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Anderson University's College of Arts and Sciences

Lessons from failure can bring resilience

By Wayne Cox, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Last spring in this column, as the first wave of the pandemic washed over the United States, I wrote about how education can be both a catalyst for change and a foundation for future success: “there is no better way to connect the dots of the present to the picture of the future than by being in a place that helps you do just this,” I wrote.



Six months later, in the midst of a rising second wave of infections and the aftershocks of a deeply divided presidential election, readers of this issue might discern another theme embedded in these pages: resilience in the face of failure. The adversity and the possibility of failure that students and graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences face now has never been more tangible to them. The classroom has changed, the job market has changed, our safety has changed. Even our relationships have changed. How do we persevere when we fail to manage a virus or when democracy seems more like a pool of muddy water than a shining sea? Along with our faith, we can also find answers in our academic studies—in particular, two CAS disciplines: science and history.

In the 1995 film “Apollo 13,” Ed Harris, playing Gene Krantz, the chief flight director of the mission, plots the reentry scenarios of the capsule crippled from an explosion. After listening to the options, he turns to his group of fellow scientists at Mission Control and says: “We have never lost an American in space; we are sure as hell not going to lose one on my watch: failure is not an option.”

While the success of the human spirit and intellect in the face of adversity is certainly something to celebrate, all of those involved failed to achieve the objectives of the Apollo 13 mission. More importantly, the success of saving the lives of the astronauts on board—and perhaps salvaging the future of NASA’s four future Apollo lunar missions—stemmed directly from an earlier failure Gene Krantz was also involved in where all three crewmembers were killed: Apollo 1.

Most students today are ill-equipped for failure. They’ve never been taught how to. Many believe they have a right to succeed—that if they don’t, someone is taking that success away from them. This attitude is supported by our educational laws: after the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 came the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. It’s also supported by my own observations from working in higher education for 30 years, and from being a parent. No one simply fails—after all, children receive a trophy just for participating. A few years ago, for example, my daughter’s bedroom was filled with them from her time on a competitive dance team. Recently, she threw away almost all of them, keeping only one: a trophy that celebrated her 12 years in dance. “All of the others were cheap, hollow plastic anyway,” she said.

Perseverance and growth don’t come from success. In the famous 1858 debates, Stephen Douglas once accused Abraham Lincoln of being two-faced. When it was Lincoln’s turn to speak (and not beforehand) Lincoln is said to have replied, “If I had another face, do you think I’d wear this one?” Years earlier he was keen on deprecating others, not just himself. His humor was crude and his anger quick. In 1842, for example, James Shields, the Illinois state auditor, challenged Lincoln to a duel to the death over disparaging remarks aimed at him. The duel was to be fought with swords, and though it was clear Lincoln could have easily won with his advantage in size, he changed his mind and later apologized. Humbled after this event, Lincoln left politics for five years.

When Lincoln resurfaced in the debates, Douglas repeatedly tried to brand him as a dangerous radical who advocated racial equality and disruption of the Union, and this helped Douglas win the election. Lincoln’s failure to win the election, however, did not mean that he lost the debate, and when the transcripts were published, he grew in status, winning the presidential election only two years later.

So, the next time you look at one of the many photos of Lincoln, take notice of the slight, wry hint of a smile on his face, a smile that comes not from a chain of unbroken success, but of many, many failures. At the end of Apollo 13, viewers can see this smile on Ed Harris’ face as well, just as, when he reflects back on how mission control learned from its own mistakes, Gene Krantz must have smiled as well.

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A pandemic graduation

Class of 2020 returns for October ceremony

By Natalie Ardis

After being delayed for four months by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Anderson University class of 2020 was finally able to walk across the stage to receive diplomas Oct. 2.

The graduation ceremony was held on the front lawn just as had been originally planned for May before the pandemic precipitated spring semester classes being moved online following spring break. Graduates were allowed to invite four guests to limit crowd size and masks were required.

“It was so exciting to address the Class of 2020 one last time,” said President Evans Whitaker. “Given the abrupt departure from campus, this commencement ceremony felt like much-needed closure. I am extremely proud of our students and graduates.”

With the continuing pandemic and many recent graduates working full time, individuals could decide if they wanted to return to participate. Around 330 students returned to campus to see friends, fellow classmates, and professors.

“I know I speak for all members of the 2020 graduating class when I say it was disappointing...we didn’t get to finish our senior year with friends and professors in person so being able to have a ‘grand finale’ with them is a blessing...,” said Clifton Martin who graduated with a degree in political science.

University officials worked on plans for the ceremony for months and were determined to hold it in the safest way possible while also ensuring it was a wonderful time for the students, said College of Arts and Sciences Dean Wayne Cox.

“The seniors need to have a culminating experience in their degree. That’s part of why they come to university, not just come to get a piece of paper. They come to an experience and it’s an integral part of their lives and they want that,” said Cox.



Evans Whitaker



The class of 2020 passes under the AU arch to their graduation ceremony in October. After COVID-19 spread around the world, the administration made the decision to postpone May graduation. (Photo by Natalie Ardis)

The university postponed the original May graduation due to the many unknowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Whitaker said.

“Originally canceling the May graduation was a challenging decision, but the right one considering the unpredictability we were facing. However, I am glad that we were able to postpone the ceremony to the fall and still have the opportunity to celebrate with the Class of 2020,” Whitaker said.

While the school tried to make graduation as “normal” as possible, a ceremony on the front lawn in October was not quite the same as the traditional May graduation celebrating the finale of four years of collegiate work.

Due to COVID-19, health and safety protocols were placed on graduates and guests. Students were not



Students and guests wear masks and space out to allow for social distancing during AU's Oct. 2 graduation ceremony. About 330 graduates and their families returned to campus for the postponed ceremony. (Photo by Natalie Ardis)

able to shake Whitaker's hand as graduates have been able to do in the past.

Seats were also spaced out for social distancing, masks were required for graduates, and hand sanitization stations were readily available.

Families were separated six feet apart on the lawn.

The university provided a livestream viewing option online for those who were unable to attend the ceremony.

Despite the obstacles, Martin said attending the October ceremony was well worth it to him.

"It was great to see my friends again. It was all I expected," Martin said.

Whitaker said the ceremony was meaningful for him as well.

"Having the privilege as president to celebrate the students and their families on this accomplishment is always a moving experience," he said. "I am grateful that the Class of 2020 could experience much of the same memorable traditions and programming as previous classes."



Clifton Martin, who graduated with a political science degree, shows off his AU diploma. Martin said the October ceremony was everything he expected, and that he was very grateful to have one last time with his fellow classmates and professors. (Photo courtesy Clifton Martin)



Unsplash photo by Florian Pintar

CAS adds minor in public policy

By **Natalie Ardis**

A new public policy minor was added this fall within Anderson University's College of Arts and Sciences.

Roger Flynn, chair of the department of history and political science, said the 18-credit hour minor has political science courses, economics courses, and sociology courses as requirements as well as some optional classes.

Designed to be interdisciplinary, the minor allows students to get a broad spectrum of knowledge that exposes them to different subjects relating to public policy, said Flynn.

Flynn said that while political science is the study of government and its institutions, public policy looks at how policies are created and implemented.

"The cool thing about the public policy minor is that it is a combination of both the political science and economics (disciplines)," junior political science and history major Kamryn Osterbind said.

The minor will be a very practical minor for students majoring in economics, business, or criminal justice, Flynn said, adding that it will help students who want to work for an interest group, political party, or as a staffer on Capitol Hill stand out by giving them a public policy background.



Photo courtesy Roger Flynn

Roger Flynn

Flynn said the public policy minor will also benefit students who plan to attend law school.

Junior political science major Bryce Goodwyn said the minor would be a good fit for him as he hopes to attend law school at the University of Georgia.

"I knew that earning a second minor in this subject would allow me to prepare for the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) and look better on my resume," said Goodwyn.

Many first-year students are interested because they would like to work in the policy field or attend law school, said Flynn.

While this minor could potentially bring more attention to political science as a major, the intention is to expose students interested in government to a political science course of study, according to Flynn.

Osterbind, who is also interested in attending law school after graduation, said she believes studying public policy will help solidify what kind of law she would like to pursue.

"I love my political science and history majors, but I have been wanting a minor that narrows down my interest and field of study," Osterbind said.

Flynn and Assistant Professor of Political Science Allan Wilford hope starting the minor will eventually lead to the creation of a policy institute at Anderson University.

"The institute will showcase student research, faculty research, and outside research on practical policy that can make a better society," said Wilford.

Sign of the times

Students learn to communicate with the deaf

By Tessa Chan

As you walk by the classrooms of Anderson University, you will often hear the voices of students and professors. But when you go by Becky Walker's class, you will be met with silence. Active discussions are being held, but with moving hands and fingers instead of lips.

Walker teaches American Sign Language, one of three modern language options for students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

ASL is the primary language for about 10 million people who are hard of hearing or have total hearing loss in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.



Becky Walker

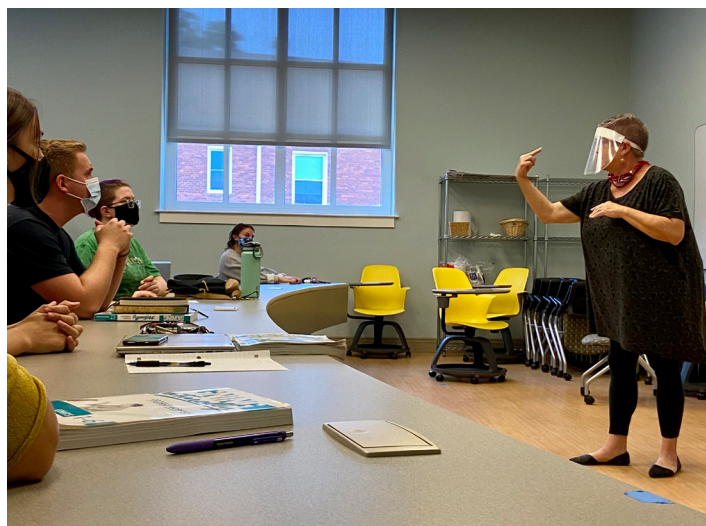
"Learning sign language has been a catalyst for a life full of incredible opportunity and adventure," Walker said. "Professionally, I have been able to work in various situations and in different capacities."

Walker, who previously worked with the deaf and hard of hearing in Israel as a missionary, has served at Anderson University over the past 10 years as the associate campus minister for women. The course covers the culture of the deaf and promotes understanding of the deaf community in addition to teaching the language itself.

"I definitely think more people should take this course," said MaCayla Ratcliffe, a junior who is majoring in worship leadership and took the course this fall. "It is a life skill. You never know when you are going to come into contact with someone who is deaf and need to communicate with them. It can also help build relationships."

Walker said the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the deaf community because it has forced the wearing of masks.

She said facial expressions play a key role in expressing emotions and are an important part of sign language. The mask covers a majority of the face and makes it difficult for the deaf to communicate.



Becky Walker wears a face shield as she teaches American Sign Language at Anderson University during the fall semester. Facial expression is an important part of communication through ASL. (Photo by Tessa Chan)

Walker said masks that are clear and face shields can be used to make reading facial expressions easier.

During class, Walker wears a face shield so that her students can see what she is mouthing in addition to what she is signing. There is no talking allowed in class so that the students feel more inclined to "talk" with their hands alongside the professor.

Walker encourages the study of ASL so that more people can connect with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"I think it (ASL) has taught me to love deeper and with more understanding. Deaf people are born disconnected. It is the only disability that separates you from people," Walker said. "ASL has allowed me to go places where few have gone...it's a world of beautiful people."

"I think it (ASL) has taught me to love deeper and with more understanding... it's a world of beautiful people."

Becky Walker

Student-led podcast provides platform for meaningful conversations

By Larisa Crowder

Cups tapping saucers, beans being ground, the hum of those conversations unique to a certain place—the coffee shop—is what inspired sophomores Luke Heisler and Jae Cox to start their podcast, “Audibility.”

A conversational-style podcast, each episode is devoted either to a specific topic or guest, and revolves around an emphasis on building and equipping a Christ-like community.

Heisler, a writing and digital studies major, and Cox, a Christian studies and Spanish double major, recorded the first episode during their first semester in the fall of 2019. When they chose the name, neither was sure which direction they wanted to take the podcast, but now, a year later, the project has grown into its name as they’ve continued to refine their vision.

“Audibility” means “the quality of being heard or understood,” the quality they seek to embody through the podcast.

“That’s an important part of just being people together,” Heisler said. “It’s an integral point of how we are called to do community: listen, and give people the quality of being heard.”

The students said their goal is to craft the episodes and series in a way that fosters a virtual third space.

“A third space,” Cox explained, “is this idea that there are three types of spaces where people interact—there’s your home, there’s work, and then there’s a place that’s a confluence of those two things but completely separate, that allows people to sit down, converse, and be on an equal playing field. It’s a kingdom idea to be able to sit down with anyone and speak with them as images of God.”

Heisler and Cox said they build episodes with one of two types of conversations in mind, inspired by those that people tend to have over coffee—a casual, more free-flowing one, or one where people meet with a particular topic in mind. For example, for the first episode in their series on the image of God, they created an outline for the discussion, then hosted Professor Channing Chrisler to define what that means for the

“It’s an integral point of how we are called to do community: listen, and give people the quality of being heard.”



Luke Heisler’s passion for coffee shop culture evolved into a creative endeavor: a podcast inspired by the environment of a third space. (AU photo)

rest of the series. At other times, they have invited friends on to share what they’re passionate about, including film, literature, and, of course, coffee.

“With our friends we have on,” said Heisler, “it’s cool to have them come on and talk about things I know they care a lot about in a more formal way. With professors, it’s just so fun. We had Professor Katherine Wyma on to talk about the distortion of the image of God, and then after we’re done recording, it’s just a lot of fun to sit with her in the room for a couple of extra minutes and talk to her about whatever. And it’s usually like, ‘oh, man, we should’ve kept recording.’”

Once the episodes are constructed with the assistance of their writer, Ian Morel, along with input from that week’s guest, Heisler and Cox record them in AU’s makerspace with their producer, Malcolm Fary. A communication-digital media major, Fary said they

considered producing differently, but realized, “Why? We’re at an Apple-Distinguished school”—the recording studio in the makerspace has everything needed to record high-quality audio.

The son of an Army chaplain, Fary said the podcast’s mission is personal.

“Growing up military, community is everything,” Fary said. “Because you’re moving around every two to three years, you have to be able to adapt to a new one, and be able to survive and thrive in it. That’s something I’ve always had to do, and this is a great way to do it, to connect.”

Abby Sisco, a communication-public relations major, who manages public relations and social media for the podcast, appreciates the intentionality behind it.

“I like to have these engaging conversations in a really safe space so we don’t have to beat around the bush; where difficult conversations can be normalized, in a sense,” she said. “That helps people grow a lot, as a community and as individuals. The point is getting different people from all walks of life to come together over this shared desire to unite people together—to share opinions and to share passions.”

Over the summer, Heisler worked alongside marketing major Matthew Pertgen and graphic design major Daniel Bas to design their website, The Audibility Podcast, as a home for their content and to solidify their brand aesthetically. It’s the way to share their mission, and introduce their team and guests.

Bas, who designed the logo, said the collaboration provided more insight into the professional aspect of what he does.

“Although we’re all college students, we’re taking it seriously. Usually, if you don’t think something is important it falls apart automatically,” Bas said.

Heisler, who’s been working on refining his creative bent since beginning college, said his experience



Jae Cox emphasizes the importance of sitting down with someone and asking questions, not simply to reply but to understand their point of view. (AU photo)

with the podcast helped him recognize what he loves to do, which is writing. It also influenced his switch in majors from communication-digital media, which is focused more on production, to writing and digital studies.

“I like writing the content, and hosting the podcast, and being involved in a more hands-on way than just the production side of things,” he said. “Creative people are often told, ‘Have a backup plan because you don’t know

what you are *really* going to do,’ but I enjoy being creative, and it’s cool to see that turn into something tangible.”

Both hosts said they would like to see “Audibility” scale into something long-term. But ultimately, the podcasters say their hope is for listeners to transfer the idea of a third space into their everyday lives—how they go about their conversations and relationships.

“I would love to see this scale up to a larger thing, to be able to point to this and say, ‘Hey, if you want to know what I’m about and the people I’m around are about, look at this,’” Cox said. “For the listeners, I think it’s the exact same thing—being able to go forward and embody the culture of the coffee shop and what the virtual third space means. To be able to live that out, and love others in a way that lives up to that.”

“For the listeners, I think it’s the exact same thing—being able to go forward and embody the culture of the coffee shop and what the virtual third space means.”



Basketball Businessman

Communication alum turns passion into career

By Tessa Chan

Myson Jones was a star basketball player when he played for the Trojans while pursuing a degree in communication with a concentration in digital media. Now he's combined his love of the game with his digital media skills to create successful businesses.

Jones, who graduated in 2015, is the founder of Hoops University, a program that trains young athletes physically and mentally to pursue their basketball dreams. He also runs Hoops Institute which provides a website platform for basketball trainers across the nation.

His podcast, "Basketball to Business," features a series of interviews with various basketball business founders.

Jones said he relies heavily on the skills learned in classes at AU to promote his businesses.



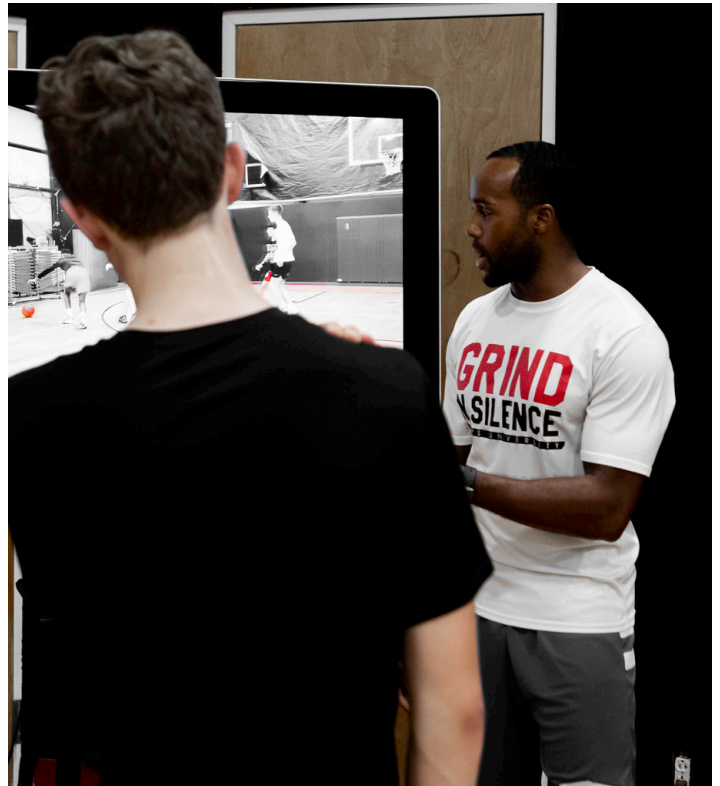
"Specifically videography helped me out a lot. There were two videography courses I took with Professor Robert Reeves that helped me learn how to edit," Jones recalls. "Right now, video content is king. People would rather watch videos than read, especially in my

market. Learning how to edit videos, knowing what looks good and how to be specific in my details to videographers and video editors has definitely been a huge plus."

Reeves speaks highly of Jones.

"I always knew Myson was going to be successful. As a college athlete as well as a student, Myson was very involved on campus," Reeves said. "He always seemed motivated and took advantage of opportunities to receive additional instruction."

AU basketball coach Jeff Bookman is also proud of Jones' success in turning his passion into a career.



Anderson University alumnus Myson Jones shows an athlete a video of a play at a Hoops University camp. Jones heavily uses the digital media skills he learned through his communication major to market his businesses. (Hoops University photo)

"Myson was hard-working, dependable and a great teammate during his time at Anderson," Bookman said.

Jones said COVID-19 has affected his business as he must maintain correct protocols and ensure any recognized hazards are communicated to clients.

He said he learned at AU that relationships are vital in the business world and despite the challenges of the pandemic, he has been able to maintain relationships with clients. He said clients have been loyal to Hoops University and have been understanding throughout the pandemic.

"I modeled Hoops University's culture from Anderson University in regards to communication and branding," Jones said. "I still watch and learn from AU and apply that to my company."

Rocky River gets outdoor classroom

By Katie Cook

Anderson University is taking learning outside the traditional classroom with a new outdoor classroom at Rocky River Nature Park.

The classroom will primarily be used for AU's new environmental science program but will also be open for any of AU's departments and colleges to use.



Rocky Nation

"Our field-based courses in biology like field biology, ecology, wetlands biology, and others will use it frequently," said Rocky Nation, associate professor of biology and department chair of biology.

The classroom can also be used by the general public and AU students during the park's open hours.

"It's a place for everyone," said Wayne Cox, the dean of CAS. "We're doing this not only for our students and our campus community, but for our local community and the upstate as well."

Funding for the classroom came through A-Day, AU's annual 24-hour fundraising event in March of 2020, and through an additional gift.

When complete, the classroom will have a concrete floor, wooden benches, and an overhanging roof. It is being built off the main trail in the park, providing easy access.



Ecology students take samples in the wetlands area of the Rocky River Nature Park. (AU photo)



The new outdoor classroom is nestled in the woods off the main trail in the Rocky River Nature Park. (Photo by Katie Cook)

"Plans call for a 30 foot by 40 foot open air structure with a metal roof, much like a picnic shelter," Nation said. "It'll be approximately a fourth of a mile walk up the main trail from the parking lot in a stand of trees near the wildflower meadow."

The classroom was designed to blend in with the natural surroundings, using natural materials and with minimal environmental impact, while also keeping the classroom as low-maintenance as possible. It will seat about 40 people.

"We did have to clear out a spot for the building," said Charles Dickerson, AU's executive director of facilities and campus safety, who is overseeing the construction. "We took extra effort to save the larger trees to ensure the classroom is positioned in the forest nicely."

A team of eight workers from the AU facilities department and the Budd Group grounds crew were involved in the construction, pouring concrete and building the actual structure.

Cox said fulfilling the dream of an outdoor classroom has been in the works for several years. It was part of the natural extension of the department to include an environmental science degree in the program.

"It's been floating around for three or four years at least," said Tom Kozel, professor of biology. "As we took students out there for ecology classes, we thought 'you know what would be nice? Sitting on the grass is good, but sometimes it's nice to sit down, sit your laptop down, take notes...It just kind of evolved from that.'"

From flight officer to professor

Weston brings Navy background to behavioral sciences

By Larisa Crowder

The newest faculty member in Anderson University's behavioral sciences department, Kayla Weston, brings a unique background to her teaching position. Before her career in higher education, she spent eight years on active duty in the Navy as a flight officer.

Originally enrolling in the U.S Naval Academy with dreams of becoming an astronaut, Weston completed her bachelor of science degree in English, as well as two years of flight school.

Though she did not have the required perfect vision to become a pilot, Weston said she did "everything but fly the plane" in her position as flight officer.

"In that job I was navigator, co-pilot, bombardier, mission commander," Weston explained. She handled communications between the aircraft and the tower, or with the ship when she was deployed.

"Whatever mission we were on, I would coordinate all that with other aircraft," she said.

During two years of shore duty, she worked as the speechwriter and special assistant to the superintendent of the Naval Academy, a vice admiral. While on active duty, she was deployed twice to the Middle East, including after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Though returning to school wasn't originally part of Weston's plan, leaving the Navy to start a family changed that, as did finding out she was eligible for Veterans Affairs post-9/11 G.I. Bill funding that would pay for her education. Once her children were in school, she chose to earn her master's in youth development leadership at Clemson University.

"Having kids was what shaped that vision for my future education—something that interested me and would be relevant to what I was doing with my kids," Weston said.

Though she was skeptical about continuing on to her



Kayla Weston

doctorate, her professors kept encouraging her to go for it, particularly one who, when grading her assignments, would add comments like "someone with a terminal degree would say something like this."

"He got in my head," Weston said, laughing.

Ultimately, she earned her doctorate in international family and community studies, also at Clemson.

It was during this time that she discovered her love of teaching. Halfway through earning her degree, she was asked to not only teach a new course, but to develop a curriculum for it. She said she was hesitant at first, but, as she put the course together, she found she deeply enjoyed the process—developing the curriculum, creating assignments, engaging with students.

"It just clicked," she said. "It felt like it was what God wanted me to do, so by the time I graduated, I'd decided I wanted to teach."

As for finding AU, she received a LinkedIn alert that AU was looking for a professor of Human Development and Family studies.

"Within 10 days of my very first interview, I had the job," Weston said. "I'll never forget June 22!"

This fall, she taught "Introduction to Human Development and Family Studies," "Family Dynamics," "Family and the Global Perspective," and "Families: Risk, Resilience, and Health."

Weston said she encourages students to study international family studies to expand their horizons.

"One of the things I realized very quickly was that all of the media we're bombarded with is very U.S.-centric," she said. "We tend to forget there's a whole other world out there."

Patty Slaughter, professor of psychology and the department chair for behavioral sciences, said AU will benefit from Weston's Navy background.

"I think anybody coming with a military background has probably a certain level of discipline and attention to detail that not everybody has," Slaughter said. "That's going to be very, very, beneficial for our department going forward, particularly as the human development and family studies major continues to grow."



Weston with the S-3B Viking for which she served as a flight officer while in the Navy. Weston is now the College of Arts and Sciences' newest faculty member serving in the department of behavioral sciences. (Photo courtesy Kayla Weston)

Weston credits her time as a flight officer with teaching her to be flexible.

“We’d have a flight plan, but I don’t think any flight ever went exactly as we planned. Whether the controllers reroute you or there’s some bad weather, it never goes exactly your way, and so I’m comfortable troubleshooting and shifting plans,” she said.

This is a quality her students have noticed, and appreciate.

“I was nervous about having a new professor for two courses, but now I am so grateful I was put into her classes,” student Mallie Wentzky said. “Dr. Weston is an outstanding professor. Her lectures are very interactive—she does a lot of discussions and group activities. She is so flexible—if a student is not able to meet with her during her scheduled office hours, she will make time to meet with them.”

Ashley Gibbs, another of Weston’s students, said she’s loved having her as a professor, and that “it is obvious

that Dr. Weston deeply cares about her students and their success both inside and outside of the classroom. She has done a phenomenal job at teaching us how to directly apply our class content to helping families in our future careers.”

Weston said that she’s come to love AU and her students. One of those students, Emily Olmedo, calls Dr.

Weston “one of the friendliest professors I have ever had. On the first day of class, she told us that we could come to her office to cry if we needed to.

Having a professor I had never met before care about me on that level was so special. She prays before every class, and she genuinely cares about her students, and not only their grades.”

As for her love of AU, Weston said, “I’ve never worked anywhere like this. Everywhere I’ve worked, I’ve wanted to run out the door at the end of the day, but I don’t feel like that here. I’m not watching the clock. It feels like home to me.”

“Whether the controllers reroute you or there’s some bad weather, a flight never goes exactly your way, and so I’m comfortable troubleshooting and shifting plans.”

Global Christianity course focuses on Gospel's impact

By Ellis Rountree

A new course at Anderson University is focusing on the world history of Christianity.

The course, Global Christianity, considers the early missionary expansion of the Christian church, but concentrates on the dramatic changes that have recently altered the face of Christianity in the world.

Assistant Professor of History Ryan Butler, who teaches the course, said he developed an interest in the topic while he was completing his master of divinity degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. He then explored it more while working toward his doctorate at Baylor University.



Ryan Butler

“Interacting with Christians from different areas of the world and then studying Christian missions in relation to globalization and poverty while in seminary sparked my interest,” Butler said.

Butler said the inspiration for the course came from Acts 11:19-20 which emphasizes sharing the message of salvation beyond just Jewish boundaries. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth which demonstrates that Christianity has always had a global perspective, Butler said.

“Recognizing the worldwide nature of Christian belief and practice is a story that I wish I knew more about when I was an undergraduate and therefore proposed for this to be taught to AU students,” he said.

Butler said Christianity is one of the largest religions in the world today because of its vitality outside of the United States and Europe. He noted that the Christian faith has had unprecedented development especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America over the past two centuries.

“In 1950, 80% of the world’s Christians came from the Northern Hemisphere (Europe and North America). By 2005, 65% of the world’s Christians hailed from the Southern Hemisphere,” Butler said. “Take, for example, Africa. In 1900, at the outset of colonial rule, there were 8.75 million Christians in Africa. In 1960, at the end of the colonial period, there were 60

million Christians in Africa. Today there are more than 500 million African Christians—which is just under 50% of Africa’s total population.”

Butler said understanding Christian history from a global perspective is especially important for 21st century believers.

“As the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted ever southward, Christian interactions with war and peace, poverty and affluence, and disease and health have multiplied with increasing complexity all over the world,” Butler said. “We need to understand these developments to best be equipped to live faithful lives in this new world.”

The course is cross-listed and can be taken as credit for both history and Christian studies concentrations.

“One of the great benefits I have seen with a course like this is the cross-fertilization with students of history and students of theology each exposing the other to important approaches and ideas from their academic fields of study—mutually enriching class discussions,” said Butler.

Roger Flynn, chair of the department of history and political science, said the course has appeal for students across multiple majors.

“Dr. Butler’s Global Christianity course provides students with an incredible opportunity to study the spread of Christianity and how it transformed cultures and societies around the world,” Flynn said. “Students in any major would find this course both fascinating and insightful.”



Anderson University’s new Global Christianity course examines the historical impact of the Christian faith around the world. (Unsplash photo by Maria Stewart)

From disco to comic books

Pop culture course explores history's lighter side

By Allie Magee

Anderson University's department of history and political science has added a new course that trades ancient maps and timelines for popular music and movies.

Assistant Professor of History Lindsay Privette taught the first "History of American Popular Culture" course this fall, featuring iconic historical symbols of entertainment.

"Instead of just reading a historical document and analyzing it, students are able to discuss significant music, movies, clothing, hairstyles, and even amusement parks that contributed to historical pop culture," said Privette.

Students were able to learn how popular culture is created through the relationship between significant historical time periods and the entertainment that rose out of them.

Privette tackled the significance of "Casablanca" in World War II, the "I Love Lucy" television show in the 1950s, the Spiderman comic books in the 1960s, George Orwell's "1984" in the Cold War era, "Saturday Night Fever" in the 1970s, and "A Raisin in the Sun" during the 1960's rise of black entertainment.

"Having class materials based primarily on movies and other interesting forms of media is

unusual and a nice change of pace. Understanding certain themes within America that influence pop culture is fascinating and not something individuals generally pick up on," said history and political science major Michaela Newton.

Privette said that while the course was originally aimed at history majors, there were numerous students from various departments interested in experiencing it.

Grant Collins, a senior communication major, said the course was one of his favorite history electives.

"Though the content of the course and the shaping of popular culture is already interesting to me, Privette's ability to masterfully turn her lectures into captivating stories engages each student," said Collins.

Newton said that for the final project, students were instructed to choose a specific year in history and produce a video or podcast about the political, economic, and social issues that resulted in famous books, movies, and other forms of cultural entertainment.

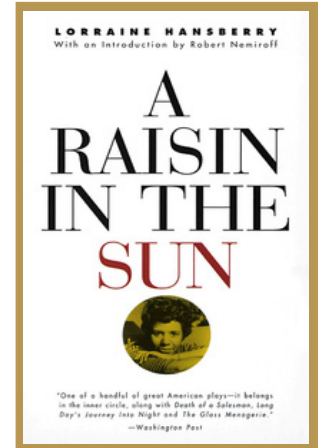
"Analyzing aspects of media within the larger context of what is happening to society, as a whole, helps answer the question of how popular culture is created each year and the effects that it still has on us today," said Privette.

Collins said popular culture is often created in an attempt to persuade viewers and increase awareness, especially when motivated by various political perspectives.

"Privette's course helps students understand that popular culture is not just entertainment to be enjoyed but contains political messages that need to be critically considered and often questioned, which is increasingly relevant," he said.



Lindsay Privette



Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun" is used in learning about 1960's entertainment in Privette's pop culture course.



Students in Privette's popular culture course discussed the significance of "Casablanca" during World War II.

Pandemic Life

Students, professors learning to adapt to COVID-19

By Shelly Lauzier

Students and teachers walk the halls speaking with voices muffled by shields of cloth. Classrooms are at half capacity and smell of disinfectant and hand sanitizer.

That's been the new reality as the Anderson University community adapted to necessary changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic for the fall semester. While onerous at times, both students and faculty say they recognize the changes as necessary and credited them with enabling students to complete the semester on campus.

"As a student body, we are having to be more conscious and cautious about our actions. Decisions we once mindlessly made, like hanging out with friends, attending events, and going to class, now have to be carefully considered for the health of others and ourselves," said Jensen Barker, a senior communication-digital media major.

Barker said new regulations have been enforced for students to mitigate the spread of the virus like sanitizing desks, wearing masks, and distancing from others.

"Remembering to carry a mask with me and wearing it at all times has taken a bit of getting used to, but it truly is the easiest precaution to take. I have also been trying to social distance whenever feasible," she said.

While students are having to make changes in their campus routines, professors have also had to navigate the different atmosphere that COVID-19 has brought upon campus.

"There are a number of things different at AU as we navigate through the pandemic," said Patty Slaughter, professor of psychology. "For example, many classes are being delivered differently than pre-COVID."

She said classroom spaces each have physical distance caps that reflect the number of students physically allowed in each room. This has required many classes to now have a remote learning component where students are 'Zooming' into classes, which allows all the students to be 'present' at the same time, half in the room and half on Zoom.

Allan Wilford, assistant professor of political science,



Hand sanitizer and mask stations have become a common fixture on campus during the COVID-19 pandemic. All students and faculty have been required to wear masks inside buildings and to maintain six feet of physical distance. (Photo by Shelly Lauzier)

said that along with wearing a mask and sanitizing desks between classes, he has been keeping his door open to allow more airflow into his classroom.

"I used to close the doors in the classroom because when I teach, I'm sure it's really annoying for people to listen to me outside in the hallway or in their offices, but I've kept them open for airflow," he said.

Since the traditional classroom setting has been left behind, students and teachers have also had to change their learning and teaching methods.

"COVID has caused me to adapt my learning process,"



Student Eden Smith works in Anderson University's Digital Media Lab with her mask on. Students have been wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 around AU's campus. (Photo by Shelly Lauzier)

said Brianna Rao, a first-year biology major. "I am an audio and kinetic learner. Since school was online for a while, it was tough to stare at a computer screen of someone talking rather than have someone lecturing in front of me. COVID made me focus on my schoolwork to maintain my grades and make sure I wasn't distracted in my online classes. It also made me more adaptable and ready for change or for new procedures for an assignment."

Wilford has found that the pandemic has caused his teaching style to change as well.

"It's taken me out of my comfort zone, which I guess is good in some ways, but bad in others because I can't teach how I would normally teach," he said. Wilford said since there is less that he can do in class, he tries to make it even more impactful for the students.

Annette Guild, a senior double majoring in history and political science, said she still has good relationships with her professors, but attending office hours through Zoom isn't her preference.

Wayne Cox, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said students and faculty have worked hard to find other ways to create connections because it's that connection that makes students remember a class.

"Higher education at AU has always been about that personal connection with the students, and I think that's why we were determined to open up in a way that was not normal, but would still preserve that connection," he said.

"So far, I have been able to develop relatively good

relationships with my professors.," said Brooks Davis, a first-year biochemistry major. "It is definitely harder to meet face-to-face, but overall, I do not think that has had a direct impact on the relationships that I have with them."

The changes have led to a few humorous moments in class as well.

"I've spent quite a few times looking at somebody thinking that they're talking to me and, you know, there's this blank look in their eyes, and 'Oh! You're not the one talking, it's the person behind you or next to you,' so that makes that interaction a little less certain," said James Duncan, professor of communication.

He said it is also harder to put eyes to a name rather than a face to a name, so he worries that it is going to delay the start of some of his relationships with new students.

Slaughter said she misses being able to see the students' faces as well.

"I really miss not being able to see students' facial expressions. I miss seeing students smile and laugh," she said.

While the transition has not been an easy one, students say they have found that Anderson University has done well with handling their safety during the pandemic.

"AU is doing a lot better than most colleges, and I've been exceedingly pleased with how the university has handled COVID," Guild said.

Graduating in a pandemic

Seniors show resilience in overcoming obstacles

By Bates Whitaker

In a world still rattled by the effects of COVID-19, graduating students from Anderson University's College of Arts and Sciences are adapting to new ways of finding graduate school placements thanks to their undergraduate education.

Across all majors, these students say they have persevered in their efforts to continue on to higher education by pushing through challenges created by the pandemic and discovering the world of possibilities ahead of them.



Photo by Abigail Timms

CheyAnn Strasinger

CheyAnn Strasinger, a senior biology student said she is applying to graduate programs with the ultimate goal of pursuing her doctorate in healthcare genetics. After her summer internship was cancelled, she said she was discouraged that she would not have the experience to add to her applications, which would look bad to doctoral admissions boards.

But Strasinger said she has pushed through the initial fear of being unqualified, and has continued to move forward. She said she found other ways to add to her experience in place of the internship, such as participating in a research project on nature's impact on stress reduction alongside two CAS professors and fellow students.

"All of the different variables are pretty daunting," Strasinger said, "but I've learned to adapt and I'm really confident that I'm well prepared to enter graduate school in the scientific field."

English major Lucy Kirkpatrick said she had initially intended to immediately pursue a graduate degree in English after graduation, but she has since changed her plans due to the pandemic and an engagement



Though some graduating students are not pursuing graduate programs due to COVID-19, they are still finding ways to adapt. Graduating senior Lucy Kirkpatrick will be honing her craft to create Christian curriculum to be used in Bible studies, vacation Bible schools, and Sunday schools. (Photo by Ashley Stone)

to her fiancé. She has decided to take a gap year after completing her degree and will use that time to hone her skills in Christian curriculum development and memoir writing.

Kirkpatrick said this gap year comes as a gift from God, giving her the opportunity to build on her skills in preparation for potential further education, and focus on her marriage.

"All of the variables are pretty daunting but I've learned to adapt and I'm really confident that I am well prepared to enter graduate school in the scientific field."

"If COVID-19 has challenged me in any one way, it would be this: it is impossible to lead a life founded in peace and contentment without first

trusting in the sovereignty of God," Kirkpatrick said.

Communication student Maddie Cromer began her headfirst dive into pursuing law school before the pandemic started. She said she made plans to tour law schools across the United States, but the pandemic cancelled all of her in-person campus visits.



Maddie Cromer spent her quarantine reading law books and taking practice tests for her LSAT. This knowledge equipped her for her internship at a local law office this fall. (Photo by Bates Whitaker)

But Cromer said this did not stop her law school pursuit. She scheduled virtual visits to the schools and studied for the Law School Admission Test during quarantine. In September, she passed her LSAT with an exceptional score.

“It got easier as I went along, once I accepted that it was going to be difficult and kind of decided to face it head-on.”

“At first, the idea of doing all of this stuff virtually was nerve-wracking,” Cromer said, “but it got easier as I went along, once I accepted that it was going to be difficult and kind of decided to face it head-on.”

Biology student Eli Goodwin said he was forced to push his

Medical College Admission Test months back from his originally planned date due to an unfortunate exposure to someone who had contracted COVID-19. But he finally took the MCAT in September and passed with flying colors.

“It’s been a tough ride,” Goodwin said. “But it’s been totally worth it. I’m planning to become a child psychiatrist to use what I’ve learned to minister in a field that is facing a shortage of physicians.”



Eli Goodwin, center, participated in an internship at the Medical Experience Academy to prepare him for medical school and his Medical College Admission Test. Goodwin plans to become a child psychiatrist. (Photo courtesy Eli Goodwin)

Despite the vast variety of futures before these students, they all seem to agree on one thing: the significance of the training and education that they have received during their time as undergraduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

“Putting the stress of COVID aside, I’m not worried about getting into law school and getting a job because my degree in the CAS has set me up very well,” Cromer said.



“Missionary kid” Hunter Curlee prays over two teenagers following their baptisms in Taichung, Taiwan, alongside fellow church leaders. Curlee is now majoring in history and Christian studies at AU. (Photo courtesy Hunter Curlee)

Two homes, an ocean apart

‘Missionary kids’ learn to adjust to college environment

By Bates Whitaker

College brings with it many transitions, especially when you are halfway around the world from home. The children of missionaries attending Anderson University face this challenge head-on as they cope with a culture different from those in which they were raised.

These students, including College of Arts and Sciences students Hunter Curlee and Caroline Mason, say that the transition to university life can be challenging because it feels like they are caught between two different worlds with different languages, people groups, and ways of living.



Hunter Curlee

Curlee, a junior history and Christian studies major, moved with his family to the mission field when he was only 5. Health difficulties in his family led to a move to Taipei, Taiwan, for seven years, and then a final move to Taichung, Taiwan.

In Taiwan, Curlee’s family worked to form community relationships, plant a local church, and operate within an American missionary Christian school in Taichung. The school, Morrison Academy, ministers to missionary families in Taiwan and teaches children to speak English.

“The main difference between me and a kid living in the United States is that I was a minority in that school. Most of the other kids were Taiwanese, Japanese, Chinese and Korean,” Curlee said. “But that wasn’t all that strange to me because all of us were speaking the same language. So, I didn’t even feel much of a culture shock there.”

Curlee’s older sister, Milly, moved from Taichung to the United States to begin her undergraduate education at AU. Her love for the school, combined with other connections made by the Curlee family in the Anderson area, led her younger brother to follow behind her.

After moving back to the United States for a few years, Curlee began his education at AU as a Christian

studies and business major. But he soon changed his educational path.

"I fell in love with the AU's department of history in the College of Arts and Sciences during my first year as a student," Curlee said. "So I dropped my business major and chose to double major in Christian studies and history."

Curlee said life as a child of missionaries prepared him well for adapting to the newness of the AU community.

"To be a missionary kid, you have to get good at saying goodbye," Curlee said. "That made saying goodbye to high school really easy. Making new friends with people who were very unlike me also made the process a lot easier."

An easy adaptation to college life is not the case for all children of missionaries, however.

Sophomore communication major Caroline Mason moved onto campus at AU straight from Hungary, where her parents were missionaries. She had lived in Estonia for 10 years, where her family ministered to the people there before moving to Hungary for nine years.

Mason's family had several connections in South Carolina, primarily from her parents' time as students at Columbia International University. Through those connections, her older brother was encouraged to visit Anderson University, and Mason tagged along for the tour.

"I remember being with him on the tour and thinking 'I'm going to go to Anderson University someday,'" Mason said. "Granted, at the time, that was mainly because they had golf carts and they gave me coffee."

After graduating high school, Mason truly decided to begin her AU journey. But she said that the transition from the mission field to campus life was a challenge.

"I found that most AU students don't have a concept of what a missionary kid is," Mason said. "They had no idea where I was coming from and what the adjustment process was like."

Moving directly from Hungary, Mason did not have a vehicle on campus. This presented problems of how to go out to get groceries or even where to go on holidays when her friends had gone home to be with family. She said that living in a place that was a 26-



Photo by Ashley Kate Miller

Caroline Mason



Caroline Mason (fourth from left) and her family in Estonia. (Photo provided by Caroline Mason)

hour plane ride away and with a six-hour time difference also made interacting with her family difficult. She said she felt stuck in a place far from home.

However, things slowly began to get better.

"I had several sweet people step up and help me out," Mason said. "People would take me to get groceries and reach out to ask me how I was. It was a huge blessing to have another missionary kid, Hunter Curlee, as my alpha leader during my freshman year."

She said her communication classes within the College of Arts and Sciences have helped as well, giving her applicable knowledge for her career after graduation.

Curlee and Mason are both interested in ministry work. Mason wants to work through a ministerial nonprofit overseas.

Wes Brashier, the senior campus pastor and vice president for Christian life, said the children of missionaries are an incredibly valuable addition to the AU community.

"Anderson University has a global mindset concerning missions and missionary families," Brashier said. "We believe that students who are missionary kids add to our campus environment and add to our rich fabric of faith."

Brashier said AU is working to find new ways to integrate children of missionaries into the campus community. He is planning a focus group to create systems and programs to assist students through the process of transitioning into a new home.

"Anderson University strives to meet students where they are and minister to them as they make this transition," Brashier said. "We want to foster an atmosphere where missionary kids can connect with each other and feel recognized and supported."

Professor, students work to cure cancer

Sixteen years ago she battled the same cancer that took her mother and grandmother. Now Diana Ivankovic is the director of Anderson University's Center for Cancer Research as well as a published author.

By Rylee Brtek

Diana Ivankovic, professor of biology, has a story to tell. A breast cancer survivor, she now works to understand the deadly disease and help train students who may one day find a cure.

Ivankovic has served at Anderson University for 17 years following a nine-year stint at Clemson University.

But that first year at AU was a tough one.

Just one month after starting, she was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 37. For seven weeks, she would go on a run every morning and then go to AnMed Health Medical Center on her breaks to get doses of radiation.

By the beginning of 2005, she was officially cancer-free. She only took one day off that semester and that was the day she had her lump removed. The day after the surgery, she was back to teaching.

Ivankovic said that during her fight with breast cancer, she was motivated to keep pushing by her mother, who she had previously lost to cancer.

"If I had not lost my mother, I would not have cared to fight as hard as I did," Ivankovic said. "My mother gave me life."

She said the loss of her mother inspired her to go into research. Cancer also took her grandmother's life.

"We had a little closet area, a very tiny room where we were doing cancer research," Ivankovic said of the beginnings of her efforts at AU.

Today, Ivankovic directs the much more spacious Anderson University Center for Cancer Research on Fant Street in Anderson. Located less than a mile from AU's main campus, the center opened in 2011.

Ivankovic said the idea for starting the center originated with the then-provost, Danny Parker, who enlisted the support of AU President Evans Whitaker.

With the university's help, grants, and donations, equipment was purchased. AnMed provides use of the building.

Through the center, Ivankovic works with students



Diana Ivankovic at the Anderson University Center for Cancer Research. Ivankovic works with students each semester to conduct research into treatments for various types of cancer. (AU photo)

each semester to research different types of cancer and study cancer treatments with a strong focus on the Anderson community.

"My job as director of the cancer research center is to expose our students to different techniques, to teach our students to educate others and also to network with different companies and help our students get published and become good healthcare providers one day," Ivankovic said.

The center collaborates with the Cancer Association of Anderson to map the parts of Anderson County that have a higher rate of cancer.

"We are trying to spread the word of prevention and



A student looks through a microscope in a lab at AU. Students working at the Anderson University of Cancer Research compare healthy cells and cancer cells to see if various plant extracts can destroy the cancer cells without having negative effects on healthy cells. (AU Photo)

early detection so that we can decrease the numbers of people with cancer,” Ivankovic said. “What we are trying to do right now is pinpoint...all the areas of the county where you have different people with different cancers. Then, we are trying to educate them and make sure that these people are more proactive and get screened more. I try to emphasize the importance of screening and prevention.”

Another project tests plant extracts’ effects on different types of cancer. The center is working with LabTech, Clemson University, the Greenwood Genetic Center, and others to track the metabolic activity of cells.

“We grow cancer cells...and we treat the cancer cells with plant extracts,” Ivankovic said. “We also treat the healthy cells and ideally the extracts kill the cancer cells but do not kill the healthy cells.”

Student Zoe Sanders has been one of the students participating in the research.

“It has been really exciting working with breast cancer cells and the healthy cells. It has been incredible and never as an undergraduate student would I have pictured myself working with cancer cells,” Sand-

ers said. “It has been very transformative for me. I have learned how to deal with failure and rejoice in success. I am benefiting from the research itself and from working with Ivankovic because she pushes me to be the best I can be.”

Student Maddie Treaster said her work with Ivankovic has been very successful.

“My extracts have worked really well and I am really interested in the work we are doing,” Treaster said. “Working with cancer cells as an undergraduate is really cool. I am very grateful for the opportunity to work in the cancer center.”

Ivankovic has also recently co-authored a textbook that will be used in her classes, “Principles of Cell Biology” with Harvard cell biologist George Plopper.

“He wanted somebody who had knowledge in microbiology and someone who was good with art,” Ivankovic said. Several of the drawings seen in the book were originally done by Ivankovic and then redrawn by an artist hired by the publisher.

It “took four years to write the book. It finally got published in February of 2020 during the midst of the pandemic,” said Ivankovic.

Pre-med interns work with alumni in interactive sessions

By Allie Magee

Some Anderson University alumni may have experienced a bit of déjà vu this fall. Several former AU students were back in the thick of college life as they worked alongside current AU pre-med students through a program at AnMed Health in Anderson.

Through an Anderson University internship course, pre-med students participated in weekly sessions at the local health center, gaining valuable experience through hands-on workshops and informative lectures. Now third-year medical students, the alumni helped lead the presentations, assisted in the activities, and advised current AU students on the realities of medical school.

“These sessions help students gain an understanding about what the medical world is like, how to be competitive when applying for medical school, and if this field is truly God’s calling for their lives,” said Associate Dean of Sciences Carrie Koenigstein.

Pre-med student Emma Kate Rackley said the pandemic limited direct shadowing of physicians, but students were still able to practice tying sutures, perform ultrasounds,

and learn about a wide range of medical concerns, such as post-operative fever and psychiatric disorders.

Junior pre-med student Maddie Treaster said she enjoyed the opportunity for hands-on experience.

“These sessions are really helpful because we get to experience how medical professionals go through the thought process.”

“These sessions are really helpful because we get to experience how medical professionals realistically go through the thought process of what medicine they would prescribe, what tests they would get, and what imaging they would send for while treating a patient,” she said.

Pre-med students said they appreciated the opportunity to work with Anderson University alumni, who were in the same internship course when they were pre-med students. From presenting on meningitis and subarachnoid hemorrhages to simply talking to pre-med students about their future plans, the alumni have positively enhanced the interactive sessions.



From left to right, Maddie Treaster, Zoe Sanders, Jamison Burdette, Joseph Harwood, Emma Kate Rackley, and Nathan Wachsmuth at an interactive presentation. (Photo by Kathy Barrington)

“It’s fun to help students when I have been exactly where they are,” said AU alum Joseph Harwood. “We have been able to talk about the benefits and downsides of medical school and different programs around the state. I am extremely lucky to be where I am today, and these students remind me of that every time I see them.”

The alumni have also provided a welcoming atmosphere for students who have never been in a real-life medical setting before.

“It is comforting to know that there are two people sitting in that room who have been in our shoes and know what it takes to be a medical student. They understand that we have questions and are enthusiastic to answer them, because they genuinely want us to learn,” said junior pre-med student Zoe Sanders.

Anderson University faculty have been instrumental in establishing contact between the medical school students and Anderson University students, according to Harwood. Pre-med interns are able to network with medical professionals, gain experience in the challenging field, present themselves as competitive candidates for medical school, and receive helpful advice for how to deal with the stresses of the medical profession.

“Medicine is a calling that impacts every aspect of your life, so we want students, whether pre-med or alumni, to experience the reality of the medical field and decide if this is truly where God has called them to serve,” Koenigstein said.

Coding provides flexible career opportunities

By Rylee Brtek

When Paige Meeker was 12 she felt she had to decide what she was going to do with her future. In her mind, she had to choose either to be a pianist or to allow her love for computers to lead her into computer science. In the end, Meeker chose her Commodore 64, an eight-bit home computer that she used to code worlds of her own. That decision put Meeker on a path that eventually led her to Anderson University.

Meeker, who joined the AU faculty in January, teaches classes in coding and application development as well as website development. Her focus is on supporting a coding minor and certificate program through the department of communication.



Paige Meeker

At the time Meeker was exploring her Commodore 64, computer science was a field chosen by few and tends to be male dominated. According to the Pew Research Center, only 25% of coding professionals are women.

Meeker said she was inspired by her study hall teacher, who “convinced the headmaster to let her teach (a computer science class) for any interested students,” Meeker said. When the school approved, Meeker’s study hall was transformed into a computer science class.

Meeker said she fell in love with coding and so did other girls who took the class.

“A majority of the females who took it ended up in technological fields,” Meeker said. “Those of us that really liked the class -- at least five of us -- are in tech fields now.”

Meeker has an extensive background in computer science. She attended Furman University for a bachelor of science in computer science and also has master and doctorate degrees in computer science from the University of South Carolina. She taught computer science for 13 years at Presbyterian College before coming to AU. Before that, she taught at both Furman University and USC.

Meeker said there is a huge need for more people who are trained in the field. She would also like to see more women in the field; many follow the stereotype



A coding student works on a project in the digital media lab.

that it is “not for them.” However, she said “women have a different way of thinking about a problem, a different way of solving a problem, and that is a powerful need.”

Meeker said coding can also be a flexible career choice.

“As a mother, it has given me the opportunity to choose work that will give me time to be there for my children,” she said.

Many jobs in the field can be home-based which enables employees to arrange their own schedules, Meeker added.

She said the skills learned in coding classes can take a student far. Meeker recommends that students consider “taking one or two classes” as an exploration.

She said that even if a student decides coding is not for them, they will have learned “important skills to add to your toolbox” that will look good on a resume and may even put a student ahead of other job candidates. Coding greatly increases a person’s marketability in a job search.

Current students say they are benefitting from the coding courses.

“I think the problem-solving skills I’m learning through the minor are important and valuable for more than just programming,” said Lindsey Gatlin, who has a coding and app development minor.

In addition to working with students at AU, Meeker also helps lead Carolinas Women in Computing, a bi-annual regional conference for women in the coding field she helped start in 2010. Meeker said she hopes to bring the 2024 conference to AU.

Behind the scenes of campus worship

Video team helps chapel go virtual

By Katie Cook

If you watched campus worship services during fall of 2020, your digital viewing experience was made possible by the campus worship production team.

Several communication majors are part of the team that works throughout the week to record and stream services for the student body.

The team is made up of nine student workers and one intern, eight of whom are communication majors. The team was formed in late August, when the decision was made to stream campus worship services rather than have them in person due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to Wes Brashier, vice president for Christian life at AU.

"That decision was really made for us...by the COVID-19 Task Force and the CDC (Center for Disease Control) guidelines, two weeks before students returned," Brashier said.



Photo by Katie Cook

Grace Ann Vargo

"I wanted to apply because of my love for production that has grown since the summer," Vargo said.

Grace Ann Vargo, a sophomore communication major, applied after receiving an announcement about the need through the communication department.

"I wanted to apply because of my love for production that has grown since the summer," Vargo said.

Vargo works as the team's producer and as a director.

"I communicate with the

camera operators and direct them to specific shots at specific times in whatever event that we are filming," Vargo said.

She said team members typically work 10-20 hours a week through Campus Ministries.

"This can be setup and filming for an event or editing an event," Vargo said.

Ryan Stanley, head of production for campus ministries, said students are filling a variety of important roles.

"Two of them are really just on editing and graphics. Six of them work primarily as camera operators or



A production team member operates a camera for campus worship recording. (Photo by Katie Cook)

video switchers. One of them, their entire job is just to edit video," Stanley said.

Larisa Crowder, a senior communication major on the team, works as a camera operator.

"I man one of the cameras we use to record and or livestream performances and events, and make sure to get the shots we need from that specific angle," Crowder said. "Usually, I just get the shots the director asks for, but there is also a lot of creative freedom to do what I think looks best."

The students on the team are getting hands-on production experience that reinforces and employs what many of them are learning in the classroom in the communication department.

"I am actually in an introduction to video production class right now," said

Vargo, "and it has helped me in the way I direct the camera operators for different specific shots, in giving them clearer communication in more direct terms."

Crowder said that working on the team has reinforced technical knowledge she has learned in classes.

"Usually, I just get the shots the director asks for, but there is also a lot of creative freedom to do what I think looks best."



Communication major Larisa Crowder operates a camera during a recording session for Anderson University's "First Night" Christmas production. Due to COVID-19 safety restrictions, all large events had to become virtual events that could be delivered online during the fall semester. (Photo by Katie Cook)

"It's given me actual experience for all the technical terms I've learned in class. I mean, you're always going to learn more by doing something than by simply being taught about it," she said.

The filming process for chapel usually starts a week ahead of time, according to Stanley.

"Usually on Mondays we go ahead and record our service host intros and outro videos...Tuesday nights from 9 until close to midnight we record worship for the next week...On Wednesdays we record the next Wednesday's chapel speaker a week ahead of time...Thursdays and Fridays are really just for editing and graphics," he said.

The team records the speaker, the worship team, and announcements to edit together into one, streamable chapel service. The students are responsible for all of the filming and editing.

The team started production with minimal equipment. For the first three weeks of chapel, they only had one camera to use.

"We basically borrowed cameras every week to make it happen," Stanley said.

The students are now able to work with high-quality video equipment that will give them a leg up in the professional world.

"We bought a lot of cameras and video stuff that we have really needed here for a long time. We basically upgraded

our whole video suite," Stanley said.

The students are also getting experience in team leadership, working together to produce many recorded events. Students helped to produce a video version of the annual First Night Christmas program.

"I love production because it's such a 'behind-the-scenes' job," said Crowder. "Learning how content is created and being part of that process is so satisfying. My coworkers are some of the most encouraging people I know, and we work well as a team, which makes such a difference during the more chaotic moments."

"I love production because it is such a 'behind the scenes' job. Learning how content is created and being part of that process is so satisfying."

Triplett impacts Anderson students, teachers, community

By Shelly Lauzier

Passionate, energetic, and engaging are just a few of the words that have been used to describe Assistant Professor of Sociology Jennifer Triplett by her students and colleagues.

Triplett, who has been on the Anderson University faculty since 2014, has had a significant impact on her students and other faculty alike.

“She’s energetic, she can multi-task better than I think anyone I know. Honestly, I don’t know when she sleeps. She has a million things going on at all times, but she’s fun, and she’s feisty, and she’s a real hoot,” said Susan Doughty, assistant professor of psychology.



Jennifer Triplett

Sabrina Singleton, a junior psychology major, agreed.

“I would describe Dr. Triplett as a professor who is very passionate about her work. You can tell that she really does care about the issues she teaches us,” Singleton said. “She is very authentic, fun, and she will always keep you on your toes, especially with her pop quizzes.”

Getting to know her students has been a priority for Triplett. She said one of the reasons she likes AU is the small class sizes that allow her to get to know her students on a more personal level.

“I really think that it’s important to get to know your students a little bit,” she said. “I feel like students do better if they get that accountability with their professor... I think it’s better for people educationally to have that.”

Triplett has also made an impact on students who are not part of the behavioral sciences majors.

“I think she does a really great job of convincing people why the field is necessary,” said Doughty. “I think she gets a lot of students, especially from criminal justice or people who are just taking a gen-ed that maybe don’t understand why they have to do this or why this is relevant to what they actually want to do. I think she does a really good job of helping people see why things are important...”

Havon Ashy, a senior criminal justice major, is just one student outside of behavioral sciences who has taken a class with Triplett.

“Dr. Triplett has an effective teaching style that I feel is set up for students to succeed,” she said. “Not only was I able to learn the material easily, but she also made it fun and inter-

esting. She had PowerPoints that were intriguing but also set up activities and videos for us to enjoy in class.”

Triplett said her goal when teaching is to combine lecture and discussion so students retain the most information. She said for undergraduate classes, it is important to present information to the students to make sure they get what they need out of the class.

“I think that if you lecture the entire time and never ask questions, never give students the time to talk to each other, never give them an opportunity for interaction, it’s just boring, and nobody’s going to stick with that very long,” she said.

Singleton said she appreciates the different modes of teaching that Triplett uses in her teaching to make each class different.

“She incorporates many different strategies for teaching her students whether it be through lecturing, watching a movie on the topic discussed, or going out and performing our own little sociological experiments,” Singleton said. “It is never the same with her which makes going to class exciting and slightly nerve-wracking because you never know what she has planned for us that day.”

Triplett is also involved in various clubs and activities on campus and in the Anderson community.

“I am the coordinator for AU 101, so I help revise the class each year to try and make it a little better, put new stuff in it, and I’ve enjoyed that. It’s nice to be able to tinker with it and try to make it into what it can be,” said Triplett.

She also does a lot of work for the university’s office of diversity and inclusion.

“I really like that because I think it’s really really important to be a part of your community and try to help out your community, and AU is a part of Anderson,” Triplett said. “There’s so much need around here, and I think as a Christian university it is important for us to put our money where our mouth is and actually go out and do good stuff and not just say that’s who we are.”

She is also involved in AU Abroad, an international program that allows students to study in various countries, although the most recent trip was canceled due to COVID-19.

“Even with the cancellation of her study abroad program, students who took part in her international study course developed a strong sense of the culture and country they were set to explore,” Ann-Margaret Themistocleous, AU’s director for the Center of Global Engagement, said.



Sociology Professor Jennifer Triplett gets ready to teach a class. (Photo by Shelly Lauzier)

Triplett also does volunteer work outside of the university.

“I don’t think you have to do that to be a sociologist, but knowing what you know in sociology and knowing what I teach, to not try to do things that are good in my community, it wouldn’t mesh,” Triplett said.

She said one of her favorite volunteering opportunities is helping out at the Developmental Center for Exceptional Children, a childcare facility in Anderson that focuses on children that have various abilities and disabilities that may

need a different educational environment. She also volunteers for Anderson County’s Meals on Wheels, an organization that provides food for the elderly and people with disabilities.

“I didn’t think that I would like it that much, but it’s actually really fun,” Triplett said. “You end up going to a lot of random people’s houses, and you get to know them. A lot of them are older and lonely, and they’re super happy and grateful to see somebody come by and want to chit chat.”

New Faculty Spotlight: Kayla Weston

Compiled by David Rolon

Get to know a little more about Visiting Assistant Professor Kayla Weston, the department of behavioral science’s newest faculty member:

Why AU?

I had just finished my Ph.D. in International Family and Community Studies at Clemson in May. When I saw that Anderson has been looking for a Human Development/Family Studies professor, it seemed like the perfect fit! I also love the fact that it’s a small, Christian school.

Teaches?

Right now the classes I’m teaching are Intro to



Kayla Weston

Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS 101), Family Dynamics (HDFS 315), Families: Risk, Resilience, and Health (HDFS 420), and The Family in Global Perspective (CON 399).

Background?

I received my bachelor of science degree from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and my master of science and doctorate from Clemson.

Hobbies?

I enjoy recreational running (mostly half-marathons) and have dabbled a bit in amateur photography.

What’s great about AU?

How the school is able to form a small, tight and supportive community here for everyone to feel included. I also love all of my students!

New biology professor brings love of nature, theology

By Ellis Rountree

Take a passion for theology, combine it with a full measure of scientific knowledge, throw in a bit of good humor and strong communications skill and what do you get? Anderson University Assistant Professor of Biology Laary Cushman.

Cushman, a field scientist with expertise in wetland ecology and endangered species, recently joined the fulltime biology faculty and brought with him a wealth of practical experience in consulting on complicated environmental projects. He currently teaches several different biology courses at the university.

Cushman said his love of the outdoors sparked his original interest in the field of biology.

“I’m in love with speciation events and can trace my passion back to the first time I learned to key out differences between plants in botany class. I now use molecular and morphological techniques to answer questions of why and how plants are different,” Cushman said.

Cushman has a master of arts degree in religion from Liberty University and a master of science degree in plant and environmental science from Clemson University. He will receive his doctorate in biology from Clemson in 2021, slightly delayed due to the pandemic. His research focused on population genomics — the branch of molecular biology that studies the genetic material of an organism — in this case, plants.

“My past experiences in wetland ecology, endangered species conservation, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) mapping and modeling, and field botany have kept me busy studying species boundaries in the southeastern United States, while a rooted love for the outdoors has allowed me broad field experience throughout North America and Europe,” he said.

His most recent work is in increasing scientific understanding of the plant life of the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment, that line at which the Blue Ridge mountain range transitions into the foothills of South Carolina.

Faith is a vital part of Cushman’s life as well. He and his family served for two years at a church plant in rural Kansas, where he was the pastor.

“I have strong passion for evangelism and apologetics, with a love of teaching both nature and theology,” Cushman said.

He said AU’s commitment to both academics and



Photo courtesy Laary Cushman

Assistant Professor of Biology Larry Cushman brings a passion for both nature and theology to AU.

faith was an important draw to the school.

“Anderson University has a strong history of academic rigor founded on Christian values that allows its students to grow both in knowledge and faith,” Cushman said. “As a believer and scientist, this was important to me as I began my search for a teaching career at a liberal arts college.”

Cushman said his favorite thing about Anderson University is “the fellowship between believers, whether students, staff, or faculty. We all strive towards a higher goal of pleasing Christ.”

Carrie Koenigstein, associate professor and associate dean of sciences, said AU students are benefitting from Cushman’s wealth of knowledge in the field.

“Professor Cushman brings a lot of experience and expertise that will support our biology program,” Koenigstein said. “He is very excited about teaching and brings a lot of environmental consulting experience as well.”

Interning during a pandemic provides life lessons

By Elizabeth Brannon

Jensen Barker, a senior communication major at Anderson University, did not give a second thought when she added an internship to her summer school schedule last spring. In fact, she was incredibly excited to take this next step that would propel her closer to graduation.

Little did she know that her summer internship was going to be impacted by a worldwide pandemic that would create challenges but also provide valuable life lessons.

“I knew ahead of time the challenges I would have to face in looking for an internship. It can get extremely competitive with other students, especially when having an internship is a requirement for graduation,” Barker said. “It’s also a lot of work. You have to make sure your resume is good as well as making sure you know how to conduct yourself in the interviewing process. It can all be a little overwhelming and stressful.”

Barker said her search for an internship began early in the spring semester. Her goal was a summer of working for a company where she could put to good use the knowledge she had gained from her time at AU.

But as she began searching and preparing for a summer internship, the possibility of a new coronavirus from Wuhan, China, was beginning to make the news. The Centers for Disease Control reported that the first cases of COVID-19 occurred in January of 2020.

Barker said she knew a little about the virus and how dangerous it was, and wasn’t sure if an internship was going to be possible for the summer.

“Once COVID started to escalate in March, that’s when I noticed a huge shift. I had two potential internships lined up for the summer, but one of them called to cancel because of the shutdown happening,” Barker said.

Fortunately, Barker was able to land her second internship — with Habitat for Humanity of Anderson County — despite the virus.

“My other internship was with a nonprofit and they were still able to have me intern with them, but I know not everyone was so lucky,” Barker said. “Most of my friends had their internships canceled, some of whom needed them for graduation, so it was a stressful time for them, and I’m sure many other students.”



Senior communication major Jensen Barker holds a sign as part of a Habitat for Humanity social media campaign media during her internship this summer.

Barker said some of her work was completed off site while at other times, she was able to work in a physically-distanced setting at the office in downtown Anderson. She gained experience in a variety of communication areas including developing social media content and producing videos for the charity.

“Whenever I face situations that are hard and difficult like this in my life I always try my hardest to look on the brighter side,” said Barker. “I think it was this skill as well as all the positive support from AU during this process that helped me and motivated me to tackle everything that COVID-19 was throwing at me while I was trying to get an internship and while I was working during my internship.”

Barker said that working through a challenging time even taught her some lessons that will be useful well beyond the pandemic.

“I think the challenges of the pandemic gave me an opportunity to learn and grow in different ways,” she said. “I was able to improve my problem-solving skills, learn new design skills, and communicate with others in new, creative ways. There is always something to be learned through an internship, no matter the setup, and I will always be grateful for the experience.”

SYNTHESIS

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May 2020 graduates stand on Oct. 2 to celebrate their accomplishments. The usual May event had been postponed due to COVID-19. Family members look on in the background. (AU photo)