

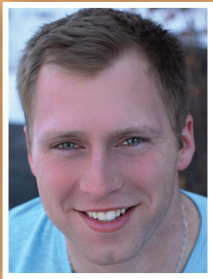


CAPSTONE

SPRING 2015

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

INSPIRING | ACHIEVING | UNITING



ON STAGE

CALAHAN SKOGMAN FINDS
HIS FUTURE AT UW-L

Story on page 4 >>

FROM CLS DEAN RUTHANN BENSON



A THEATRE DEGREE: A TICKET TO SUCCESS!

Yes, you heard me right — a theatre degree can be a ticket to success! As a college dean, I use the skills and knowledge I first learned as an undergraduate theatre major every day.

The theatre degree enabled me to get my first jobs after graduation, in banking, insurance and the medical field, as well as work teaching and directing theatre. All of the business employers valued my ability to communicate effectively, work independently or as part of a team, determine and work within budgets and schedules, and creatively problem solve. All skills I had learned as a theatre major.

The ability to read and understand complex materials and to write professionally was also the result of my second degree in English. My minor in education gave me the skills, knowledge and dispositions to effectively teach.

Later on in life my master's degree in theatre management combined my work as a theatre practitioner with master's level business skills in management, marketing and finance to be successful in a position as a theatre school director. A Ph.D. in fine arts/theatre allowed me to hone my skills in acting, directing and playwriting, as well as higher education teaching and administration. This led to my positions as theatre arts faculty member, my administrative roles as Director of Theatre, Associate Dean, Director of the School of Arts and Communication, and most recently as Dean of the College of Liberal Studies.

Even with the acquiring of additional undergraduate and graduate degrees, I still value my undergraduate degree in theatre, where the foundations for my careers were laid. There is a world of possible career choices for theatre majors, both within theatre itself and in countless other fields.

Regards,

Ruthann E. Benson

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www.uwlax.edu/cls

Features



8

More Than Drum Beats

When Soojin Ritterling was growing up in South Korea, she watched farmers celebrate the harvest. In the male-centric society, women and children didn't perform. Though Soojin wanted to, she never dreamed she would learn to play and perform using the traditional drums.



10

A Devoted Dean

When Ruthann Benson came to UW-L in 1994, her son was grown up and out of the house. She had time to commit to new goals, and she did. More than 20 years later, Benson is the College of Liberal Studies dean, and her UW-L family has grown.



18

Uncovering History to Inspire Art

An exhibit conceived by three UW-L students will showcase local historical artifacts from the La Crosse County Historical Society's collection and new original artwork from artists inspired by the objects. UW-L students will learn to be experts at artifact analysis and research, public relations, curatorial work and educational programming to move the project forward.



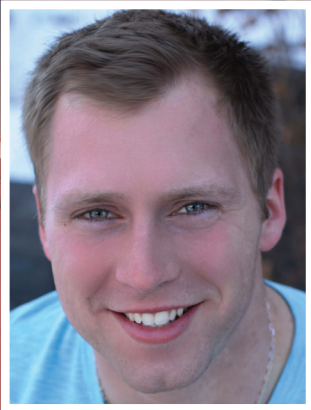
27

Grad Group

The summer before Alex Helberg graduated he was thinking about graduate school, along with some friends. But, they had questions. So Helberg asked Assistant Professor of English Kate Parker if they could chat. Helberg, Parker and his friends quickly formed a bond that helped the students get into grad school.

CLS Vision Statement

Championing the enduring values of the liberal arts and positioning them as key to transforming people, ideas and the world.



ON STAGE

Calahan Skogman finds his future at UW-L

Calahan Skogman was standing backstage in the dark as the curtain closed.

As the drapes swung together, an eruption of applause echoed throughout Toland Theater and into his ears. The moment — was perfect.

It was Skogman's first theater performance, and an experience that changed his life.

"There are certain times in life when you know you're doing what you're supposed to do," he says.

It took some soul searching for Skogman to find his way on stage at UW-L. But the transfer student has no doubt it was the right decision.

"I've learned so much more about myself during my college years — how to really trust in

yourself and listen to yourself — finding the purpose that's in your heart rather than what others think," he says.

Skogman was entranced with theater from the moment he saw his first play in high school. After seeing a Friday night show, he went back to watch all the other weekend performances. "I was blown away by it," he says. "I'd



Skogman in UW-L Theatre Arts department production of "Rumors" in 2015.



Skogman in UW-L Theatre Arts department production of "The Metal Children" in 2014.

"I've been a firm believer that the busier I make myself, the more productive I make myself. And I try to do things that I love doing. If I'm going to give up sleep for something, it better be for something I enjoy."

CALAHAN SKOGMAN, '15

never been exposed before."

But Skogman was an athlete in high school who didn't want to quit sports to quench his thirst for theater. When he started at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, he still couldn't find a way to participate in both.

Eventually, he transferred to UW-L in fall 2013, his junior year, where he made a point to pursue his dream.

He walked into Theater Director Mary Leonard's office, explaining that theater was his passion and he wanted to minor in it. Skogman worked backstage for a fall production and was cast as a lead the following spring in "The

Metal Children." But he hadn't given up sports. He was also voted most valuable player on the men's basketball team that winter.

"He dedicated himself to balancing both worlds, and he did it quite impressively," says Leonard.

Some are amazed by Skogman's seemingly diverse interests in sports and theater.

"People think they are so different. That's sad to me. I think they are similar," says Skogman. "Both teach you how hard you have to work to achieve what you want to achieve — how to have discipline, but also be able to react on the fly."

In addition to his talent in theater and athletics, Calahan Skogman has a 3.9 GPA and has been on the Dean's List since he started at UW-L. Skogman also hosts a sports radio show, "CWSports – The Handle," on UW-L's RAQ radio about professional and college sports, which he started last year.

Skogman eventually decided to major in theater. His career goal is to be an actor, writer and director on the biggest stage possible. It's what he thinks about when he goes to sleep and when he wakes up.

"It's become the dominant thing that I think of — theater, film and telling the stories I want to tell and reaching the people I want to reach," he says.

Those stories don't have to be amazing or grand — they just have to be about real life, says Skogman.

"Everyone is going through

something, but at the same time we can relate," he says. "I want to tell stories about things that hit people's hearts."

Skogman co-directed his first film Oktoberfest weekend 2014. The film, "The Year After: A Short Film on Love and Loss," was about a young man reflecting on his girlfriend a year after she died.

"Whether you've experienced that kind of loss or not, you can watch the film and understand what it means," says Skogman. "The film takes an extremely delicate, heart wrenching aspect of life and shows it in a real way."

In addition to his film pursuits, Skogman has continued to pick up lead roles in UW-L theater productions from "8" to "Rumors."

Watching Skogman rise up as an actor has been "inspiring," says Leonard.

"We all dream of something. He knows, if you want something, you have to pursue it strongly," says Leonard. "You could see that he was just hungry for knowledge and opportunity — he was willing to do what he needed to do to succeed."

Leonard says she's glad to have him in the department. Skogman is also happy to be at UW-L.

"I love this place. I really love this place. I would tell anyone, anywhere, anytime. This school has everything I could possibly need, and it's been an incredibly supportive place to grow," he says.



Watch a short film on love and loss starring Calahan Skogman and Lily Cornwell:

https://youtu.be/j_63_jc9Dgs

HEAR HERE

Everyday stories make history in downtown La Crosse



La Crosse's downtown will come alive this spring with memories of local citizens who worked, lived and shopped on the streets. As part of the Spring Fling Downtown Mainstreet Inc. April 12, UW-L Assistant History Professor Ariel Beaujot will launch the "Hear, Here" project.

Signs at downtown locations will be linked to a phone system where people can hear the collected stories of everyday people. The stories contribute to the larger history of the community, notes Beaujot.

"It is very exciting to see this project come together after two years of planning and grant writing," she says.

Beaujot is particularly proud of her students in a new public and policy history major who did a lot of the legwork. Students in a fall 2014 course collected, recorded and edited stories about downtown La Crosse's past and present. Stories ranged from the aftermath of a downtown fight to safety in gay bars in the early '90s.

Students in a spring semester course are launching the project from coordination of technology to public relations. Viewing street signs, people may call a toll-free number (or listen online) to



UW-L Assistant History Professor Ariel Beaujot teaches a hands-on public history course examining the theory behind location-based history. The fall course and one in spring 2015 culminate with the launch of a location-based mobile phone system downtown in April.

first-person accounts of the places. After listening to a recollection, visitors can add their own stories.

Beaujot has made a special effort to reach out to historically underrepresented groups such as people who are homeless, the Ho-Chunk Nation, the Hmong, African American and LGBTQ* communities to contribute, so that the community can understand the perspective of all citizens.

Beaujot says the project will run until 2020. "We would like for it to evolve and change over time, just as our community does and has. This is the reason why it is so important for there to be a way for the community to keep contributing their stories. History is what happened 100 years ago, but it is also what happened yesterday."



Hear history at www.hearherelacrosse.org or find **HEAR, HERE** on **FACEBOOK**

**This symbol indicates individuals who identify as neither women nor men, a mixture of the two, or something else.*

MORE THAN DRUM BEATS

Soojin Kim Ritterling, associate professor of music education, was born in Jeonju, South Korea, an area rich in traditional Korean farmer's dance and music. Here she plays her original composition, "Turn," with the Korean Percussion Ensemble and the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra.

Faculty member writes original music that reflects her roots

When Soojin Ritterling was a young girl growing up in South Korea, she watched with amazement as the farmers celebrated the harvest. They proudly pounded their drums in the field as they marched in formation, twirling their hats high in the air.

In the male-focused society, the women and children didn't perform. Though Soojin wanted to, she never dreamed she would learn to play and perform using the traditional drums.

Decades later, Ritterling doesn't only perform with traditional Korean drums, she has composed an original piece of Korean percussion music based on the traditional Korean farmer's music and dance.

Ritterling, a UW-L associate professor of music, performed the concerto-style work with a group of students in her advanced Korean Percussion Ensemble and the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra for one of the first times Nov. 15, as part of a concert theme on war and peace.

The work, called "Turn," is about Korea, its history and people, says Ritterling. The name stems, in part, from the many changes Korea went through at the turn of the century. With westernization, chemicals and

machinery meant less communal labor and the traditional farmer's music once played together in the field began to fade. But the rhythm in Ritterling's composition revives the drumming patterns she heard as a child.

"I'm trying to bring Korean history and music to the western world," says Ritterling.

During the symphony performance Ritterling felt pride. Her goal of sharing her culture was coming together. After the performance, Ritterling's percussion ensemble was supposed to exit the stage quietly. But as audience members rose from their seats for a long standing ovation, she couldn't.



Get a look at the unique drumming: <http://goo.gl/G1zWxz>

Soojin Ritterling took a sabbatical during 2009-10 in South Korea with a grant from the Fulbright Scholarship Program to learn more about the traditional percussion music and how it is performed in contemporary Korean society. Ritterling completed her composition, "Turn," in summer 2014 after she was contacted to perform Korean drumming with the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra.

"Usually when you're on stage, you're not supposed to look at the audience, but I couldn't help myself," says UW-L senior Sarah Mickelson, a music education major. "Everyone was standing. It was the longest standing ovation I've ever seen."

Ritterling's students describe performing the piece as moving and exciting. "When symphony locks with percussion, there is this adrenaline rush," explains UW-L senior Zachary Zalewski.

"It's something I'll be telling people about for the rest of my life," adds Mickelson.

At the end, Ritterling said she was moved too. "I was really, really touched," she says.

SHARING SOUTH KOREAN CULTURE

Ritterling teaches three Korean percussion ensembles at UW-L. Two are for beginning and advanced students. The other is the Women's Samulnori Ensemble for female faculty and staff. All practice regularly and perform.

Mickelson recalls her first rehearsal with the Korean Percussion Ensemble as "terrifying." After growing frustrated and almost quitting, she began to figure out how to properly hold the instrument and move with the music. Learning to play these instruments has inspired confidence and leadership, she says. Plus, it's just fun.

"In this group you can feel the music more than when you play with other musical groups — you move with it," says Mickelson. "It's awesome."

Ritterling's students call her strict, but fun. "She has this huge personality, which, when you don't know her really well, can be intimidating," says Zalewski. "But a lot of that melts away as you get to know her. She is extremely compassionate and does all she can to help students."

He says Ritterling inspires loyalty in her students and gives the group amazing opportunities. In addition to playing with the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, they've taken a trip to Nashville and visited Ritterling's home for a homemade Korean meal.

While African drumming is sometimes played in public schools, Ritterling says her dream is to hear Korean drumming there too. That isn't far off. Ritterling's ensembles often visit public schools to perform and music education majors she has taught have brought the drums to their classrooms.

ABOUT 'TURN'

"Turn" is considered fusion music because it blends Korean authentic drums with western orchestra. In Korea, different regions have strong dialects. The flavor of the dialects is brought out in the music.

"Turn" is a concerto-style symphonic piece with three main themes:

» The first emphasizes three tones.

It is based on menari tori from the eastern coastline of Korea. Tori, refers to different tonalities of Korean music reflecting regional dialects in folk music.

» The second is a well-known Korean folk song: Arirang. Drummers stop drumming and sing. Because five tones of the pentatonic scale are

equally used, Korean scholars categorize this as gyeong tori (from the central area).

» The third comes from taryeong, a Korean court dance music theme. Variations of this theme played by the orchestra mimic the various dynamic aspects of traditional rhythms and dance movement.

Singing a new song

Professor publishes warm-up book



Choirs nationwide are warming up to Music Professor Gary Walth's latest book.

"WARM-UP! 20 Purpose Driven Etudes to Develop Essential Choral Skills" is a compilation of warm-ups Walth used

with the UW-L Concert Choir the past four years.

"The book is targeted for middle school, high school, collegiate, community and church choir directors," says Walth. "So far the feedback has been good."

Walth says the warm-ups not only prepare a singer's mind and body for rehearsal, but add elements that strengthen basic singing.

This is his second book published by Hal Leonard Corp. Walth's first, "Jazz Warm-ups and Vocalises," also received popular acclaim. Walth plans to team up with Milwaukee musician Tom Anderson this summer for a third book, "How to Speak Rhythm Section."

Encore!

Walth isn't new to publishing. His other projects include:

- Seven compositions and arrangements currently available from three publishers.
- More than 30 compositions and arrangements written and performed during his 22-year UW-L career.
- Advent and communion liturgies for English Lutheran Church, La Crosse. Both still being used.
- 16 anthems for the English adult choir or praise band. A Christmas cantata, written for English Lutheran choirs, premiered in 2010.

FIGHT SONG



Gary Walth, center, with two La Crosse Loggers players at Copeland Park. The players include Aaron Knapp, right, a sophomore from California-Berkeley; and Ryan Kirby, a sophomore from the University of San Diego, who stayed at the Walth home last summer. Walth has written a fight song for the Northwoods League team.

Gary Walth has a hit with a fight song he penned last summer for the La Crosse Loggers baseball team. Early indications: it's a home run.

Walth, and his wife, Cathy, season ticket holders for five years, have served as host parents for players the last two. So, he knew the Loggers well. Walth had a feeling for the style of music he thought would be right for the team that annually has the second highest attendance in the Northwoods League.

"I also wanted the lyrics to be descriptive in their content," explains Walth. "I wanted to include things that set this team apart from the others in the league like mascots Louie the Logger and Logger Dog, the Copeland Crazies — the fans — and, of course, their home field, Copeland Park, also called The Lumberyard."

Logger management liked what they heard and introduced the song at last year's final home game.

This isn't Walth's first fight song. He wrote one for a new high school in Aurora, Colorado, while living there in the late '80s.

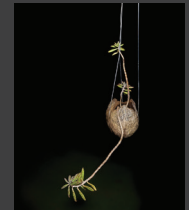
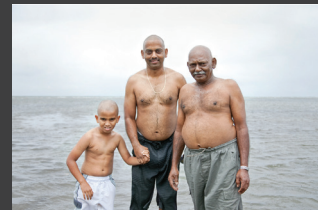
Sing along at:

<http://goo.gl/EgxPxx>



CLICK

Photographer captures a changing tide in an island nation



Her camera was her guide when she returned to the island country where she lived as a child.

Kathleen Hawkes, UW-L assistant professor of photography, took about 28,000 photographs in Fiji and surrounding countries during 2012 on a Fulbright grant. She revisited places she knew as a child from living in Western Samoa while her parents worked at the University of the South Pacific. It was a place she daydreamed about long after she moved away.

But what Hawkes saw through her lens was not what she expected.

She thought she'd see people on the islands isolated by the vast Pacific Ocean. She found the opposite — a country buzzing with communication technology from Internet to mobile phones.

Moreover, the people didn't see themselves isolated in the middle of an ocean. "The ocean is instead the connective tissue that links the land masses, people and cultures together," explains Hawkes.

Hawkes communicated the discrepancies she found between her preconceived, westernized view of the

South Pacific and what she actually found in a photographic exhibit "Ocean/Land" Aug. 1-Sept. 5, 2014, at The Gallery of Oceanian Art at the University of the South Pacific.

The exhibit challenges the westernized view of Fiji as a tourist's paradise. Instead, Hawkes portrays a country with a complex national and cultural identity and history. She explored not only trends in the country's communication technology, but also effects of climate change and political unrest through the stories of people and photographs of them and their homes.

Find out more about Hawkes at www.kathleenhawkes.com



SPEAK UP!

UW-L Public Speaking Center supports students, enhances classes



Students Ben Wunderlich (left) and Christopher Farvour practice at the UW-L Public Speaking Center in Murphy Library.

Surveys of Americans' greatest fears rank one above all others — even before death.

The fear of public speaking.

UW-L students are often asked to manage this fear in classes from communication studies to business and education. Now they have a campus resource to help. A group of peer mentors at UW-L's Public Speaking Center (PSC) are trained to help make the prospect of speaking in front of a large audience less terrifying.

"There is a stigma that public speaking is scary and cannot be comfortable," says Noelle Griffiths, a UW-L senior and lead peer mentor at the center.

Griffiths, a peer mentor for four semesters, once felt scared about public speaking too. She struggled with talking too fast and forgetting information. But, with help from a couple UW-L professors, she learned how to improve, and ultimately manage her fear.

"Now, I can be that resource for students, and it is really rewarding," she says.

Peer mentors help students select topics, develop their speech and delivery, manage anxiety, and more. The trained, student mentors give peers an opportunity to prepare and gain confidence before presenting to a larger audience.

"Just like playing basketball, cre-



"Directing the Public Speaking Center is the best part of my job — I get to work

closely with some of our brightest and most passionate students as they develop into mentors, and help hundreds of students on campus overcome their fear of public speaking, find their voice, and develop into articulate, powerful speakers."

Tony Docan-Morgan

ating art or writing a paper, public speaking is a skill. Skills must be practiced and honed,” says Center Director Tony Docan-Morgan. “The Public Speaking Center offers a safe, supportive space for students to do that.”

Since the center was piloted in 2012-13, use has climbed. Five-hundred students walked through the door in 2013-14, with nearly 800 in fall 2014 alone.

UW-L’s training program for peer mentors is certified by the National Association of Communication Centers. Only 12 other communication centers in the U.S. have the certification that acknowledges UW-L’s peer consultants receive high quality, extensive training in public speaking, mentoring and instruction, and provide constructive speech feedback.

Students stop in individually or entire classes use the center. Docan-Morgan has collaborated with colleagues across campus to provide hands-on, interactive workshops. They prepare students for specific assignments or cover public-speaking related topics such as reducing anxiety, building credibility or using PowerPoint.

Along the way, peer mentors are learning too.



Noelle Griffiths, right, is a one of two lead peer consultants at the Public Speaking Center spring semester. The UW-L senior who is majoring in communication studies says she’ll use skills learned at the center no matter where her future takes her.

Brandon Forcier, a UW-L junior and lead peer consultant, says he learned how to ask good questions and the appropriate time to add input. “There is no doubt that this job has improved my listening skills as well, which is a vital, yet sometimes an overlooked skill,” he says.

Forcier says being a peer mentor has improved the interpersonal skills he’ll need as a high school guidance counselor. It’s also confirmed his desire to pursue the profession.

“There is nothing more rewarding than watching a student understand something they had not originally understood,” he says. “They begin to become more confident and the session becomes easier because they begin to lead their own session.”

Tony Docan-Morgan worked with CST 110 instructors and peer consultants to plan and host the first public speaking competition. It took place this spring during Creative Imperatives.

Griffiths, who plans to tutor and mentor underprivileged youth through an AmeriCorps program after graduation in May, says the PSC has taught her how to teach.

“Overall, I have learned that the only way to meet a student’s — or anyone’s — needs is to be patient, be willing, ask questions, and find out what the person hopes to accomplish,” she says. “Such skills are ones I will absolutely carry with me into my future.”



Learn more about the UW-L Public Speaking Center: <http://www.uwlax.edu/psc>

MAKING AN ENTRANCE

UW-L Center for the Arts to get remodeled main entrance



Architectural rendering of what the remodeled south entrance to the Center for the Arts will look like.

The main entrance to the Center for the Arts is being updated. The south side of the center — the way the public enters the four decades old building for art, theatre and music shows — will get a nearly \$1.1 million overhaul.

The upgrade includes an American Disabilities Act-compliant elevator, along with new indoor and outdoor stairs. Currently, the entrance is only accessible by two groups of outdoor steep steps. The only elevator in the building to carry large items to the gallery is accessible through the ground level at the back of the building.

The project was initially approved in August 2014, and will be presented to the State Building Commission in April

2015, says Doug Pearson, executive director of UW-L Facilities Planning and Management. If approved, Pearson expects construction to begin in fall 2015 and be completed in early 2016.

The entrance makeover is the second major renovation approved recently for the Center for the Arts, built in 1973. A \$900,000 overhaul of 285-seat Annett Recital Hall was approved in early 2014. On hold for two to four years, the project would completely renovate the recital hall, replace lighting and electrical infrastructure; upgrade the room's mechanical HVAC system; replace wall and ceiling finishes, along with floor finishes and fixed seating; and install new educational technology.



ABOVE: The south entrance to the Center For the Arts has looked like this since the building was constructed in 1972. A nearly \$1.1 million upgrade will make the entrance ADA compliant and more inviting. Photo by Mark Beckerjeck, '88.



SHORT STORY HONOR

Faculty member
receives
Katherine Anne
Porter Prize in
fiction

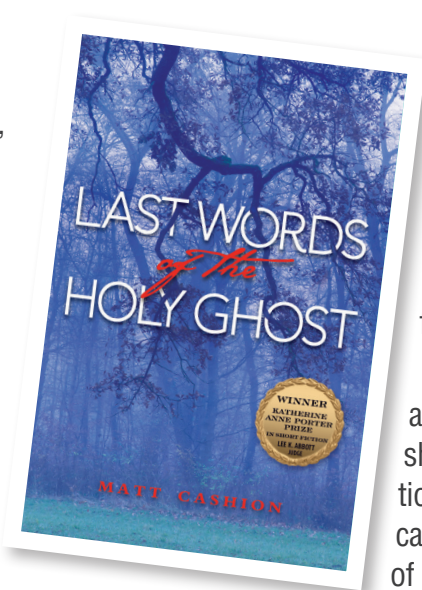
Matt Cashion, associate professor of creative writing, has won the 2015 Katherine Anne Porter Prize in fiction for his short story collection, “Last Words of the Holy Ghost.” He will receive a cash prize and University of North Texas Press will publish his book in November 2015.

“I’ve been writing (and re-writing) fiction for about 25 years, so it’s extremely gratifying to have my story collection chosen for this prize,” says Cashion.

“Last Words of the Holy Ghost” is a collection of 12 stories featuring a cast of quirky characters and diverse points of views. Set in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Wisconsin, the stories are about people struggling to survive the absurdities and sorrows of daily life (often with well-timed humor) while negotiating conflicts related to

class, gender, race, sexuality, family, place, work, death, love and storytelling itself.

A committee and judge selected Cashion’s work based on merit from 250 writer submissions. Cashion says the award is espe-



“I’ve been writing (and re-writing) fiction for about 25 years, so it’s extremely gratifying to have my story collection chosen for this prize.”

Matt Cashion

cially meaningful because accomplished fiction-writer Lee K. Abbott was the final judge.

Abbott writes about Cashion’s short story collection, “Listen: if you can find a collection of stories more cohesive, more ambi-

tious in reach, more generous in its passion, and fancier in its footwork, I will buy it for you and deliver it in person.”

Cashion has been published before. His novel, “How the Sun Shines on Noise,” was published by Livingston Press in 2004. His second novel, “Our 13th Divorce,” is currently under contract to be published by Livingston Press in the spring 2016.



CLS Dean Ruthann Benson will step down from her position in June 2015. She plans to take a sabbatical in fall 2015, then teach in 2016 before officially retiring in December 2016.

A DEVOTED DEAN

Retiring CLS Dean Ruthann Benson devoted career to internationalization, diversity, liberal arts and UW-L

When Ruthann Benson came to UW-La Crosse in 1994, her son was grown up and out of the house. She had time to commit to new goals, and she did.

In fact, Benson worked so hard as UW-L's new director of theatre, spending 60-80 hour weeks at the university, that a new family began to emerge.

"The university became my family, my social network," she says.

Now, more than 20 years later, Benson is the College of Liberal Studies dean, and her UW-L family has grown. Her present and past

colleagues describe her as "diligent" and "someone who embodies UW-L."

Benson will step down from her position June 30, 2015. She plans to take a sabbatical and go back to teaching before officially retiring in December 2016.

John Magerus, dean emeritus of CLS, says he first saw Benson's diligence when the two were charged with organizing the 20th anniversary celebration of the Fine Arts Building in 1994.

"I soon learned how hard-working and organized she was; these

traits have been a consistent theme in her professional life at UW-L," he says.

Prior to becoming CLS interim dean and dean, Benson was associate dean and director of the university's School of Arts and Communication from 1997-2007 and director of theatre from 1994-97.



Ruthann Benson's sabbatical in fall 2015 will take her back to her theatre roots. She plans to work on children's theatre playwriting. Benson was a children's theatre director in Florida for five years before pursuing a master's of fine arts degree in arts management/theatre and a doctoral degree in fine arts and theatre. In spring 2016 and the following fall semester, Benson plans to teach half time and work on special projects for the provost.

Benson also worked hard to lead her college and university toward internationalization. She chaired the university's 2005 task force on international education charged with recommending strategic directions for the internationalization of the institution. She developed and led the first study-abroad experiences through the London Study Program, which is now an annual faculty-led program. She taught theater courses abroad, and has been heavily involved in developing the English Department partnership programs with five

universities in China.

"I would like to see every student have an international experience," she says. "The insights they gain from that international study is so important for them in today's world."

Benson has also worked hard to support diversity initiatives on campus such as the award-winning Eagle Mentoring Program, a CLS mentoring and retention program for under-represented, first-generation or low-income, second year college students.

Colleagues say Benson's decisions as dean reflect her enthusiasm and commitment to the value of a liberal arts education.

"She has challenged the CLS to think strategically about how we can most effectively champion liberal arts education today and in the future," says Charles Martin-Stanley, CLS associate dean.

Benson says the liberal arts provide a background for life-long learning. After Benson retires, she plans to embrace her liberal arts education and keep on learning by auditing UW-L courses. She also plans to continue to support UW-L through volunteering.

Finding ways to get involved at UW-L hasn't been a challenge during her career, and she doesn't expect it to be in retirement either.

"One of the things I tell candidates when come to interviews is, 'You'll find UW-L gives you opportunities to get involved that you won't necessarily find at other universities. If you come here, you can make a difference if you want to,'" she says.

FORMER AND CURRENT COLLEAGUES CHIME IN ...

"As chair of Theatre, Ruthann hired me in 1996. I left that interview thinking, 'this was the place for me.' Over the next 13 years at UW-L, Ruthann was always my direct supervisor. She took me under her wing as faculty, then chair and as interim associate dean. She let me make mistakes, helped me learn from them and taught me how to channel my passions and be a stronger leader. Ruthann embodies UW-L. A few years removed from UW-L, I still get to call her friend, and that is the best reward."

Billy Clow, former interim associate dean of the College of Liberal Studies and director of the School of Arts and Communication

"One of the benefits of having Dr. Benson as the Dean of the College of Liberal Studies has been her personal and professional commitment to the Arts. Her decisions and actions reflect a real commitment to the value of a liberal education and lifelong learning."

Betsy Morgan, professor of psychology

"Ruthann's dedication to the School of Arts and Communication, the College of Liberal Studies, and UW-L is unquestionable. She has brought a diligent attitude to doing what is best for everyone associated with this institution. Her dedication to her family, friends, students and colleagues is admirable. Indeed, she has made a significant contribution to the continuing success of our great university."

John E. Magerus, Dean Emeritus, College of Liberal Studies



LIFELONG LEARNER

Mary Jo Snow, associate lecturer of psychology, has a long-term link to UW-L's Psychology Department.

She has fond memories as an undergraduate and graduate student in the late 1970s. Two days after marrying her husband in 1978, she reported to graduate school in the school psychology program. "I like to tell people that I spent my honeymoon at Graff Main Hall — except my husband wasn't with me," she jokes.

But Snow's hard work in graduate school landed her a job as a school psychologist for the La Crosse School District the summer after she graduated in 1980. She worked for the district for 32 years.

Snow didn't stay away from UW-L for long. In the 1980s, she returned to teach part-time in the Psychology Department two

afternoons a week, after a full day of work at the school district. Although Snow took a hiatus from teaching at UW-L when she and her husband started a family in

the 1990s, she maintained ties with UW-L as a graduate student supervisor for 55 school psychology graduate students.

Snow returned to UW-L to teach part time in January 2013. Coming back has been "wonderful," she says, but it has also come with some challenges. One is adapting to new teaching technology that wasn't around in the '80s, such as Desire2Learn (D2L), an online learning management system where she posts assignments, grades and more.

"My experiences at UW-L have provided me with new challenges and have allowed me to continue to grow during my retirement years," Snow says. "I tell my students that I hope to continue learning from them as they are learning from me in the classes that I teach."

Mary Jo Snow, '78 & '80, earned a double major in psychology and elementary education before completing the school psychology graduate school program.

[art]ifact

Uncovering history to inspire art, exhibit will feature artifacts along with corresponding artwork

Artists can submit work to an exhibition that blends La Crosse community history and art: [Art]ifact.

The exhibit, originally conceived by three UW-L students, will showcase local historical artifacts from the La Crosse County Historical Society's collection and new original artwork from artists inspired by the objects. Along the way, UW-L students will learn to be experts at artifact analysis and research, public relations, curatorial work and educational programming to move the project forward.

"To do a project like this, you have to have a community that believes in its students," says UW-L Senior Ariel Reker, a project leader.

The project is a team effort among the Pump House Regional Arts Center, the La Crosse County Historical Society and UW-L's History Department.

In 2015-16, students in Ariel Beaujot's Public and Policy History classes will choose 15 artifacts made in La Crosse and represent the community's diverse history. Then, a Pump House jury will select 15 artists from submissions received by Sept. 15, 2015. Artists will be assigned a historic object to use for inspiration to create new artwork. Historic artifacts and corresponding



Public and Policy History major Callie O'Connor, left, says compiling La Crosse history artifacts for a new exhibit has been exciting. O'Connor and UW-L Assistant History Professor Ariel Beaujot look at a 1940s dress with a tag that says "Zita Maher at Newburgs, La Crosse" at the La Crosse County Historical Society. It took some digging to figure out the dress was from a women's section in the upstairs of a Newburgs, a downtown men's clothing store.

new artwork will be displayed side by side at a spring 2016 Pump House exhibit.

"[Art]ifact will show our accomplishments as a community historically and today," says Beaujot.

Reker is heading up the overall direction and public relations aspects of the project and UW-L Senior Callie O'Connor is working on the curatorial end. Their duties match their future career goals to be a museum director and curator. Beaujot is their mentor.

ARE YOU AN INTERESTED ARTIST?

The deadline to submit work is September 2015. Three prizes will be awarded to artists who present the best connection, best transformation and best renewal.



Learn more about [art]ifact project: <http://www.art-ifact.org>

GRAD GROUP

Students work with faculty to prep for graduate school

It was the summer before Alex Helberg planned to graduate. He was thinking about graduate school, along with some friends. But, they had questions, so Helberg, '13, asked Assistant Professor of English Kate Parker if they could chat.

Parker accepted the offer and after meeting the group of five she realized they were serious and suggested they meet more formally every two weeks. They agreed and over the academic year worked on purpose statements and writing samples, along with what to expect in grad school life.

“Everyone always showed up ready to work, ready to get down to business,” notes Parker.

While the group had fun, they meant business. “They read countless drafts for one another. They offered each other enthusiastic support and advice. They were so articulate and thoughtful in their critiques of one another,” says Parker. “It was an incredible experience to witness this kind of commitment from



These five CLS graduates met as a group with CLS faculty during the last half of 2013 to get tips on getting admitted to graduate school. From left are Natalie Goodman, Kevin Sommerfeld, Jason Crider, Alex Helberg and Dillon Mader.

students who had just graduated from college.”

Parker says the group exceeded expectations with its search for answers and more. “It was really important to be honest with the students about how competitive some of the programs they were applying to actually are,” she says. “They needed to be prepared for the realities of the graduate school application process — it can be brutal.”

The success of the group — all were admitted to grad school — has made Parker plan for more in the future. She expects to see their hard work getting into grad school blossom as they begin their careers.

“They all possess an incredible professional ethic, and I think they will make wonderful future colleagues in any department,” she concludes.

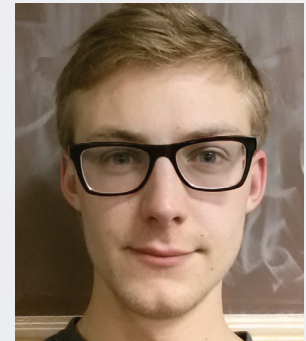
Here's what the students had to say about their group seeking answers about graduate school:



JASON CRIDER, '13

*Hometown: Racine
Pursuing: MA in English,
Clemson University*

“Dr. Parker and the rest of the group helped me to get into that headspace and get a jump start on what my life would be like starting at Clemson, which I think has been instrumental to my success here.”



DILLON MADER, '13

*Hometown: Coon Valley
Pursuing: MA in English,
University of Colorado-Boulder*

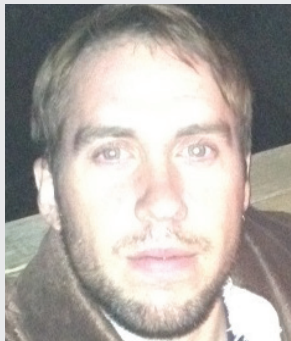
“So often, our work becomes privatized and competition reigns. The main strength of this group was destabilizing these barriers of competition. Not only did faculty give us instructions on how to survive in graduate school, but they taught us specific teaching and studying strategies.”



ALEX HELBERG, '13

*Hometown: Prescott
Pursuing: MA in Rhetoric,
Carnegie Mellon University*

“It was extremely helpful to be able to collaborate and give feedback to each other in a workshop-style setting – something which, I think, helped prepare me for the type of collaborative work done in my graduate school classrooms.”



KEVIN SOMMERFELD, '12

*Hometown: Racine
Pursuing: MA in English, Clemson
University*

“Kate and the guest professors talked about the amount of work involved, the importance of developing relationships with professors and colleagues, getting involved in publishing and presenting at conferences, financial issues, and how to approach all these aspects. Without this group, I don't think I would have pursued graduate school, at least not right away.”



NATALIE GOODMAN, '13

*Hometown: Sparta
Pursuing: MA in English: Media,
Cinema, and Digital Studies
track, UW-Milwaukee*

“It's always valuable to get feedback on writing, but the insight and wisdom provided by Kate, my group members, and other UW-L professors was indispensable. The group didn't just help me get into grad school, it prepared me for what happens once I actually got there.”



TAKING HER SHOW OVERSEAS

KARYN QUINN SELECTED TO PERFORM IN CHINA

A long-time music instructor was selected as one of the Americans to jazz up new audiences overseas.

Karyn Quinn, a senior lecturer in the Music Department since 1989, participated in the Second Bi-annual Jazz Education Festival at The Shanghai Conservatory of Music in Shanghai, China. Quinn, '84, was invited to be part of an all-star jazz combo and adju-

dicate at the festival held Nov. 15-23, 2014.

Quinn performed in concert with a seven-piece, all-star combo made up of professional artists and educators from throughout the U.S. The all-star group also performed in concert with the Shanghai Conservatory Jazz Ensemble.

"I taught two master classes for bass students and judged

jazz bands and combos from throughout China in a competition," Quinn says. "I also performed in concert with New York saxophonist Eric Alexander at JZ's Jazz Club in Shanghai."

Quinn teaches applied bass, history of jazz cultures, jazz bands, combos, jazz techniques and low brass techniques. She also directs the UW -L Jazz Orchestra (formerly Jazz I) and UW-L Jazz Ensemble (formerly Jazz II).

Quinn was invited to teach at a jazz camp in Bangkok, Thailand in March 2015, and hopes to return to Shanghai in July for the Grammy China All-Star High School Jazz Ensemble. Her Thailand plans have been scrapped following an accident in late January in which she tore off the tip of her finger. Her recovery time extended through March, which exempted her from making the spring trip.



Music Department Senior Lecturer Karyn Quinn was on the bill of the All-Star Jazz Combo festival in Shanghai, China, in November. She's pictured in the top row, far right.

GLASS CEILING; GLASS CEILING?

Study shows gender bias in student evaluations

A UW-L faculty member is co-author of a study that shows students in online courses give higher evaluations to their instructors when they think they are men — even when the instructor is actually a woman.

“This is how universities evaluate teaching and make promotion and retention decisions,” says Adam Driscoll, assistant professor of sociology, a co-author. “When female instructors are disadvantaged in this way, that matters for their career and highlights broader gender inequalities that exist in our society.”

The paper, “What’s in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching,” was published online Dec. 5, 2014, in the “Innovative Higher Education Journal.” It’s already made headlines in national news outlets including NBC, New York magazine and Inside Higher Ed.



“This is how universities evaluate teaching and make promotion and retention decisions. When female instructors are disadvantaged in this way, that matters for their career and highlights broader gender inequalities that exist in our society.”

ADAM DRISCOLL

The researchers evaluated students in four discussion groups in an online course at North Carolina State University. A female instructor led two groups while a male instructor led the other two. The female instructor told one of her groups that she was male while the male instructor told one of his groups he was female.

At the end of the course, students rated the discussion group instructors on 12 traits ranging from effectiveness and interpersonal skills. The instructors whom the students thought were male received higher ratings on all 12 traits. Differences ranged from half a point to a point difference on a five-point scale.

Other authors on the study were Lillian MacNeill, North Carolina State University, and Andrea Hunt, University of North Alabama.

AT THE TOP

Alumni find career success grounded in the liberal arts

Two CLS alums from the Class of '91 are leading colleges in Michigan and New York. Both say CLS faculty served as mentors and helped them to their leadership posts.

Joseph E. Nyre is the eighth president of Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, and Thomas Pleger is the eighth president of Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

Nyre says thoughts of higher education leadership came



Joseph Nyre, '91, is president of Iona College in New York.

JOSEPH E. NYRE

- » 8th president, Iona College, New Rochelle, New York
- » Ed. S. and Ph. D., University of Kansas; M. A. University of Missouri
- » Bachelor's in psychology from UW-L, 1991.

into focus for him over the years. "As a first-generation college graduate, I experienced the transformational nature and immense power of higher education," he notes. "As a college professor, I witnessed the same in others."

Nyre saw strong leadership at UW-L, experiencing servant-based leaders and mentors in Psychology Professor Harry

Gardiner and fellow alum Nick Marvich. "They were compassionate, firm, funny, well grounded, insightful and of the highest integrity," he says. "Those traits undoubtedly impacted my approach to leadership."

The best thing about being a college president is seeing students transform, says Nyre. Higher education is experienc-



Thomas Pleger, '91, and his wife, Teresa (Schaefer), '90 & '10, enjoy living on the Lake Superior State University campus and interacting with students daily. Pleger is the eighth president of the university in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Photo credit: LSSU/John Shibley

THOMAS C. PLEGER

- » 8th president, Lake Superior State University, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan
- » M.A. in anthropology, Ph.D. in anthropology/archaeology, UW-Madison.
- » Bachelor's in political science from UW-L, 1991.

ing change, too. "Being there for students while developing sustainable business models, ensuring the affordability of a college education, recruiting and retaining top faculty, building state-of-the-art facilities, and raising the necessary funds for all those initiatives becomes an elegant balancing act of time," he says.

Pleger attributes his outstanding liberal education at UW-L — courses in natural and social sciences, communication and writing, and the arts and humanities — to prepping him for college president. "This broad curriculum helped me develop skills that were useful in graduate

school, as a professor, dean and eventually as a president," he says.

Professors Jim Gallagher and Jim Theler were mentors, he says, along with Political Science Professor Al Bigel whose constitutional law classes helped sharpen his analytical skills.

Pleger says the best thing about being a university president is being around students, faculty and staff. "Universities are exciting environments and as president, I am able to help faculty and staff serve students and our community," he notes.

The work is stimulating too

when he's confronting situations with no clear-cut answer. "The challenge comes when one has to decide what will produce the greatest good in making a decision," Pleger explains.

Public universities are experiencing tremendous change, he notes. Some think universities should simply prepare students for jobs or careers, while others think they should produce educated citizens. "I believe we should produce well-rounded, educated citizens who are ready for a variety of careers and who are passionate about learning and discovery," Pleger says.

LIFELONG LINK

CLS ALUM TERRY WIRKUS HELPS CAMPUS CONNECT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

When Terry Wirkus started working in Wing Technology Center in 1996, it was just like coming home.

Wirkus grew up across the street and both parents worked on campus. He went to the campus school at Morris Hall through eighth grade, and he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees at UW-L.

Finally, after nearly two decades in local broadcasting, Wirkus joined the UW-L Academic Technology Services staff to develop learning through technology. That was when technological advances were just about to explode with personal computers. Distance learning was in its infancy and the Internet was bringing the world closer.

"The Internet has changed everything," says Wirkus. "The only border now is where the Internet ends."

Enhancing education through technology for better teaching and learning is what makes Wirkus excited about coming to work every day. "That's what I enjoy the most," he says.

It's also what made colleagues honor him with the 2014 UW-L Academic Staff Excellence Award.

Wirkus says his single most important accomplishment has been promoting video conferencing throughout campus. "I've helped champion it and to move it forward so that students, faculty and staff are able to use it every day," he notes.

Wirkus especially enjoys seeing students off when they graduate. "It also brings me a deep sense of satisfaction to read our students' names at commencement," he says.



TERRY WIRKUS FILE:

- Distance Learning Technology Coordinator in Information Technology Services since 1996.
- Announcer for Screaming Eagles Marching Band and commencement ceremonies since 1996.
- Academic Staff Council chair or co-chair for six years, council member for 12 years.
- Bachelor of science in mass communications and speech communication, UW-L, 1979; master of science in educational media, UW-L, 1988.

GET 'HAPPY'

Alum-student theatre group celebrates joy, rain

Happy Rain Theatre Co., a student-run production company, unites UW-L students and alumni through performance.

Members aim to show audiences a mirror to learn more about themselves — both the joy and the rain of the human experience. Ultimately, they'd like to leave audiences with the perception that a cloudy day isn't necessarily a bad thing, explains Kevin Fanshaw, '12, one of the group's founders.

"Rain is a beautiful thing. It is something everyone experiences and something everyone has the opportunity to experience in a variety of ways, depending on one's mindset," says Fanshaw. "A rainy day could be a cozy day in a coffee shop, a pinnacle romantic moment, or a soggy inconvenience; it's up to you. We strive to create experiences that ultimately result in happiness."

Fanshaw started Happy Rain Theatre with Austin Hernandez, '13, in 2011 to give students another outlet to hone their craft whether acting, designing, directing or producing.

"We feel the exclusively-student team encourages individuals to take chances and challenge themselves with academic pressures," Fanshaw explains.



The performance of the musical "Edges" in September was the fourth annual performance of Happy Rain Theatre. UW-L Senior Lewis Youngren, "Edges" director, says he and the show's Music Director Matt Salvo, '14, made a good team. Music directing made Salvo realize all the skills he learned as a UW-L piano performance major.

"I've learned so much from this school, and I really love the chance to keep the connection," he says.

TOP: A group is uniting students and alumni through performance. Happy Rain Theatre "Edges" cast members include, from left, Lily Cornwell, Quinn Masterson, Callie Boydston, Seth Von Steidl and Crystalia Varelis. ABOVE LEFT: Kevin Fanshaw, '12, is one of the founders of Happy Rain Theatre Co., a student-run performance group that involves alumni. ABOVE: Matt Salvo, '14, a piano performance major, was musical director of "Edges," performed by a student-alumni troupe.

RESEARCH CITED

SOCIOLOGY FACULTY MEMBER'S WORK IN DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Dawn Norris, assistant professor of Sociology, says losing a job poses more challenges than the potential financial burden. Her research on how job loss affects identity and mental health was cited on the front page of *The Dallas Morning News* in late November.

The *Dallas Morning News* reporter focused on one aspect of Norris' research related to male identity loss. Norris conducted 48 interviews with men and women who lost their jobs.

One thing Norris was not surprised to find was that identity was challenged by job loss, which led to deteriorating mental health. She is quoted in the *News* saying,

"Our societal definition of masculinity is being employed, being the provider, being the

Norris' study, which she completed in 2012 as part of her doctoral dissertation at the University of Maryland, will be published by Rutgers University Press in 2016.

breadwinner." With masculinity so closely tied to work, Norris says men who lost their jobs described themselves as "impotent, deficient and worthless."



Dawn Norris, assistant professor of sociology, with the edition of the Dallas Morning News that referred to her research.

But Norris was surprised to find that people she interviewed also found creative ways to manage or change their identities with job loss. This identity repair work took the shape of an unemployed editor still editing — but on a voluntary basis, or a woman shifting her focus from her career to being a mother.

"I thought it was fascinating how creative and resilient we can be in the short term," notes Norris.

The study was spurred by Norris's own life experiences with identity transitions — particularly when she transitioned from full-time employment to being a college student.



Read the *Dallas Morning News* article: <http://goo.gl/a7QWkP>

SNAP!

NEIL SIMON'S 'RUMORS' HAS UW-L TOLAND THEATRE RUN

UW-L's Department of Theatre Arts performed "Rumors" in December. The fast-paced comedy by Neil Simon follows four couples attending a dinner party in celebration of the New York City deputy mayor and his wife's 10th wedding anniversary. Mystery arises when the guests discover there are no servants, the hostess

is missing and the deputy mayor has shot himself in the ear. Comedic complications develop as the upper-class guests decide they must do everything in their power to conceal the evening's events from the media. As the evening progresses, inevitable confusion and miscommunication result in classic farcical hilarity.

The cast included: Molly Barbeau, Callie Boydston, Erica Bush, Tanner Costello, Olivia Dubiel, Jessie Fanshaw, Sophia Goodner, Quinn Masterson, Aamer Mian, Calahan Skogman, Seth Von Steidl, Alex Taylor, Maxwell Ward, and Julia Whalen.

