

Building Bridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Volume 26 | Issue No. 1

Fall 2020



Passing the torch

**CBA has a new dean, a new building
and a renewed commitment to excellence**

Building Bridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse



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Vol. 26, No. 1 | *Building Bridges* is published biannually for UWL-La Crosse College of Business Administration alumni, friends, students, faculty and staff.

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NEW YEAR, NEW DEAN

Brooks named interim dean after Milner's retirement

UW-La Crosse's College of Business Administration has a new dean at the helm.

Taggart "TJ" Brooks, a professor of economics and chair of UWL's Economics and Finance departments, has been appointed interim dean of the college for the next two years.

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Interim Dean TJ Brooks hopes to steer the college through COVID-19 while building upon the work of his predecessor, Laura Milner.



TJ Brooks

Brooks replaces Laura Milner, who announced her retirement after five years as CBA dean effective Aug. 1.

Milner, who came to UWL in 2015 after a stint as associate dean for Central Washington University, is recognized for many accomplishments.

She helped establish a new mission statement that pushed the college toward academic excellence, career success and community engagement.

She led major improvements to curriculum, including the creation of two minors embracing data analytics and the first core curriculum overhaul in decades.

And she oversaw the creation of donor-funded educational programs including the Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship and the Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research.

“The momentum is there, and this is a good transition time for a new dean to step in and take it further,” Milner says. “The stage is set to do even better, which will be vital in the time of even more diminishing resources. As I have said before and will say again, we are just beginning the Golden Age of the College of Business Administration.”

Brooks will be tasked with helping steer the college through the unprecedented times of COVID-19, while continuing to build upon the recent momentum.

His biggest challenge, he says, “is continuing to support faculty, staff and students as they work and learn through this pandemic while staying safe and healthy. The next biggest challenge is managing the college through the budget challenges brought on by the virus-led economic contraction.”

His ties across the community will be an asset. Brooks is known for his role in the regional business forum, “Economic Indicators” An Update for the 7 Rivers Region,” and he is treasurer for the La Crosse Community Foundation’s Board of Directors.

He has chaired UWL’s Economics Department for the past 10 years and authored more than two dozen published academic papers.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from UW-Madison, and master’s and doctorate degrees in economics from UW-Milwaukee.

“I enjoy exchanging ideas with people, whether with students or colleagues, and I just enjoy learning from other people,” Brooks says. “In my new role, I look forward to learning more about higher ed financing, and how to best create the right incentives to achieve our collective goals and deliver on our mission to “foster academic excellence, career success, and community engagement through enriching, interactive experiences.”



Celebrating 50 years

The College of Business Administration’s 50th anniversary celebration will be held Oct. 22 and 23, 2021. Events will include campus tours, a Wittich Hall ribbon cutting and open house, and an alumni pub crawl. Online registration will begin in March. For more information, visit www.uwlax.edu/cba/50th-anniversary. Please note that this event, originally scheduled for October 2020, has been rescheduled due to COVID-19.



Mary Hamman

Faculty Fellow

Mary Hamman, an associate professor in the Economics Department, has been named the first UWL College of Business Administration Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellow. The fellowship, funded by 1985 CBA graduate Scott Swenson and his spouse, Cynthia Baier, is UWL's first philanthropically funded faculty fellowship supporting the vision and recognition of business faculty who are industry-engaged.

College of Business Administration names Hamman first campus fellow

An innovative associate professor who has taught in the UW-La Crosse College of Business Administration for nearly a decade has been named the inaugural recipient of the college's first faculty fellowship.

Mary Hamman, who teaches in the Economics Department, has been awarded the college's first Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship.

The fellowship rewards and supports outstanding CBA faculty who enhance the

educational experience of their students by creating opportunities in their curriculum for students to engage with business and community leaders.

Hamman says she's thrilled to be selected and is excited to expand community engagement efforts with her colleagues. "We are so fortunate to have this opportunity," she says. "I am committed to putting these resources to good use."

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Working with Economics Department colleagues, Hamman has been a driving force behind transforming “Economics 230-Data Analysis for Business Applications,” a required class for all majors in the college. In the class, students are coached by industry partner representatives on data analysis and presentation.

Hamman says being able to correctly analyze data has become increasingly important — especially during the pandemic, which has caused economic restructuring and job turnover. She’s excited to offer workshops not only for students, but alumni and business leaders as well at no charge.

“I am hoping this may help our students, alumni, and those in our local economy facing changes in employment, job roles, or plans for internships due to the pandemic,” she says. “I plan to cover an array of beginner and intermediate topics and hope to engage a diverse set of participants in terms of life experience, race and ethnicity, and career goals.”

Hamman’s impact on student engagement with business and community leaders extends beyond her own classes. She and Economics Department faculty have worked to present a systematized, assessable approach to benefit all students regardless of their instructor.

Hamman says the three-year fellowship allows her to complete formal training on teaching methods to ensure both her workshop and classroom teaching offer students the best opportunity to learn. She plans to extend those new skills to area businesses.

“This training should enable me to deliver tailored workshops for area employers to engage and support our local economy,” she says. The fellowship begins July 1.

Hamman, who has taught at UWL since 2011, is an empirical microeconomist and expert in applied econometrics and analysis of complex data sets. Her areas of interest include the economics of preventive health-care, retirement policy and workforce aging, and long-term care.

Hamman’s work has appeared in *Health Economics, Health Affairs*, and the *American Journal of Public Health*. She has received funding from the Social Security Administration, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Steven H. Sandell Grant Program.

Hamman is a faculty research fellow at UW-Madison’s Center for Financial Security and an associate director of UW-Madison’s Retirement and Disability Research Center. She teaches courses in health economics, business research methods, and labor and managerial economics.

Funding for the fellowship is provided by 1985 CBA graduate Scott Swenson and his spouse, Cynthia Baier. This is UWL’s first philanthropically funded faculty fellowship supporting the vision and recognition of business faculty who are industry-engaged. Swenson was attracted to fund the fellowship because he believes it provides the greatest return on investment for student education and career preparedness.

“I had a couple professors that were really integral in not only my success at La Crosse, but my success beyond that,” Swenson explains. “One of the things that I’ve seen in the business world is that I compare a professor to a boss or a manager. A boss or a manager, a good one, can impact hundreds or thousands of people and clearly that’s the same with a professor.”

Swenson says motivated professors can relate to students and bring in things from the

outside world, impacting many and setting them up for a bright future.

“It was a no-brainer for me,” says Swenson. “Investing in faculty was a better path for us than any other one.”

UWL CBA Dean Laura Milner says the generous gift will help keep the college competitive. “The Swenson Baier Faculty Fellowship is at the forefront of those types of gifts that change a college’s trajectory,” Milner explains. “Faculty have such an aggregate and cumulative impact on multitudes of students that dividends for years to come beyond the length of the gift itself are provided.”

Milner says on behalf of the college, she expresses profound gratitude to Swenson and Baier for sustaining the CBA’s competitive edge and by embracing its 50 Years Forward theme of “Engagement, Transform and Transcend.”

Swenson has 35 years of leadership experience in general management, financial and executive roles. He has owned Quest Engineering, a distributor of flow control parts, since 2013. Prior to that, he was a vice president at Polaris Industries, where he directed all operations for Polaris Snowmobile, PG&A (parts, garments and accessory), and financial services divisions, which generated more than \$600 million sales and over \$200 million operating income.

The fellowship selection committee included Peter Haried, chair, Department of Information Systems; Will Mass, associate professor of accountancy; David Annino, lecturer of Information Systems; Mark Sandheinrich, dean, College of Science and Health; and Tanner Holst, vice chair of administration of Mayo Clinic Health System and CBA Board of Advisors member.

Hamman, shown in this 2016 photo, says the three-year fellowship will allow her to complete formal training on teaching methods to ensure her workshop and classroom teaching offer students the best opportunity to learn. She also plans to extend those new skills to her work with area businesses.



Coming together amid COVID-19

While some
classes are
virtual, CBA
faculty find ways
to connect

COVID-19 didn't just upend the business world, with stores and restaurants scrambling to adjust.

It also shook up UWL's College of Business Administration, forcing students and faculty to adapt to the new reality of online education.

Over two weeks in March, faculty faced the daunting task of moving their in-person classes to virtual formats. Instructors had to identify creative solutions, while supporting students amid difficult times.



Management Professor Christa Kiersch, center, in this 2019 photo, says COVID-19 has forced her to fine tune her courses and sharpen her understanding of technology. CBA faculty have been challenged to adapt to online and hybrid instruction.

Now, with online and hybrid courses playing a key role in the fall semester, instructors say they are better prepared after the challenges they faced in the spring.

“Overall, I think it did and will have a positive impact on my teaching,” explains Christa Kiersch, an associate professor of management. Kiersch is on sabbatical during the 2020-21 academic year, but she hopes to carry the lessons of this spring into future semesters.

“It’s easy for faculty to get sidetracked, but it forced me to distill the classes and really think about the actual goals,” she says. “It also encouraged me to use different tools, strategies and get a lot better at Canvas (UWL’s learning management system).”

For Nilakshi Borah, an associate professor of finance, the key to a successful online course is fostering student-to-student interaction.

Since face-to-face discussions weren’t an option in the spring, Borah used Canvas to create student-led discussion board assignments on three business cases: Whole Foods, Zorbas Bakeries (based in Cyprus) and Canadian Pacific Railway’s bid for Norfolk Southern.

Students gave group presentations on their respective cases, and asked qualitative and quantitative questions when they weren’t presenting.

It’s an approach that is suitable for both hybrid and online courses, and that she intends to use in her online classes this fall.

“The main rationale behind this teaching strategy was to improve student engagement and to promote a sense of belonging,” Borah says. “Students responded well to this teaching strategy, since out of 50 students, 49 participated in all three discussion board assignments.”

Stacy Trisler, a marketing lecturer, taught two online courses over the summer — experience that will come in handy during the fall semester.

She plans to lean heavily on Microsoft Teams, which allows her to create separate channels for students doing group work. And like Borah, Trisler has structured her classes around student engagement, using a “flipped classroom” model.

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Finance Professor Nilakshi Borah says the key to a successful online course is fostering student-to-student interaction. She's found group projects and student-led discussion periods to be especially impactful.

"I've recorded videos of some of my lectures, so students can watch 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there, and I have a lot of activities planned for my Professional Selling class," she says. "One example is different role-playing scenarios, which students record so we can review it later. There are a lot of activities and interaction, and I don't want to lecture for more than a few minutes at a time."

Other strategies extend outside the virtual classroom, spilling into the community.

Adam Hoffer, an associate professor of economics and the director of UWL's Menard Family Initiative, compiled a collection of

briefs (featured on page 12) highlighting innovative ways the Coulee Region responded to COVID-19.

The briefs detailed how a local distillery began producing hand sanitizer, and how a UWL art professor inspired hope and resilience through her paintings, among many other efforts.

"Our front-line health care and essential workers deserve the heroic accolades they receive," Hoffer says. "We wanted to give an opportunity to praise our behind-the-lines heroes, those innovators and leaders that took quick action when action was needed most. The response was truly inspirational."

That sense of community, of togetherness, has been a major theme of UWL's response to the pandemic — whether that's illustrated by an emphasis on group projects and student interactions, or by faculty donating masks to local hospitals.

More than anything else, that may be the lesson CBA faculty carry into the future.

"UWL is a supportive community," Borah says, "and we are all here to help students learn."



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Innovation during crisis

Menard Initiative highlights creative solutions amid COVID-19

From an artist portraying hope and resilience to a distillery churning out hand sanitizer, the Coulee Region has met the crisis of COVID-19 with an array of innovative solutions.

These solutions — some meant to promote safety, others meant to lift spirits — are featured in a collection of briefs published by UW-La Crosse's Menard Family Initiative, under the title "Innovation During Crisis: Response to COVID-19 in the Coulee Region."

"Our front-line health care and essential workers deserve the heroic accolades they receive," says Adam Hoffer, an economics professor at UWL and the director of the Menard Initiative. "We wanted to give an opportunity to praise our behind-the-lines heroes, those innovators and leaders that took quick action when action was needed most. The response was truly inspirational."

The Initiative accepted 11 briefs across five categories: health care, business pivots, new startups, education and community resources.

While different niches of the community responded to the pandemic in different ways, the briefs illustrate an overarching theme of community service, and the power of people coming together during difficult times.



Adam Hoffer



Art Professor Jennifer Williams recently launched a project, "Painting Us Forward," in which she captures the faces of friends, family and community members as they weather the pandemic. The project was featured in a collection of briefs compiled by UWL's Menard Family Initiative.

Doctors at Mayo Clinic in La Crosse shared how the health system opened a drive-through testing site, embraced virtual doctor visits and adopted a new set of standard operating procedures.

The La Crosse Community Foundation and Great Rivers United Way created an emergency relief fund, which has disbursed more than \$750,000 to nonprofits serving families in need.

And UWL professors Heather Schenck (chemistry and biochemistry) and Melissa Weege (health professions) explained how teachers used to face-to-face instruction can best serve students in virtual formats.

Others confronted the virus with a paint brush in one hand and a palette in the other.

Jennifer Williams, a UWL art professor, is painting a series of portraits as part of her "Painting Us Forward" project. The goal, she says, is to communicate hope and resilience through the faces of family, friends and small business owners enduring the pandemic.

"I began the paintings during the onset of the pandemic shutdown, realizing the impacts of social distancing on small businesses,"

Williams explains. "The project is an artistic and empathic connection in solidarity with my community. These people and places are what make La Crosse special and unique."

She also hopes the project will foster appreciation for art at a time when industries are given the label "essential" or "nonessential."



"To sustain a robust and compassionate community, we need each other, and we need the arts in times of crisis," she notes. "Right now, we are challenged to consider what is essential, and there is no doubt that art is essential to our existence, a key to hope and evidence of our resilience."

More evidence of that resilience can be found in the home of Amy Marohl.


Pre-COVID-19, Marohl, a mother of eight, ran a small Etsy shop out of her house, selling hand-made items like table runners, curtains and reusable baby wipes.

When the pandemic set in, Etsy asked shop owners to consider pivoting their business to masks. Marohl, who had been making masks for local families and essential workers, saw an opportunity to grow her business while providing much needed supplies.

"Special requests from customers started coming in, asking for a certain breed of dog on the face mask, or a type of food, or to make them in a child's size," says Marohl, who also sold themed masks for restaurants and grocery stores. A few of her masks even became best-sellers on Etsy.

She also found a way to involve her children, four of whom are homeschooled. Each time she shipped an order to a new state, her children colored it in on a map. It didn't take long for them to color all 50.

"The shift of focus at this time of crisis helped not only my large family, but also over 1,000 of our customers," she says. "The support from my family was very helpful, and they are all proud to be helping others across America."



Beighley Leth, a senior marketing major at UWL, placed in the 97th percentile in the Spring 2020 RNMKRS Virtual Sales Competition in April. The competition challenged students to persuade an artificial intelligence buyer to purchase a batch of new Dell laptops.

Selling while social distancing

UWL's Beighley Leth earns high finish in virtual competition

Beighley Leth is such a good salesperson, she can sell a computer to, well, a computer.

Leth, now a senior marketing major at UW-La Crosse, placed 36th out of more than 1,300 college students worldwide in the Spring 2020 RNMKRS Virtual Sales Competition in April.

The competition challenged students to use all the people skills and marketing tactics

at their disposal to persuade artificial intelligence buyer named Alex to purchase a batch of new Dell laptops for his organization, a fictional police department.

While the competition was held virtually, Leth hardly phoned it in. To the contrary — she studied the features of Dell's computers and the needs of the police department she was selling to, and then executed her plan better than nearly everyone else.

"It was a really proud moment," she says. "I had been talking to a few of my classmates, asking how it went and what they got for scores. I noticed mine was pretty high compared to most of theirs and started to have a feeling I might have ranked. When I heard my name get called over the Zoom chat, I was freaking out."

During her 15-minute call with Alex, Leth used the SPIN approach to selling. This in-

“I thought my sales class was one of the more interesting classes I’ve had.”

Beighley Leth

volves asking a series of questions that fall into four categories: Situation, Problem, Implication and Need-payoff.

She asked questions like “What laptops are you currently using in your squad cars?” to get a better sense of the buyer’s situation.

She asked him to identify problems with their current setup, and then explored the implications of those problems, such as wasted time and reduced productivity.

Finally, she emphasized the benefits of the new computers, explaining that they would solve issues stemming from the department’s current technology.

“Beighley did a number of things well,” explains Stacy Trisler, a marketing lecturer at UWL. “She listened for cues in what the buyer was telling her and addressed those needs in her sales pitch. She also found commonality with the buyer — things like, ‘Oh, I see you have a picture of you sailing in your office. I used to sail, too.’ It’s all about relationships and how well you build that rapport.”

Connecting with clients is a whole lot easier, though, when the client is an actual person. Trisler says the task of selling to AI has its drawbacks and benefits.

“You lose some of the body language stuff and the ability to connect as easily, but it’s a nice simulation,” she says. It’s also a good learning experience for aspiring salespeo-

ple, who are entering a field in which more and more deals are being made virtually.

“Even before COVID, we were starting to see more national and international companies stepping up their game as far as virtual interaction,” Trisler notes. “It makes sense financially and timewise to do it virtually, so I don’t think it will be going away.”

Leth is still considering career options, although she’s leaning toward a marketing position in beauty and fashion. She hopes to secure a marketing internship this winter or spring, after her previous internship was canceled due to the pandemic.

“I thought my sales class was one of the more interesting classes I’ve had,” she says. “I like people, so I think it’s interesting how you can read people and tweak

your sales approach to fit their personality — whether the person likes to talk and is personable, or they’re very business-oriented and straight-to-the-point. There’s more to sales than just a product.”



Stacy Trisler

Fitness is his business

UWL student launches fitness clothing brand: Streighth

Before he was a bodybuilder and an ambitious young business owner, Shane Skaar was a scrawny kid with crippling insecurity.

Skaar was born with pectus excavatum, a condition in which a person's breastbone is sunken into their chest, giving the appearance of a large dent just below the neck.

Growing up, Skaar endured shame and bullying whenever he had to take off his shirt — until he took a leap of faith in July 2015, going in for a major surgery to correct the condition.

Five years later, Skaar's insecurity has been replaced by confidence, his sense of hopelessness replaced by a desire to share his story.

After recovering from the surgery and taking an interest in weightlifting, Skaar started a fitness clothing business, Streighth, which he hopes will inspire others to push their limits and be their best selves.

"Fitness turned into my biggest passion, and I've always had a passion for business as



Shane Skaar, a junior at UWL, overcame a rare chest deformity to achieve his health and fitness goals. Now he's hoping to inspire others through his fitness clothing brand: Streighth.



Shane Skaar, right, reviews photos taken by Alex Thompson of Instinct Photography during a Streignth photoshoot in La Crosse this summer.

well,” says Skaar, a junior in UW-La Crosse’s College of Business Administration. “So I started thinking: What if I combined fitness and business and made it into something that could motivate people through my story? And that’s what we did.”

At first, Skaar did much of the work himself, using his uncle’s screen printer to emblazon each shirt with the Streignth logo: the profile of a roaring lion. (The name “Streignth” serves as a call for people to harness their own inner strength, and to reign over the challenges in their lives.)

Soon, Skaar was getting his products through Games People Play, a sports apparel and equipment store in downtown La Crosse. Six months after that, the company had grown even more, and he began ordering clothing in larger amounts through an outside contractor.

With each season, Skaar has added new, limited-edition products to Streignth’s online store.

This past winter, they launched crew necks and long sleeves.

In the spring, they introduced sports bras, leggings, hoodies and joggers.

And in the summer, they released a line of tank tops and men’s and women’s shorts.

Customers can’t seem to get enough.

Two years in, Streignth has sold products to customers in all 50 states. During product launches, 80% of the new apparel is bought and sold within the first week.

All profits go right back into the business, Skaar says, so the brand can keep growing.

“Money has been the biggest challenge,” he says. “We’re college kids. I mean, we’re not broke college kids, but we’re still college

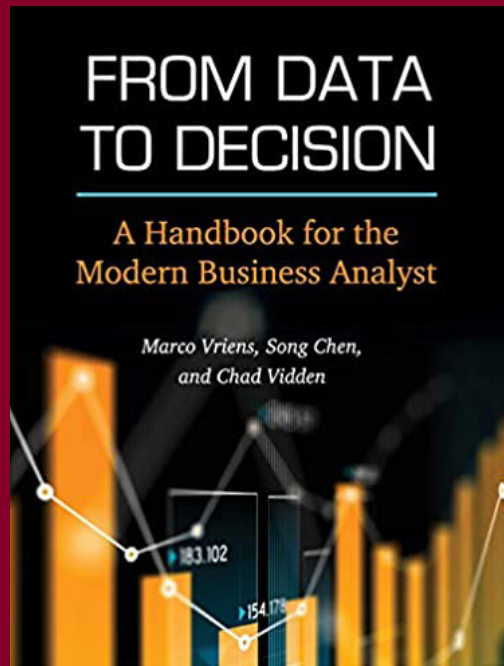
kids. If we had a ton of money and were able to invest in this, I think we could blow up.”

Locally, there might not have been a blow-up, but there has been a small explosion.

Skaar’s family and friends embraced Streignth at the start. But recently, before COVID-19, Skaar was seeing more and more strangers on campus and around town supporting the brand.

“If I’m walking to class or I’m in the gym and I see someone wearing something with our logo, it’s such an incredible feeling,” he says. “Just the fact that they believe in what we’re doing and want to embody that ... it’s the best feeling in the world.”

See the line of products at streignth.com.



From Data to Decision

Prof's' new book explores business analytics

A new book authored by UW-La Crosse professors will help prepare students to enter the world of business analytics.

"From Data to Decision: A Handbook for the Modern Business Analyst" was a collaborative effort among Marco Vriens (Marketing),

Chad Vidden (Mathematics & Statistics) and Song Chen (Mathematics & Statistics).

The team developed the idea for the book after leading various training sessions for the American Marketing Association. They set out to write an overview of analytics that

was grounded in the realities of commercial business.

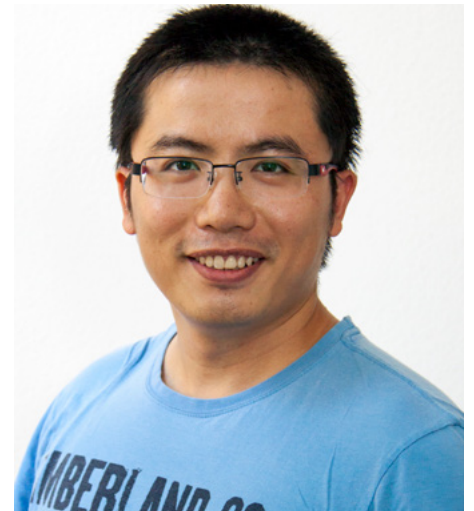
"The analytics landscape is huge, and it is difficult to boil things down to the most useful techniques rather than just the latest trends," Vidden explains. "Also, business



Marco Vriens



Chad Vidden



Song Chen

students are not always strong in technical work, so we had to work to make the book both accessible and useful. The most important approach we took was to showcase ideas with real case studies from our own industrial experience while enabling students to follow.”

When the trio started researching the book, they realized there were no good books on the market that could explain analytics to a business student audience.

Vriens — who has written five books, including the newly released “The Business of Marketing Research” — says the text is intended for professional and academic audiences. He used the book in his Marketing Analytics course in spring 2019 and spring 2020.

Writing an insightful text for a wide audience, he says, took a tremendous amount of work.

“People who have never written an academic book do not know how much work it involves,” Vriens notes. “Within the College of Business Administration, books don’t get much weight. But they are a massive, massive undertaking.”

Vriens and Vidden plan to release a second edition that builds on the concepts of the first.

For Vidden, who had previously authored scientific papers but never a book, the process has been both challenging and rewarding — especially since it has been an interdisciplinary effort, with marketing and math faculty working in tandem.

“It is challenging to show useful techniques at a real scale without losing readers who don’t have a strong technical background,” he says. “The first edition of this book gives the reader a good conceptual grounding, but is light in practice. The second edition of the book will integrate R programming throughout the text starting with initial coding tutorials, allowing readers to have access to data and reproduce all results, and increase in programming skill through the end of the book. The second edition is ambitious, but it will result in the reader being able to have practical experience.”

The human side of the

Relationships, challenges fuel Christa Kiersch's love of teaching



An excellent teacher has a profound impact on students, in and out of the classroom. This year, UWL's Provost Office received more than 500 nominations from students hoping to recognize their favorite teachers.

From these nominations, a university committee selected six faculty to receive 2020 Eagle Teaching Excellence Awards.

This year's winner from the CBA is Christa Kiersch, who teaches in the Management Department. She is joined by Lisa Kruse (Sociology & Criminal Justice), Greg Ormes (Communication Studies), Barrett Klein (Biology), Megan Strom (Global Cultures & Languages) and Tushar Das (Mathematics & Statistics).

Christa Kiersch, Management

Started at UWL: Fall 2012

Courses: "I teach courses in the areas of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management. I often describe my areas as falling within 'the human side of business.'"

Background: "Prior to teaching at UWL, I was in graduate school at Colorado State University, earning my Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. While at CSU, I did research on fair treatment of employees and employee engagement. I also did project-based consulting work, helping organizations make evidence-informed decisions about their human capital."



he business

Favorite part of teaching: “My love of teaching has a lot to do with the human connections formed and how these connections can lead us to think differently about a concept or problem, or even about the world around us.

“I love how these connections can offer support for mutual challenge, and when my students overcome challenges in a project and exceed their own expectations of what they thought was possible. It’s also pretty amazing when my students challenge me to do something new, or something different, and I realize some of my own hidden capabilities, too.

“It’s such a privilege to be part of this process with my students.”

Management Professor Christa Kiersch, second from left, received a 2020 Eagle Teaching Excellence Award. Kiersch says she loves teaching because of the human connections and the chance for students and teachers to inspire one another.





Wowed by Wittich

The CBA's new home is a mix of classic and cutting-edge

The \$25 million renovation of Wittich Hall, the original physical education building on campus, was completed this summer, creating an exciting new space for the CBA and the Small Business Development Center.

The building, which strongly resembled its original 1916 form prior to the re-do, now has a 21st century flair that appeals to faculty, staff and students.

The west side of the building has an impressive patio, a spot certain to become a favorite of students. Inside, an electronic ticker tape reports the latest numbers from the stock market, and a sleek basement lounge provides plenty of study space.

But there are also vestiges of the old Wittich. Green wall tiles that used to surround the pool can be seen in some of the offices, and the hardwood basketball court has been retained as the floor throughout the second story.

UWL Professor Emeritus AB Culver, a 1967 UWL master's degree graduate who completed her thesis on Walter Wittich, for whom the building was named, believes he would approve of the renovation.

"[Wittich] would be very happy to see the results of the restoration of the sky lights in the roof, walking track and other historic aspects of the building," Culver says. "He would be honored to see how much care and effort has been going into keeping Wittich Hall visible and relevant in the future of UW-La Crosse."

The renovation of Wittich Hall preserved elements of the building's original character, including the green tiling from the swimming pool and hardwood basketball court, while adding an array of modern amenities.





And the award goes to...

Sydney Emmerich is this year's Hoeschler Award winner



The Jake and Janet Hoeschler Award for Excellence recognizes a College of Business Administration graduate for academic accomplishment and leadership on campus and in the community. Janet Hoeschler, a 1940 graduate, established the award in 1992 to signify a business-university partnership. Recipients receive \$1,500.

This year's winner is Sydney Emmerich, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science with majors in economics and finance: risk, insurance and financial planning concentration.

Emmerich, a member of the women's track and field team, was named to the NCAA III All-Academic Women's Track & Field Team in 2018 and 2019. She received the Joe Laux Family CBA Top Scholar Award and David M. Cole Award in Economics and Finance, along with numerous scholarships. Emmerich was a member of the Financial Management Association and Investment Club. The Circle K member also worked with the campus Habitat for Humanity chapter.

Emmerich, a 2016 graduate of Medford Area High School, has accepted a job as a fiscal analyst for the Legislative Fiscal Bureau in Madison.

Emmerich says her favorite UWL professors were Mary Hamman and John Nunley, both from the Economics Department.

"I had Mary for Econometrics, and while it was a difficult class, she always did a good job explaining concepts. Even with her busy schedule, she did her best to be available to students and provide the necessary tools for us to be successful," she says. "I had John for Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis and Labor Economics. He is intelligent and always explains concepts well. But more so, he is just interesting to listen to. I always enjoyed sitting through his lectures, listening to him talk about real world matters relating to (or not relating to) topics we were covering."