technology as it develops.”

“We offer a Bachelor of Science, a Master of Science and a rare five-year dual-degree program,” said Professor John Yoon, Ph.D., who directed the cybersecurity degree programs during the redesignation process.

“We prepare students for in-demand careers as well as leadership positions in business, technology, health care and a host of other fields.” A new bridge program we signed with New York University offers a pathway for students without a science or computer background who seek a master’s degree in cybersecurity computer science.

In 2022, the program was awarded a two-year \$465,398 grant from the NSA with a twofold mandate: design a method of reducing infrastructural gaps that threaten information systems and develop an academic program to deliver the new technology. “Our goal is to train students to detect and neutralize threats, deny access to intruders, and address future gaps in security systems,” said Yoon.

Mercy’s Cybersecurity Program mandate is to address security breaches carried out by hackers or other criminal agents seeking access to sensitive information of individuals, corporations and governments, either for profit or to compromise the infrastructure. “Cyber Threat Analytics,” a special topic master’s level course that trains students in state-of-the-art techniques used to detect and manage insider threats in multiple scenarios, was introduced in 2022.

“Every business entity needs cybersecurity. Professionals with the level of safety and security training and skills we teach at Mercy are in high demand,” said Yoon.

Chen pointed out an added benefit of joining the CAE-CDE’s elite cadre of designated centers: the opportunity to gather and share best practices. “As the field advances, so do the ways in which security systems can be breached. The redesignation requirements also become more complex every year, so exchanging information with colleagues is vital to our progress,” he said.

To sustain the program’s cutting-edge technology and best practices, the MCEC, in collaboration with faculty in the cybersecurity degree programs, regularly hosts events and challenges, both virtual and in-person. Cyber skills competitions,



Photo by Leslie Kahan Photography

“ We are always trying out new ideas. Our collegial and professional community is vital, and it’s growing.”

hackathons and student research forums, faculty professional development and even a cyber camp for faculty and students, have not only moved the Center toward greater prominence but have also raised public awareness. “We’re thankful for the recognition we’ve received, including grants that have helped us expand our offerings,” said Chen.

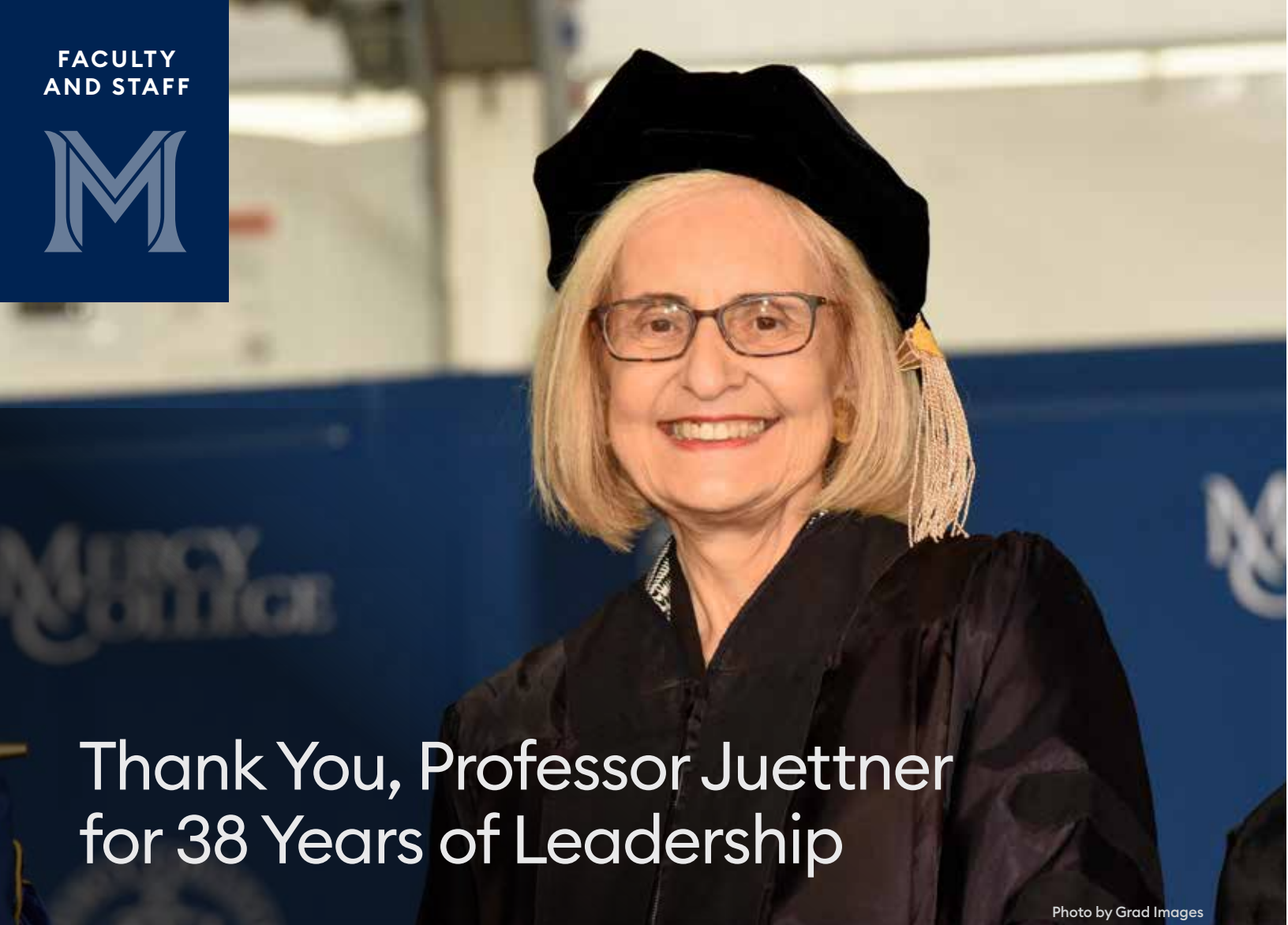
Currently, the average salary for information security analysts in New York is over six figures, and cybersecurity job openings are expected to increase 32% by

2028. While the market is booming, job seekers must satisfy rigorous requirements for certification – an essential requirement for landing the first job leading to a lucrative, satisfying career. “Our program includes students who switched majors from health care, law, and liberal arts,” said Yoon. “And a growing number of our students include people who have left established careers that were no longer satisfying.”

The MCEC is now renewing its focus on workforce development. “We are partnering with other

colleges as well as corporations like IBM Skills Academy,” said Chen. “And we’re staying in touch with our alumni.” Graduates of Mercy’s Cybersecurity Program have landed high-profile positions with employers such as the NSA, Columbia Medical School, the U.S. Government and Lockheed Martin. Other graduates are working in legal firms and the courts, in education, business and the arts. “Our alumni need to constantly update their skills and knowledge, and we try to provide that value. We want them to feel proud of what they learned at Mercy,” said Chen.

“Staying nimble and relevant is vital to the success of our program,” said Yoon. “We are always trying out new ideas. Our collegial and professional community is vital, and it’s growing.”



## Thank You, Professor Juettner for 38 Years of Leadership

Photo by Grad Images

When Diana D'Amico Juettner, J.D., H.D. '23, professor of legal studies, announced she was retiring after a 38-year teaching career at Mercy College (now Mercy University), the news traveled quickly. It was a watershed moment for anyone who knew, worked with or learned from Juettner, who not only taught law and mediation for most of her life, but was also a practicing lawyer, a fierce negotiator and a dedicated public servant.

In a fitting tribute at Mercy's 2023 Commencement, Juettner received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. "Each one of you has a special gift you bring to the world, something no one else can share. And you may be surprised what you learn from them in return," she told the assembled graduates.

Juettner, who retired from her faculty position in June, expressed deep appreciation for her students and colleagues as well as for the many opportunities Mercy provided that enabled her to make a positive impact. Describing her career as "a source of great joy and satisfaction," she added, "I hope to be remembered as someone who truly loved her work."

In 1985, Juettner was a practicing attorney hired to teach business law and paralegal studies at Mercy's former White Plains Campus. She called the appointment "the fulfillment of a long-held dream." Within a few years she had advanced from adjunct to full-time faculty, teaching legal studies, government studies and conflict management.

It wasn't long before Juettner's leadership qualities began to emerge. During her tenure she served in numerous positions that tapped her wisdom, good judgment and mediation skills. In addition to serving as president of the Faculty Senate and as Interim Dean of the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SSBS), she served during various periods as program director and division or department chair. She maintained an active presence as the faculty representative on the Development Committee of Mercy's Board of Trustees and on the Racial Equity and Inclusion Committee established by the School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHNS). In her community of Greenburgh, New York, she was a driving force behind civic projects while serving for almost 30 years as a Greenburgh town councilwoman.

But what Juettner speaks of most often, and with pride, was her role in creating a Mercy course called “Managing Human Conflict.” Working with fellow faculty members Arthur Lerman, Ph.D., and Dorothy Balancio ’68, Ph.D., she helped design a course that would teach average citizens how to settle small disputes without incurring the need for costly and time-consuming litigation. The three took turns teaching the class while continuing to perfect their material and approach. “It evolved as we did, which meant we were adding new stuff every year,” Juettner said. The program today – a 15-credit New York State-approved certificate in dispute resolution – boasts more than 500 alumni of the course, and all because of Juettner and her colleagues’ passion for “helping people resolve conflicts in a constructive way.”

Lerman, now professor emeritus of political science and history, recalled Juettner’s singular qualities as a teacher and a sage interpreter of the law. “Diana always showed a remarkable talent for humanizing stereotypes,” Lerman said. “She was known as the ‘voice of calm and reason,’ helping maintain positive relations even when difficult emotions arose. Virtually every trainee reported a positive impact on their own behavior and their interpersonal relationships.”

“Arthur and I were lucky to work with Diana. We all benefited from her extensive experience as a legal studies program director, practicing lawyer, elected official, and volunteer mediator and arbitrator,” Balancio recalled. “Her compassion and dedication to student success never failed to shine through in her work. Through our commitment to team-teaching and collaborative learning, this revolutionary interdisciplinary program has achieved remarkable success.”

As a councilwoman, Juettner initiated or supported numerous public projects that earned her the Commissioner’s Community Service Award for her contributions to the town. Paul Feiner, Greenburgh town supervisor, called her “a hard-working councilwoman who was very responsive to constituent concerns, and who always tried to put people first. She cared deeply about programming for seniors, and she fought hard for several initiatives that would not have occurred without her leadership.”



“ Sometimes you have no idea what impact you’ll have until a former student comes back and tells you something that blows your mind. Some just say, ‘I’ll never forget you.’ That’s the kind of thanks I will carry with me.



Photos provided by Dorothy Balancio '68

Recently Juettner set up a scholarship fund for Mercy students. “I wanted to help the students who might not qualify for full tuition, but who could use a little extra money to help them through the semester,” she said. The Diana and Paul Juettner Endowed Scholarship is so named in tribute to her late husband, Paul Juettner, J.D., who for many years taught legal studies and the conflict management course at Mercy.

“My husband was a patent and trademark attorney by profession, but he was also an enthusiastic teacher,” said Juettner. “He believed it was important for the law to be crafted by people from every culture and walk of life.” Before his passing in

2014, Paul gifted his alma mater, St. John’s University in Minnesota, with a modest student scholarship. “We both felt a strong pull toward helping students who struggle, so I took his idea and turned it into an endowed scholarship for Mercy students,” Juettner said.

As the former law professor considers a future that she hopes will include some form of teaching, she reflected on her legacy. “Sometimes you have no idea what impact you’ll have until a former student comes back and tells you something that blows your mind,” Juettner said. “Some just say, ‘I’ll never forget you.’ That’s the kind of thanks I will carry with me.”



# Business Faculty Drive Innovation and Insight into Four Key Areas

Mercy’s School of Business faculty actively contribute to advancing their respective fields through impressive scholarship. Their research informs critical decisions that affect the business environment and our everyday lives. These research endeavors also influence classroom curricula, ensuring that Mercy students graduate with a deep understanding of the latest trends and behaviors in the business world.

Four School of Business faculty research projects are highlighted below.

## 1 AI and Machine Learning in Financial Services Compliance

Assistant Professor John Power, DBA, is investigating the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for improving compliance in financial services. His work aims to uncover how AI’s pattern recognition capabilities could enhance the role of compliance officers.

Power is a former Wall Street executive and entrepreneur. Before coming to Mercy, he was responsible for stabilizing companies in financial distress.

“A critical piece of compliance is monitoring behavior,” Power said. “As AI enters more mainstream businesses, we are finding that machine learning can help reduce the potential for wrongdoing by enabling compliance officers to keep up with vast amounts of data.”

His research seeks to determine how the pattern recognition capabilities of AI can support compliance officers working in the financial services field. Power also aims to assess AI technology’s compliance integration potential. Among his findings were a series of identifiers that can help compliance professionals use AI more effectively.



Photo by Leslie Kahan

## 2 Breaking the “Model Minority” Stereotype

Associate Professor Li Yong, Ph.D., challenges the stereotype of Chinese Americans as a “model minority” by studying class structures of Chinese immigrants in their adaptation to American society.

“The model minority concept refers to Asian Americans’ perceived high levels of socioeconomic success through their cultural values, work ethic and stable family structure,” said Yong, who was born in China and educated in the U.S. “We wanted to look at those different classes of Chinese immigrants for commonalities as well as how each group differs from the others.”

Yong and a colleague, Chelsea Yi-Hsuan Kuo, Ph.D., assistant professor and director of behavioral science in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, conducted interviews and focus groups with three groups of Chinese immigrants in the New York area: working class wage earners; middle class professionals; and immigrants with personal wealth from investments or businesses.

“We found, against our intuition, that working-class immigrants integrated well into their

new culture,” Yong said. “They use technology to help them connect with communities and overcome the language barrier.” The findings also showed middle-class immigrants, heavily focused on work, often feel out of place. Wealthy Chinese Americans, they found, tend to stick with other affluent families while retaining ties with their network in China. “They don’t feel a strong need to adapt to American culture to be successful,” said Yong.



Photo provided by Li

Beyond breaking the “model minority” stereotype, the research highlights that all immigrants follow unique paths and reveals areas for intervention. Yong emphasized the need to better support first-generation Chinese American students, as working-class immigrants often lack the time and resources to help their children pursue education. “There is more we can do for first-generation students. All immigrants want to live a better life, and we hope our findings help make that happen.”

### 3 Monitoring Costs and Consequences of Waste Management

“The U.S. is among the top three countries in the world for the amount of waste we generate,” said Assistant Professor Naushad Kollikkathara, Ph.D., who has developed a novel metric for measuring the costs of municipal solid waste collection and recycling.

The “waste recycling efficiency metric” conveys both veracity and utility for making decisions through performance benchmarks. The findings from applying the metric provide greater insight into the true picture of waste generation and recycling performance of a region.

Establishing waste management operations for a region involves heavy financial investments. Addressing this concern, Kollikkathara also developed a predictive analytics model for regional solid waste generation with the aim of helping decision-makers identify opportunities to reduce costs and their carbon footprint.



Photo by Joy Yagid

“Our predictive model uses unusual factors, such as income, education, even life expectancy in a region, to make more accurate predictions that are based on socio-demographic characteristics, not just the amount of waste,” he explained.

Kollikkathara, who emigrated to the U.S. from India to pursue his graduate and doctoral studies, sees much overlap between his research and the classroom. “When my students see the power in their hands through analytical tools such as the waste recycling efficiency metric and the methodologies we’ve discussed, I enjoy seeing their faces light up.”

## 4 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investing Research

In their research, assistant professor Zach Williams, M.B.A., Ph.D., and Heather Apollonio, M.B.A. '23 and Mercy's Director, Advancement Services and Prospect Management – delve into the challenges of ESG investing. They question the reliability of current ESG rating methodologies and emphasize the need for better understanding for investors in this growing field.

Williams and Apollonio contend that a positive ESG rating does not necessarily correlate with a company's financial performance and that it is challenging to assess the relevance of ESG rating components across various industries.

“There’s a lot of valuable data that goes into compiling ESG scores, but investors need to understand that ESG disclosures are voluntary and scoring methodologies vary between vendors. Anyone interested in pursuing an ESG-informed investment strategy should be taking a more nuanced approach that does not solely rely on one aggregate score,” Apollonio explained.

Williams emphasized the significance of their research: “Our work aims to enhance the understanding of ESG ratings for investors, given that ESG investments have reached \$35.3 trillion, representing 35.9% of all professionally managed assets, as per the Global Sustainable Investment Review.”

The wide-ranging research conducted by Mercy's School of Business faculty reflects a commitment to addressing the relevant social, environmental and financial concerns impacting our communities.



Photo by John Raiola



Photo provided by Apollonio

# Global Teammates with a Singular Winning Mindset



Photos by Brian Foley

The students on this year's women's volleyball team at Mercy University aren't just learning how to beat their Division II rivals. They're also learning about each other, coming together as a team and picking up a little Portuguese and Caribbean Spanish along the way. One member of the 14-woman squad is from Brazil, one is from the Dominican Republic and six are from Puerto Rico. All 14 have a hunger to win and an enthusiasm for learning about their teammates' cultures.

"The fact that we're so diverse helps a lot," says team co-captain Larissa Schneid, a Mercy senior who is from Brazil. "We all talk to each other openly about one another's culture, and that makes you feel really welcomed and accepted. We laugh together, dance together, and we're so comfortable with each other, we've really become a family. And Coach Ana, she's there for us, which helps those with family in other countries so far away."

Coach Ana Todorovic, who is Serbian; played five years for the national team of Serbia and played professionally there for 17 years, before coming to America more than a decade ago.

Coincidentally, Todorovic explored coaching at Mercy nine years before she was hired here. "(Assistant Vice President for Athletics) Matt Kilcullen said to me, 'Do you know that you emailed me nine years ago?' I didn't remember, but I went back to check my emails and I did email him, and he did email me back."

"Ana came to us very highly recommended by our former Coach Gary Preston," commented Kilcullen. "I thought I remembered her name and lo and behold, I came across the email I sent her. Ana has done a tremendous job with the program in



Coach Ana Todorovic



the short time she has been here. I'm very happy that we reconnected!"

Todorovic joined Mercy last year and led the team to its best season since 2005; it marked the first-time women's volleyball was back in the NCAA regional rankings. At press time, the team secured a spot in the East Coast Conference (ECC) tournament semifinal.

"We're still in the game, fighting for a spot in the playoffs," says Todorovic. "The other teams in the East Coast Conference are all getting stronger every year. We've practiced a lot, and the players are all so hungry for more."

"Volleyball has been my passion since I was a little kid," says team co-captain Yarianne Gonzalez '24, who shares a dorm room with Schneid. "I enjoy the feeling of playing as a team with other girls who have the same passion I do. Being from Puerto Rico, I was excited to learn more English. And I'm becoming fluent in Portuguese!" Gonzalez has accumulated some impressive honors at Mercy: In 2021 she was named First Team All ECC and in 2022 she was the Co-Setter of the Year in the ECC. (The setter is the team player who sets up the ball so that her teammate can smash it over the net.) Gonzalez is majoring in Health Science Promotion and says she hopes to play professionally in Puerto Rico when she graduates.

For Schneid, who has been playing volleyball since she was nine years old growing up in São Paulo, Brazil, playing for Mercy has been a rewarding experience as both an athlete and a student. "I love the Mercy campus, the location. From the beginning I was really comfortable here. In Brazil we don't have the chance to study and play for a school, you have to choose one or the other. For me it has been so nice to play for my school, to play the sport that I love. I definitely like the scholar-athlete model. You're a student first and an athlete second. At Mercy you get a lot of support for both."

**“ We all talk to each other openly about one another’s culture, and that makes you feel really welcomed and accepted.**

Being a team co-captain helps her with leadership and guidance skills, both of which she says come naturally to her. "I work a lot to put the team's performance above my own performance. That makes me a better person, to be proactive in helping my teammates." Schneid rounds out her Mercy experience by indulging in the great New York experience as well: Niagara Falls, New York Yankees games, Broadway and Rockefeller Center during the holidays.

"All the opportunities I've had here at Mercy – no one can take them from me. This cannot be taught, and it can't be bought – it's priceless. Each time it

makes me happier for having chosen it."

In volleyball, there are six players on the court at any given time, but there's a "7th player" with them always: the crowd, which they're excited to say is growing. "Now we're bringing the awareness across more, Mercy is really on top of it, we're feeling more united with the school," says Schneid.





# From Ecuador to the ESPYs

## Business Honor Student Ronny Delgado '24

Mercy University business honors student Ronny Delgado '24 has a list of accomplishments that would make any family proud. Not only is he a top student at Mercy, Delgado also serves as a volunteer soccer coach and mentor to disadvantaged youth in the South Bronx. At ESPN's 2023 ESPY Awards ceremony, Delgado received honorable mention for the Billie Jean King Youth Leadership Award for his role in improving communities through sport.

But Delgado has never been one to brag about his success. A native of Ecuador, he and his older brother were very young when their father emigrated to the U.S. Both parents worked multiple jobs for 13 years before the family could reunite in America. Shy by nature and overwhelmed by the language barrier, 16-year-old Delgado struggled to adapt. "That first year was really tough," he recalled. "I could barely leave our apartment."

He found solace and redemption in soccer. "I'd been playing soccer in Ecuador from the age of 6. When we moved here, I looked for a way to keep playing," he said. He discovered South Bronx United (SBU), a nonprofit organization that promotes youth development through sport. Before long he was volunteering as a coach and mentor to young athletes, many of whom endured similar disadvantages.

Delgado learned about Mercy University from an SBU counselor who encouraged him to apply for the Business Honors Program. "Being a business honors student has helped me realize I'm capable of a lot of things I once believed I couldn't do," he said. Inspired by his professors'



success in the business world, he was equally energized by the competitiveness of his fellow students. "They motivated me to work harder and that brought out my best."

Kelly Blacker, assistant professor of accounting at Mercy, has witnessed Delgado's determination and drive in class. "The business curriculum is not easy. It takes effort and dedication," she recalled. "But from day one, Ronny was an exceptional student – very focused, and he never missed a class." She noted that he formed several study groups, often drawing in students who were struggling with the material. "I could see he had the makings of a leader," she said.

Today, Delgado's work with the immigrant community has become his passion. "I want to offer more opportunities to people who believe they don't have a future," he said. He accepted an offer to work for one year with Up2Us Sports, a national sports-based program for youth in under-resourced urban communities. He also helped the SBU raise \$200,000 for programs that provide opportunities to every player, regardless of their

family's ability to pay.

Recently Delgado expressed gratitude for his Mercy mentors, including those who encouraged him to apply for the Billie Jean King award. What's more, he was tapped for a prestigious internship with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Manhattan. Of the two summers he has spent working with partners, directors and managers of the accounting firm, he said, "It was a great experience that allowed me to gain confidence in what's next for my career."

Having seen his own family's tireless efforts to support their children's dreams, Delgado said he feels empathy toward the parents of his young soccer players. "Kids want their parents to be proud of them, but they often don't realize how much their parents sacrificed to make those opportunities possible," he said. "I want every kid to look up to their parents as role models."

He said his greatest joy is when a parent thanks him. "Some even say, 'I hope my kid will grow up to be like you one day,'" he said, visibly moved. That makes it all worthwhile.

# Alumni Survey 2023

Thank you to those of you who participated in our recent alumni survey that was conducted in the spring of 2023. We received responses from nearly 800 alumni from the Classes of 1965-2022. We're here to keep you connected to Mercy and to each other. You provided valuable feedback on your experiences while a student at Mercy, your experiences as alumni, and what type of programming and communications you prefer. Mercy will continue to use the data from the survey to deliver an excellent experience to alumni and students. Below is a snapshot of the results.



How would you rate your decision to attend Mercy?

90%

of respondents say it was a **good** or **great** decision to attend Mercy.

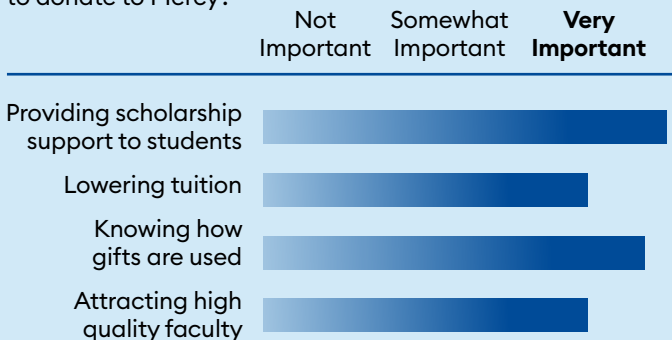
Alumni since graduation have:

- 44% earned at least one additional credential
- 38% earned a promotion at the same company
- 36% earned an advanced degree
- 34% been hired into a new role at a different company
- 13% considered themselves to be an entrepreneur
- 12% been in a senior executive role

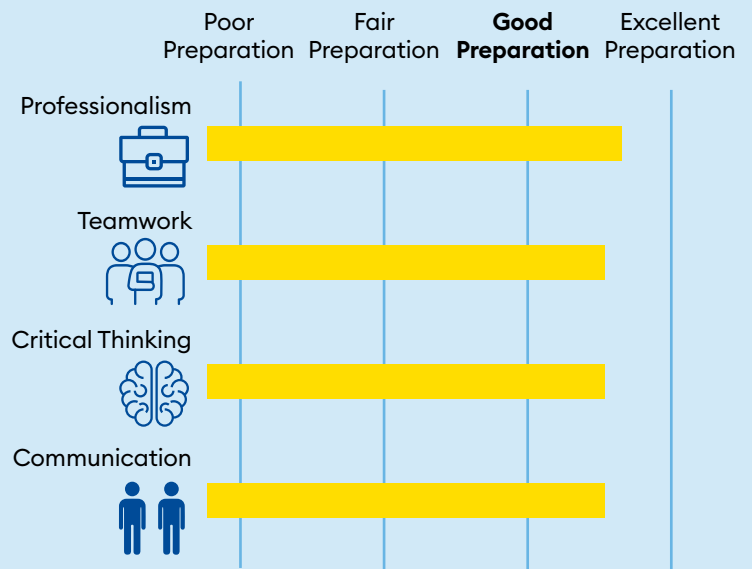
Mercy programs and activities that had a special impact on Alumni's experience as students:

Occupational therapy  
 Founders Day  
 Theatre Club MSOL student teaching The Impact  
 Student Government  
 Psychology Nursing Student Teaching  
 TESOL Baseball STEM Program  
 Model UN  
 Orientation Leader  
 PA program

How important are the following in making a decision to donate to Mercy?



How well did Mercy prepare you in each of these transferable skills?





# Jen San Juan '18 Hits It Out of the Park for Women in Professional Sports

Photos provided by Jen San Juan '18

Jen San Juan '18 grew up with a love of baseball. A native of San Francisco, her love of the game began to take root alongside a family of die-hard San Francisco Giants fans. Little did she know that lifelong passion would guide her to a dream job in the Giants organization as manager of external affairs.

At age seven, she was playing in South San Francisco's baseball league on her first team as the only girl. Tough-willed and determined, the obstacles of being a girl in a sport dominated by boys did not turn her away. Excelling at that sport even helped

land her the cover of *U.S. News and World Report* when she was just eight years old. "The stereotype is that girls play softball and boys play baseball," said San Juan.

Reaching high school and contemplating her athletic path into college, San Juan said a decision became inevitable to switch to softball. Applying to colleges, San Juan faced fierce competition in the softball recruitment process. Several offers came through from other schools, but their softball teams were Division III, and then Mercy's offer came in for their Division II softball team.

Far from her California home, moving to attend college was daunting, but San Juan was soon won over. “The main thing that led me was the scholarship at Mercy, in addition to the opportunities to be able to study business with a concentration in sport management and be near and in New York City,” said San Juan. Packing her bags, she set off for New York with a steady eye toward her dreams. “I didn’t have any family or friends out there, so it was tough, but I was very focused,” San Juan admits.

As an athlete enrolled in the Business Honors program, San Juan saw unlimited opportunity at Mercy. In her sophomore year, she made the difficult decision to stop playing on the team to dedicate time towards internships that could help her level up her experience in professional sports. “At that point being dialed-in to the importance of advancing my internship and work experience, it just made sense,” said San Juan.

She landed her first internship on the business development team of a startup called Krossover which focused on providing analytics based on video for sports teams and athletes. The experience sharpened her skillset and inspired her toward other opportunities at Mercy, one of which included studying in Greece spring semester of her junior year.

Her biggest internship break would come while working in a frozen yogurt shop a short distance from the Westchester Campus. Spotting a customer with a Major League Baseball (MLB) shirt logo, she saw her chance. She told him about her interest and her previous experience, and a door opened to her next internship – this time with MLB. “I was lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time,” she said. Starting as a labor relations intern, she worked her way into supporting the youth department then working in the marketing and advertising department – an experience San Juan believed to be life-changing.

Today, as one of an increasing number of women working for professional sports franchises, San Juan feels very much like a trail for women is being blazed before her eyes. She is managing projects that include neighborhood and citywide engagement to expand the footprint and impact of San Francisco’s baseball team. San Juan is a key team member helping develop and launch Mission Rock, a mixed-use commercial and residential waterfront neighborhood just steps away from Oracle Park designed to further connect the baseball team with their community. The magnitude of her role at such a young age (she’s about to turn 28) is not lost on her. “I have a sense of pride and accomplishment as a first-generation college student particularly,” said San Juan. Her parents, Filipino immigrants, and three siblings were a major motivator all the way along her journey.

Still in touch with a few Mercy friends and teammates, she is quick to point out Mercy’s stamp on her career that remains in her heart. She fondly remembers many trips she made back and forth from the Westchester Campus into Manhattan and the sense that she was making steps toward her dream. San Juan credits her alma mater and many professors with reminding her the impossible she desired was possible. “If there’s something you set your mind to, there’s a path toward it - even if it’s not a linear path,” said San Juan.

“ The stereotype is that girls play softball and boys play baseball.





Photos provided by Terry Davis CNR SAS '73

## Community Service Energizes CNR Alumna After Television Stardom

In the heyday of television soap operas, Terry Davis CNR SAS '73 became a household name playing April Cavanaugh Scott on ABC's "Edge Of Night." Davis' first major break as a young actress was something she called "a magical experience." Yet, she credits the very road that led her to that exciting career to her time as a student at the College of New Rochelle.

"Given my dramatic flair I really gravitated toward and connected with Props and Paint," said Davis, who eagerly joined CNR's theater group her freshman year – a place where she said she found her calling. During her time

on campus, she starred as Cordelia in "King Lear" and Sally Bowles in "Cabaret," all while attempting to balance the hectic demands of working as a waitress to pay for tuition.

"It was not an easy time," admits Davis, who, as one of five children, often felt the burden of financial responsibilities leaving her questioning if she could finish college. As a commuter student through most of her four years, her theater connections and the camaraderie of playing bridge in the cafeteria with other "day students" steadied her sense of belonging. She credits the financial assistance she received at CNR,

as “coming to the rescue,” particularly by providing on-campus housing when she was no longer able to afford her own housing. Having moved out of her home after freshman year and into an apartment with three roommates, she was stuck without housing her senior year when her roommates had other plans.

Social work was an early career consideration for Davis, who interned in a psychiatric hospital her junior year, yet the pull toward acting remained. “My attitude was that I ‘need to try this now’. I did not want to see myself 30 years in the future saying what could have been.” Shortly after graduating, her friend who worked in advertising helped her get an agent – leading her to a series of commercial and television auditions. “I was working in a disco in New Rochelle selling drinks and working until 2 a.m., and then travelling back and forth into the city. And then I landed “Edge of Night,”” said Davis.

Davis spent four years in the role, but would end up

“ I am very grateful to Mercy. I was impressed by the real commitment they have to our alumni.

leaving the ABC series with her popular character’s storyline culminating in a happy ending off-screen. In real life, Davis left just in time to have her first baby with husband Andrew Weyman, her director from the show. Later Davis would be cast in the NBC soap opera “Another World,” but left that show to have her second child. The couple moved to Los Angeles shortly thereafter, with Davis balancing motherhood and acting roles on television through the years. She formed Weyman/Davis Productions, Inc., an entertainment company with her husband, who continued directing television sitcoms throughout the 1990s including “Roseanne,” “Two and A Half Men” and “The Ellen Show.”

Now residing with her husband in Malibu, Davis has not slowed down, though these days she is more active in the theatre community, primarily as a longtime company member of Pacific Resident Theatre in Venice. She is a devoted grandmother of five to her daughters’ children and her focus on community service has taken a much larger portion of her life in recent years. She is the current president of Malibu C.A.R.T. (Community Assistance Resource Team, a nonprofit food and services assistance program, and is heavily involved in her local chapter of Arson Watch, working diligently to prevent and mitigate the devastation from wildfires California residents have been grappling with in recent years.

Davis’ devotion to giving of herself comes naturally – a lasting remnant she says of her Catholic school



upbringing and certainly the inspiration of CNR and the Ursuline community. “I’ve been devoted to community service all my life, it’s always been a part of me,” said Davis, who found after all these years that she still shares this common ground of service with CNR classmates. At a recent 50th reunion in June at Mercy’s Moller House, Davis shared many memories that also helped heal some of the wounds left by CNR’s closure.

“I am very grateful to Mercy,” said Davis. “I was impressed by the real commitment they have to our alumni,” who intends to stay involved with CNR alumni events. She has added alumni volunteering as a new venture for her already busy volunteering calendar – even offering to host a CNR California alumni event at her home this coming winter. “It is not goodbye,” said Davis.



Davis on “Family Feud” with host Richard Dawson



**Harry Belafonte, H.D. '09**  
(1927-2023)

American singer and actor Harry Belafonte died on April 25, 2023. Belafonte was active in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and was a longtime and ardent supporter of Hudson Link for Higher Education, Mercy's partner for its program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. He received an Honorary Degree from Mercy College in 2009.

Photo Credit: Public domain / Arquivo Nacional Collection



**Anthony "Tony" Robert Errico**  
(1936-2023)

Anthony "Tony" Robert Errico passed away on January 4, 2023, at age 86. He taught general business courses in Mercy's Business Division and School of Business for decades, retiring in 2010. In his long career as an adjunct faculty member at Mercy, Errico taught hundreds of students, and in the 1990s, he taught in Mercy's program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. A multiple-time awardee as distinguished teacher, Errico relished teaching and helping students find their true potential.



**Donald "Don" J. Matthews**  
(1933-2023)

Mercy Trustee Emeritus Donald "Don" J. Matthews passed away on June 5, 2023 in Los Angeles. Matthews served on Mercy's Board of Trustees from 2006-2015 at which time he became a Trustee Emeritus. He served on numerous board committees during his tenure as a Mercy Trustee including the Development Committee, Endowment Management Committee, and the PACT Advisory Board. Shortly after graduating from Notre Dame in 1955, he worked for the family business, Universal Maritime, and quickly became president. He later began a long career with Johnson & Higgins, the largest privately held insurance brokerage and benefit consulting firm in the world. After retiring from Johnson & Higgins, he co-founded and served as president of American Capital Access Holdings, a financial guarantee insurance company. Matthews was an accomplished sailor who served on the crew of two America's Cup yachts, one of which won in 1962.





## Robert “Bob” Postman (1941-2023)

Robert “Bob” D. Postman, Professor Emeritus of Childhood Education passed away on March 20, 2023, at age 81. Postman joined Mercy College in 1976 and retired in 2012. Over the course of over three and a half decades at Mercy, Postman served as Professor and Chair, in which roles he taught thousands of teacher candidates; developed graduate programs in mathematics and technology; and founded Mercy’s Urban Teaching Academy on the Bronx Campus, to help meet NYC’s teacher shortage. An expert in diverse fields of education, Postman authored numerous textbooks and test preparation guides.



## Joseph Victor (1942-2023)

Joseph Victor, long-term Mercy faculty member who helped establish the Criminal Justice program in the 1970s, passed away on July 12, 2023. Over the course of three decades at Mercy, Victor developed numerous courses in Criminal Justice including innovative curricula focused on stress management and wellness. Throughout these years, he remained a cherished professor, beloved by faculty and students for his kindness, compassion, and insight. He retired from Mercy in 2009.



## Rick Wolff (1951-2023)

Mercy Athletics Hall of Fame member, Class of 2008 and former baseball coach, Rick Wolff, died April 10, 2023 at age 71, following a brief battle with brain cancer. Wolff served as head baseball coach at Mercy from 1978-85, posting the highest winning percentage in school history and built the program into one of the most respected in the country. Along the way, his teams recorded five straight winning seasons, including a 21-12 mark in 1983. His teams were also nationally ranked and he sent several players on to play in the professional ranks.

# Mercy CLASS NOTES

## 1960s

**Susan Morganelli Pignato '69** was honored by the Broward County Women's History Coalition and inducted into the 2023 Broward County Women's Hall of Fame. She was celebrated for this honor



at an induction ceremony in September.

## 1980s

**Joe Apicella '85** made the list of City & State's New York State 2023 Real Estate Power 100. The list features the industry's most influential developers, policymakers and advocates in New York.



## 1990s

**Edward Skvorc '91** is a senior design engineer at ASML, a software development company that specializes in precision motion assemblies in Wilton, CT. He previously was a staff software engineer for Smiths Detection in Danbury, CT.



**Joel Dongallo '92** was hired as a technical support specialist at Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, CT. He previously was a help desk analyst at the Ashforth Company in Stamford.



**Christina Broccoli '98** was appointed as senior associate athletic director for development at Farleigh Dickinson University. She previously served as a major gift officer at Mercy. She is also the founder and CEO of prosper IV, the first stand-alone vitamin IV spa in Westchester County, specializing in vitamins and hydration for wellness needs.



**Jeff Lin, M.S. '99** obtained his certification in chainalysis cryptocurrency fundamentals and risk and regulation training. He currently works as a director of financial services in the New York State Department of Financial Services.



## 2000s

**Desree Cabrall '01** is the dean of teaching and learning at KIPP Academy Elementary in New York City. She has worked at KIPP Academy for more than 14 years and was a founding teacher and chair of their Leadership Pathways program.



**John Levai '07** works for Hudson Community Enterprises as a records management and data entry specialist. His advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities has given him a new path of inspiring others. His personal essay on living with autism was recently published in the Montclair Local, a newspaper in Montclair, NJ.



**Lois Jeremy-Greene, M.S. '08** achieved her doctorate in educational/instructional leadership from Northcentral/National University. She is an assistant principal at Wings Academy High School in New York City.



## 2010s

**Christine Morano '10** completed her doctorate of education degree at the University of Southern Mississippi. She is currently associate director of enrollment services at Marist College. She also serves on the Mercy Alumni Advisory Council.



**Nick Canzano, M.S. '13** and **Holly Canzano, M.B.A. '19** welcomed a new addition to their household with the birth of their son, Cole Maverick in July. He joins proud sister Cora Mae. Both Nick and Holly work at Mercy University.



**Kevin Rucker, M.B.A. '13** opened a coffee shop "Casaroma Cafe" in New Rochelle. In celebration of his new entrepreneurial adventure, he is offering 10% off of the first purchase for any fellow alumni. Simply mention "Mercy Alum" to your cashier.



**Lucinda Cross '14** made the 6th Annual List of 'Influential African American



Business & Corporate Women You Should Follow on LinkedIn.' This annual list highlights 200 African American business and corporate women who are innovators and influencers in social media.

**Brianna Moura '14, M.S. '15** is a teacher and life coach specializing in goal-



setting, personal and work relationships and self-discovery strategies. She produces a weekly self-help newsletter that she shares with those on her mailing list. To find out more about her work and coaching sessions visit her [Briannamoura.org](http://Briannamoura.org).

**Andrew Bergman '15** was hired as a junior product designer at McCann



Health in Manhattan. He previously held the role of UX/UI designer at Fiero Group in Brewster, NY.

**D'Andrea Lancelin '15** was hired as a litigation paralegal at Pessin Katz Law in Baltimore, MD.



Lancelin is currently a Juris Doctor degree candidate at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

**Hakim Lahlou, M.B.A. '16** was promoted to the role of assistant vice president of alliances at Raistone Inc. He previously served as an associate of originations at the New York-based financial technology firm. He also serves on the Mercy Alumni Advisory Council.



**Kokulaba Kokutegereza**

**Mujunangoma '17** was hired as an account clerk for SUNY Westchester Community College. She previously worked as a sales support associate in retail.



**Melissa Molina, M.B.A. '18** is the senior residency program coordinator for



General Surgery Residents at Columbia Irving Medical Center (CUIMC) in New York City. Founder of the National Association

of Latino Healthcare Executives (NALHE) Tri-State Chapter she was the 2022 recipient of the NALHE Chapter Leader of the Year award.

**Sasha Garcia '19** was hired as a Title Five Coordinator at College of the



Mainland in Texas City, TX. Carrying experience as a public elementary school teacher, she is excited to start a new career path in higher education.

## 2020s

**Jessica Brandt '20** is a television news producer for KEYE-TV in Austin, TX, a CBS affiliate.



She started as an assignment editor in October 2021, and was promoted to news producer in April 2022.

**Daniela Weigand, M.S. '22** was promoted to director of budget and



operations for the School of Health and Natural Sciences at Mercy University. She previously worked as a project budget and construction manager at Mercy.

# In Memoriam

March 21, 2023 - October 15, 2023

Elizabeth D. McNamara '65

Maria Miehle '65

Michael P. Henneberry '76

Barbara Farnung '81

Karen L. Anderson-Kemp '82

Susan Sclafani '85

Darlene M. Pidoto '93

Nicholas A. Scorza '94

Yves Pierre '02

Catherine W. Glaab, Jr. '04

Marie E. Beale '09

William Fargelli '16

Louis Buther, *Mercy University Friend*

Linda Dubiell, *Administrative Assistant, English Department, School of Liberal Arts*

James McCue, *Former Chief Compliance Officer*

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Mercy Class Notes is a way to stay connected. We would love to share your recent news, life events and accomplishments. Tell us about them, and we will include it in the next issue. Email: [alumni@mercy.edu](mailto:alumni@mercy.edu) with your class note.

# CNR CLASS NOTES

## 1970s

**Joanne Harmon Bryant SAS '78** artwork was showcased this past September at the Wilton,



CT Library as well as the New Canaan Carriage Barn Arts Center. A versatile artist, Harmon Bryant is the

recipient of multiple awards for her work. In addition, her work has been shown in homes throughout the tri-state area and in California.

## 1980s

**Darlene Yee-Melichar GS '81** has been appointed to the California State



University Board of Trustees. Yee-Melichar has served as a Professor at San Francisco

State University since 1990.

**Nancy Molello SAS '86** has been named the inaugural Executive



Director of the Ginsburg Institute for Health Equity at Nemours Children's Health in Orlando, FL. Molello will

develop new initiatives to further the mission, goals and strategic initiatives launched by the Ginsburg Institute to accelerate the improvement of health equity among vulnerable populations.

## 1990s

"Surviving Myself: The Making of a Middleweight" by **Peter Wood GS '90**



presents a compelling narrative that delves into the healing and transformative power of artistic expression. This

captivating memoir takes readers on a shocking journey of resilience, self-discovery and the liberation of embracing a creative outlet – punching inside a boxing ring.

"Floral Fantasy," an exhibit of oil paintings on canvas by **Dorothy**



**Calio GS '91**, was displayed at The Art Gallery at Shutter Speed Photo in Middlebury, CT. A former graphic designer, Calio

pursued a career teaching art and also served as a painting instructor on luxury cruise lines.

In February 2023 **Solymole Kuruvilla SN '96**, associate director of



occupational health services for Jacobi and North Central Bronx was awarded the "Legacy of Caring Award" from the National

Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA). The award honors outstanding nurses who embody and exemplify excellence in patient advocacy, creativity, compassion and leadership in the nursing practice.

**Tara O'Neill Brant SAS '98** started a new position as associate director,



grant development and outcomes reporting at the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Interventions in Washington, DC.

Prior, O'Neill Brant spent eight years as a Senior Program Development Manager at Paradigm Medical Communications, LLC.

**JoEllen Revell, LCSW, BSW '98** was named Florida's 2023 Visionary



Voices Awards recipient from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) to recognize the creativity and hard work of individuals

around the country who have demonstrated outstanding work to end sexual violence.

## 2000s



On July 1, 2023, **Dr. Corey W. Reynolds GS '05** became Superintendent of the City School District of New Rochelle, NY.

**Hope B. Weinberg GS '07** received the Ethel Kennedy Award for Human



Rights Leadership from Manhattanville College for her work on cultivating climates of belonging for LGBTQ+ children and adults in school

communities. Weinberg is the assistant principal at the Concord Road Elementary School in the Ardsley Union Free School District.

**Natalie Corey SNR '08, GS '12** started a new position as supervisor for Good



Shepard Services in the Bronx. Guided by social and racial justice, Good Shepherd Services partners and grows with communities so that all NYC

children, youth and families succeed and thrive.

# 2010s

**Alba Beltre SNR '12** accepted a new position as benefits specialist at



Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Essex County, MA. Prior to joining the Commonwealth, Beltre was a Community Facilitator with

Fedcap and the New York City Department of Corrections.

**Dr. Priscila Echevarria de Sepulveda SNR '13, GS '18** has been named



manager for health equity of Richmond University Medical Center on Staten Island, NY. She has served as a health care professional for the past decade,

helping to foster better relationships between underserved patients and their clinical care teams.



**Sinead Commance Cerone GS '17** started a new role as school counselor for the Central Jersey College Preparatory School.

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CNR Class Notes is a way to stay connected and keep the CNR legacy alive. We would love to share your recent news, life events, and accomplishments. Tell us about them and we will include it in the next issue. Email: [CNRalumni@mercy.edu](mailto:CNRalumni@mercy.edu) with your class note.

# In Memoriam

March 21, 2023 - October 15, 2023

Sr. Stephanie Nolan, OSU CNR SAS '41  
Dolores Morris Donnelly CNR SAS '45  
Leatrice Carr Allen CNR SAS '48  
Estelle Harper Brocks CNR SAS '49  
Florence Doyle Fitzgerald CNR SAS '50  
Jean Kilcoyne McSharry CNR SAS '50  
Marian Maney McLellan CNR SAS '50  
Elizabeth Broe Green CNR SAS '51  
Catherine Lofaro Nigro CNR SAS '51  
Diane Meeker Mela CNR SAS '51  
Patricia Ahearn Gillin CNR SAS '52  
Ann Koenig Biancheri CNR SAS '52  
Anne Hone Burns CNR SAS '53  
Marlene Casertano Hess CNR SAS '55  
Barbara Gannon Artopoeus CNR SAS '55  
Kathryn Heck Begley CNR SAS '55  
Nina Sheehan Strattner CNR SAS '55  
Elaine Cukras Grogan CNR SAS '56  
Sr. Bernadette Hannaway, OSU CNR SAS '56  
Gertrude Kelly Hamilton CNR SAS '57  
Florence Lang Erbe CNR SAS '57  
Maryan Furey Elder CNR SAS '58  
Sr. Jeanne Hamilton, OSU CNR SAS '58  
Patricia Colahan Cunningham CNR SAS '59  
Kathleen O'Connor Miller CNR SAS '59  
Patricia Scully Henry CNR SAS '59  
Kathleen Burns Hendrix CNR SAS '62  
Marguerite Fredrick CNR SAS '62  
Marjorie Meszaros Hendrickson CNR SAS '64, GS '89  
Louise Murray CNR SAS '64  
Barbara Reish Spangler CNR SAS '64  
Malene Bascaran Ryff CNR SAS '65  
Linda Mastrangelo Kennedy CNR SAS '67  
Mary Jo McGonegal CNR SAS '67  
Helen Harrington Murawski CNR SAS '69  
Nancy Nouss Brown CNR SAS '69  
Ellen Longden Breyer CNR SAS '70  
Christine Marbach Kellett CNR SAS '70  
Jeanne Kent CNR GS '76  
Kathleen Guarino Burns CNR SAS '79  
Janet Kidd Begley CNR SAS '79  
Joy Libert-Gelb CNR SNR '81  
Wellington Sawyer CNR GS '84  
Alice Jamison CNR SNR '85  
Ann Lawrence CNR SNR '95  
Kenneth Lemon CNR SNR '02  
Mynetta McCutcheon CNR SNR '05, GS '08  
Fr. Sean Cooney, *CNR Friend*  
Lucia Passarelli, *CNR Friend*



# Mercy Authors

Featured here are select publications of Mercy University Faculty, Staff and Students from July 2022 - June 2023

## School of Education



**JungKang Miller** (Associate Professor and Department Chair, Literacy and Multilingual Studies) and **Mi-Hyun Chung** (Professor, Literacy and Multilingual Studies), "A Narrative Biographical Study of Faculty

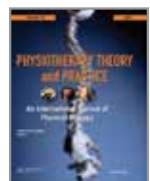
Collaboration in E-Portfolio Development", *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development*, 6 (2023) 1: 1-11. doi:10.4018/IJTEPD.320520



**Kristen V. Napolitano** (Senior Researcher, Center for STEM

Education; and Lecturer, Biology), **Meghan E. Marrero** (Professor, Secondary Education), **Amanda M. Gunning** (Associate Professor, Secondary Education), Latanya T. Brandon, & Jessica F. Riccio, "What Happens After edTPA?", *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 30 (2022) 80. doi:10.14507/epaa.30.6988

## School of Health and Natural Sciences



**Marc Campo** (Professor, Physical Therapy), **Matthew Hyland** (Associate Professor, Physical Therapy), and **Ruth Hansen** (Associate Professor, Physical Therapy),

"Experiences of Physical Therapists During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis", *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*, 39 (2023) 2, 369-383. doi:10.1080/09593985.2021.2021576



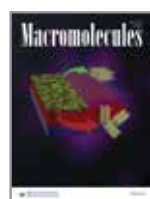
**Tharushi A. Perera** (Assistant Professor, Chemistry), William V. Taylor, M. Brenton Gildner, Eric W. Reinheimer, Sho Ito, Anna Nelson, Shane R. Yost, and Todd W. Hudnall, "Photochemical Reactions of A Diamidocarbene:

Cyclopropanation of Bromonaphthalene, Addition to Pyridine, and Activation of sp<sup>3</sup> C-H bonds", *Chemical Science*, 14 (2023), 7867-7874. doi:10.1039/d2sc05122b



**Francine M. Seruya** (Professor, Occupational Therapy), **Emily Feit** (Mercy student), **Alexys Tirado** (Mercy Student), **Diana Ottomaneli** (Mercy student), and **Melissa**

**Celio** (Mercy student), "Caregiver Coaching in Early Intervention: A Scoping Review", *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 76 (2022) 4. doi:10.5014/ajot.2022.049143



K. J. Winchell, Patrick Y. Yee, Yolanda L. Li, Alexander F. Simafranca, Julia Chang, Christian Beren, Xinyu Liu, Diego Garcia Vidales, **Robert J. Thompson** (Assistant Professor, Chemistry), Charlene

Z. Salamat, Quynh M. Duong, Robert S. Jordan, Benjamin J. Schwartz, William M. Gelbart, Yves Rubin, and Sarah H. Tolbert, "Designing Amphiphilic Conjugated Polyelectrolytes for Self-Assembly into Straight-Chain Rod-Like Micelles", *Macromolecules*, 56 (2023) 8, 3160-3170. doi:10.1021/acs.macromol.2c02057

## School of Liberal Arts



**K. Patrick Fazioli** (Associate Professor, Critical Inquiry) and Michael J. Kelly (eds.), *Social and Intellectual Networking in the Early Middle Ages*, Punctum Books, 2023.



**Maureen MacLeod** (Associate Professor, History) and Stephen K. Stein (eds.), *Teaching and Learning History Online: A Guide for College Instructors*, Routledge, 2023.



**Rosaura Uscanga** (Assistant Professor, Mathematics) & John Paul Cook, "Analyzing the Structure of the Non-examples in the Instructional Example Space for Function in

Abstract Algebra", *International Journal of Research in Undergraduate Mathematics Education* (2022). doi:10.1007/s40753-022-00166-z

## School of Nursing



Susan Hassmiller, Ashley Darcy Mahoney, and **Kenya Beard** (Professor and Dean, School of Nursing), *The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Global Applications to Advance Health Equity*, Springer Cham (2023).

doi:10.1007/978-3-031-29746-5

## School of Social and Behavioral Sciences



**Eduardo Albrecht** (Associate Professor, International Relations and Diplomacy), "Predictive Technologies in Conflict Prevention: Practical and Policy Considerations for the

Multilateral System", Discussion Paper, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (June 2023).



**Sarah Hahn** (Assistant Professor, Behavioral Science), **Emily A. Butler** (Mercy student), and Kimberly Ogle, "We are Human too.": The Challenges of Being an End-

of-Life Doula", *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, online first (2023). doi:10.1177/00302228231160900



**Serah Shani** (Associate Professor, Behavioral Science), *Indigenous Elites in Africa: The Case of the Maasai*, Routledge, 2022.



**Julia Zavala** (Assistant Professor, Psychology), **Rebecca C. Trenz** (Associate Professor, Psychology), **Dimitra Tzanis** (Mercy student), **Chanel Malette** (Mercy student), and **Natalia**

**A. Monsalve Marin** (Mercy student), "The Impact of Social Media Use for News on Academic Performance in Underrepresented Undergraduate College Students", *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 26 (2023) 8, 657-661. doi:10.1089/cyber.2022.0303



# Making a Planned Gift to Support Mercy University

There are multiple ways to secure the future of the university and keep higher education accessible to all those who seek it. Planned gifts or estate gifts will have a profound impact on students and their futures. Here are some simple ways that you can support Mercy University through your estate plans:

## Designate Mercy University in any of the following assets:\*

- 1 YOUR WILL**  
Designate Mercy University as beneficiary or co-beneficiary.
- 2 LIVING TRUST**  
Include a donation in your revocable trust. At the time of your passing, Mercy University receives the amount you specified.
- 3 LIFE INSURANCE POLICY**  
Name Mercy University as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy. You can determine if this is the entire value of the policy or a specific percentage of it.
- 4 INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNT (IRA)**  
Name Mercy University as a full or partial beneficiary.  
\*If you are 70½ or older, you can make a direct charitable gift from an IRA. The amount given to Mercy University will count toward your minimum required distribution, but does not increase your taxable income.
- 5 401(K) AND/OR 403(B) ACCOUNTS**  
To help reduce the income tax burden to your loved ones, consider donating all or part of your 401(K) and/or 403(B) to Mercy University upon your death.
- 6 CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST AND/OR CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST**  
The Trust will make payments to your designated beneficiaries as directed, while providing a tax benefit to your estate.
- 7 BROKERAGE ACCOUNT**  
Your stock account can be donated to Mercy University when you list Mercy as a beneficiary.
- 8 WRITE ON ANY BANK ACCOUNT**  
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Funds in this account are paid on your passing directly to Mercy University. This avoids probate in many states.

**Do you need to create a will?** To further our dedication to you, Mercy University has partnered with FreeWill, a free online estate planning tool. Scan the QR code to link to the website to begin creating your will.



Contact the Office of Planned Giving at **914.674.7385** or via email at **Lgyory@mercy.edu** for a confidential discussion on how to make a difference in the lives of Mercy University students.

*\*This is not professional tax or legal advice; consult a qualified tax advisor or attorney about your specific needs.*



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