

# SYNTHESIS

Summer 2023



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Anderson University College of Arts and Sciences

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Senior Abby Sisco. (Photo by Bobby Rettew)

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# SYNTHESIS

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# Promoting excellence

## Center for Student Success coaches bring out students' best

By Abigail Fowler

College classes can be tough but Anderson University seeks to help every student succeed by providing tutors and student success coaches to help those who may need a little extra guidance in their courses.

Dianne King, associate vice president for student success, said coaches work with students who need assistance with “knowing how to do college,” in such areas as study skills, organization, and time management. Tutors work with students help them better understand and learn specific subject areas.



Fowler photo

**Mary Grace Hanson**

The tutors and coaches, who work through AU’s David Larson McPhillips Center for Student Success, are typically top students who have already demonstrated excellence who can provide additional information, feedback on a student’s work, and celebrate the victories when students succeed.

A number of the student success coaches and tutors come from the College of Arts and Sciences. The tutors meet with students on a weekly basis to walk through concepts or assignments that they may be struggling with in a particular subject.

The coaches and tutors each have their own style in helping students and say that helping other students helps them to learn more themselves.

Mary Grace Hanson, a senior biochemistry major, said she often uses practice problems and worksheets to help students. They talk through the problems as a way of helping the students in areas where they are struggling.

Hanson said tutoring “allows her to think creatively” because it challenges her to think about the material differently and in the process learn more herself.

“I love it because it allows me to solidify my knowl-

**“I love it because it allows me to solidify my knowledge. I really like helping the students when they are struggling and then see the light in their eyes when they understand.”**



Communication major Sarah Ankers, left, talks with a student in her role as a student success coach. Ankers said she enjoys being able to celebrate the accomplishments of the students she works with. (Photo by Abigail Fowler)

edge,” Hanson said. “I really like helping the students when they are struggling and then see the light in their eyes when they understand.”

**Mary Grace Hanson**

skills through the process.

“I appreciate the ability to see students grow and to be able to pursue the things that they want from life,” said Crouch.

Sarah Ankers, another student success coach, said she likes getting to be a part of the lives of the students she helps.

“I really enjoy getting to know the people and then celebrate their accomplishments with them,” Ankers, a communication major, said. It’s “an overall rewarding experience.”

The tutors and coaches say they also enjoy watching their students grow with each session.

Hannah Crouch, a junior communication major who has served as both a tutor and a coach, said she really enjoys watching students develop

# Class partners with city to showcase downtown

By Joshua Acree

Students in an Anderson University class partnered with the city of Anderson to produce a series of videos focused on promoting the downtown area's beauty this spring.

The class, Corporate Video Production, gives students the opportunity to have real world work experiences by planning for videos, meeting with the client, producing content, and editing footage.

Bobby Rettew, assistant professor of communication, said that he has two goals in the class— to teach the technical aspects of video production, and “to teach the soft skills necessary...to visit with clients, to have meetings with them...to have interviews with people and interact as a communications professional.”

Andrew Strickland, assistant city manager, acknowledged the importance of hands-on involvement for students.

“From an education perspective, it’s invaluable to have real world experience,” Strickland said.

Strickland said the project came together because Rettew “knew we were in need of some storytelling capabilities and asked if his students could help out with that.”

The project goal was to produce a series of short 90-second videos, highlighting downtown Anderson, with various videos focusing on different aspects of



*Senior communication major Abby Sisco operates a camera during one of many shoots to capture activity in downtown Anderson as part of a Corporate Video Production project on behalf of the City of Anderson. The project provided practical experience for AU's students while also benefiting the city. (Photo by Bobby Rettew)*

*Anderson Arts Center Director April Cameron is interviewed for a video on downtown arts as part of a project led by students in Anderson University's Corporate Video Production course this spring on behalf of the City of Anderson to showcase the city's vibrant downtown area. (Photo by Joshua Acree)*







*Communication major Micah Furtick (standing) shares research gathered in advance of the downtown Anderson video project with Andrew Strickland, assistant city administrator (orange shirt) and the rest of the class. In addition to video production skills, AU's Corporate Video Production course seeks to teach students the soft skills needed to work with clients. (Photo by Bobby Rettew)*

Anderson life, such as unique merchants, restaurants, public art, theatre, and more.

Students were responsible for all aspects of the project -- making sure to plan adequately, capturing the right footage, and editing everything together seamlessly.

The focus of the videos was to show the uniqueness of the downtown area and the community associated with it. During the process, the students captured footage to convey a thriving and bustling downtown.

Students had to schedule and film interviews, get permission to shoot at various locations, and capture interesting content.

Through this experience, students had access to industry standard equipment to use in project. This gave them experience using the same gear they'll be

using in projects after graduation. Students simply had to go downtown to AU's Chiquola Digital Media Studio and check out gear.

"The equipment that we get to use in Chiquola really enhances the class experience," said Micah Furtick, a digital media senior in the class. "Getting my hands on Canon C100 cameras, Ronin stabilizers, and lighting/audio equipment consistently throughout the class has helped me hone my skills in videography."

The experience has put "another tool in my toolbox," said Micah Tassy, a sophomore communication major concentrating in digital media.

Tassy said the experience was "invaluable," adding that the most informative parts included "sitting in on meetings just as the professionals are able to do it, or going around and capturing video."

# Ivy Leaves empowers student voices

By Emma Brightman

*A team of 10 students gathers to conduct a review of a literature piece. Each student has an opinion on the piece's merits, but as the discussion among classmates goes on, there are shifts in perspectives around the room. Finally, a decision must be made...*

This scenario played out through multiple stages of revision as Anderson University's literary and art journal, Ivy Leaves, prepared to publish its 98th issue this spring. Begun in 1916 as *The Orion*, the journal has showcased the voices and artistic vision of hundreds of AU students for more than a century.

"The publication to this day kind of owes it to those first groundbreaking women to provide a venue for student expression and voice," said Tim Speaker, associate professor of art who serves as the journal's creative director. "Within terms of the visual tone this year, I think my role is just to make sure that we don't lose what we have built up, the sort of equity the brand has built up, but to be flexible enough to be something that's in the voice of students."



**Tim Speaker**

To celebrate the diversity of student voices, Ivy Leaves accepts submissions from multiple mediums. Fiction, poetry, photography, and ceramics are all represented in the journal's pages.

Submissions for both the literature and art sections of the journal require a rigorous blind selection process, during which the team members voting on pieces to be included do not know who submitted them.

"They don't have to take creative writing classes, but typically the students who do see their work published have been writing for a while and take writing seriously," said Associate Professor of English Derek Updegraff, the Ivy Leaves literary advisor.

To those students interested in submitting, he gives a few words of advice.

"Learn craft, practice craft, keep writing, and if you



**Derek Updegraff**



*The 2022 edition of Ivy Leaves was the journal's 97th volume. The journal began as *The Orion* in 1916 and has been published nearly continuously ever since. (Photo by Emma Brightman)*

don't get selected, don't get discouraged because the writing that gets chosen is usually done by people who have been studying writing or who have been in multiple workshop classes," he said. "Often, they didn't get in the first or second year, but they keep at it. So, particularly for underclassmen, I would say just keep writing and keep trying."

Ivy Leaves Assistant Editor Adam Jobson, a senior creative writing major, said he looks for those pieces that show both skill and passion.

"It's those pieces that are really challenging that I'm most excited to see published," Jobson said. "If I can tell that a student really cares about this, I'm more likely to be excited about the piece, and therefore more likely to see the potential in it."

The staff appreciate the works that are published.

"I remember every single (literary piece) that's pub-



**Adam Jobson**





Junior creative writing and writing and digital studies major Emma Miller participates in an Ivy Leaves meeting. In sessions like this one, the team evaluates submissions to select the best work for publication. (Photo by Emma Brightman)

lished every year because they're all like a labor of love for me," said Editor-in-chief Lily McNamara, a junior painting and drawing major. "It's really the heart of the piece that shines through and...defines my yes or no."



**Lily McNamara**

Speaker said effective storytelling is always the goal.

"We tend to lean towards work that has more narrative quality, which makes sense given the overall tone of the journal," he said.

Speaker said there is no limit to how many submissions someone can put forward for consideration.

"Take all your best shots," he said.

Updegraff said the experience of writing for and working on Ivy Leaves provides valuable lessons for those students who want to write or edit professionally.

"It's just wonderful hands-on experience for anyone interested in going into the field of editing," said Up-

degraff. "But again, as a writer, getting that glimpse into what the process is like when you leave Anderson and submit your writing for publication...is just invaluable."

Senior Jennifer Hollifield, a graphic design major and the journal's senior liaison and director of communications, said that for her the most rewarding part of being on the Ivy Leaves team is knowing that that the work the students have done will live on through the journal itself.

"We leave our mark on AU to be here after we're gone," Hollifield said of the publication that is available in both a print and online version.

To see the online version of Ivy Leaves, visit [ivy-leaves-journal.com](http://ivy-leaves-journal.com).



Brightman photo

# History, theatre unite for a medieval experience

By Nicholas Burge

It might seem out of the ordinary to think history and theatre classes have a lot in common. However, students in Performing Identity: Religion, Race, and Gender in Medieval Europe and Theatre History 1 have learned the two subjects are intertwined.

The students in these classes collaborated to recreate the play “Moses and Pharaoh” during the spring semester. The play dates to medieval Europe (roughly 500 A.D.-1500 A.D.) and was considered a cycle play, which means that it would have originally been performed throughout a city on a wagon that moved from location to location.



**Lynneth Renberg**

The project was introduced by Assistant Professor of History Lynneth Renberg, who developed the idea for the interdisciplinary course in response to requests from past students.

“The comment from students was that it would have been really cool to see what a medieval performance would have looked like,” said Renberg.

Renberg taught the history class involved in the production. Students from this class worked with students in the Department of Theatre and Dance on recreating the play. In doing so, the students got to experience what people in the medieval period would have experienced.

“One of the big things is making medieval life more real,” Renberg said. “It’s sometimes hard to wrap our heads around some of these experiences. So I think it’s a very cool chance to get to see various aspects of medieval history...literally come to life.”

Samuel Sanders, a sophomore history major, said the class allowed him and his classmates to better understand the experiences of the people during this time in history.

“Our class has mainly been focusing on the history behind the plays along with what they mean and why they were put on,” Sanders said. “This has allowed us to have a lot of insight into how the laypeople of the time would have experienced these plays. We have also been looking at the context of the plays and the different gaming theories that went into the creation of the plays. It wasn’t the easiest process, but it has been fun.”

The theatre aspect of this production was run by the student production team from the Theatre History 1 course taught by Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance David Sollish.



**David Sollish**

“The theatre students hold the reigns of the production. The faculty and staff are here to support their vision and their work,” Sollish said.

While the production team was made up of theatre majors, Sollish said the cast of the play comprised theatre majors, minors, and students from other areas of campus.

History students, rather than acting in the play, contributed by being the historians to the cast and production team. Renberg said the students would explain how “medieval drama works, kind of the historical context to the play, and the way medieval audiences would’ve understood and engaged it.”

Renberg also noted that her students would help with other duties such as costuming and set construction.

“I will be working with the Department of Theatre and Dance to help build the set and stage for the play along with doing a presentation to some of the cast on how medieval Europeans understood the Middle East along with some context on Egypt and Goshen



From left to right, history students Gracie Hembree, Aley Oliver, and Carly Alexander present on “Theology and Interpretation of Moses and Pharaoh” to the cast and production team of the “Moses and Pharaoh” play. (Photo by Nicholas Burge)



during biblical times,” Sanders said during the planning stages. “So, I will be more of a background supporter than someone who works during the actual performance.”

Caroline Byce, a junior acting major and director of “Moses and Pharaoh,” said more collaborative projects like this should be done in the future.



**Samuel Sanders**

“I often feel like in the Department of Theatre and Dance we are in our own little world. That isn’t necessarily a bad thing; it takes a lot of time and energy to get a show off the ground,” Byce said. “However, theatre is a very collaborative art form, and working together with other departments prepares us for that very well.”



**Caroline Byce**

Sollish also said the collaborative experience was valuable for both classes. “I think it is incredibly important for departments across campus to collaborate,” Sollish said. “Our students learn so much when new perspectives and techniques are brought into a process that they know very well; this keeps us fresh and creative. I think this collaboration, in particular, has been a wonderful first step to future interdisciplinary projects.”



*The “Moses and Pharaoh” cast and production team rehearse one of the final scenes. (Photo by Nicholas Burge)*



*“Moses and Pharaoh,” a medieval cycle play is performed on the AU campus. (AU photo)*

The medieval cycle play was performed at the end of April outside the Merritt Administration Building.



*Lynne Renberg and her students work together to analyze a medieval manuscript. (Photo by Nicholas Burge)*

## In the classroom and beyond!

# Professor cheers students on at extracurriculars

By Zachary Freeman

Lecturer of Mathematics Traci Carter wakes up on a Saturday morning with a full day ahead of her. It may not be a school day, but she plans to see many of her students. A look at her schedule shows a lacrosse game at 1 p.m., a softball game at 2:30 p.m., a baseball game at 4 p.m., and a musical performance at 7 p.m. This is an average Saturday for Carter.

Carter's personal motto is this quotation often attributed to President Theodore Roosevelt: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."



Lecturer of Mathematics  
Traci Carter with Troy, Anderson University's mascot.

This care starts in the classroom where she teaches core curriculum math classes. Carter started at AU as a part-time faculty member but moved to full-time in 2018.

"I loved AU," said Carter. "I loved the teaching environment. I loved the students. I loved the people, the spirit, and the environment. So at that point I said 'I'm home!'"

Carter teaches core curriculum math classes so her students are not math majors.

"I get a lot of the students who don't want to be in a math class, but they have to be," said Carter. "They come in with a frown on their face and sad eyes because they have to take a math class. My hope, my desire, and my prayer is that they will leave with a greater appreciation for math."

Carter said she views all the students she teaches as a part of her family. She loves them not just as her students in the classroom, but holistically, seeking them out where they not only have to be -- in class -- but where they want to be -- plays, recitals, campus events, and games.

"I want to see my students in the areas that they do love," said Carter. "Areas that they are passionate

**"I show interest in their extracurriculars and they show more interest in the class and it builds the relationship!"**

**Traci Carter**



Professor Traci Carter receives a gift from Lily Kinder at an Anderson University volleyball game. The senior volleyball players each chose a professor to recognize who had impacted them in a special way. (AU photo by Davidson Cothran)

about. I want to see my students shine where they are comfortable. I get to know them better that way."

"I see her at every sporting event whether it's a volleyball game, a basketball game, baseball, softball, or lacrosse," said Bert Epting, vice president for athletics.

"She's their biggest cheerleader, whether they play well or play poorly. She's just loving that they are in her class and that they play a sport."

Epting said Carter has a sweatshirt or t-shirt for every sport she attends and that even on days when she attends multiple games, she will find the time to wear the appropriate shirt to support that team.

Carter said she teaches almost 200 students each fall semester and about 125 students in the spring.



"I've taught so many students that I'm pretty much guaranteed to have a student on the field, or the court, or the stage, or in the orchestra pit," said Carter.

Jackson Van Ness is one of those many students. A junior right fielder for Anderson University's baseball team, Van Ness had Math 101 with Carter in the fall of his freshman year. He experienced her family atmosphere firsthand and even uses her as a prime example of the high quality of professors that can be found at Anderson when he gives tours to prospective students.

"The fact that a professor I had for one class three years ago still cheers the loudest for me when I step up to the plate means the world to me," Van Ness said.

This involvement beyond the classroom did not just start when Carter began teaching at Anderson University. She said she taught math to middle school students for 13 years and would also watch her middle school students' football teams and cheer-leading squads. But just like with Van Ness, she didn't stop once she was no longer teaching them.

"They would graduate from eighth grade and go on to high school and then I'd pack my daughter up and go to the high schools and watch them play football, basketball, soccer, and cheer," Carter said. "It's just grown from there."



*Traci Carter poses with daughter, Madi, at a student vs. faculty kickball game. (AU photo by Davidson Cothran)*

Carter doesn't only go outside the classroom to show her care for her students, she tries to bring in relevant examples to the classroom. She said she brings in sports statistics for her probability and statistics course and uses other example problems relating to the business, psychology, education, and human development and family studies majors to which her students belong.

The relationships built both in and out of the classroom result in a win-win situation, Carter said.

"I show interest in their extracurriculars and they show more interest in class and it builds the relationship," she said. "It improves the learning in the classroom and the learning environment. The positive attitudes toward learning are contagious."

Carter not only models this kind of care and love for students but encourages her fellow faculty and staff to go out and support their students in their extracurriculars as well.

She believes that what may start as just a handful of professors and students whose interactions extend beyond the classrooms to extracurriculars will spread across the campus, continuing to build the family atmosphere of Anderson University.



*Traci Carter visits with two of her students, Haley Horn (left) and Katherine Gosnell at the Women's Tea in 2019. (Photo courtesy Traci Carter)*

## Whodunit?

# Students explore ‘mystery’ of creativity

By Micah Furtick

Anderson University students got to take their creativity to the macabre last fall through a new writing course that led them to develop their own mystery stories.

Mystery Writing, taught by Professor of English and Chair of the Department of English Bob Hanley, helped spark students’ creativity by giving them a close look at the process of solving crime through literature.

Hanley said the class began the process by reading through multiple mystery novels, including “The Hound of the Baskervilles” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie’s “And Then There Were None.” Exploring these novels gave students the opportunity to gain a solid understanding of mystery writing before tackling multiple writing challenges in preparation for a culminating class assignment — writing their own mystery story.

“Most of them were pushed out of their comfort zones as writers because most had never written anything (like a mystery),” Hanley said.

For one assignment, students were required to participate in an improvisational play with a murder mystery they needed to solve.

Allen Geiger, a senior majoring in accounting, said he discovered a lot of practical applications from the play.

“It was almost like networking practice... you don’t know who anyone’s character is and you’re having to tell people... the things about yourself that they need to know to further the game along,” Geiger said.

Hanley said his objective was to teach students to think critically about what they were seeing and observing — skills that would serve them outside of the classroom.

These skills were also critical as the students wrote their own mystery story. Hanley said the students



**Bob Hanley**



**Allen Geiger**



*Sherlock Holmes investigates a murder in an illustration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure in the Abbey Grange.” (Public domain illustration by Sidney Paget from Strand Magazine)*

ultimately produced their own full-length mystery stories that showcased the elements of this genre, with some stories ranging from 30 to 90 pages long.

“If you think about mysteries and try to understand the elements of the mystery story in order to craft one yourself, then you must have an insight into rational thinking as well as human behavior that may contradict logic,” Hanley said.

Student Golven Leroy said the course was helpful even though he was majoring in pure mathematics.

“This class helped me with how I synthesize my ideas,” Golven said. “I think more and more people understand that if you’re taking the science route or the mathematics route, you’re still going to have to explain your ideas and if you don’t explain them efficiently and clearly, that can make a huge difference.”

Hanley said the ultimate success came through the energy invested by the students whose enthusiasm for their work reflected true joy in learning.



# AU makes it easy for students to choose a major

By Easton Gowan

The time after graduating high school can be one of the most stressful seasons in life. Even if one decides to pursue a college degree, there are many majors to choose from. Anderson University has some methods of making this decision process easier for students.



Smith photo

Wendy Smith, director of AU's Center for Career Development, said students all come with interests but often need help in exploring these.

Smith shared that the first place students should go if they are unsure about what major they want to pursue is the Focus 2 Assessment.

## Wendy Smith

"The assessment takes less than twenty minutes to complete," Smith said. "It is a reliable tool for career and education decision-making because the assessment focuses on five areas: personality, work and leisure interests, skills, and values."

She said the assessment also includes many other tools, such as creating a road map for academic and career-related activities.

Another place many people go for answers is the university website ([andersonuniversity.edu](http://andersonuniversity.edu)). There, users can find a list of every major Anderson University offers.

Micaela Jack, a senior communication student, said she found the site helpful when she was deciding on her major.

"I specifically remember going on their website with my mom and scrolling through the long list of majors the school offered," Jacks said. "Once I used the hyperlink to visit the communication page, my interest soared."

Jacks said the reason some do not know what major they want to pursue is because they are unaware of the many options there are to match a degree to specific interests. By visiting this list, students can get a better understanding of each major and may end up choosing one they would have not considered before.

Cooper Reynolds, a communication senior with a concentration in public relations, said he initially



Gowan photo

## Micaela Jack



AU photo

came to Anderson University wanting to pursue a major and career in elementary education.

He said that in that first semester, he discovered he loved the school setting, but that teaching was not for him.

Then through conversations with trusted mentors and prayer, he discovered he still had a desire to work in a school system but in a different way.

"Take the time after high school to try as many new things as possible and see what may interest you," Reynolds advised. "You cannot know what you want to do if you don't have a good sense of who you are."

Reynolds said he believes his exposure to new things is what ultimately helped him narrow down a major.

He said his biggest piece of advice is that if one cannot decide on a specific major, students shouldn't be afraid to begin college in the "undecided" category. He said that by learning more about themselves and the things they like, new college students will more easily be able to find a major that is either directly in line for their career path or one that will best support it.

Emma Brightman, a junior creative writing major, said she feels she is in the perfect major to support her passion for writing. She said she has always loved writing and that after exploring her options, she found she could use her gift for writing in a future career.

"Do not pass any major or career path up without at least exposing yourself to it to some extent," Brightman said. "You may be surprised as to what you discover about a major or even yourself."



Furtick photo

## Cooper Reynolds

# ‘Zero percent traditional’

Professor Ruíz Martín connects learning with hands-on experiences

By Lauren Jackson

Instead of sitting in a classroom one October day, a group of Spanish 112 students gathered for lunch at El Güiri Güiri, a local Mexican restaurant. They weren't skipping class. They were on a field trip with Susana Ruíz Martín.

Ruíz Martín, senior lecturer of Spanish, joined the Anderson University faculty in August 2022 and has a passion for integrating real-life experiences into learning.

Currently, she teaches three classes, including two levels of elementary Spanish and an upper-level conversational class, Spanish 305.



**Kassandra Lezama**

Junior biology major Kassandra Lezama, whose parents are from Mexico.

Lezama said the class got to play. In the process, they were learning culture.

"I am zero percent traditional," said Ruíz Martín, who believes that students will learn best when seeing the language used.

"I believe it's better to ... be able to communicate (than to speak perfectly)," she said. "You may have mistakes like I do in English, but you have the possibility to connect with other people."

Ruíz Martín has been teaching for 15 years and has worked with kindergartners through college students. She earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Colegio Edu-

"We are connecting a lot of culture (in 305)," said Ruíz Martín. "We're watching movies from different countries; we're talking about writers."

Every Friday, the students play games.

"I literally love it! I brought this game that ... my parents have that they play in Mexico a whole bunch," said ju-

**"If you expose yourself more and more to different cultures, then the better you will be."**



*Susana Ruíz Martín, a senior lecturer of Spanish, believes students learn language best when they can connect their knowledge to activities in which they apply what they are learning. She is known for using games and field trips to immerse students into Spanish-speaking cultures. (Photo by Lauren Jackson)*

cación y Patria A.C. in Mexico, where she was born, and her master's degree in Spanish literature from Middlebury College.

She has taught in private and public schools, including Hughes Academy in Greenville.

## Susana Ruíz Martín

This middle school received students from an elementary school where students began learning a second language in kindergarten. She said the students were exposed to Spanish through literature.



“I was in charge of the middle school ... and (by then) the students were able to read (in Spanish). They were able to ask questions,” said Ruíz Martín. “It was really, really amazing.”

Ruíz Martín said she believes that exposing oneself to culture is the best way to learn a language. She has lived in Mexico, Germany, Argentina, and the United States, and is an avid international traveler.

After earning her bachelor’s degree in Mexico, she came to the United States in 2005 as an au pair and stayed with a host family, an experience she said helped expose her to U.S. culture. At the same time, she began studying and learning English.

She said that, while in the program, “Your challenge is ‘Are you going to get better in the language?...You have to start taking classes as soon as you arrive.’”

A year later, she changed her status to international student and completed a certification to teach K-12 Spanish in America. She began her career working in a private school, then moved to public schools.

Today, Ruíz Martín is passionate about teaching, as well as about the Spanish language and Latino culture.

Students describe her as a caring professor who works hard to create good learning experiences for them.

“She would ask us and she’d say, ‘What do we need help with? What should I do better?’ Like, ‘What’s helping? What’s not helping?’” said Lezama.

Joshua Sewak, who took Spanish 112 with Ruíz Martín last semester, said, “She was always open to meeting with you outside of class or emailing you about any problem you have (understanding the material) as well.”



*Jackson photo*

### Joshua Sewak

languages and associate professor of Spanish, and Arlette de Jesús, assistant professor of Spanish, are working to grow and enhance the Spanish program.

Ruíz Martín encourages students to give Spanish a try and expose themselves to other cultures. When she took her class to the restaurant, she said it was just “a small activity” that shows how much students can improve with a language by being around the culture.

She and her colleagues, Krissie Butler, chair of the department of modern



*Students enjoy authentic Mexican food at Taqueria El Güiri Güiri, taken during a Spanish 112 class field trip. (Photo by Lauren Jackson)*

“Our goal is...student interest,” said de Jesús, “(and to) create a very good environment for learning the language and then to tell the student, you can speak the language!”

The professors want to show the fun side of learning Spanish, as well as how practical it is, with over 41 million native speakers living in the United States as of 2021, according to the U.S. Census.

“It is possible to speak in Spanish at this point (in life),” said de Jesús, addressing a common concern among students that they’re too old to become proficient in a second language.

Ruíz Martín said that learning Spanish is so much more than grammar, and there are many opportunities to use the language “outside of the classroom” to connect with other people.

“It’s still a lot. You have to prepare yourself,” she said. However, she encourages students.

“If you expose yourself more and more to different cultures, then the better you will be,” Ruíz Martín said.



*de Jesús photo*

### Arlette de Jesús

## Public relations with a purpose

# Students manage suicide prevention campaign

**By Cooper Reynolds**

Four Anderson University public relations students found themselves in a literal quest to save lives this spring when they took on the challenge of promoting the school's first Out of the Darkness walk for suicide prevention.

The students were part of part a course being taught for the first time, Conducting Strategic Public Relations Campaigns, and were working with Thrive Wellness, the Anderson University health center.

The work they did met an important need while also giving them a hands-on opportunity to put into practice the skills they had been learning in their studies.

The Out of the Darkness walk held at AU on April 1 was part of a nationwide effort by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to spread awareness of suicide's impact on individuals and raise money for suicide prevention programs and research.

Erin Maurer, director of counseling services for Thrive Wellness, said she wanted to start the event on Anderson's campus because young people are heavily impacted by suicide.

According to AFSP and Suicide Awareness Voices of Education statistics, suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10-24 in South Carolina and the second leading cause for those between the ages of 25-34 in South Carolina.

Maurer said she has experienced the emotional ef-



*Classmates (left to right) Abby Sisco, Cooper Reynolds, Kinnidy Thoreson, and Morgan Lane conducted the public relations campaign to support AU's first Out of the Darkness Walk for suicide prevention. (Photo by Alley Pridmore)*

fects of suicide loss herself and she strives to support individuals who may have been affected by suicide.

"As a counselor, I have the opportunity to support individuals who are struggling with thoughts of suicide and/or who have lost someone to suicide," said Maurer. "I recognize, however, that those individuals are only the ones who found their way to counseling. There are many more out there that haven't sought out the support."

Maurer said she desires to show people that they are not alone in suicide loss or suicide ideation and that there is hope and support for them.

"The real heroes are those who have the courage and knowledge to talk openly about suicide with someone they are concerned about and help them connect to the resources," Maurer said. "Awareness is the first step in change, and that is why I am excited about doing this walk."

The students developed a strategic public relations plan to promote the walk that used posters, social media, and digital signage to promote the event, said Kinnidy Thoreson, a senior communication major in the course. The students also pitched area news media to cover the story to carry the message throughout the Upstate, worked with the city of Anderson on a proclamation making April 1 Out of the Darkness



*Director of Counseling at Anderson University, Erin Maurer, participates in an interview with a videographer from WYFF4 News. (Photo by Cooper Reynolds)*





Anderson staff, faculty, students, and community members lead the Out of the Darkness Walk through the Anderson University Campus. (Photo by Cooper Reynolds)

Suicide Prevention Day, and promoted a suicide prevention training session for faculty and students.

“More people have been directly impacted by suicide than we think,” said Abby Sisco, a senior communication major in the course.

She said it was exciting to help educate students and community members on how they can support each other and build a greater sense of unity around the difficult issue of suicide.

“There’s purpose in different campaigns we do, but this one, in particular, has a big impact,” Sisco added. “We have the opportunity to bring awareness to something like suicide.”

In the end, the campaign saw more than 250 walkers participate and more than \$9,000 raised, nearly doubling the \$5,000 goal. The walk also received TV and radio news coverage throughout the area.

Thoreson said that while the campaign had an important impact on the community and brought awareness to suicide prevention, it also helped her to see the important role communication professionals play in society.

“This class excites me because it gives me so much

real-world application and is a wonderful thing to put on my resume,” said Thoreson.

Associate Professor of Communication Robert Reeves, the instructor for the course, said he was excited about Thrive partnering with the class. The class provides a capstone for communication majors concentrating in public relations.

**“The real heroes are those who have the courage and knowledge to talk openly about suicide with someone they are concerned about...”**

**Erin Maurer**

“We were looking to let the students run the campaign from beginning to end,” said Reeves, noting that the students worked through the public relations process of research, planning, implementation, and evaluation that professionals use every day.

Reeves said he hopes to grow the class in the future by providing more opportunities for students to work on real-world campaigns.

For her part, Maurer desires to grow the event to become an annual staple of campus life.

“I want it to be an event that people get excited about and want to be a part of year after year,” Maurer said. “A great measure of success would be to see students return to campus for this event as alumni because they want to continue supporting this fight against suicide.”

# Double the interests, double the fun

## INDS major gives students chance to focus on two career paths

By Ashley Strange

So what do you do when you go to college but have more than one study interest? Some students add minors or double majors. But for others, an interdisciplinary studies degree is the way to go.



**Karen Zagrodnik**

The undergraduate interdisciplinary studies major is a relatively new major at Anderson University that focuses on bringing multiple interests together to complement and challenge each other, Karen Zagrodnik, coordinator of interdisciplinary studies and senior lecturer of English, said.

The degree concentrates on what the student wants to do with two majors, including what jobs they would look for after graduation, what combinations they could create between existing majors, and what they need to accomplish in both their jobs and academics.

Zagrodnik said the major is a chance for students who might have interests in seemingly unrelated areas “to think about how those can work together, and how they provide them with opportunities to look for and create future careers.”

Sarah Wilson, an interdisciplinary studies major focusing on English and Spanish, said her two fields allow her to study creative writing as well as graduate with a working knowledge of Spanish.

Senior Marli Cloutre has study disciplines in Christian studies and art with a concentration in painting and drawing.

The interdisciplinary studies major “allows me, someone who does not really fit into an exact plan, to find a way to do what I love without having to choose between the two,” she said.

Zagrodnik said interdisciplinary studies can be an excellent choice for transfer students or for those who decide to switch their majors later in their academic careers. It helps students stay on track while still pursuing their passions.

She said interdisciplinary studies majors are expected

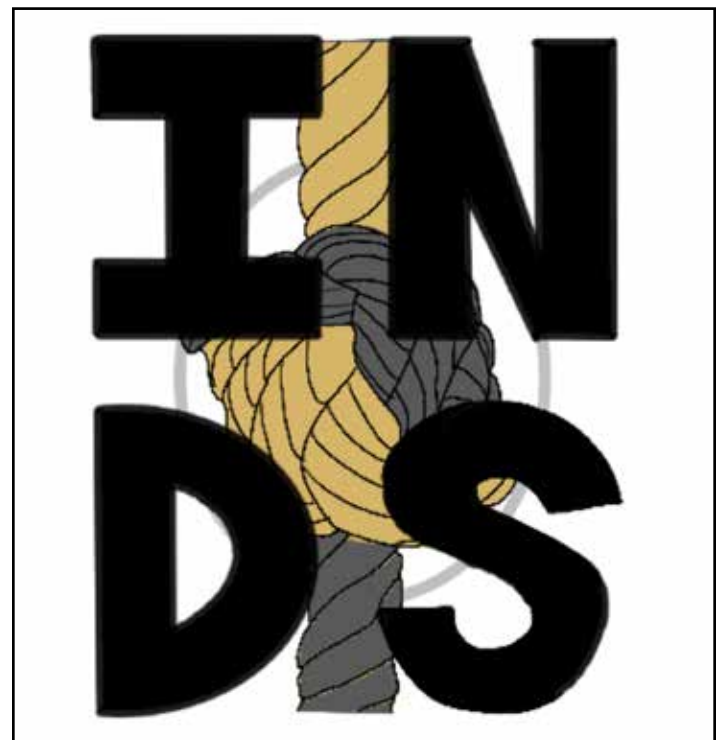
to fulfill the same requirements as all students in the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as take courses in two distinct disciplines.

Zagrodnik said students must complete a minimum of 9-12 credit hours at the 300 and 400 level in each discipline. This ensures that the students have a deep understanding of both areas of study..

With the degree requirements, students have the flexibility to customize their degree through their class choices.

“I love the fact that with the INDS major, I can hand-pick the classes I want to take,” Wilson said. “I got to gear my English discipline toward creative writing and my Spanish discipline toward classes I desired to take.”

Zagrodnik said she was asked by Wayne Cox, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, to be the coordinator of Liberal Studies, a non-traditional degree completed online. Then, during the 2020-2021 academic



*Marli Cloutre, an interdisciplinary studies major focusing on Christian studies and art, designed this illustration to embody the concept of “tying” two interests together and turning them into one major.*





*Karen Zagrodnik, coordinator for interdisciplinary studies and senior lecturer of English, meets with a student for advising. She advises multiple interdisciplinary studies majors to keep them on track for graduation. (Photo by Ashley Strange)*

year, she and Cox developed the degree for traditional undergraduates, which was approved and included as an official bachelor’s degree beginning in the fall of 2021.

“Students’ needs today are different than they were five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago, and that’s in part because of how the professional worlds are changing,” Zagrodnik said. “Students need degrees in the areas in which they want to work, but with varied skills as well. This can be a great way to pull together the diverse aspects of where they’re headed with their lives and their careers.”

Wilson said she plans to publish books in the future and hopefully teach in a private school context.

“I love to write creatively and hope to use that for the kingdom of God,” Wilson said. “I also have a heart for Hispanic countries around the world, as well as

immigrants here in the states, and an aptitude for the Spanish language that I hope to use in ministry and missions.”

Cloutre said she wants to ultimately become a homeschool mom and use the tools that this major has given her to do that.

“However, even before becoming a mother, I am looking at several opportunities. These include working at homeschool co-ops, non-profit organizations, churches, and several other options,” Cloutre said.

Eleven students are currently making their way through the program, and Zagrodnik said that at least two more are declared as interdisciplinary studies

majors entering Anderson University for the 2023-24 academic year.

The undergraduate degree had its first graduate, Rylie Sargent, in December 2022. Five others graduated in May 2023.

**“I love the fact that with the INDS major, I can handpick the classes I want to take. I got to gear my English discipline toward creative writing and my Spanish discipline toward classes I desired to take.”**

**Sarah Wilson**

# New professors join College of Arts and Sciences faculty

By Joey Heckel

The College of Arts and Sciences added four new faces to the faculty during the 2022-23 academic year.

## Robert Altman

Robert Altman, assistant professor of human development and family services, holds a bachelor's degree in general psychology, a master's degree in experimental psychology with teaching emphasis, and a doctorate in developmental psychology.

He is a member of the Society for Research in Adolescence, Society for Research in Child Development, and Society for the Teaching of Psychology.

Altman also loves to fence. He competes in foil, epee, and saber. He trained and competed two years for Georgia Southern University and five years for Florida Atlantic University.



**Robert Altman**

## Todd Fenstermacher

Todd Fenstermacher, assistant professor of mathematics, teaches multiple mathematics courses. He holds bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in mathematics.

He formerly taught math courses at Clemson University and Marian University in Indianapolis, Indiana.

He and his wife love working with children's ministries at his church, University Baptist Church in Clemson.

He also enjoys playing ultimate frisbee and disc golf. Fenstermacher represented both Taylor University and Clemson University in ultimate frisbee.



**Todd Fenstermacher**

## Stanley Paul

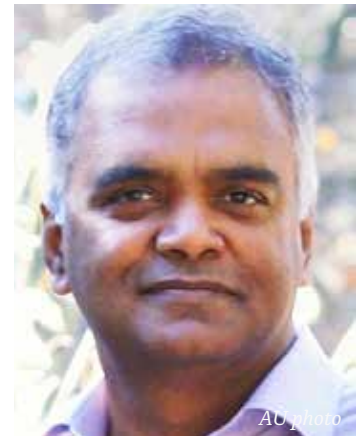
Stanley Paul, professor of physics, teaches general physics and astronomy.

He holds a master's degree in physics, a master's degree in lasers and electro-optical engineering, and a doctorate in optics.

Paul joins AU with 24 years of experience in teaching and research.

He enjoys singing, playing the guitar, and playing the violin, as well as spending time with his wife, Cynthia, and two adult children, Abishek and Keerthana.

"At AU I am blessed with the opportunity to not only impart knowledge but also to share my faith with the students," Paul said. "As educators at a Christian university we have the unique opportunity to teach scientific subjects, through the lens of our faith in Jesus."



**Stanley Paul**

## Susana Ruíz Martín

Susana Ruíz Martín joins the College of Arts and Sciences as a senior lecturer of Spanish.

Born in Durango, Mexico, she has taught every level of education from kindergarten through college.

Ruíz Martín holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in Spanish with a concentration in Spanish literature.

"Teaching a language is more than just grammar," she said, adding that she seeks to implement many multicultural elements into her teaching.

She attends St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church in Simpsonville.



**Susana Ruíz Martín**



# Research leads to foster care position

By Kinnidy Thoreson

Human development and family studies senior Alyssa Morgan did a semester-long research project on foster care in the fall of 2022 that inspired her to pursue child care ministry after graduation.

The focus of her research was the correlation between kinsman caregivers and the placement security of a foster child. Kinsman caregivers are relatives who assume guardianship over the fostered child, and placement security refers to how likely these children are to stay at a foster placement.

Morgan said she wanted to look into some of the factors that affect placement stability for foster children, and that led her to the benefits of kinship caregivers.

“I’ve always been interested in adoption and foster care, so learning more about it was really interesting,” Morgan said about her research. “Typically there’s a lot of placement instability where (foster kids) move around a lot. When a child goes into foster care, they can go in a number of different situations: they could go with a non-relative who has been licensed by the state or they can be placed with a relative.”

Associate Professor of Psychology Robert Franklin, Morgan’s faculty advisor for her internship, said all psychology and human development and family studies majors have to do internships before they graduate but that Morgan’s research especially stood out.

“It was very high quality research,” noted Franklin. “It involved really combing through some deep data to get some answers.”

Morgan said she started to realize that there are many laws involved with kinship caregivers, so she and Franklin shifted their research to cross-analyze Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, which all have different requirements for kinship caregivers.

“Some states have lots of licensing requirements and

some states have no licensing requirements,” Morgan said. “Not having a lot of requirements makes it easier for families to have custody of their relatives and that is good, but they get less support.”

Franklin said the research showed that children who were placed with relatives in kinship care had more stable foster care experiences with fewer moves from one caregiver to another. Additionally, North Carolina, which did not have licensure requirements for kinship caregivers, had more children with kinship caregivers and more stable placements, when compared to South Carolina and Virginia, which had more requirements.

The research was conducted as an independent study with Franklin, who helped Morgan gain access to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System through AU’s Thrift Library. This system collects information on children in foster care for whom state child welfare agencies have responsibility.

Morgan said she was inspired to do her research because of an internship she did with Nightlight Christian Adoptions, a resource for adoption, foster care, and unplanned pregnancy support. After conducting her research

she was offered a full-time position there in May 2023.

“It was valuable and really great to get that real world experience and be able to apply all the things that I’ve learned in classes in a real job,” Morgan said.



**Robert Franklin**

Research is really important if you want to go to a good graduate program or, in Alyssa’s case, get a good job right out of college with no problem.”



**Alyssa Morgan**

**It was valuable and really great to get that real world experience and be able to apply all the things that I’ve learned in classes in a real job.”**

**Alyssa Morgan**

Franklin encourages more students to take advantage of the research opportunities at AU.

“For students who are motivated to work one-on-one with professors, those opportunities are there and I wish more students would take advantage of it,” Franklin said. “With Alyssa’s example, she used it to really inform her career calls.

# Walker retires as associate campus minister

Reporting by Noah Barker, Tessa Chan and university staff

Associate Campus Minister for Women Becky Walker, an adjunct faculty member teaching American Sign Language in the College of Arts and Sciences, has retired after 13 years of service to Anderson University.

Her retirement marks the end of a long career of professional Christian ministry, although she is quick to point out that ministering to people goes on for a lifetime.

Colleagues and students said that throughout her tenure, Walker inspired them with her passion for teaching, her commitment to women's ministry, and her devotion to supporting the deaf community.

"You made a phenomenal difference in the life of this institution, in the lives of our students, faculty and staff, myself and (my wife) Diane," said AU President Evans Whitaker at Walker's retirement celebration in January.

Originally from Hamlet, North Carolina, Walker graduated from Gardner-Webb University with a degree in elementary education. She later earned two master's degrees in the field of vocational rehabilitation.

Walker said she first learned sign language from a deaf woman at the age of 11. Then, during her undergraduate studies, she interpreted for seven deaf students and participated in the deaf revival team, which sparked her interest in deaf ministry.

Walker said she went on to attend Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where she was one of 200 women among 5,000 men. There, she helped plant a church for deaf people and became a counselor for the deaf in vocational rehabilitation.

Later, she and her husband, Dennis, moved to Richmond, Virginia, where they met a deaf friend who was the first deaf woman appointed as a missionary by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I interpreted for her for all her training and meetings, and this experience led me to have an interest in overseas mission work," Walker said.

They applied for a job in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian territory bordering Egypt and Israel, where there is a large deaf population. Walker was hired to work there as a sign language consultant and developed curriculum to teach parents, teachers, and professionals working with deaf people in Palestinian Sign Language.



*Associate Campus Minister for Women Becky Walker hugs close friends and family at her retirement celebration in the Student Center theater on Jan. 13. (Anderson University photo)*

That was "a crazy, but awesome experience," Walker said.

In her women's ministry role at AU, Walker served as a mentor to female students, providing guidance and support as they navigated the challenges of college life. She also helped organize events and activities that promoted fellowship and spiritual growth among women on campus.

She said that while at AU, she participated in mission trips to Haiti, Guatemala, Italy and England, as well as to various states across the U.S.

She also served on the South Carolina Baptist Women's Ministry team as a board member and as a ministry participant serving church planters and their wives.

As a trained interpreter, Walker has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to her ASL classes, one of three modern language options for students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Walker said she plans to continue teaching ASL on a part-time basis.





*Becky Walker is celebrated at her retirement party in the student center auditorium with dozens of students in attendance. The students are blowing bubbles, something Walker has been known for on campus for years. (Photo by Leah M. Davis)*

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.

**“ASL has allowed me to go places where few have gone...it’s a world of beautiful people.”**

**Becky Walker**

Walker said her students not only learned the language but also gained a deeper appreciation for the deaf culture and community.

“I think it (ASL) has taught me to love deeper and with more understanding,” Walker said for a Synthesis article in 2020. “Deaf people are born disconnected. It is the only disability that separates you from people. ASL has allowed me to go places where few have gone...it’s a world of beautiful people.”



*Becky Walker wears a face shield as she teaches American Sign Language at Anderson University during the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall 2020 semester. Walker recently retired from her full-time role as associate campus minister for women but plans to continue teaching ASL at AU on a part-time basis. (Photo by Tessa Chan)*

# SYNTHESIS

Anderson University  
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Anderson, SC 29621



*Students join Carrie Koenigstein, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (center), to show off their certificates from the recent Pre-Med Boot Camp conducted by AU's College of Arts and Sciences and College of Health Professions in cooperation with AnMed. Camp participants from AU and eight other institutions experienced real-life scenarios in the Anderson University Center for Medical Simulations and by shadowing physicians at AnMed. They were also able to work in Anderson University's Cadaver Lab—the only cadaver lab for undergraduates in South Carolina—something usually not seen before medical school. The workshop is designed to bring students up to speed on what to expect when preparing for medical school—even how to face medical school interviews with confidence. (AU photo)*