DEAR COLLEAGUES,

As we approach one year since COVID-19 encroached on our lives and community and changed the way we live and work, I’m reflecting on how much we have learned, the challenges we have overcome, and the successes we have celebrated.

We’ve come a long way in that year; we’re more comfortable performing the duties of our jobs in different ways, and we’ve been successful thanks to your dedication and resilience. Each of our situations are different, but all of you manage your daily work, homeschool your children, virtually meet with your colleagues and students, and continue to handle everything thrown your way with grace and professionalism.

When I reflect upon where we were at this time last year—from energized over the start of the spring semester to nervously transitioning to remote work—and compare it to now, I think about how we have run the gamut of emotions and have had to reset our expectations while changing our routines and meeting our goals.

This edition of Our People focuses on highlighting more ways that we can continue to support you and your well-being, as well as keep you abreast of information as it relates to COVID-19. It dives into providing you with more resources regarding mental health, highlights employees on campus that focus on supporting you, and provides you with information on expectations as we continue to work under COVID conditions. I hope you find it resourceful and that it helps you as we move forward.

I am hoping that we all have a very different 2021 and we move away from the challenges presented to us in 2020. Keep plugging away, continue to shine, and thank you again for all your great work.

Go Bears!

Sincerely,
Kelley Williams
Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Meet Lauren Finnegan,
Director of Counseling and Wellness

In March 2020, Lauren Finnegan, a licensed clinical psychologist and director of the Wellness Center, became a go-to resource for the entire campus community in ways not previously imagined.

With the onset of the pandemic, Lauren joined the college’s virus task force and expanded her daily impact across campus. On the many changes COVID-19 has brought to her experience at Ursinus, Lauren said one positive has been “getting to know so many more people across campus.” She adds that she has been very impressed with what people have to offer, saying, “It is easy to get siloed and this experience has really brought so many different teams together in new and collaborative ways,” specifically acknowledging the extraordinary work of athletic department staff who stepped up to manage and facilitate the testing center.

Lauren hopes to soon diversify the work of the Wellness Center. “Wellness is a big idea and there is a lot of opportunity to expand what we are doing across campus,” she says.

Read more about Lauren in the fall 2020 issue of Ursinus Magazine.
The spring semester is here—and the warmer days are coming—but we know that this has been a particularly tough start to the semester. Many unusual stresses have combined with the usual factors to make this an especially challenging start to the spring semester. Your human resources team is here, along with our campus partners, to support your personal wellness. You may not be aware of some of the offerings available to assist you not only in your physical and mental health, but also in other aspects of your life. We want to highlight a few here and throughout this newsletter:

**Employee Assistance Program**
This program offers expert advice for work, life, and your well-being in many areas that might surprise you including: budgeting; financial guidance; retirement planning; buying or selling a home; tax issues; legal services; issues relating to civil, personal and family law; financial matters; real estate and estate planning; identity theft recovery and prevention; and health, family, and work challenges.

The program's experienced counselors are provided through LifeWorks. Learn more.

**Wellness Resources**
The Wellness Center has compiled resources for the entire Ursinus community on their webpage. Covering physical, emotional, financial resources, and more, the pages offer many free and low-cost options for helping us all to navigate our world today.

If you are concerned about a student, the Wellness Center can also help you understand and provide assistance for students in distress.

Visit the Human Resources webpage for more resources.

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**Supporting Your Health and Wellness**

- There is a personal dietician for faculty and staff through the Charge Group. Six visits are covered annually on the college health insurance.

- NewU offers programs throughout the year and has introduced a “parenting during COVID” support group.

- Physical, mental and financial health resources are available on the Wellness Center resources and tips webpage.

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**Supporting Your Professional and Personal Development**
The Library and Information Technology (LIT) team has compiled a wealth of professional and personal development resources for faculty and staff. Whether you are looking for support for teaching or working remotely, or you want to explore personal development and improvement on your own, LIT has something for you.

The Teaching, Learning and Working Remotely webpage offers information, links, and tutorials to help faculty, staff, and students navigate the tools that we may use every day. From Apporto and your office phone to shared drives and Zoom, they have it all.

If you want assistance with learning or improving your knowledge in a specific software, the digital library fellows will be happy to assist you.

For educational resources, professional and personal enrichment, check out many other library resources such as:

- Academic Video Online for self-improvement.
- Flipster for digital access to popular magazines like Rolling Stone, The Atlantic, and Discover.
- Watch movies on Kanopy and Swank.
- See high-caliber dance performances via Dance Online.

Find more on the library databases A-Z page.
The human resources team wants to support you in your teaching and working and is always looking for new and exciting ways to do this, in person and remotely. We are working with our external and campus partners to provide resources to you, and there are many ways that your colleagues and the campus community have come together to support one another:

- **Workstation safety**: Whether you are working from home or coming to campus, Carol McMillin, director of environmental health and safety and risk management, has provided helpful information for ensuring your current workstation is best suited for comfort, alignment, and physical well-being.

- **Microsoft Teams**: Since last year, our friends in the LIT have worked hard to help you work smarter. Read more about how Teams has become a valuable resource to our community.

- **Canvas regularly** has updates and new features added. Recently, a Rich Content Editor was introduced. LIT is providing information and tutorials for these updates.

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**Supporting One Another**

On Monday, January 25, more than 100 faculty, staff, and students joined together virtually for the annual community conference, which carried the theme, “Breaking Invisible Barriers: Identity & Empowerment.”

The conference provided an opportunity to learn from students, faculty, and staff how to combat the invisible barriers that affect all populations and was another step in Ursinus’s ongoing commitment to becoming a more inclusive, accepting, and empowering campus.

The annual event, sponsored by the president’s office and organized with the help of the community conference committee, is usually held in August, prior to the first day of classes. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and our campus’s health and safety requirements, the conference was moved to January and held in a virtual environment. This year also marked the first time that the entire student body was invited to attend.

During the opening session, members of the Ursinus community spoke about their personal experiences in overcoming barriers to find success. Learn more about one of the panelists, Ava Willis-Barksdale, in our “staff spotlight” on page four and read more about the 2021 community conference.

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**Expanded Coverage**

Ursinus has applied to be a vaccine provider and is waiting for response from the state. There are two different possibilities for which we have applied: the first is for a limited number of vaccines to be distributed on campus by the Wellness Center staff; the second is to be a large-scale provider, with a distribution like that of the flu shot in the fall, as a closed Point of Dispensing (POD). The county has accepted our application as a closed POD, but the state will review both types of applications for access to the vaccine. We have not been given a timeline for response from the state but will share updates with you as they become available. Please continue to check the task force updates on the faculty/staff page and in the Good Morning, Ursinus! email.
Welcome New Employees

We are proud to welcome these recent hires to the Ursinus family:

**Maureen Clark**, Advancement Coordinator (Advancement)

**Alex Kesselman**, Financial Aid Counselor (Student Financial Services)

**Emily Williams**, Graphic Designer (College Communications)

**Elizabeth Willard**, Research Assistant (Biology)

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: AVA WILLIS-BARKSDALE

Ava Willis-Barksdale, associate vice president for advancement, joined Ursinus in January of 2019 with 30 years of success in education, healthcare, fundraising support, and organizational leadership.

She has worked in both higher education and in K-12, most recently as vice president and director of human resources at Girard College in Philadelphia. President Blomberg recently announced an expansion of Ava’s role to include more day-to-day management of the advancement division. Ava is encouraged by the strong possibilities at Ursinus. She says the college “has a great opportunity to be an example of a number of things in the liberal arts space” and says we have as a result of the pandemic. In addition to the shift in work and function that the whole world has experienced, the team has spent much of the past 10 months reminding donors and the campus community about

*Ever since first moving into a management role, Ava has always set her sights on building strong teams.*

“laid a great foundation for post-COVID growth at the college.”

Ever since first moving into a management role, Ava has always set her sights on building strong teams. The balance she says is “in leaving space for people to be creative and at the same time moving together toward a common goal.”

In addition to the role of team-builder, Ava sees the mission of the advancement division growing even more important as a result of the pandemic. In addition to the shift in work and function that the whole world has experienced, the team has spent much of the past 10 months reminding donors and the campus community about

In keeping with the college’s strategic commitment to inclusion and diversity, Ava’s role includes serving on DART and various committees across campus. She is a music lover and a proud product of an HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) education. Learn more about Ava in her spotlight on the faculty/staff page.

We wish the best of luck to our Newest Retirees

**Lynda Manz** (Student Affairs)
January 2021

**Ann Breen** (Biology)
March 2021
Catherine van de Ruit, an assistant professor of health and exercise physiology, was named a recipient of the Periclean Faculty Leadership Program (PFL) in STEM and Social Sciences by Project Pericles.

Jonathan Marks, a professor of politics, has published, Let’s Be Reasonable: A Conservative Case for Liberal Education. It was named one of The Wall Street Journal’s top books for February and has appeared in national media outlets.

Student Affairs has announced that Diana “D” Deoki joined their team as assistant director, student leadership and transition. Her office will be in the Institute for Inclusion and Equity.

Marketing Communications and Advancement Awards

Out of more than 300 entries submitted for the 2021 CASE District II Awards, Ursinus College has earned high honors in an impressive five categories, affirming the creative energy and truly collaborative spirit demonstrated by the advancement, enrollment, and marketing and communications teams. CASE is the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. The honors include:

GOLD in the “Special Events, Single Day” category for Ben Franklin Day (Abele Scholars Gift Announcement).

SILVER in the “Special Events, Multi-Day” category for the Ursinus College Sesquicentennial Celebration.

SILVER in the “Digital Communications, Websites (Institutional)” category for the Ursinus Website Redesign.

SILVER in the “Communications, Student Recruitment on a Shoestring” category for the 2020 Ursinus Admitted Students Experience (ASE).


JOIN US


For more faculty successes and good news, visit the dean’s office webpage for issues of their monthly newsletters and see the Celebration of Faculty Achievement for recent faculty publications and creative work.