Leadership
A decade of accomplishments while looking toward the future

Progress and support for Wellness Pavilion

Meet our two new vice presidents
I am humbled by this issue’s look back on my first decade here at Mount Saint Mary's University. It has been an incredibly special and blessed time, full of true moments of joy, wonderful relationships and a daily dose of inspiration.

It has been a decade of growth and change, while steadfastly holding on to the mission and values of our founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

As for what I have “accomplished,” I cannot take singular credit for anything listed on these pages. Every success has been due to the collaboration with many other talented, thoughtful and brilliant people, without whom none of these achievements would have been possible. It takes the entire community to see opportunities, to solve problems and to dream big.

As our Centennial approaches in 2025, I am grateful for our bold strategic plan, which will take us one year beyond our 100-year celebration. There are many staff and faculty members spearheading teams dedicated to accomplishing the goals for each of the strategic plan's six themes. The cross-departmental collaboration is essential to the plan’s success and exemplifies how we are all an integral part of this University.

The Mount has two new division vice presidents who will be instrumental in leading some of this work: Dr. Krishauna Hines-Gaither, vice president of equity, diversity and justice, and Susan Dileno, MBA, vice president of enrollment. They have already hit the ground running, and they are both profiled in this issue.

I look forward to the future and what we will accomplish as we expand upon an already stellar educational experience and foundation for our upcoming leaders.

Sincerely,

Ann McElaney-Johnson
A community effort
NEW VP WANTS THE MOUNT TO BE A MODEL FOR OTHERS

A nod to the past, but focused on the future
AFTER A SUCCESSFUL DECADE, MOUNT PRESIDENT FOCUSED ON GROWTH, BUILDING COMMUNITY

Closing in on the goal
MOUNT COMMUNITY VOICES SUPPORT AS WELLNESS PAVILION PROJECT GAINS MOMENTUM

Recruitment and retention
VP FOR ENROLLMENT BRINGS WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHTS FOR FUTURE

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IN HER FIRST DECADE AT THE HELM, ANN MCELANEY-JOHNSON, PHD, HAS PROVEN TO BE AN ENERGETIC, STRATEGIC AND INNOVATIVE LEADER.
Grant to support student veterans

Mount Saint Mary’s University has received a two-year, $200,000 grant from the Carol Moss Foundation to establish an office of veteran and military student services.

The mission of the office will be “to support and advocate for veterans and military-affiliated students while they pursue their intellectual and personal development within an engaging and welcoming environment,” said Linda McMurdock, PhD, vice president of student affairs.

The new office will include a dedicated physical space and virtual, web-based resources staffed by a new veteran and military student services coordinator.

“The Carol Moss Foundation is proud to provide MSMU with the financial support necessary to open and operate a new office of veterans affairs to help these students excel in their university careers,” said Keith Allen-Niesen, director of the Carol Moss Foundation.

The Mount has provided specialized services to veterans for many years, including dedicated financial assistance and student support programs. Our initial support services have been partially funded since 2013 by the Ahmanson Veteran Scholarship Initiative and a gift last fall from the John and Maria Laffin Trust. With this grant, Mount Saint Mary’s will be able to expand and enhance veteran services across our campuses.

National Endowment for the Humanities grant sparks gender and border studies

Mount Saint Mary’s University has been awarded a $150,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to explore “Women at the Los Angeles-Tijuana Border,” an initiative that will give students the opportunity to study and preserve the history and culture of women at the border.

“This is an important opportunity for the Mount to continue to expand our undergraduate research offerings while deepening our commitment to the humanities, the women’s college experience and the internationalization of the University,” said Lia Roberts, PhD, academic director of the Center for Global Initiatives and professor of political science. Roberts will co-direct the project with Stephen Inrig, PhD, professor of history and political science.

Over the next three years, the University will develop a program that includes lectures, research trips to the U.S.-Mexico border region, courses and a new Gender and Border Studies minor. In addition to Roberts and Inrig, Mount faculty participants include Robert Perrins, PhD, provost and academic vice president; Emerald Archer, PhD, associate professor of political science and director of the Center for the Advancement of Women; and Therese Fassnacht, PhD, associate professor of music.

External partners include faculty at Scripps College (California), CETYS Universidad in Mexicali, UABC in Tijuana, and UABC in Ensenada as well as the winemakers at DuoMa Winery in Baja California.
Honoring Bernadette Gonzaque Robert’s legacy

Family, friends and members of the Mount community gathered on November 16 to honor the life and legacy of the late Bernadette (Bernie) Gonzaque Robert ’77 (1957-2021) by dedicating the Center that now bears her name — The Bernadette Gonzaque Robert Center for Equity, Diversity and Justice.

Over her 35-year tenure at the Mount as a student, alumna and leader, Robert’s professional and personal journeys were closely intertwined with the University. In her last position as the associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion, Robert led the creation of the Center in 2016. Her expertise, vision and commitment to social justice were the force that built the foundation and the blueprint to increasingly foster inclusion and diversity across our campuses.

As a friend, mentor and colleague, Robert also touched the lives of people in the community — as evidenced by the many speakers who shared fond memories and anecdotes about her.

“Bernie exemplified the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph, working always to serve all persons without distinction, to bring people together through love,” said President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD, during her opening remarks. “Today, we celebrate her as we take one more step toward fulfilling the vision she created with this community.”

The University’s collective efforts to strengthen equity and inclusion at the Mount are a cornerstone of the strategic plan for 2021-2026. “We commit to our dear friend and our guardian angel to continue the work she started with us,” added McElaney-Johnson, “to live and work as an antiracist University fueled by the power of unifying love called for by our founders.”
Bringing Laudato Si to campus

Inspired by Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home,” Mount Saint Mary’s has joined other Catholic educational institutions worldwide in creating action plans to better care for the planet and, consequently, ourselves.

“We see this as part of our mission as a Catholic university,” says President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD. “It really is a moral imperative to engage in this work. It certainly will build on our commitment to sustainability and social justice and it will help us be more intentional.”

The Mount will pursue various initiatives on campus, such as reducing waste and installing more ecologically friendly systems. Also, next fall will see the launch of a new, cross disciplinary environmental studies major with the flexibility to tackle issues via science, law, media and policy.

Everyone is affected by the environment, but people from vulnerable communities are less able to move away from manufacturing site-created pollution, carry adequate insurance to rebuild after natural disasters or pay medical costs associated with, for example, poor air quality.

A team of student and faculty researchers led by Adriane Jones, PhD, associate professor of biology, is one example of the Mount’s involvement in a community initiative that fulfills the goals of Laudato Si. The group equipped the small Los Angeles County city of Cudahy with low-cost, portable air sensors. The goal of the project was for residents to better understand the risks to their cardiopulmonary systems.

Dean of nursing becomes Academy fellow

Last fall, Leah FitzGerald, PhD, FNP-BC, FAAN, dean of nursing and the Fletcher Jones Endowed Chair in Community Partnerships, became a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. Fellows are selected based on their contributions and impact to advance the public’s health.

The academy recognizes nursing’s most accomplished leaders in policy, research, practice, administration and academia. The Class of 2021 fellows is comprised of 225 individuals representing 38 states, the District of Columbia and 18 countries.

“I am deeply honored to receive this prestigious recognition and look forward to working with colleagues to make a difference in the health and life of those we serve,” said FitzGerald.

FitzGerald has been a registered nurse for 40 years, maintains national certification as a family nurse practitioner and continues to do research, contributing articles to peer-reviewed journals.

“I am thrilled for this important fellowship that recognizes Dr. FitzGerald’s long service as a leader in her field. I am excited to see how her expertise and contributions will advance health care and make an impact in the community,” said Robert Perrins, PhD, provost and academic vice president.
A lifetime of service recognized

Sigma Honorees

Sister Callista Roy, CSJ, ’63, PhD, FAAN, professor emeritus of nursing, was honored with the Nell J. Watts Lifetime Achievement in Nursing by the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing for her extensive contributions to nursing scholarship spanning more than 50 years of service.

“When Sister Callista's name was announced at the STTI conference, the entire audience stood in celebration and recognition of her achievement,” says Leah FitzGerald, PhD, FNP-BC, FAAN, nursing dean and the Fletcher Jones Endowed Chair. “Her contribution of the Roy Adaptation Model not only touches the lives of Mount grads but extends across the world and makes a difference in the lives of patients, families and communities.”

She never imagined the impact that her adaptation model, which calls for treating patients as complex human beings with ever-changing biological, psychological, social and spiritual needs, would have on nursing. She spent her career developing the framework that looks at people’s ability to deal with changes in the environment.

Our nursing program is based on this model and is our mark of distinction. It allows our nursing program to be fully situated in the liberal arts.

As for the lifetime achievement award, Roy says that her career has been “a great experience and I appreciate the award very much. But I think that lifetime achievement applies to a lot of people I know, so I represent all of them.”

The power of prayer

“Holding Still" is a fascinating documentary showcasing how centering prayer helped current and former incarcerated inmates from Folsom Prison transform their trauma and shame into a liberating and healing experience.

Mary Trunk, assistant professor in the film department, directed the film, with help from several Mount connections: Roman Zenz, cinematographer and film department equipment manager; Lea Smith ’23, production assistant; Lucky Atkare ’19 MFA, additional camera, sound; and Lilit Manukyan ’19, production assistant.

“We decided we wanted to make a film that really highlighted the vulnerability and the way these men practice this,” says Trunk. “We wanted to make sure that it was the men talking, and not necessarily the facilitators. They’re the ones who have had the transformation. The film is a way for the general public to have access to the prayer circle in a way that isn’t intimidating or preachy, but more emotional and inviting.”

Ultimately, Trunk hopes that this film builds that human connection with its viewers and shows that everyone deserves a second chance at life, love and forgiveness.

NOTE: You can find the movie, followed by a panel discussion, on YouTube.com under “Holding Still movie.” The panel features Trunk, several of the former inmates from the film, and Ray Leonardini, who founded the centering prayer practice for inmates.
Krishauna Hines-Gaither, PhD, joined the Mount in January as the inaugural vice president for equity, diversity and justice. As a nationally recognized diversity educator and leader, Hines-Gaither is focused on establishing the Mount as a model for antiracist teaching and learning. “I’m building on a legacy where amazing things have already happened at the Mount,” explained Hines-Gaither. “I want to tell our story and set a standard for other EDJ centers throughout the nation.”

Hines-Gaither is a prolific and much sought-after writer and speaker on antiracist language and diversity topics. She recently contributed two articles to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages’ winter magazine, which focused on antiracism, and is under contract as a co-author of “The Antiracist World Language Classroom” from Routledge Press.

Hines-Gaither will drive efforts to further strengthen equity and inclusion within the University. “I want broad-based engagement and to build networks of support throughout the campus. Our work is dependent on the support of every Athenian,” said Hines-Gaither.

Before joining Mount Saint Mary’s, Hines-Gaither served as the interim vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion and the director of the Intercultural Engagement Center at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Earlier, she served as the inaugural director of diversity and inclusiveness at Salem College, a women’s college in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Before transitioning into college administration, Hines-Gaither was a Spanish professor.

Hines-Gaither looks forward to working in close collaboration with students, faculty and staff at the Mount. “Let’s do this together. Let’s be unstoppable, together.”
PRESIDENT
ANN MCELANEY-JOHNSON

A DECADE LEADING THE MOUNT FORWARD

Spring 2022 Mount Magazine 7
TEN YEARS AGO, President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD, gave her inaugural address as the 12th president of Mount St. Mary’s College. “At Mount St. Mary’s, we have the courage to both imagine and then build our future,” she said.

Since she arrived, President McElaney-Johnson has been an unstoppable force that has built upon the Mount’s legacy with a long list of achievements and milestones. Yet, she says enthusiastically, “I feel like we are just warming up!”

Over the last decade, she has led with passion, determination and a collaborative style that has propelled the Mount community to dream big and build a strong foundation as the University embarks on its next century of educating and developing global leaders. And despite the challenges of the past two years, marked by the Getty Fire in the fall of 2019 and the current COVID-19 pandemic, President McElaney-Johnson’s optimistic and forward-thinking attitude has guided the Mount to continue to foster a community of excellence and care during the most unpredictable times of the University’s history.

Originally from Boston, “President Ann” (as students affectionately call her) never thought she would become the president of a university one day. But she always knew that education was her passion. Educating and empowering students to reach their full potential has been her career mission for more than four decades.

As a strong advocate for gender equity and women’s advancement, President McElaney-Johnson led the creation of The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™ in her first year as president of the Mount. A groundbreaking report, the annual editions remain the most authoritative collection of research on issues affecting the 20 million women and girls in California. In the last 10 years, the Report has helped inform public policy decisions and nonprofit funding priorities statewide.

Ultimately, the Report’s success led to the creation of the Center for the Advancement of Women in 2017, which has become one of the most dynamic hubs in the nation for intersectional gender equity research, advocacy and leadership development.

President McElaney-Johnson also spearheaded the transition from college to university in 2015 and launched the Mount’s first comprehensive marketing campaign to bring greater visibility and awareness to the University. Under her leadership, Mount Saint Mary’s expanded its Weekend/Evening & Online College and its graduate programs, including a PsyD in clinical psychology, an MFA in creative writing, an MFA in film and television, and an MS in health care policy and administration, among others. In the last decade, the

ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

**JULY 2011**
Ann McElaney-Johnson became the 12th president of Mount St. Mary’s College.

**MARCH 2012**
The Mount released The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™, the most comprehensive analysis of women and girls in the state.

**SEPTEMBER 2012**
The University expanded its annual Women’s Leadership Conference to include alumnae and members of the public to advance leadership skills of women at all career levels.
University has also launched four other new centers of research and academic innovation that have elevated the Mount’s presence at the national and international level.

Another hallmark of her presidency has been the focus on wellness and the creation of the Wellness Movement in 2016. “I adamantly believe in personal wellness, and that involves body, mind and spirit,” President McElaney-Johnson says. “In order to help our students develop as strong leaders, we need to pay attention to their wellness and health. I’m very proud of the Wellness Movement, which is still expanding and changing students’ lives. I’m excited to see how it continues to evolve.”

A thought champion for college equity and access, the president is also involved in several organizations that work to advance education policy at the national and state level. She is the current board chair of the Women’s College Coalition, serves on the board of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and is the first vice chair of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities’ executive committee, among other associations. “I believe that Mount Saint Mary’s and institutions like us need to have a seat at these tables, and we need to help drive policy in Washington, DC and Sacramento,” she says.

For the last three years, the University has housed the Women’s College Coalition’s headquarters on campus and President McElaney-Johnson has been championing the efforts to promote federal support for women’s colleges across the nation. She believes in the essentiality of women’s colleges and the important role that they continue to play in higher education.

Most recently, the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, developed by a collaborative effort from the Mount community, sets the path forward for the next five years. “I’m very proud of how this community came together in the middle of the pandemic and created this forward-thinking, ambitious and bold plan,” says the president. Among other themes and priorities, the plan outlines the University’s commitment to becoming an antiracist institution.

As she looks to the future with optimism, her vision continues to be guided by the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet — to respond to the needs of the times. “I want us to keep asking how we are going to respond to the different needs of our students and the generations to come,” says President McElaney-Johnson. “During this pandemic, we showed that this community can come together on a moment’s notice to respond to the needs of our students.”

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**PRESIDENCY HIGHLIGHTS**

- **5 new centers of academic research and innovation established.**
- **13 new undergraduate and 7 new graduate programs created as well as 26 new certificate programs.**
- **Led the most successful fundraising campaign in the Mount’s history, securing $135M in donations.**
- Among many other accolades, Mount Saint Mary’s has ranked #1 in overall social mobility from The New York Times and U.S. News & World Report for the western region.
JANUARY 2016
CSJ Institute was established to educate the Mount community and the world at large about the history, legacy and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

SEPTEMBER 2016
Mount Wellness Movement was launched to provide resources, programs and support services for the Mount community to achieve optimal physical and mental health.

SPRING 2017
Center for the Advancement of Women was established to provide a hub for gender equity research, advocacy and leadership development.

MARCH 2015
Mount Saint Mary’s produced the City of Los Angeles Report on the Status of Women, the first gender research of its kind for a city in the United States.

SUMMER 2015
Center for Global Initiatives was launched to provide cultural fluency and global experiences for students.

JANUARY 2016
CSJ Institute was established to educate the Mount community and the world at large about the history, legacy and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph.
"Ann’s extraordinary and visionary leadership has seen the school through a fire and pandemic, has resulted in a campaign that has raised over $130M and hired a talented team of administrators. We are blessed.”

DEBORAH E. REED, CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"President Ann finds these amazing ways to personalize the time that you share with her. Her constant reassurance and nurturing throughout my academic journey have fueled my passion for the Mount.”

ERIKA MCKISSICK ’22
SGA PRESIDENT

"Ann embodies the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and is someone who consistently inspires those around her through her commitment to the Mount, to its mission and above all to its students.”

ROBERT PERRINS, PHD, PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

"Ann McElaney-Johnson is a dedicated, compassionate and collaborative leader who led us with determination and optimism through a historic fundraising campaign and during very challenging times for not only our community but the entire world.”

THOMAS J. BLUMENTHAL, MEMBER AND FORMER CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"Ann leads by example and has been an incredible mentor to me; I’ve learned so much from simply being at the table with her during important and delicate conversations.”

EMERALD ARCHER, PHD, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

"President McElaney-Johnson’s leadership has shifted the Mount from being a small women’s college to a prestigious university that is a national and global leader for the advancement and upward mobility of women.”

SONALI PERERA BRIDGES ’98

"Ann’s leadership has solidified the Mount as a place where women are educated to become all they are capable of being. She honors and respects the role of faculty with her collaborative approach, which empowers all of us to make the Mount all it can be.”

HELEN BOUTROUS, JD, PHD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND PRE-LAW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

"Over the last 10 years, I’ve had the opportunity to watch Mount Saint Mary’s University thrive under her direction. She is fierce, dedicated and truly unstoppable!”

VALECIA ADAMS KELLUM, PHD, MSMU TRUSTEE AND PRESIDENT & CEO OF ST. JOSEPH CENTER

"Ann McElaney-Johnson is a tireless champion for equity and access with an incredible work ethic and deep sense of purpose to improve lives and communities through education.”

KRISTEN SOARES, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

"Ten years ago, President Ann McElaney-Johnson brought her own unstoppable spirit to the Mount. With unflagging belief in the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, she has led the university decisively, with integrity and with irrepressible enthusiasm.”

JUDITH R. MCDONALD, TRUSTEE EMERITA AND CHAIR OF THE UNSTOPPABLE CAMPAIGN CABINET

NOVEMBER 2017
The Unstoppable Campaign for Mount Saint Mary’s kicked off the largest comprehensive fundraising effort in Mount history. The $100M goal was surpassed by $32M.

SEPTEMBER 2019
The Women’s College Coalition, the leading advocate for women’s colleges and universities in North America, moved its headquarters to the Doheny Campus. President McElaney-Johnson serves as the board chair.

SPRING 2021
The 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, “Educating Global Leaders for the Next Century,” outlined the University’s priorities and goals through the Centennial in 2025.

NOVEMBER 2021
The Bernadette Gonzaque Robert Center for Equity, Diversity and Justice was renamed to honor the vision and legacy of the Mount’s first director of the Center for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that was established in 2017.

JANUARY 2022
Launch of new Cabinet position for a vice president for diversity, equity and justice.
Mount community voices support for Wellness Pavilion

Ever since a 2016-2017 wellness needs assessment of students found that two-thirds viewed themselves as unhealthy, the University launched a multi-pronged effort to reverse that statistic, from farmers markets to innovative, educational programs. The biggest hurdle to overcome has been the lack of a facility to support our students’ pursuits of a healthier lifestyle.
FROM THE TIME OF ITS EARLIEST PLANNING STAGES, the Wellness Pavilion at the Chalon Campus was the embodiment of the Mount’s emphasis on building lifelong habits to support both mental and physical health within its community.

The Unstoppable Campaign for Mount Saint Mary’s, which concluded at the end of 2020, raised 83% of the $35 million goal for the Pavilion, and efforts have continued to close the funding gap. In addition, the approval process with the city of Los Angeles is gaining momentum, and support has become increasingly vocal among Athenians and friends of the community. Last year, the Mount participated in the first two of four public hearings with the city. We received unprecedented, unanimous support for the Wellness Pavilion from the city’s planning commissioners following the second hearing.

A helping hand, a little guidance

Everyone knows that equilibrium is important to health, but it’s not always easy to ignore the lure of yummy-but-not-good-for-you foods and to be active consistently. Throw busy schedules and the corresponding stress and lack of sleep into the equation, and it’s all too easy to get off track, even for health-savvy individuals.

“It is easier than ever to get misinformation about health and wellness from the internet and social media,” said Alison Halpern, RD, CHES, associate director of wellness. “The Wellness Pavilion will be a place our students can go for reputable, inclusive and accurate wellness education from professional staff and trained student health educators.”

Here’s where Peer Wellness Advocates can help. Our nationally recognized program uses trained student mentors to work one-on-one with student clients and guide them to pursue attainable, well-rounded wellness goals centered around the four tenets of our Wellness Movement: Move More, De-Stress, Eat Green and Sleep Well.

“It is our duty to help our students get and remain healthy, especially since 60% of our students enter health care fields,” said President Ann McElaney-Johnson, PhD. “They need to be healthy in order to keep our community healthy, and they need to be our role models.”

Our PWAs are comprised of students majoring in health-related fields. By giving them the tools early to become confident educators of their peers, the University is setting them on a path to becoming role models within their communities and for their future patients. In this way, the ripple effect of our wellness initiatives is guaranteed to be very wide reaching.

The Wellness Pavilion will have dedicated spaces for students in the doctoral physical therapy program to work as well as areas for PWAs to meet with their student clients to discuss various topics and to go over individualized wellness plans and discuss what’s working and what needs revisiting.

Students are equally enthusiastic about the learning opportunities the new center will provide. “I believe this project should be supported,” Erika McKissick ’22, student body president, told the commissioners at a public hearing. “At this moment, we are limited in the opportunities that we can provide students surrounding health and wellness. MSMU changes lives, and it wouldn’t bring you this expansive project if it wasn’t needed.”
At the core: a complete gym
The Mount's current fitness facility isn't big enough for more than a few students to benefit from it at any given time. “I oversee the current facility, and it is painfully inadequate,” said Mark Spellmire, director of sports, recreation and wellness. “On a daily basis, we have to turn away students because our facility has reached the capacity of six people inside the fitness room. Our students deserve and need a newer and updated gym.”

Students feel the strain of the current facility. “As a student-athlete, I use exercise as a way to relieve stress,” said Angelica Martinez ’23, a biochemistry major. “What we have currently is a very small trailer, and there’s only three treadmills.”

The Pavilion will feature a state-of-the-art gym, basketball and volleyball courts, exercise/dance studios and a pool.

The link to mental health
The 2020 census results revealed that more than half of 18- to 29-year-olds showed significant symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Karlie Intlekofer, PhD, a neuroscientist and global wellness researcher for Matrix Fitness, spoke to the Los Angeles City Planning Commission in support of the Mount's Wellness Pavilion. “A wellness center can enhance and protect mental health, as demonstrated by decades of research,” she said. “Mount Saint Mary's wellness center can empower students to develop these healthier stress-coping skills and to stem the rising tide of mental health issues in this most vulnerable population.”

Trustee Joan Otomo-Corgel, DDS, periodontist and clinical associate professor at UCLA School of Dentistry, also mentioned the correlation. “Mental health is a benefit of physical health,” she said. “We want Mount graduates to thrive. This project is a great fit for those who truly care for the overall well-being of our students. The Wellness Pavilion has the potential to impact myriad people in ways we don’t even know yet.”

Acknowledging the relationship between mental and physical health, Linda McMurdock, PhD, vice president of student affairs, is expanding programming of the Wellness Movement. Food insecurity, disease prevention, drug and alcohol abuse, and gender-based violence prevention are new areas where education will be provided and solution-based programs developed under the Wellness Movement initiative. This holistic approach is a hallmark of the Mount’s broad-reaching perspective on what constitutes optimal health.

An equity issue
“For fitness to become a lifestyle, it has to be accessible and affordable,” said Elvia (Cabral) Cowan ’94. “If the Pavilion was available for Mount students and part of their routine and life, they could build a lifelong habit of wellness, health and exercise. This is a wonderful opportunity. There weren’t a lot of fitness opportunities available when I was a student.”

“[I’m a big believer in offering great places and great spaces to people as an equity issue,” said Planning Commissioner Jenna Hornstock. “These young women deserve a beautiful, wonderful facility to use that lifts them up and makes them want to take care of themselves. And these are also the women that are going to take care of us and our families as we age.”

The Wellness Pavilion will, at long last, be providing the Mount with facilities that are on par with that found at other universities.
A place to call their own

“I learned a lot in the classroom, but outside the classroom, I made lifelong friends,” said Rhea de Guzman ’06. “This center is about building community and learning how to have balance in life. It is also a place to gather, especially for commuters who might have a big gap between their classes. It supports the CSJ’s belief in caring for the whole person.”

Although the Los Angeles planning commissioners were supportive of all the initiatives that the Mount has created as part of the Wellness Movement, they were most behind the basic, boiled down concept of having the space to flourish. “This project is about giving women who are seeking higher education, many of which are first in their family to go to school … the space that they need to thrive on a school campus,” said Commissioner Yvette Lopez-Ledesma.

Investing for the future

Investing in students today will impact generations to come. “It’s critical for women to have access to health and wellness facilities,” said Cowan. “If we want to lift other generations up, we must support the Pavilion.”

The Wellness Pavilion has motivated many new donors who see the continued improvement of the University as elevating the value and reputation of their own degrees. “My donation to the Wellness Pavilion is the first time I made a gift to the Mount, and it made me feel good that future students will benefit from the facility and the Wellness Movement,” said de Guzman. “If they learn to have balance in their lives in college, it will be easier to keep that in place as they transition to the working world.”

There’s less than $6 million to go to reach the $35 million fundraising goal for the Pavilion. Contact Stephanie Cubba (scubba@msmu.edu), vice president of institutional advancement, for information on ways to invest in the Wellness Movement and support the Wellness Pavilion, including naming opportunities.

With your assistance, this long-fought-for dream will become a reality.

“My donation to the Wellness Pavilion is the first time I made a gift to the Mount, and it made me feel good that future students will benefit from the facility and the Wellness Movement. If they learn to have balance in their lives in college, it will be easier to keep that in place as they transition to the working world.”

– RHEA DE GUZMAN ‘06

“I have been a stalwart supporter and donor to the Wellness Pavilion, and I think it’s crucial. If you valued the education that you received at the Mount, won’t you contribute to its ongoing success?”

– DIANNE SCHAUTSCHICK ‘65
Susan Dileno, MBA, the new vice president of enrollment at Mount Saint Mary’s University, has worked in admissions and enrollment management for more than three decades. Dileno comes to the Mount from Ursuline College in Cleveland. The similarities between Ursuline, a women’s college founded by sisters, and the Mount is what attracted Dileno to make the move to Los Angeles.

“I felt a strong sense of familiarity when examining the Mount as my next opportunity,” says Dileno. “There are parallels in the institutions’ missions, the emphasis on women’s leadership and the passion of faculty and staff for the wellness and advancement of their students and alumnae. Thus, I was confident that I could come here and positively impact the University in its enrollment goals.”

Dileno’s educational background, both as a student and in her career, have centered around New York and Ohio. She obtained a bachelor’s degree from Niagara University in Lewiston, New York, and an MBA at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

Dileno praises the Mount’s leadership, faculty and staff and feels privileged to join them and be part of the University’s success. Her admiration is extended to the students: “They are living up to their unstoppable moniker,” she says. “These women are talented and blossoming into their own,” she says. “My team and I are actively communicating their successes and recruiting the next classes of students to continue in the Mount’s tradition of becoming well prepared, compassionate leaders.”
Visiting Fulbright professor seeks a deeper understanding of human nature — and the rest is history

Thanks to a Fulbright scholarship, Eliud Biegon, PhD, arrived at Mount Saint Mary’s last August to teach various history courses on Africa as well as a course in Swahili, one of Kenya’s official languages.

A professor at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, Biegon traces his love of history to his grandparents. “In my rural village, I would have long conversations with my grandfather about the past, and I found them fascinating,” he recalls. “I also read the daily newspaper to my illiterate grandmother. They sparked my interest in the history of communities and my country.”

From his grandfather, he learned of a violent conflict between two ethnic groups that took place in his village during Kenya’s transition to independence. His family’s home was raided and burned, and his grandparents were forced to flee.

Dissatisfied with the explanations of violence between these once-friendly communities, Biegon studied history in earnest, culminating in his PhD from Selwyn College in Cambridge, UK. His thesis focused on the history of the Terik, one of the minority ethnic groups involved in the conflict.

Biegon’s students engage in lively classroom debates. He enjoys getting to know and meet with each student individually — a near impossibility in his homeland where class sizes average 400 to 500 students.

He is also writing a book about the conflict that first sparked his interest in Western Kenya’s colonial history. “Hopefully this book will provide clarity about the context of the conflict, the communities involved and the driving forces during that period,” he says. “The Mount has given me the gift of a quiet and inspiring environment to write my first book and reflect on where I would like to head with my teaching and research.”

“Historians are interested in how people behave in contexts that are different from their own. If students can move toward understanding other societies, they will in turn be richer for it.”
The nursing department has two new interim directors: Lauren Fujihara, MN, RN, CNOR, CNS, now oversees TBSN, and Kyle Renick is in charge of clinical placement.

Professor Yuliana Garcia ’08, ’11 MA, currently pursuing a PhD in human development and psychology at UCLA, was an author on “Beyond undocumented: Differences in the mental health of Latinx undocumented college students” in Latino Studies. Her research interests include risk and resilience factors that influence the educational attainment for minority youth.

Sande Harte, PhD, coordinator for the sociology department’s criminology major, gave a virtual presentation to the “Yes, We Must” coalition, a consortium of universities looking to create a more social justice-centered criminal justice system and advocacy programs. Harte outlined how the Mount’s criminology major has a foundation of CSJ social justice and the United Nation’s universal declaration of human rights.

Assistant professor Tony Macaraeg completed a study focusing on reducing catheter-associated urinary tract infections in elderly patients in long-term acute care. Fellow assistant professor Keirstin Uomoto ’08 BSN focused her work on implementing a routine depression screening into primary care specifically for older adults. They both recently received their DNPs from Grand Canyon University.


Lequina Myles, MBA, business administration faculty member, was the monthly program speaker last fall at a SDRAN (San Diego Regulatory Affairs Network) meeting. Her presentation was “Clinical Supply Chain Management: Dude, Where’s My Patient Benefit?” Myles is also the senior director of quality assurance and regulatory affairs for Phenomenex.

The Tennessean published an opinion piece, “How to hold a conversation about advancing racial truth and reconciliation,” coauthored by education professor Shelly Tochluk, PhD.

Four professors (clockwise from top left), Carol Johnston, PhD, education department chair; Afsane Arvand, PhD, biological sciences associate professor; Paul Lee, PhD, assistant professor, physical sciences; and Julia Tang, MSW, PhD psychology associate professor, co-authored “Attracting and retaining Latina women in an undergraduate biology program: Benefits of NFS S-STEM Support” in Journal of STEM Education.
ALUM

Hana (Nazih) Abuershaid ’06, MD, was recently the featured physician on YorkPedia.com. A biology/biological sciences major at the Mount, Abuershaid is a hospitalist — a physician who treats only hospital patients rather than having an individual practice or specialty — at Hoag Hospital in Irvine. Abuershaid and other hospitalists are seen as a key component to Hoag’s ability to provide the personalized care it strives to be known for.

Jennifer Cooper ’18 MBA, teamed with Evan Baker to make “Charlotte on the Rebound,” a finalist in the Best Student Film category in the Vancouver Independent Film Festival.

Currently pursuing a PhD at UC Santa Barbara, Celeste Tobar ’19 was an author of an article, “Solid-state MAS NMR at ultra low temperature of hydrated alanine doped with DNP radicals” in Journal of Magnetic Resonance.

Helen Umana ’21 met her mentor, an area president of Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., a global insurance brokerage, while participating in a week-long GenHERation Connection event through the Mount’s Career and Professional Development and Women’s Leadership departments. Today, Umana is a client representative for Gallagher, working under her mentor.

STUDENTS

Creative writing major Salma Alejo ‘23 recently had a poem on finding hope between love and loss published online by brave voices magazine. She also enjoys creating digital art.

Kim Kha ‘22 won the best poster award for work completed during her summer research program at UCLA’s Samueli School of Engineering. “Our lab investigated the advancement of bioelectronics sensors into a wearable platform for more accurate, efficient, and continuous measurement of multiple biodatas, thus yielding the possibility for commercial personalized medicine in patients. Such biodata includes chemical concentrations that can determine some underlying conditions.” Such conditions include diabetes and the monitoring of drug use, such as in patients being treated for bipolar disorder.

Journalism major Michelle Leon ’22 won an Emmy for directing “Under the Scarf,” part of the Girls Voices Now series. Leon is also pursuing a film, media and social justice minor and has been a student worker for the Mount’s communications department this year.

The music playing/composing sisters shared their so-called exZuberant news: Kaitlin Webster-Zuber ’22 and Emily Webster-Zuber ’24 placed first in the Marker & Pioneer international competition in the chamber music duet category for ages 18 to 25. The sisters performed Igor Stravinski’s “The Rite of Spring” for two pianos.

Kim Kha ’22 and Emily Webster-Zuber ’24
There’s a hidden jewel in the Mount’s academic offerings: it’s GIS, or geographic information systems. But what is it, exactly? Think of GIS as creating data maps using technology. GIS is a jewel because a growing number of industries need people with these mapping skills. And although the program for these tech skills is relatively unknown, the Mount has the second-highest percentage of students with a background in GIS of all universities in Southern California.

Some examples of its use: Police take cell phone data to track a criminal’s whereabouts. The California Coastal Commission mapped our state’s wetlands. Community demographic data — how far people travel to work and the number of 911 calls made, for example — help state and city governments allocate resources for services such as public transportation and the number of fire departments.

The GIS program at the Mount began in 2014 with Title V funds. “It’s a very white, male-dominated field,” says professor Patrick Kahn, MA. “I’m happy to tip the scales, to make it more inviting to women and traditionally underserved students.”

According to Kahn, “having a minor in GIS makes a wide array of jobs available that people wouldn’t be qualified for otherwise.” Also, geospatial technology is one of 14 sectors identified by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration that is projected to add substantial numbers of new jobs, affect the growth of various industries and require new skill sets for workers.

The biggest challenge is introducing students to GIS. Kahn works closely with colleagues in criminology, sociology, biological sciences and computer science to include GIS as a component in three or four of their assignments each semester. He usually gets some “transfers” as a result. Currently, students can major in geospatial criminology or minor in GIS; there are plans for a GIS certificate program to launch in fall 2022.

Khan had a recent moment of joy: for the first time, a first-year entered the University with the intent of declaring geospatial criminology as a major. One giant step forward for a Mount program putting women into the forefront of tech-based data mapping.
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A lifetime of service

Janet (Wolff) Maulhardt ’69 and her husband Richard (Dick) began last year’s holidays by being honored by Catholic Charities of Ventura County for decades of service to both their parish church and Catholic Charities.

Leadership and service are traits that Maulhardt says she learned at Mount Saint Mary’s, where the sisters’ charism and the University’s mission of leadership and serving others influences all aspects of students’ lives. “I did lots of work in student government,” she says, “and ‘caring for the dear neighbor’ was something I heard throughout college.”

“I’m so happy Catholic Charities honored both Dick and me,” says Maulhardt. “Dick has been a true partner throughout all of this work — and in my life.” In addition to volunteering with Catholic Charities, the Maulhardts are also members of the Mount’s Regent’s Council. Giving back to the Mount comes easily for them. “I am so thankful for my education and for the sisters and all they did to help me.”

Working Mount nurses: Apply now for a new grant

The Lulu Nurse Cindy Bland Memorial Foundation invites MSMU nursing program alumnae who are working in the profession to apply for 2022 Lulu Nurse Grants. With the generous donations Lulu Nurse has received, this year the foundation will award five grants of $2,000 each to deserving working graduates of Mount Saint Mary’s nursing program. The foundation’s intent is to increase the size and number of these grants in the future.

The foundation was established to honor the memory of Cindy Bland ’08 ADN. Over her 10-year nursing career, she worked as a dedicated labor and delivery nurse in California and Washington. A video tribute to her work lives on the foundation’s website (lulunurse.org).

Bland was a healthy person who ate well and exercised regularly, but often put the care of her patients, family and friends before herself. Despite her efforts to live a healthy life, she was tragically diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer in June 2018. Eleven months later, after a hard-fought battle, she lost her life at the age of 38.

To continue Bland’s legacy of caring and keep her memory alive, her family founded Lulu Nurse in June 2020 to inspire the nursing community to make positive lifestyle choices to prevent illness and improve societal health and wellness.

MSMU nursing program alumnae working in the nursing field are invited to apply for a grant by April 15, 2022. The application is available at alums.msmu.edu/lulu.
New mentoring programs

Professional mentorship is undeniably one of the most effective tools to enhance self-knowledge, gain a deeper understanding of the job market and accelerate professional development. In February, the Business Administration Mentoring Program launched on Mount Connect. When business alumnae and students joined the Spring 2022 mentoring group on Mount Connect, they were matched with one another based on their academic and professional interests. The three-month-long program includes monthly milestones for the mentors and mentees to connect and discuss.

Brittany Skiles, manager of alumnae relations, said, “We are excited to provide our students with the tools to build their professional network before they graduate, and I am grateful for our alumnae who take the time to help our students.” Alumnae Relations provided mentoring guides and online resources to support the mentors and mentees throughout the program. The Black Alumnae Association is also hosting a mentoring program on Mount Connect from March to May.

Anyone interested in getting a mentor need not wait for more group sessions to be launched. The Mount Connect platform will automatically recommend connections based on professional interests for anyone with a profile in its network. When alumnae log in and indicate they are seeking help from others, potential mentor recommendations with the highest percentage match will display on the “Find a Mentor” section. Alumnae can then make a connection directly through the platform to request whatever career-related advice they need.

Jenna Payan ’05, a board member of the Alumnae Association, is an active user of Mount Connect. “I think this is a wonderful vehicle for students to seek advice from connections within the Mount community as they navigate their first jobs,” she said. “It’s also useful for someone mid-career to have the opportunity to both help others coming up behind them and to develop their own mentors as they work to ascend to the top of their industries. I signed up early and am watching the numbers of users grow. The platform’s effectiveness will continue to expand as more people join and become active participants.”

Alumnae Relations will host formal mentoring programs with additional groups in the fall. All alumnae and students can sign up at any time for Mount Connect at mountconnect.com to build their individual networks.

Free resources for your personal and professional development

A wide variety of resources are available to the entire Mount community. Check out the following:

alumlc.org/msmu

- WEBINARS
  1-hour sessions, live and on demand
- WORKSHOPS
  2- to 3-hour live sessions
Featuring career experts and best-selling authors. Topics include leadership, work-life balance and communications.

alumlc.org/msmu/library

- RESOURCE LIBRARY
- ARTICLES
- PODCASTS
- VIDEOS
- BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS
Featuring professional development, career advancement, and health and wellness.
Sister Teresa Marie McIntier, CSJ, ’45
(1923-2021)

Sister Teresa Marie McIntier graduated from the Mount in 1945. An RN, McIntier ministered in hospitals sponsored by the CSJs, serving in a variety of roles. McIntier taught in the Mount’s nursing department from 1972-1976. She was a pioneer in the hospice field in Arizona and a friend of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, MD, the famous psychiatrist who developed the model of the five stages of grief and who championed the hospice and palliative care movements. While serving as pastoral associate in Phoenix, Arizona, McIntier co-authored “Will You Hold My Hand and Let Me Die,” to be used by volunteers aiding the terminally ill. She had a special interest in working with children who were dying and ministering to their parents. Friends and associates note that her loving presence was paired with a superlative sense of humor.

Sister Regina Clare Salazar, CSJ, ’51
(1928-2021)

Born in New Mexico and raised in Los Angeles, Sister Regina Clare Salazar, CSJ, ’51, PhD, entered the CSJs in 1946 and graduated from the Mount with a math degree. As a faculty member in the Mount’s education department, she established a program at the future Doheny Campus that allowed sisters who were teaching in downtown LA to take evening and weekend classes — a forerunner of Weekend/Evening & Online courses.

Dulce Maria Iglesia Martinez ’73
(1925-2021)

Born in Cuba in 1925, Dulce María Iglesia Martínez ’73, EdD, was part of a U.S. State Department program under President John F. Kennedy that enabled academics, scientists and journalists who had fled the Communist regime in Cuba to work in the United States. A group of 60 refugees nicknamed “Treinta-Treinta” (30-30) was placed at two American colleges in 1965, one of which was Mount Saint Mary’s. They were seasoned educators but lacked the English skills and credentials that would allow them to teach in California. The Mount provided immersive English classes, an accelerated certification program through a decade-run Cuban Teacher Training Institute in cooperation with the state Department of Education and helped place the graduates in parochial and public schools. Martínez returned to her profession and became a much-loved principal.

Remembrances

Sister Marion Donohue, CSJ, ’58
(1925-2021)

Sister Marion Donohue was born in San Francisco. She joined the CSJ community in September 1943 and attended the Mount as an education major. She was recruited to join the new science advancement program at Stanford University, where she received a master’s. Donohue taught chemistry at the Mount from 1964 to 1967 and returned in 1971 to serve three years on the Board of Trustees. In her later years, Donohue co-founded the Family Law Center in Oakland with Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, ’69. The center is dedicated to assisting those who need help navigating their way through the legal system. She became a devoted, well-respected court-appointed conservator for many East Bay residents.

James (Jim) Flanigan (1936-2021)

A Mount trustee from 1999 to 2010, James Flanigan was born in the Bronx, New York, and graduated from Manhattan College after a two-year stint in the Army. In 1963, he began his journalism career at the Herald Tribune, eventually becoming a business reporter. Flanigan moved to the Los Angeles Times in the mid-1960s. Unlike many business reporters who focus primarily on corporate activity, Flanigan examined economic impacts on society and policy. Two of his main areas of focus: education and immigration. Forty years ago, Flanigan noted that the wealth gap in America was widening and advocated for increased support of education “to keep us a society with opportunity for all.” A child of immigrants, he saw education as the means to elevate one’s socioeconomic position.

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College. When MSMU opened the Doheny Campus in 1962, Salazar served in senior administrative posts and taught in the education department on both campuses. She later served as chief executive of Daniel Freeman Hospital in Inglewood and president of Carondelet Health Care. At the time of her death, she was a director in the CSJ’s Holy Family Community.

Sister Margaret Anne Vonderahe, CSJ, ’58 (1932-2021)

The oldest of three siblings, Sister Margaret Anne Vonderahe, CSJ, was born in Torrance. After graduating from St. Mary’s Academy in 1950, she enrolled at the Mount and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in March 1951. She completed her bachelor’s degree from the Mount in 1958 while teaching in CSJ elementary and secondary schools. After earning a master’s degree in education at Loyola University, she came back to the Mount in 1972, where she served in senior administrative positions for 20 years, first as academic dean at Doheny and then as assistant academic dean at Chalon. In 1992, she left the Mount to begin a new ministry in the CSJ’s hospital chaplaincy program, serving until she retired in 2015. She participated in activities with the sisters and became a Vitas Hospice volunteer.
1962
Rose Marie (Lemus) Brockman graduated from the Mount with a history major then followed her Air Force husband to various posts. She taught stateside and in Turkey in the dependents’ school on the Air Force base. The couple had a child who was born in Turkey. They moved to Fort Worth, where they remain, in 1977 for her husband’s last assignment before retiring. Brockman obtained a bachelor’s and master’s degree in social work from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth and the University of Texas at Arlington, respectively. She worked in psychiatric settings for many years and in private practice before retiring. “I have a grandson, granddaughter and three great grandchildren. Next year is our 60th wedding anniversary.”

1966
Tina (Von der Ahe) Brown proudly wears her Mount Saint Mary’s University items in Oregon! She is excited to have some bragging rights along with her husband, four children and grandchildren who are always wearing their university items. Her family wears and cheers on UCLA, University of Colorado Boulder, Stanford, Berkeley, University of Oregon, Lewis and Clark, and the University of San Diego. (One more is studying in Seville, Spain.) “The other seven are too young but certainly are faithful to their parents’ colleges, so there is fun competition among the kids during game time!”

1969
Atmosphere Press has published “How To Be Dead: A Love Story,” by Laurel Schmidt, with an audiobook recording by “Orange Is the New Black” actress Barbara Rosenblat.

Synopsis: The book explores what it means to be fully alive — even in the afterlife. It celebrates the power of memory and the lifesaving potential of an excellent espresso. Schmidt is an author of four nonfiction books on art. She taught for decades while working with major museums in Los Angeles and New York. “How To Be Dead” is her first novel. She lives with her writer-husband in Santa Monica (laurelschmidt.com).

1970
Muriel (Brady) Bowes is approaching her 52nd wedding anniversary to her husband, Russ. They are still counting their blessings, including children (born in four different states) and 11 grandchildren. Five granddaughters are currently thriving at Carondelet High School in Concord, California, where Bowes also lives. She is busy in retirement as a dedicated family genealogist, dog rescue foster parent and volunteer, and struggling gardener.

1976
After 41 years, Carla Esling retired from Northrop Grumman in her role as senior business manager.

1977
Martha (Mathews) Libster, PhD, MSN, APRN-PMHCNS, FAAN, was one of three individuals with Mount connections inducted into the American Academy of Nursing last October. (See entry under 1999; the third inductee was Leah FitzGerald, PhD, FNP-BC, FAAN, dean of nursing and the Fletcher Jones Endowed Chair in Community Partnerships, p. 4.) The American Academy of Nursing serves the public by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally.

1978
In June, Lillianne Legra-Rodriguez was named Elementary Teacher of the Year by ATDLE (National Association of Two-Way Dual Language Education). Legrá-Rodriguez works at the Central Language Academy in the Ontario-Montclair School District. “Thank you to the Mount for setting a strong foundation in academics and multicultural education.”

1980
Irla Miller married Tom Heller, whom she knew since her high school and his college days, in 2015. They found each other on Facebook in 2011, reconnected in 2012 and the rest is history. Miller is the author of six books on late 19th and early 20th century European royal history.
1999

One of two alumnae inducted into the American Academy of Nursing during the annual Health Policy Conference in Washington, DC in October (see 1987, opposite page, for the other), Larissa (Marquez) Africa, MBA, BSN, RN, the president of Versant Holdings, LLC, was recognized as an individual who has made significant contributions to health and health care.

In honor of Veteran’s Day, the Mount newsroom featured a story on retired Army Lt. Col. Ruth Racine Tubbs, who served as a family nurse practitioner for two decades. To view the article, click on “All Articles” and scroll to the November 1, 2021, posting or type “Ruth Racine” in the search box.

2003

Elise Levine has joined the American Red Cross as executive director for the Northern Valleys chapter overseeing the San Fernando, Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys.

If you live in these areas and are interested in volunteering or joining the board, contact elise.levine@redcross.org.

2004

Celebrating 30 years in the food industry, Gerson Espindola was named vice president of food safety, quality and regulatory affairs, North America, with Bakkavor Foods, LLC.

2005

Diana Serna gave birth to her first child, daughter Madeleine Diaz, on March 5, 2021.

2007

Carolina Diaz completed her second LA marathon (and third full marathon) last fall. The race, usually held in March, was postponed in 2021 because of the pandemic. It had been eight years since Diaz ran her last marathon. “I continued to run because I love it. I’ll be running the 2022 LA Marathon in March.” For those in Los Angeles who are interested in training, Diaz is happy to share some great running clubs throughout the city that can help get you to the finish line.

2008

Naval veteran Rocio V. Palmero, from Arleta, is the program coordinator for Women Vets on Point, one of the few women’s veteran organizations. Assemblymember Luz Rivas nominated Palmero for Veteran of the Year.

2009

A citizen of the Tohono O’odham Nation, Naomi Miguel is staff director for the House Committee on Natural Resources: Democrats Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States in the House of Representatives and has received a national award for Native Americans 40 under 40. Through her role, Miguel advocates for #IndianCountry at the federal level and has built an all-Native women staff on the subcommittee.

2010

Marilag Lubag Casao married Joseph Casao on October 26, 2021, in a civil ceremony. The couple had known each other for more than 20 years. Because of COVID protocols, only four immediate family members witnessed the ceremony. Casao is an MSMU Alumnae Association Board Member and Class Ambassador.
Inspired by years as a clinical nurse specialist at oncology patient bedsides and overseeing an oncology unit in suburban Los Angeles, Suzanne Graf joined the Nursing Research and Education Department at the City of Hope. She is a board certified CNS and an oncology certified nurse. Her focus is on survivorship in the lung and colorectal cancer patient populations.

Myra Phan gave birth to Gianna on February 2, 2021. “Gianna’s birth was most anticipated, especially because she is our rainbow baby. My first born, her big brother, passed away at birth in 2019. She saved us and has brought much needed love and life back into our lives — more than she will ever know.”

Sarah (Peraza) Gonzalez and her husband Sebastian ’22 MBA welcomed their first child, a son, in October 2021.
The dual purpose behind the founding of Mount Saint Mary’s College

This story is often told: Bishop John Joseph Cantwell had just given the commencement address at St. Mary’s Academy on June 16, 1925, when he turned to Mother Margaret Mary Brady and said, “These charming young women need a college. Could you start one?”

Mount Saint Mary’s College was founded a mere three months later. But there was more to Cantwell’s request than just a place for high school girls to continue their education. He needed teachers for the education and spiritual formation of the hundreds of thousands of Catholics in his diocese.

In those days, most sisters teaching elementary school had only their high school diplomas. Secondary schools required a college degree, but the only way a sister in Los Angeles could earn a bachelor’s was through a degree-by-mail program through Villanova University. But parents and the sisters themselves were demanding that teachers be better educated.

Public schools were struggling, too. In 1929, the Mount partnered with newly founded UCLA to establish an education department and manage the academic sequence that would lead to a state credential. The resulting curriculum allowed Mount laywomen to earn a degree and credential in four or five years.

For the women religious, the demands of full-time teaching made getting a degree a years-long process — seven or eight, sometimes more. They took evening or weekend classes and often boarded at Chalon for classes during summer vacations. Many CSJs today still talk about the year-round challenge of teaching 60 children while trying to finish school themselves.

In the late 1960s, faculty and students decided to confront the big issues of the day — non-English speakers, children with disabilities and schools in poor, urban neighborhoods. Two groundbreaking results were the Center for Urban Education in 1965 and its successor, Metro Lab, in 1973. These programs provided internships, credential tracks and practicums for students wanting to teach in Los Angeles’ underserved urban neighborhoods.

For almost a century, the true beneficiaries of the Mount’s commitment to education are the tens of thousands of schoolchildren educated by generations of Mount alumnae, both CSJs and laywomen: A true legacy of seeing a need and meeting it the CSJ way.

— Victoria McCargar, retired Mount archivist
Save the Date — April 7: Mount Day of Giving

Participate in a community-wide effort to build a better, stronger University. For 24 hours, students, alumnae, faculty, staff, parents and friends unite in a concerted effort to raise funds to create opportunities and transform lives.

Your support helps ensure that future students will continue to be unstoppable. We can accomplish amazing things when we work together toward a common goal!

Visit giving.msmu.edu/2022-mount-day-of-giving

Use Freewill to formalize your wishes

Did you know nearly 70% of adults do not have a legal will in place? We have partnered with FreeWill to give the Mount community access to an easy and intuitive tool that helps you plan for your future while continuing to empower our students.

Go to freewill.com/MSMU to get started on your free plan.

Qualified Charitable Distributions

If you’re 70½ or older, you can donate up to $100,000 a year to charity from your IRAs via a qualified charitable distribution. After you turn 72, the QCD will count toward your required minimum distribution. A QCD is not deductible, but it will reduce your adjusted gross income, which lowers your federal and state tax bill and can also lower taxes on other items tied to your AGI, such as Social Security benefits and Medicare premiums. If you do not itemize — which is the case for many retirees — a QCD provides a way to get a tax break for your charitable gifts. Whether you want to make a QCD gift to Mount Saint Mary’s University, request a tax acknowledgment letter for a gift already made, or just learn more about QCDs, visit msmu.edu/QCD.