MSMU’s Hollywood Studio
Competitive advantage for creative pursuits
Psychology degrees provide pathways to meet community needs
New student leadership group
We are in the midst of another busy and exciting spring semester. Several updates and successes are highlighted in this issue, along with introductions to new members of our community who are leading the effort to rejuvenate some beloved traditions while bringing new offerings to our campuses.

One success story is that of Stephanee Beggs ’20 ABSN, who was recently recognized by Forbes in their “30 Under 30” list of people to watch. While preparing for her nursing exams, Beggs decided to post study guides to help student nurses and fellow recent graduates online. She received an overwhelming response, which led to a new business venture that has generated more than $2 million in revenue.

A relatively new member to the Mount, Dr. Arely Acuña, the Mariette Sawchuk Director for The Bernadette Gonzaque Robert Center for Equity, Diversity and Justice, is propelling us forward on the journey toward becoming an antiracist University. She is working closely with Dr. Krishauna Hines-Gaither, vice president for equity, diversity and justice, on a new program that will provide students the opportunity to become peer educators and trainers as EDJ Leadership Scholars.

Dr. Ashley Joseph, director of Women’s Leadership and Community Engagement, is another new member of our community. With her degree in organizational leadership and certifications in higher education assessment and cocurricular design, she has been expanding student programs to optimize our offerings and maximize the students’ growth as leaders.

These are just a few examples of the Mount community stories you will read in the following pages. It is hard to believe that Commencement is fast approaching, as well as our annual summer trip to Le Puy, France. I hope that you will consider joining me and members of the Mount family on this impactful journey. May we always be inspired by our Founders to lead lives filled with purpose to meet the needs of our times.

Sincerely,

Ann McElaney-Johnson
Spotlight: New Director of the Center for Equity, Diversity and Justice

NEW STUDIO BUILDS TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY FOR FILM AND MUSIC STUDENTS, AMONG OTHERS

Spotlight: Ashley Joseph, EDD, New Director of Women’s Leadership

Psychology Department

UNIQUE PROGRAMS SUPPORT POPULATION-SPECIFIC NEEDS

TYLER KUSLAKA ’26, MAJORING IN FILM AND MEDIA, RECORDING A PODCAST AT THE MOUNT’S NEW FILM STUDIO FACILITY IN HOLLYWOOD.
Mount Saint Mary’s annual Women’s Leadership Conference provided an engaging atmosphere for its 300 attendees with its theme, “Women’s stories: The power to connect, engage and transform.”

The conference featured a keynote speaker and two sets of concurrent sessions focused on using stories to drive change, advance careers, become a leader, and promote communications and connections. The conference closed with a highly engaging session on using improv to tell stories.

Ashley Blancas ’23, executive vice president of the Student Government Association, said that the panel on storytelling as an essential tool for landing a job was of vital significance for her.

“As I am preparing to graduate and take on my future career plans, I found the advice for interviewing very beneficial and engaging,” she said.

In addition to the main conference sessions, the Alumnae Association sponsored an exclusive workshop, led by Erika Jones ’00, to help participants hone their stories so that they could deliver them with confidence to make a strong first impression. Another program matched volunteer mentors with students seeking guidance and career advice to support their personal and professional development.

A mobile storytelling booth was set up for attendees to share their own stories. Mary Trunk MFA, assistant professor of film, said, “Some of the more powerful moments in the interviews came from first-generation MSMU students and alums. They clearly understand the contributions of the women who support them and sacrifice for them so they could have the advantages of an education. They also know how to do the same for women who need that help now and in the future.”
The President’s Invitation to Serve: Living our mission

Members of the Mount community participated in the 16th President’s Invitation to Serve in January. Coordinated by the Office of Women’s Leadership and Community Engagement, this tradition brings the Mount community together for a day of service.

“All of us were placed on this earth to be a servant leader in our community,” says alumna Kinette K. Cager ’06.

Participants chose between several volunteer sites and projects, such as delivering flowers to the residents at the Alexandria House, making meal bags and cards of encouragement for the Downtown Women’s Center, and organizing school supplies for the Assistance League of Los Angeles.

Thais Perez ’24 affirms, “It was uplifting to work alongside a multitude of MSMU generations. Also, I felt joyful hoping I made a difference in the lives of people whom I perhaps will never meet.”
Members of the Heritage Society, comprised of those who have included the Mount in their will, trust or as a beneficiary, gathered at the Doheny Mansion on December 9 for the group’s annual lunch with President Ann McElaney-Johnson and Institutional Advancement’s individual giving team.

“The Mount’s stellar faculty and staff, who continuously gave so much of themselves, believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself,” says Regent Elaine Kindle ’75. “With the solid and caring foundation provided by the University, I was able to dream, to keep moving forward, and to exceed my dreams. There are other young women who need the Mount to do the same for them, and the Heritage Society provides one way to help students become unstoppable.”

Featured speaker Mary (Caratan) Sloper ’62, regent, professor emerita of nursing, former assistant to the provost and creator of the Mansion’s docent program, entertained the gathering with stories from the new “Trek of the Seven Sisters: Pilgrimage Companion Guide,” that she wrote along with Sister Mary Murphy, CSJ, ’60, based on the diary of Sister Monica Corrigan, one of the seven sisters who spent 37 days traveling 2,983 miles from St. Louis to Tucson in 1870.

“The holiday party is a unique opportunity to connect with and meet others who share the same dedication toward the Mount,” says Angela Hawekotte ’75, JD. “We greatly appreciate the Mount’s faithful stewardship of the Heritage Society members’ donations.”

Stephanee Beggs ’20 ABSN is an emergency room nurse within the UCLA Health hospital network who has built a platform, RNExplained Inc., to help nursing students and those preparing for the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX). Last November, the 28-year-old alumna made the 2023 Forbes 30 Under 30 list. Beggs was selected from a pool of 12,000 other candidates.

When Beggs was studying for her NCLEX, she posted a teaching video that she made on TikTok, and it went viral. “I began making the videos because that’s how I learn — by speaking out loud. But I realized that many people studied the same way so my videos might benefit other students,” she explains. The success of her social media content inspired her to set up an Etsy store, where she sells study sheets and merchandise for aspiring nurses. She has generated more than $2 million in revenue and attracted more than 730,000 followers.

“Being part of the Forbes’ list is a good reminder of the impact I’m making in the healthcare community and a recognition of all the effort that I’m putting into this business.”
Alumnae Weekend ‘22: Connections, a farewell and a gift of gratitude

The much-anticipated return to campus for Alumnae Weekend on October 15 was rewarded with energy and camaraderie. The alumnae in attendance spanned seven decades, as did DJ Mike’s musical choices.

The afternoon activities included a campus tour, a presentation on traditions of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet by Shannon Green, director of the CSJ Institute, and Founders Day Mass in the Mary Chapel, led by Gaile Krause, MA, and Laura Gomez of Campus Ministry.

The Class of 1972, newly inducted into the Golden Graduate Society, was honored. “I loved the campus tour,” said Jenna Payan ‘05, vice president of the Alumnae Association. “It was so fun to walk down memory lane but also see the new updates. The whole day from start to finish was outstanding. I look forward to coming again!”

The Campus Center featured pumpkin martinis, dinner and music. A table of former students celebrated the recently retired pre-law program director Helen Boutrous, JD, PhD. President Ann McElaney-Johnson expressed appreciation for Boutrous’ many contributions to the Mount, particularly for her work with students for more than 20 years, and “Dr. B” was given a bouquet of roses followed by a standing ovation.

Another big round of applause followed the announcement that the reunion campaign raised $515,000 from approximately 200 donors.

“It was wonderful to see friends and classmates,” says Melanie Sava ‘17. “Catching up on what everyone has been up to for the past several years definitely helps renew connection, both with one another and with the Mount.”

SAVE THE DATE FOR HOMECOMING
OCT. 7, 2023
On September 22, people gathered to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Charles Willard Coe library on the Chalon Campus. The Coe library was the fifth building erected on the campus and the last of the original buildings in the 1926 master plan.

The building was named after a California rancher whose daughter, Sister Mary Celine Coe, CSJ, contributed her inheritance for construction; the Coe family coat of arms appears in stone over the entrance to the building. Additional funds for building and furnishing the library were raised by students, who hosted a benefit tea and hat show on campus as well as a comedy night at the Wilshire Ebell Theater.

With the current generation receiving much of their information in a digital format, are libraries becoming obsolete? Not so fast, according to director of the University libraries, Danielle Salomon, who stressed that libraries are more relevant and needed than ever before. “Our work is teaching students how to think critically about information and how to use it to create a better world,” she said. “Also, librarians help scholars obtain the materials they need for their work.”

“Stories From the Violins of Hope”

Mount Saint Mary’s University proudly hosted the premiere of a live, in-person production of “Stories From the Violins of Hope” at the William H. Hannon Theater. The production told the true story of three generations of luthiers (restorers of string instruments) and their relationship to the instruments that they collected from the Holocaust and later restored.

Paula Meichtry ’66, co-chair of the Regents Council, brought the work to the attention of Mount President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD. “They moved me to tears and motivated me to get the story to the people. Mount Saint Mary’s was initiating their antiracist program and had hired Dr. Krishauna Hines-Gaither [as vice president of equity, diversity and justice]. The timing was perfect.”

The violins represent not only the collective voices of those previous owners but also the ultimate failure of the Nazis to eliminate diversity in their attempts to destroy ethnic and religious groups they deemed inferior. To consider the conditions in which these instruments were previously played reinforces the mantra: “Never forget. Never again.”
Arely Acuña, PhD, assumed her role as the Mariette Sawchuk Director for Equity, Diversity and Justice last August, and the Center recently unveiled 17 spring events resulting from its efforts to collaborate with Mount community partners.

Acuña describes herself as a Latina immigrant who was previously undocumented and a first-generation college student. She majored in international studies from the University of California, Irvine, received a master's degree in student affairs from UCLA, and a PhD in urban education policy with a concentration in higher education from USC.

When she was exploring the director position at Mount Saint Mary’s, Acuña was “very impressed with the way that the University was articulating their efforts around equity, diversity, justice and antiracism.” But what sealed the deal were the faculty and staff working groups in addition to the research allocation, strategy and the transparency around the strategic plan.

Last fall, the Center brought back Justice Week, a tradition from the 1940s. On March 30, the Cultural Fair is returning. “People want to see programming that represents their identity, their experiences and their cultures,” says Acuña.

She is encouraged by all progress, big and small. “The most impactful moments are when someone shares how a program or interaction sparked an interest, allowed them to explore themselves more deeply or led them to start a healing process. That gets me excited.”

“People want to see programming that represents their identity, their experiences and their cultures.”
The Educational Equity webinar series by the University of Phoenix featured Kimberly Nao, PhD, the Fritz Burns Endowed Chair, associate professor of education, and diversity fellow. Nao’s session, “Equity Is Not A Trend: How to Continue Your Commitment in 2023,” covered intersectional approaches to antiracist structural change through guiding principles and aligning terms; an introduction to a reflexive approach to antiracist work; and self-reflection and self-assessment.

Johnny Payne, director of the MFA in creative writing, had a number of his works published recently, including short story “Oranges” in Fast Flesh literary journal; three poems in Amherst College’s Peregrine Journal; “Vampire Girl,” a serial novel, and short story “Political Pomo Puppets” both in The GroundUp; a sonnet, “The Isle of the Dead,” published in The Chained Muse; and “Fish Head” (Soundings East), a book of short stories.

Assistant professor of psychology S. Mae Peralta, PhD, general counseling psychology adjunct faculty member Christine Kang, PhD, and PsyD student Malkie Hermatillake ’25 (left to right, respectively) will present “Higher Education Narratives From Students and Faculty” at the Association for Asian American Studies national conference in Long Beach in April.

Interim provost Daniel Prosterman, PhD, and his wife, Megan E. Bryant, have written a series of four children’s books, published by Penguin Random House and available on Amazon. The series title is “Citizen Baby” and the set includes “My Vote,” “My President,” “My Congress” and “My Supreme Court.”
ALUMNAE

Last October, the board of trustees of Citrus College in Glendora, California, appointed Noemi (Vargas) Barajas ’09 MSN, DNP as the director of the health sciences department. Following her master’s degree at the Mount, Barajas received her doctorate through CSU Fullerton.

Claudia Iraheta ’17 MBA was a recent employee of the month at Nowcom, a software company in Los Angeles. “I am so happy for Claudia’s success,” says Christian Teeter, MBA, EdD, associate professor of business administration. “The Mount is one of the very few MBA programs in the area that has a project management concentration, and it’s wonderful to see the effective deployment of her MBA degree and skills within her career endeavors.”

Between the Lines Publishing has just produced the novel “The Dark Prairie,” which was the thesis project for John Jarrett ’21 MFA. The coming-of-age story centers around James Tuck, a 16-year-old boy living in Kansas along the dangerous Santa Fe Trail. In the winter of 1870, his 8-year-old sister is kidnapped, and it’s up to him to rescue her. Jarrett is the eighth — and first male — in his family to graduate from the Mount.

“A Bag of Milk and Ghosts,” a short story by Tricia Lopez ’22 MFA developed in the Mount’s Photography and Narrative class, was published in Selcouth Station.

STUDENTS

Ashley Blancas ’23, executive vice president for the Mount’s Student Government Association, is seen here with Kristen Soares, the president of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities. Blancas will attend trainings to learn how to advocate and lobby on the state level in addition to how to create policy.

Ebell scholarship winners (left to right, respectively) Jasmine Gonzales ’24, Abigail “Abby” Knight ’23 and Angelica Seifert ’23 were interviewed for the October 2022 e-magazine for The Ebell of Los Angeles, an educational and philanthropic organization founded by women, for women, in 1894. There are four more Ebell scholars at the Mount, all pursuing a traditional bachelor of science in nursing.


Diana Martinez ’23 and Lusine Minasyan ’23 co-authored a paper for the Social Sciences Research Network with Christian Teeter, MBA, EdD, associate professor of business administration, titled “COVID-19 and the Acceleration of Food Insecurity: A Southern California Case Study.” The genesis of the research program came from a 2017 Faculty Learning Community chaired by philosophy professor and now-interim assistant provost Paul Green, PhD.

At the National Student Leadership Society’s annual national summit in New Jersey, Sarah Sanchez ’25, the Mount’s NSLS chapter vice president, received an award for her written leadership story. She also received a scholarship for her ongoing leadership achievements at the Mount. NSLS-MSMU has more than 50 active members.

Student leaders Aurora Torres ’24 and Cathy Vides ’23 (left to right, respectively) attended PLEN’s (Public Leadership Education Network) “Preparing You to Lead” workshops in Washington, DC, on how to support and create policies. The Women’s Leadership program has sent numerous students to various PLEN Series to encourage them to lead on their own terms.

Angel Vasquez ’23 MFA had a young adult genre piece, “The Saints Need Bloom,” which was produced as part of work done in the AfroLatinx Creative class, published in The GroundUp.
Established as an undergraduate degree program in 1963, the psychology department is one of the most popular at Mount Saint Mary’s and is known for its rigorous coursework, signature programs, multiple specialization options, and experiential learning and research opportunities. With the recent addition of its new doctorate program, the department offers a full complement of degrees for students, especially those interested in serving the Latinx or other diverse populations as a hallmark of their work.

If you ask faculty and students why the department is special, invariably the discussion focuses on the culture and sense of community. It’s so strong that a third of the instructors have undergraduate or graduate degrees — or both — from the Mount.

Orlando Alvarez ‘14 MS, instructor and master’s program interim director, says, “My own experience as a student changed my life. That’s one of the biggest drivers of my work here. It’s rewarding to see the new generation of alumnae educators put their heart and souls into the program. They feel their education was a gift given to them, and they’re now paying it forward.”

The faculty talks about how much their department is like a family unit, and it’s not just hype. Outsiders have picked up on our reputation; the Vancouver International Conference on the Teaching of Psychology invited the department to present a session on collegiality.

The bachelor’s degree

In addition to the hallmarks of all Mount classes — a small teacher to student ratio and a supportive faculty — “Our psych program is unique in that its students fulfill requirements that are optional in most other university’s psychology programs,” says Michelle Samuel, PhD, associate professor and program director. “It makes our students more compelling to graduate schools.”

Multiple degree options for varied careers
One such requirement is the practicum of at least 110 hours working in the field, usually fulfilled in the junior or senior years. (It’s not referred to as an internship because in the field of psychology an internship denotes graduate-level work.) Aloha Buenaventura, PsyD, assistant professor and program and clinical coordinator, vets practicum sites to ensure that students are interacting with clients and observing staff work.

Students not completing a practicum are required to complete at least one semester of research work. Every full-time faculty member has a research lab, and students can participate as early as their first year.

**Bachelor’s in applied psychology: Weekend/Evening & Online College**

The applied psychology bachelor’s program for Weekend/Evening & Online College launched in 2014 after being spearheaded by Gregory Travis, PhD, a licensed psychologist, professor and the director of the doctorate program, and Julia Tang, MSW, PhD, associate professor and advisement coordinator for the undergraduate program.

> “Undergraduate psychology is a good foundation for any other field that requires people and research skills.”
> -- PAMELA L. GIST, PHD, PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT CHAIR

“Similar to the traditional undergraduate structure, the curriculum in the WEOC program emphasizes the application of psychology and research in class formats designed for working adults,” says program director Evelyn Oyuela-Kowalski ’11, 14 MS. She received her WEOC bachelor’s in sociology and her master’s in counseling psychology before joining the staff and credits Robin Bishop, PhD, for mentoring her both as a student and now as a colleague. Bishop is an associate professor and program co-coordinator of the general counseling psychology program with assistant professor S. Mae Peralta, PhD.
Students are also required to fulfill a practicum, and those already working in the field can do their practicum at their jobs, which helps them with their busy schedules. Angela Benveniste, ’09, DSW, is the practicum coordinator for applied psychology. “She’s so in touch with the community, and she has connections with so many different organizations,” says Oyuela-Kowalski.

**Master’s degree in counseling psychology**

What sets our master’s program apart, according to Alvarez, is the intimate size of the graduate cohorts that enables students to maximize their educational opportunities. Alvarez’s goal is to “continue to foster a culture of community, belonging and connection.”

The master’s degree has three specializations: general counseling psychology; marriage and family therapy; and MFT with a certificate. The general counseling psychology degree is a degree for those wanting to pursue jobs in nonclinical settings such as community colleges or nonprofits.

Those who want to pursue licensure choose an MFT specialization. The MFT features an optional certificate, ¡Enlaces! [Links] Building Bridges to Spanish-Speaking Clients. ¡Enlaces! courses are taught in both English and Spanish and enable students to develop proficiency with psychological terminology in Spanish while learning about unique cultural factors inherent in counseling people from diverse backgrounds. Students also have a clinical placement with a Spanish-speaking client.

A grant from the American Psychological Association helped launch the program in 1999 and quickly garnered recognition from the APA and the National Latinx Psychological Association; the department was invited to speak about ¡Enlaces! at both organizations’ conferences.

Approximately 200 students are enrolled in the master’s programs. Those attending evening classes can finish in three years, or students can opt for an accelerated program that meets two full workdays a week to finish in two years. “It’s challenging, rigorous and asks a lot of the students,” says Alvarez. “But when they walk across the stage and get their diplomas, nothing is more beautiful when you know the stories behind what they did to get there.”

Graduate psychology students have helped the Latinx community in Los Angeles — especially undocumented populations — overcome their legal status, lack of insurance and the stigma of mental health issues to receive the services they need.
Paula Helu-Brown, PhD, LMFT, assistant professor of psychology and MFT program coordinator, helped the Mexican Consulate in Los Angeles launch a unique mental health program in 2017 called “Módulo de Salud Mental” [mental health module]. “As a sovereign territory where US authorities can’t intervene, the Mexican Consulate provides a safe space for people who otherwise would not seek psychological support,” she says. Although the program was curtailed during the height of the pandemic, it has assisted more than 1,000 people since its launch.

**New Doctorate (PsyD) Program**

The Mount’s PsyD is so new that the first graduating class of eight in this full-time, five-year program won’t receive their diplomas until 2025. That fourth-year cohort will be done with classes this summer and will then start their year-long internships.

Just as the master’s program has three specializations to choose from, our PsyD also has two different paths — Diverse Populations and Latinx Mental Health.

Students enrolled in Diverse Populations will focus their dissertation research, practicum and internships serving clients of various intersectional identities. Latinx Mental Health candidates will do the same with Spanish-speaking populations in communities where mental health resources are scarce.

All students are trained in the application of critical theories to examine how systemic oppression impacts the mental health of historically marginalized communities.

“It’s exciting to be amongst faculty and other colleagues who share those values and that mindset and who are more aware of social justice and have a bigger sense of responsibility to look after marginalized people,” says Esmeralda Zamudio, PsyD, assistant professor and assistant director of clinical training.

Everyone will be watching to see which student will be the first to be awarded both their undergraduate and their doctorate degrees from the Mount. There’s no doubt in anyone’s mind that it will happen — and sooner rather than later.

The Mount has made a name for itself with its strong academic requirements that expose students to both clinical and research pathways in an environment that values the close-knit community that is its hallmark. The communities and families served by our graduates are enhanced by their work.
New director of Women’s Leadership expanding already successful programs

Ashley Lauren Joseph, EdD, director of women’s leadership and community engagement, has been at Mount Saint Mary’s for just under a year and already feels deeply connected within the Mount community.

Joseph is looking at the overall student experience and exploring ways to expand student engagement. For example, she’s looking at broadening student roles in various programs, increasing their mentoring and leadership opportunities, and encouraging more conference participation and community engagement.

A triple degree holder from the University of La Verne, Joseph has a bachelor’s in psychology, a master’s in educational counseling and a doctorate in organizational leadership, with additional certifications in higher education assessment and cocurricular design.

There were so many wonderful reasons to join the Mount, said Joseph, but she was especially excited to have her first opportunity to work with a Black female supervisor in Linda McMurdock, PhD, vice president for student affairs. “Linda is really knowledgeable about student affairs, counseling and assessment, and I will learn so much from her.”

Joseph appreciates working at a university where she can “openly talk about my relationship to God and what that means to me,” she says.

“Serving students is truly the work of God. It’s awesome to be able to do that every day.”
Mount Saint Mary’s has a long tradition of peer-advisors programs: Mount Leads, Peer Wellness Ambassadors, Leadership Scholars and Community Ambassadors, among others. This spring, a new addition, the first group of Equity, Diversity and Justice Leadership Scholars will be selected from incoming first year and transfer students.

EDJ Scholars will work with students across campus and serve as liaisons by hosting or volunteering at EDJ events and facilitating EDJ training for their peers, high school students and community partners.

“We want these scholars to be known as leaders for EDJ work,” says Arely Acuña, PhD, the Mariette Sawchuk Director for Equity, Diversity and Justice. “The Mount has the right mentality, spirit and heart around EDJ efforts, and there are students who really want to be a part of it.”

The curriculum will incorporate the Mount Leads model and develop their students' leadership. “There will be several opportunities for the scholars to put what they are learning into practice,” says Krishauna Hines-Gaither, PhD, vice president for equity, diversity and justice. “We want to have sessions that are student facilitated. There aren’t a lot of studies in the EDJ discipline on the outcomes of student-led training and their ability to co-facilitate. We hope to publish research findings in that area.”

Hines-Gaither has spearheaded similar programs at other institutions. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to keep students engaged with the University, and it is a transformative program that also aids in student retention,” she says.

The Black Alumnae Association was thrilled with the launch of this program, and it plans to raise $100K for four cohorts of students. If you would like to contribute to this effort, contact Kevin A. Barry, senior director of development, at kbarry@msmu.edu.
REACHING FOR

How the Mount film programs are setting up students for success
Los Angeles is the most desirable destination for people who want to study and pursue a career in entertainment. But breaking into the industry can be hard without the right set of skills, connections and professional experience. The film, media and communication degree programs at Mount Saint Mary’s University prepares students for successful careers in entertainment, right in the heart of Hollywood.

Film, photography, journalism and new media students are immersed in courses that provide hands-on experience and access to state-of-the-art equipment at the new studio facility in Hollywood. Located on Hollywood Boulevard across from the historic Grauman’s Chinese Theater, the new location is home to photography, production, post-production, documentary storytelling, music production and sound design courses.
The Mount Advantage

A distinctive trait of the MSMU film programs is that students own the intellectual property of the content they create while they are at the Mount — a right that is not given to students at most film schools.

The 10:1 student-faculty ratio means that students get more personalized instruction and mentorship from educators who are also full-time industry professionals, which often leads to great networking and professional opportunities.

“This new studio has allowed us to create spaces that are ideal for our needs, and it provides the maximum number of tools and resources for the students,” explains Kelby Thwaits, MFA, director of graduate programs in film, television and photography. “Students get the benefit of being exposed to hands-on experience through their entire program, instead of trying to integrate that experience after they graduate.”

All students taking a course from the department can take full advantage of the facilities for their academic, professional or personal projects. Rosi Gonzalez ’23, a major in Spanish Studies, took a digital video production course and uses the facility to develop her own video projects.

Cintia de Mita ’21 is an Indonesian director and choreographer specializing in music video production. She moved from Jakarta, Indonesia, to pursue a career in entertainment. After receiving her BA in film and media, she’s now pursuing her MFA. De Mita plans to continue directing musical films. “I want to be the person Hollywood producers come to when they do the next ‘La La Land’ or ‘West Side Story’ movie,” she says.

“It’s great to have an opportunity to practice and further develop as an artist without needing to spend extra time and money to find these resources elsewhere” says Jordan Dash ’23 MFA. He has been able to build a strong portfolio that will help him with his future career.
before graduation. These opportunities usually stem from relationships developed with adjunct faculty, who are active in the profession, and industry guest speakers. Those roles give students a head start as they graduate and look to advance in their fields.

Students who have benefited from connections within the MSMU film department include Valeria Sanchez ‘15, animation production executive at Netflix; Sean Garry ’17, director of photography for Entertainment Studios; and Amy D’Alessandro ’17, editor of the “Outlander” series on STARZ.

Other graduates have secured positions in broadcasting, feature film production, music video production, radio broadcasting and web development at companies such as Sony, E! Entertainment, Lions Gate and Warner Brothers.

A mission-driven program

Rooted in the University’s mission, an important focus of the department is to help women break through the glass ceiling of Hollywood. Charles Bunce, MFA, chair of the Film, Media and Communication department, explains that a predominantly women environment offers unique opportunities and removes some of the traditional barriers that students may encounter in other film programs.

The first BA in documentary, film and social justice was founded in 2004 under the leadership of Pam Haldeman, PhD, chair of the sociology department, who recognized that film can address issues of social justice and human rights. Today, the curriculum continues to be advocacy-driven and focused on social justice issues, offering courses such as “Women in Hollywood,” “Race, Sex and Gender” and “Science Fiction and Human Rights.”

“The entertainment industry claims to be improving their inclusion of women and people of color,” says instructor Nicole Haggard, PhD. “However, as The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™ has shown, the needle has not really moved for more than two decades. With the current political climate and proven financial gains of diversity, the media industry is highly motivated to create change.

“My students are able to think, speak and write clearly about issues and know how to apply them to the creation of media content,” says Haggard.

Bunce reiterates that the emphasis on social rights is deeper than an individual or even a department focus. “As one of the most diverse universities in the nation and as an antiracist institution, we are really focused on helping students who have traditionally been marginalized, giving them voices and opportunities to tell their stories.”

“My students are the future the industry seeks and have already begun to impress media executives.”

– NICOLE HAGGARD, PHD, INSTRUCTOR, FILM, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

MSMU FILM PROGRAMS

Undergraduate programs
• BA in Film and Media*
• BFA in Professional Photography*
• BA in Journalism and New Media
• BS in Film, Media and Social Justice

Graduate programs
• MFA in Film, Television and Photography
• MFA in Producing for Film and Television
• Dual MFA and MBA degrees

Certificates in Film
• Photography
• Documentary Storytelling
• Producing
• Post-Production
• Music Production and Sound Design
• Acting

*ALSO OFFERED AS A WEEKEND/EVENING & ONLINE PROGRAM
Your legacy, your community, your MSMU

Since 1925, Mount Saint Mary’s University has graduated global citizens who make a positive impact on the world. You are a part of this rich history and can carry this tradition forward with your own legacy today.

The Mount has partnered with FreeWill, a free online estate planning resource, to help you take stock of the people and communities you love — like our community right here at MSMU! When you include a gift to the University in your will or legacy plans, you join a community of alumnae and friends in the Heritage Society. Your legacy gift today will support future generations of students at the Mount.

Get started today at FreeWill.com/MSMU or scan the QR code to learn more!
A lasting legacy reflecting lifelong passions

ERIKA (ORTH) OWENS ‘50, an ardent supporter of Mount Saint Mary’s, passed away in May 2021 but left a significant legacy to the University with her $3.5 million bequest to support expendable scholarships, establish a fund for the arts, endow the director role for the Center for the Advancement of Women and help us build the Wellness Pavilion at Chalon.

Angela Hawekotte ’75, JD, met Owens at a Mount event and has served as her estate planning attorney for more than 15 years. “Erika was a very smart and engaging woman while, at the same time, subtly quiet and self-effacing,” she says. “I always enjoyed my interactions with her because I always learned so much about many different topics.”

Born in Houston in 1928, Owens settled in Ojai, California, by middle school, attending Villanova Preparatory School, where her mother taught art. Because older brother Alex fought in WWII, the two siblings were set to enter college at the same time. “With the four-year age difference, we didn’t really interact that much growing up,” Owens explained in 2014. “But once we got to college, we did more together, like double dating. Years later, at his wedding, I met his best friend, Lee. And I ended up marrying him.”

Owens maintained a zeal for learning. She approached the LA Zoo about volunteer work and was told she’d have to pass a test to become a docent. She studied four or five large volumes of information — and served as a docent for 50 years. She also was a docent for the Huntington Library and Gardens, ultimately becoming a specialist in desert plants. “She was a compassionate person who cared for the world,” says her son Tim. “She was really happy that the money is going where it’s going. She chose wisely and generously left us enough.”
WHEN: Saturday, October 7
WHERE: Chalon Campus
WHO: All alumnae and their families
WHY: Because it’s fun!
Reconnect with old friends and make new connections.

WE CANNOT WAIT TO SEE YOU!

BECOME A CLASS AMBASSADOR!

Work with the Alumnae Association and your fellow classmates — not a big-time commitment and it’s fun! Contact Brittany Skiles, manager of alumnae and volunteer engagement at bskiles@msmu.edu to learn more.

Keep an eye on your mailbox, inbox, Mount social media channels and our Homecoming website at msmu.edu/homecoming for more details.
**Brady Leadership Society**
Named for the Mount’s visionary first president, Mother Mary Margaret Brady, the Brady Leadership Society recognizes donors who contribute $100/month ($1,200/year) or more to the Mount Fund, which supports areas of greatest need on campus. BLS donors receive an invitation to an annual event, a designated staff liaison, special communications and more.

For more information or to join the Brady Leadership Society, contact Kathleen LaManna, director of annual giving, at klamanna@msmu.edu.

**Double the impact of your gift**
Did you know that many employers match charitable gifts made by current employees and their spouses? Some companies will even double or triple your gift! Visit muss.edu/matching-gifts to see if your employer will match your donation.

**Fund a scholarship**
Prepared students who wish to attend college should not be turned away because they cannot afford it. Mount Saint Mary’s awarded more than $4.2 million in need-based aid in 2021–’22. Most of that aid (95%) came from scholarships funded by alumnae, parents, faculty and friends.

Your gift of $5,000 or more can directly impact a Mount student and allow you to name a scholarship. To set up an MSMU scholarship, please contact Carly Basile, director of development, principal gifts, at cbidner@msmu.edu.

**The Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation challenge grant update**
Here’s an update on what we’ve done in nine months:
- 92 donors (including foundations)
- $2.65 million in donations
- $5.3 million raised with match
- 58% of goal reached

The challenge grant from the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation allows donors to apply matching funds toward a naming opportunity. If you are interested in leaving a lasting legacy, contact Carly Basile, director of development, principal gifts, at cbidner@msmu.edu.

**24 hours to make an impact**
Each spring, the entire Mount community comes together for staff, parents and friends to create new opportunities and help keep MSMU education accessible.

Our collective impact has the power to transform the lives of future and current Athenians. Every gift, of any size, makes a difference. Let’s make this the best Mount Day of Giving yet!

Visit giving.msmu.edu/MDOG23
The Mount takes pride in its tight-knit community, where students and alumnae are supported by faculty, staff, the administration and one another. Helping others along their career trajectories is a vital part of growing networks and ultimately finding that dream career. Sign up for Mount Connect and join scores of alumnae and student members reaching out to receive or provide assistance. It’s easy to log in using email, LinkedIn, Google, Apple or Facebook to access numerous capabilities:

- **RECONNECT** with a classmate through an alumnae database
- **SEARCH** for or post a job
- **FIND A MENTOR**, ask for an introduction or have your resume reviewed — or volunteer to provide those benefits to other members. You can also express an interest in speaking to a class — you choose your level of involvement
- **PROMOTE** your upcoming event by building an page so members can learn more about the event, RSVP, share photos, and interact with you and other guests

Now more than ever, people are looking for mentors, sponsors and help in identifying job opportunities. In this case, “helping thy neighbor” involves a very defined group, and it’s the collective efforts that make each individual unstoppable.

**Help guide the Latina Alumnae Association**

Building on the history of Latina networks created by alumnae volunteers, the Latina Alumnae Association (LAA) aims to support the MSMU Latina community by bringing alumnae, students, faculty and staff together to provide support, programming and mentorship opportunities to future generations of Latina leaders.

To bring this vision to fruition, contact Mariam Khwajazada, director of alumnae and volunteer engagement, at mkhwajazada@msmu.edu.

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The Alumnae Association invites you to explore southern Italy this spring! This week-long trip will take you from your base in seaside Polignano a Mare over timeless terra to historical towns filled with indelible wonders. Witness the preserved heritage of Alberobello and enjoy Mediterranean meals amid olive groves and family vineyards. Each day invites new opportunities to drink in vistas of brilliant blue seas and savor the region’s famously fresh cuisine. Along your journey, celebrate the Puglia region’s authentic culture and warm hospitality. **Saluti!**

For more information or to make reservations, please call 800-323-7373 or email Selma Vlakic of AHI Travel at svlakic@ahitravel.com.

**LE PUY PILGRIMAGE**

**MAY 29-JUNE 7**

Led by President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD in conjunction with the University’s CSJ Institute. See back cover for more information.
Jane Ellen Crawford (1948-2022)

Jane Crawford obtained a PhD in history from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She became a welcome fixture at Mount Saint Mary’s, where she taught history and humanities classes for more than 25 years.

Part of the original faculty group that started the master’s in humanities, Crawford “never seemed to run out of ideas for the program that thrives on the unusual,” says Millie Kidd, PhD, current co-chair of the Regents Council. “She leaves a big hole in our hearts.”

Crawford took many trips with her children and grandchildren, but the highlight most certainly was an all-family trip to Ireland (that is, their six children, their partners and grandchildren) in 2015 to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

Eileen (Murphy) Bigelow ’65 (1943-2023)

Eileen (Murphy) Bigelow ’65 was born in Buffalo, New York, the second of seven children. “Eileen’s love for life, her energy and exuberance were boundless,” says classmate Vivien LoPizzo ’65, ’73. “Her kindness, compassion and generosity were well known.”

During her senior year, Eileen’s father asked her to show his college roommate’s son around Los Angeles. That favor blossomed into a romance. “Eileen had met her soulmate, Brien,” says LoPizzo, “a man as compassionate, energetic, caring and family-oriented as she was.”

The Bigelows provided both expendable and endowed scholarships to countless students and supported Mount initiatives large and small. Bigelow was actively involved in the Mount’s Alumnae Association and served as its president. They served on the Regents Council, and she was co-chair for many years. “Eileen was full of life, energy, ideas, laughter and always giving of herself,” says Paula Meichtry ’66, current co-chair of the Regents Council. “She leaves a big hole in our hearts.”

Bigelow took many trips with her children and grandchildren, but the highlight most certainly was an all-family trip to Ireland (that is, their six children, their partners and grandchildren) in 2015 to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>MaryAnn Russo recently published her third book of poetry, “The Sound of Petals.” She notes that the roots of her writing grew and were nourished during her years at the Mount. Her book is available on Amazon.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>The US Secretary of Agriculture has appointed Elaine Veyna Bannatyne to the Hass Avocado Board (HAB). HAB works with the agricultural marketing service of the USDA to increase demand for the Hass avocado through promotion, research and information.</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Robert P. Rice Jr. informed us about the passing of Michael Trankina. During his career, Trankina was a nurse manager at Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia. He then became the clinical program coordinator at Cedars-Sinai’s Kidney &amp; Pancreas Transplant Center in Los Angeles. &quot;Michael often visited patients who were alone after hours and on weekends and always made sure that patients did not die alone. Most importantly, he was a loving husband who loved me deeply.&quot;</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Mai Huong Ho-Tran is the lead physical therapist in pain medicine for Kaiser Permanente in Northern California and director of the pain sciences fellowship for Evidence in Motion, a provider of hybrid health care continuing education. Ho-Tran is a loving partner and mom to two adventurous girls. &quot;I credit the Mount for instilling values of hard work with a spirit of service. God’s purpose for me is to empower others with the skills to effectively heal pain.”</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Recently featured in the President's Report as an annual donor in the Brady Leadership Society, Melissa Stolsig notes that the culture of the Mount still influences her work as a clinical psychologist in private practice. Giving back to the Mount gives her joy, knowing that she’s supporting the Mount’s many opportunities for current students.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Elizabeth “Betty” (Robles) Jimenez ’03, ’17 MA, has become a special education teacher after educating herself on dyslexia, a condition her son, Benjamin, was diagnosed with at age five. Her advocacy led Jimenez to a position with Bryson Avenue Elementary after finishing her education credentials.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Sarah Bessel and her husband John welcomed their baby girl, Mariah Teddy Dyer-Bessel, in December 2022.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Lydia (Smith) Martinez reports that her mother, Anita (Montalban) Smith ’69 (shown here), passed away in November 2021.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>From October 2021 through April 2022, Erik Bauer was the consulting archivist for the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. He then became the third archivist and records manager when his predecessor retired and has worked to establish a digital asset management database. He continues to teach remotely at Salem State University.</td>
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Go Athenians!

2009

Linda Ravenswood, poet and performance artist, is the 2022-2023 Edwin Markham Prize in Poetry winner from San Jose State University for Reed Magazine. The selection was made by Juan Felipe Herrera, former US poet laureate. Ravenswood is also the Oxford Prize in Poetry winner for 2022-2023 and the founding editor in chief of The Los Angeles Press.

2010

Nicole (Que) Convento and her husband Jason welcomed their baby boy Lando Thomas on September 3, 2022. Lando weighed in at a healthy 7.2 pounds. He has been well-received by siblings Clara, 7, Marco, 4, and twins Matteo and Bosco, 2.

2017

Leslie Sandoval currently works at St. Anne’s Maternity Home, a nonprofit organization located in Los Angeles. Sandoval works in the short-term residential treatment program as the milieu manager. “I am proud to be part of an organization that supports Los Angeles’ most vulnerable populations and promotes the well-being, safety, resilience and ongoing achievement of the children and families it serves.”

2018

Erica (Cisneros) Rivera completed her MPH degree from USC in May 2022. On October 8, 2022, she married her high school sweetheart, Daniel Rivera, on their 12-year dating anniversary, at Our Lady of Lourdes in Tujunga, California. Erica’s bridesmaids included close friends from the Mount: Lupita Gaytan ‘17, Lizbeth Galvez ‘16, ’20, and Angelica Frias ’19. Also in attendance: Natashaa Mendoza ’22, Helen Alvarez ’16 and Josselyn Varela ’18.

2020

Sloane (Burns) Garcia married Anthony, her best friend, thus achieving her happily ever after on May 7, 2022, in Wilmington, California, with the reception taking place in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Eduardo Marin received a master’s degree in humanities from California State University, Northridge.

2021


2022

Georjina Sandoval is a residential supervisor at the Los Angeles LGBT Center.

2023

Orthopedic and pelvic health physical therapist Katrina Wong had her article recently published that discussed how physical therapy techniques can improve gut health. Her YouTube channel is @wholebodywellnesspt.

After discovering her passion for health equity through MSMU’s GWSTEM program, Georgia Aguilar decided to pursue her master’s in public health policy and law. She graduated summa cum laude from Boston University in December 2022. “I thank MSMU for acting as a catalyst for everything I am doing and striving for today!”
looking back

The Mercy Chapel
stained glass
The Mercy Chapel on the Doheny Campus was dedicated in October 1984, originally with clear glass. Jos Maes, a stained-glass artist whose daughter, Virginia (Maes) Healy ’76 obtained a degree in nursing, donated his designs to the Mount and completed the work over the next few years. Working with Mount President Sister Magdalen Coughlin, CSJ, Maes sought “a visual experience that includes symbolic elements that have foundation in our understanding of the Catholic way of life.”

There are seven different window segments, each with a motif representing the Mount’s relationship with the natural settings around the Doheny Campus or celebrating various ideas or symbols of Catholic faith, such as the role of family and community — the last a nod to the CSJ charism to love the dear neighbor — Easter and the Resurrection, and elements of the Sacraments of Initiation (the Eucharist, confirmation and baptism).

Other links to the Mount can be found in a scene of hospital activity, a tribute to the Mount’s distinguished role in educating nurses and other health professionals, as well as a grouping of five instruments paying homage to the Mount’s long history in liturgical music.

Window 2, which can be seen in almost its entirety below, is dedicated to the Madonna figure enclosed in a golden nimbus and touching additional groupings suggestive of faculty, students and all believers in attitudes of praise and adoration.

The windows are a beautiful addition to this space reserved for reflection, prayer and a celebration of faith.

— Victoria McCargar, retired Mount archivist
Adapted from “Notes and Thoughts on the Stained Glass” by Jos Maes, 1985.
Travel with the Mount

Travel to Le Puy, France, and experience the land of our Founders

Join President Ann McElaney-Johnson’s annual trip to honor and share our connection with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Your days will include guided tours, good food, friends and wine, evening reflections, and plenty of time for exploration.

**WHAT:** Footsteps of our Founders: CSJ Heritage Pilgrimage to France

**WHO:** All members of the Mount Community

**WHEN:** May 29-June 7, 2023

**INFORMATION:** Shannon Green, sgreen@msmu.edu or call 213.477.2712

**REGISTER:** portal.myfaithjourneys.com (group code 23039)