

# CRIMSON & BLACK

Central  
Washington  
University  
Fall 2023



CWU Aviation  
program develops  
the next fleet of  
professional pilots









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#### Connect with CWU



**On the Cover:** Emma McLaughlin is a senior in the CWU Aviation program and serves as president of the Women in Aviation club.

Photograph: David Dick

**Left:** Hundreds of first-year students gather at midfield in Tomlinson Stadium during Welcome Week 2023.

Photograph: University Relations

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### CRIMSON & BLACK

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Dear Wildcats,

We've embarked on another memorable year at Central Washington University, and I can't express how proud I am of everything we have accomplished as a community.

I am awed every day by the Wildcat family's shared commitment to the common good, and I am inspired to see everyone doing our part to help our students become engaged, productive citizens.

To that end, we took another crucial step over the past year and a half by defining our new Vision, Mission, and Values. With input from across the university, we put an exclamation point on the process last summer by finalizing our Values-based Strategic Plan for the next five years.

At the heart of this plan is our Unifying Value of Student Success. As many of our readers can attest, CWU's primary objective is to create pathways for students of all backgrounds to reach their academic and professional goals by providing a supportive, caring learning environment.

Staying true to our three Core Values of Engagement, Belonging, and Stewardship will prove just as critical to our future as we seek to provide equitable access to higher education and invest further in successful outcomes for our students and the communities we serve.

As we work together to achieve these ambitious goals, we must recognize that the world of higher education is far different than it was even five years ago. We can no longer sit back and wait for students to come to us; we need to provide them with real-world examples of how CWU can help them create a better future for themselves and their families.

One way we will do this is by continuing to focus on building and nurturing lasting relationships. One story in this edition of *Crimson & Black* highlights some great examples of how our professors connect with their students and maintain relationships with them long after graduation.

Another story chronicles the success of a recent graduate who has overcome significant adversity in his life to chart a new path, thanks in large part to the support he received along the way from his CWU mentors.

As you will discover in these pages, we are doing some amazing work here at Central Washington University. We have a lot to be proud of, and we are just getting started.

Sincerely,

A. James Wohlpart  
President

### CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Central Washington University acknowledges the people who have been on this land since time immemorial. The Ellensburg campus is on lands ceded by the Pshwanapum and other bands and tribes of the Yakama Nation in the Treaty of 1855. The Yakama people remain committed stewards of this land, cherishing it and protecting it, as instructed by elders through generations. We are honored and grateful to be on their traditional lands, and give thanks to the legacy of the original people, their lives, and their descendants.





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# Professors Prefer to Make It Personal





# CWU faculty build relationships with their students that last well into their careers

By Tara Roberts



*CWU Professor of Management James Avey, right, believes in the power of building relationships with students like Erika Belmontes, left.*

Erika Belmontes knew she needed mentors if she was going to move forward with her career.

The first-generation college student from Quincy had been working nights at a frozen-potato factory while attending community college by day. When she transferred to CWU to study business administration, she started looking for people who could guide her.

Some of her initial classes were with James Avey, a Distinguished Professor of management, and she saw right away that he had many of the qualities she sought in a mentor.

“He was always hilarious, and he just seemed so easy to talk to,” Belmontes said. “I think that’s primarily what I look for in mentors—they’re never going to make you feel bad because you don’t know the answer to a specific question. He really established that safety.”

One day, Belmontes decided to stop by Avey’s office to ask for advice. He was impressed by her ambition.

“She comes in, she’s asking questions, and I’m going, ‘Holy smokes, she’s got wisdom beyond her years. She’s just a standout,’” Avey recalled.

The two quickly identified shared values and established mutual respect. Belmontes had found a mentor.

After she graduated in 2015 and began her human resources career, Belmontes stayed in touch with Avey. She credits some of her success to that connection, though Avey is quick to put the spotlight back on her. Their relationship illustrates how mentorship often lasts beyond a student’s time at Central, becoming a long-term bond of friendship and trust.

The institution’s emphasis on relationship-building and small class sizes creates an environment where faculty and students are primed to connect, said Kurt Kirstein, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs.

“You’ve got a faculty member who’s dedicated to the field, you’ve got a student who’s curious about the field, and I think that dedication and curiosity feed into each other,” he said.

## From Student to Professional

Similar relationships are being developed in the CWU Music Department, where students meet weekly for one-on-one lessons with their primary teacher. This creates a unique connection between student and professor from the start, according to Gayla Blaisdell, professor of music, voice, and opera.

“Singing is very personal, because we’re singing with our bodies; our bodies are our instrument,” Blaisdell said. “Almost every lesson starts with a check-in to know how the student is doing, what’s going on with them, so that I know how to teach them during that day.”

When senior McKayla Sherman began her vocal performance studies at Central four years ago, she had heard Blaisdell held herself and her students to a high standard. Sherman started out nervous—unnecessarily memorizing an entire piece of music in the first week—but soon discovered how Blaisdell’s high expectations are designed to help students grow.

“I feel like I can go into my voice lesson and I can tell her about what’s going on in my personal life. It doesn’t even have to be about school, because obviously whatever’s going on in my



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**“You’ve got a faculty member who’s dedicated to the field, you’ve got a student who’s curious about the field, and I think that dedication and curiosity feed into each other.”**

Kurt Kirstein, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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personal life is affecting the way that I’m performing,” Sherman said. “It’s really helpful to share my thoughts and feelings with her.”

Last spring, Sherman was offered a spot in the summer program at the Saluzzo Opera Academy in Italy. It would be a financial challenge and the first time Sherman would ever leave the United States, but Blaisdell encouraged her to go.

Training programs like Saluzzo are key steps toward graduate school and a future as a professional opera singer, Blaisdell said. Helping her singers bridge the gap from student to professional is a critical component of her approach to mentorship.

One notable benefit Blaisdell and her CWU faculty colleagues offer to their students is an experience-based understanding of the industries they come from, Kirstein said. Students appreciate their professors’ authentic knowledge, which builds a pathway toward mentorship.

“We could teach you from a textbook a whole lot of content that’s related to your field,” he said, adding that Central faculty are also committed to helping students become work-ready. “We could teach you to go to the library and look up what others have written about the field. But when you’re dealing with somebody who was an electrical engineer, and is now teaching people how to be electrical engineers, I think there’s just that connection.”

Blaise Dondji, a Distinguished Professor of biological sciences, teaches a course on flow cytometry, a process that quickly analyzes molecules on and around cells. He said cytometry is useful for tasks such as evaluating new vaccines, including the one for COVID-19. Central is one of only a handful of U.S. colleges where undergraduates learn this valuable technique.

“When you finish at Central, you should go and get a job or go to graduate school. If you don’t, then we’ve failed our job at Central to prepare you,” Dondji said. “I tell students, ‘Guess what, I have this cool machine, this cool technique, and all the students that have gone through that training, they get admission to medical school, and they are hotcakes on the job market.’”

Tyanna Stuckey (’22) struggled when she took immunology from Dondji, but he encouraged her to keep going, and she eventually enjoyed the class. The next quarter, she signed up for the flow cytometry course.

“Dr. Dondji has this way of connecting with students and making sure that we know that he cares and that we are successful in his class,” Stuckey said. “I took the flow cytometry class, and that was awesome, just learning new technology.”

Stuckey decided to pursue the discipline as a career. After earning her degree in cell and molecular biology, she was offered a position at the Allen Institute for Immunology in Seattle.

She emailed Dondji to let him know. As is his tradition whenever a former student lands a good job, Dondji had a glass of wine to celebrate.

## Advising for the Individual

As her human resources career progressed, Belmontes often checked in with Avey, updating him on promotions and job changes, and asking for professional advice. Along the way, they got to know each other better.

In long-lasting mentor-mentee relationships, the human connection becomes more important than the professional one, Avey explained.

“The questions become, ‘Is this a good spot for my family? Is this a good spot for a quality of life? These are some unique scenarios in my family—how does it affect that?’” he said. “Rather than saying, ‘Yes, you’re qualified for this job, here’s what I recommend you negotiate for a signing bonus’ and all that, it becomes a much richer discussion, and then those turn into longer conversations.”

Belmontes’ most recent career change was a big shift: While finishing graduate school at Gonzaga University, she took some time off work to care for her daughter, who will soon start kindergarten. As always, Avey supported Belmontes wholeheartedly.

Avey believes that if faculty members want to become good mentors, they have to show students they care about them as people.

“For us, I think the question is really, ‘do you want to make a difference?’” he said. “And if you do, that comes through relationships. It doesn’t come through PowerPoint slides.”

When Terri Reddout retired from Central in June 2023, a group of her former students at Central News Watch, a student-produced weekly newscast, made a special video to congratulate her, recounting their relationships with fond farewells and inside jokes.

Reddout challenged students to improve as they learned the news business, but her welcoming spirit made Central News Watch even better, said Justin Nuñez (’15), who’s now a supervising producer at CBS 8 in San Diego.

“She was just always an open book,” Nuñez said. “Once a quarter, she would invite us over for a big team dinner, and she’d make an awesome dinner and give us a chance to build camaraderie and get to know her more, just outside of the teacher position, as friends. It’s stayed that way as well.”

When Emily Bontrager (’16), another of Reddout’s former students, decided to leave the news business for a corporate





*Distinguished Professor of Biological Sciences Blaise Dondji measures his own success as an educator by the success of his students.*

communications position at Intel, she was nervous to tell Reddout—but she didn't need to be.

"She just said she was proud of me," Bontrager said. "She really supported anything I did."

## From Mentee to Mentor

Students who build deep connections with their mentors often go on to become mentors and leaders themselves.

Reddout keeps up with her Central News Watch alumni through a Facebook group where former students share everything from new jobs to baby announcements. Before she retired, Reddout also used the space to introduce former students to current ones.

"I would say, 'Hey, in the producing class, this question came up. How would you handle it?' And then I would share their answers with my class," Reddout said. "I'd say, 'Hey, I need somebody to talk about ethics. Can you be in this Zoom meeting on this day and time?' And people would show up."

Núñez and Bontrager were both regular guests in Reddout's classes.

"I think that's my favorite part about Terri: she understands very well that she's been working in the classroom for years, but the industry outside has changed, and she always puts that effort out to understand and know what's changing," Núñez said. "I love to talk to students, too, because it gives them another perspective, like, 'I'm working in news still. Everything Terri's teaching you is going to be the foundation for what you do from here on.'"

Stuckey said Dondji's outreach work has inspired her to make personal connections a key element of her career development. Dondji is the co-founder of the Bawa Health Initiative, a non-governmental organization in his home country of Cameroon that works to provide health care access and reduce infectious disease in the village of Bawa and the surrounding area.

At the Allen Institute, Stuckey is involved with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts, including rebooting her department's community engagement group after the pandemic.

"My goal with the group is to engage with the community in a culturally relevant way," she said. "For me, that means engaging with the Black community in a way that allows them to build trust in the research community so that we might do a better job of diversifying our cohorts. This is especially important to me because of my background and the historical distrust of research and governmental entities in the Black community."

Belmontes has enjoyed getting involved with current students at Central, becoming a mentor herself in the College of Business mentorship program, and speaking at a Society of Human Resource Management event on campus.

Avey credits Belmontes with bringing "boots on the ground" insight to students by sharing her career experiences and challenges, such as building an HR department from scratch and managing labor relations in a unionized manufacturing plant.

But the best part about building a long-term mentorship, Avey says, is that it goes way beyond the practical.

"You don't really think about it in terms of benefits," he said. "It's a joy to give, it's a joy to support, it's a joy to connect." ■



# NOTHING BUT BLUE SKIES AHEAD

Department of Aviation is meeting critical needs for aspiring pilots and the airline industry

By Savannah Tranchell



*CWU senior Emma McLaughlin.*





The U.S. commercial aviation industry could soon be facing a pilot shortage that is increasingly dire, with some sources reporting a projected shortage of 18,000 pilots in the coming years.

Even the U.S. Congress got involved last summer, hearing testimony from the airline industry and advancing controversial legislation calling for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to improve recruitment and retention and raise the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots as a way to cope with the pilot shortfall.

But at Bowers Field—the small, single-runway regional airport in Ellensburg—faculty and flight instructors from CWU are working to address this shortage in their own way: by training their top students to become the next generation of commercial airline pilots.

Central's aviation program has been around since the 1970s, and officially became a standalone department in 2006. The college boasts a 100% job placement rate for graduates and offers one of the only public four-year aviation degrees on the West Coast.





*CWU Aviation student Trace Erwin works on the ground crew at Bowers Field in Ellensburg.*

Those statistics, paired with a nationally renowned faculty, create a competitive program with more applicants than it has seats.

For the 2023-24 academic year, the four-year professional pilot degree program has 200 students sharing 19 aircraft and one runway. The program saw 185 first-year applicants last spring, according to department chair Dr. Sam Pavel ('85). Of those applicants, 67 were admitted and accepted to begin their training in Ellensburg this fall.

The remaining 123 students were placed on a waiting list.

"It's unprecedented the way the need for pilots has exploded over the last several years," Pavel said. "The baby boomers are at that mandatory retirement age, and they can't fly with a commercial airline anymore. And so many people are wanting to travel. It's a great time to get into the industry."

## Facing the Challenges

Despite the demand, aviation isn't a field people can jump into if they're looking for a big paycheck. The training is demanding, with mandatory flight-hours and physical requirements, and the costs can often be prohibitive. Even after earning their license and pilot's degree, students must clock 1,000 hours of flight time before they are eligible for a job with a major commercial airline.

Among the students who are eager and willing to face these challenges is Emma McLaughlin, who is in her final year of commercial flight studies in the Department of Aviation. Growing up in Federal Way, McLaughlin thought she'd be a teacher or an athletic coach since those were the jobs she saw the women around her doing.

But in middle school, she joined Amelia's Aero Club at the Seattle Museum of Flight, and her passion took flight.

"I joined the club, and I got to go up in the air, and I loved it," she said. "I thought, 'I didn't know I could do this!' Once I got up in the sky, I felt like there was no way I could do anything else; I have to do this."

McLaughlin went on to earn her private pilot's license as a senior in high school. She chose Central because of its stellar reputation in the industry and its proximity to home. She looks at the airline industry with hope for the future, for her own career, and for people around the world.

"I want everyone in the world to be able to go places and travel," she said. "That's my goal in life—I want to see the world. I want my kids someday to be able to hop on a flight and go. It's amazing what aviation is able to do."

## Focus on Student Success

One of the main reasons McLaughlin was drawn to Central was the quality of the instructors. Among them is Dr. Amy Hoover, who was named the National Certified Flight Instructor of the Year in 2022 through the General Aviation Awards program. Other CWU instructors have had long careers in the industry and with the FAA, bringing real-world experience to the tarmac and the classroom.

Hoover and Pavel both attribute the success of the CWU aviation program to not only the faculty, but also to the high-quality students who choose to come to Ellensburg.

"Student success has always been a top priority," Hoover said. "The industry needs smart, committed and capable professionals. Learning to fly or be an aviation mechanic or other professional is not particularly difficult, but it does take commitment."

Those who remain committed go far, Pavel said, with Wildcats flying for nearly every domestic airline and holding lead roles across the industry.

Alumnus Wes Clapper ('04) is a captain with JetBlue Airways, flying out of Los Angeles. He also serves as vice president of finance/treasurer for the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA), the world's largest airline pilots union.

"It's an exciting time to be an airline pilot," said Clapper, a Spokane resident. "Pilots today have more opportunities and a brighter future than any generation before them. They can choose where they want to start their career, and most will have their choice of which major airline to fly for."

Clapper stays involved with Central as a mentor and helped form the university's Aviation Collegiate Education (ACE)



Club through ALPA. He credits his success to the challenges of learning to fly in the Kittitas Valley skies. He also encourages students to pursue a minor in aviation management.

“Aviation is a cyclical industry, and I know many other classmates who have relied on that minor degree,” he said.

Pavel noted that the bachelor’s degree track makes Central students more competitive in the industry, while also giving them alternative career paths to protect them from the, at times, boom-or-bust nature of the commercial airline industry.

Pilots also are subject to rigorous medical exams at least once a year. Pavel cautioned that a personal health issue can end your time in the cockpit, so it never hurts to have a backup plan.

“You need to have that degree to fall back on,” he said. “It gives you options. You can go on and get a master’s if you have a four-year degree. Or, say you want to move up into management. You’ve got to have that bachelor’s.”

## Increasing Diversity in the Skies

Along with meeting the industry’s growing need for pilots, the Department of Aviation is also proud of its efforts to increase diversity and representation in the cockpit. Globally, only about 3% of airline pilots are women. By contrast, Central’s incoming class for the current academic year is 30% women, Pavel said.

“The industry is changing; it’s less of a good ol’ boy system,” Pavel said. “Our program is this blending pot of people from a lot of different backgrounds who are going to be pilots. That’s amazing.”

In addition to being a flight instructor, Hoover serves as the advisor for the Women in Aviation club, which promotes diversity and outreach. She believes working with aspiring female pilots from all different backgrounds is making a tangible difference, both at CWU and in the industry.

“It is important to increase the number of women professionals in aviation to demonstrate to young girls that they can follow their dreams and are capable of doing whatever they want to apply themselves to,” she said.

McLaughlin is now president of CWU’s International Women in Aviation chapter, and also serves as secretary of the ALPA ACE club. One of her goals is to promote the career option to underrepresented groups. This year, she and her peers are hoping to start a chapter of the National Gay Pilots Association (NGPA) to support the LGBTQIA+ community.

“We want to be as diverse and inclusive as possible, and get more people interested and involved in the field,” McLaughlin said.

After spending the past four years at Central, McLaughlin is looking forward to her future as a pilot. The program maintains strong alumni connections, and many of the flight instructors are recent graduates who are earning their hours on their way to something bigger.

“At least once a quarter, airline pilots come in and talk about how they got to where they are, and we can ask them any questions we want,” she said. “It’s really cool to have that connection. We get to watch our certified flight instructors go to the airlines, and see them go achieve their dreams, and think, ‘I can follow them right in their footsteps.’” ■

## CWU AVIATION FLYOVER

The CWU Department of Aviation features a Professional Pilot bachelor of science degree and an Aviation Management BS, with specializations in Aviation Management, Executive Pilot, and Maintenance Management. The department also offers minors in Aviation Management and Aviation Professional Pilot.

Each year of the four-year Professional Pilot program focuses on a different aspect of flight. In the first year, students who don’t already have their private pilot’s certificate can earn one. First-year students begin flying within their first week of class.

By the end of the program, they will have a commercial certificate with an instrument rating, a multi-engine rating or flight instructor certificate (or both), and 200-250 hours of flight time. Major commercial airlines require 1,500 hours of flight time, although Central grads can get a job with only 1,000 through an agreement with the FAA.

Most students work as flight instructors for two years at programs like the one at CWU to earn their hours. With 500 hours, pilots can fly for small airlines; regional airlines like Horizon require 1,000 flight hours.











# Career Shifts Into High Gear

After joining classic car company out of college, mechanical engineering alum now runs the place

By David Leder

*High school sweethearts Matt and Lisa Jones attended CWU together and now own a successful classic car refurbishing business called Art Morrison Enterprises.*



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## **“We’re like a family here, and I couldn’t be happier with how things have gone.”**

Matt Jones

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It was June of 2005, and Matt Jones needed a job.

Commencement day was fast approaching, and the CWU mechanical engineering specialist didn’t have any solid leads yet. All he knew was that he wanted to work in the automotive industry.

One day, Jones’s mentor, former Professor Dr. Craig Johnson, told him about a possible entry-level position in Fife, just down the road from his hometown of Kent.

“Dr. Johnson got a call from a businessman in Fife who needed an engineer that was interested in cars,” Jones said. “He told him, ‘there’s this one kid,’ and then I got a call asking me if I wanted to come in for an interview. Almost 20 years later, I’m still here.”

Jones went to work for Art Morrison Enterprises (AME) a few weeks after graduation, designing frames and suspensions for classic cars. The company, founded by Morrison in 1971, specializes in modern chassis and suspensions for older cars, which enable them to drive like they’re brand new.

It wasn’t long before Jones was promoted to lead designer, lead engineer, and operations manager. After excelling at every opportunity along the way, he received his most significant promotion last year.

The one-time entry-level engineer is now the owner and president of Art Morrison Enterprises.

“Art couldn’t bear the idea of seeing the company he built get torn apart by a big corporation,” said Jones, who officially took over the reins from the now-retired Morrison in July 2022. “He knew he would either have to sell to a big capital interest group or find someone to take over, so he approached me and asked what I thought.”

Jones discussed the idea with his wife, Lisa, and they agreed to move ahead with the proposal.

“I’m financially conservative, so the thought of borrowing a bunch of money to buy the business was a really hard decision,” he said. “But I just couldn’t let this place go. It’s part of me.”

In early 2022, the couple began the painstaking process of securing a loan from the federal Small Business Administration. They managed to jump through all the required hoops and completed the purchase just in time—literally.

At the very moment Jones was signing on the dotted line, Morrison was considering an even more lucrative offer from a large national conglomerate.

“The timing couldn’t have been any better,” Jones said. “Just as Art was going to make the announcement to our employees about me taking over, he got a call to discuss another offer. No one knew for sure what he was going to do, but, in the end, he really wanted me to have it. That’s just the type of guy he is.”

Jones explained that Morrison could have sold AME for “twice as much,” but after putting his heart and soul into the business for 52 years, Morrison wanted to make sure it remained under local control.

AME’s corporate competitors often buy mom-and-pop businesses and streamline them to maximize profitability. If Morrison sold to a national conglomerate, he feared AME would become another casualty of corporate consolidation.

“Art didn’t want to see us go in that direction,” Jones said.

Needless to say, the 50 AME employees were overjoyed that one of their own was going to be their new boss. Jones is proud to report that the business is exactly the way it was when Morrison retired, with all of same people and all of the same products.

“We’re like a family here, and I couldn’t be happier with how things have gone,” he said.

## **Family First**

That family-first approach ended up being a significant incentive for Lisa Jones to join the Art Morrison Enterprises team. The 2004 CWU public relations alumna left her longtime restaurant industry job last spring to become the company’s marketing manager and media relations specialist.

Her primary responsibilities include placing news stories in industry publications, designing ads and buying ad space, assigning quote requests to the sales team, and managing the company’s social media accounts.

“Coming to work here just seemed like a natural fit because I’ve been immersed in the world of classic cars since I was a teenager,” said Lisa, who started dating her now-husband when they were 15 years old. “Matt has always been interested in cars, so it sort of became my hobby, too.”

Lisa explained that her recent career move was also a good opportunity to align her schedule with Matt’s so they could both be around for their two daughters, ages 14 and 9.

“Working for the same company allows us to focus more on our family,” she said. “We used to have trouble synching up our calendars when Matt was traveling to car shows. This way, we’re both on the same page. It’s worked out great so far.”

Lisa noted that the family-oriented nature of AME has had the side benefit of breathing new life into her career. In particular, she likes that AME focuses on its builders and customers on social media instead of touting its own successes.

“We want to put the spotlight on our customers, rather than always prospecting,” she said. “It’s the people who make our company what it is, but it’s also the people who use our products. They’re the reason we do what we do.”





*Matt Jones purchased Art Morrison Enterprises in 2022, and his wife Lisa joined the company last spring as a marketing manager.*

## Lifelong Passion

It's no wonder Matt Jones has embraced his new role as owner and president of a car company. Ever since his childhood in South King County, classic cars have been his passion.

Now, at age 40, he's living the dream.

"I've always been a car guy, since I was a little kid," Matt said. "My grandfather was a drag racer in the 1950s and I would go hang out at the garage with him and his friends. It was kind of a treat for me, at 10 or 11 years old, to talk cars with these guys who were in their 70s. They were local legends back in the day, and I really looked up to them."

As one might expect, Matt went on to become a drag racer at Pacific Raceways in Kent—formerly Seattle International Raceway—during his younger days. However, once he became a family man, he decided to hang up his helmet.

"When I had kids, it was time for me to stop," he said. "Drag racing was too risky, and it was also really expensive. I had a ton of fun, and I'd probably do it again. But, now, I'm focused more on my family and my business."

Since taking over Art Morrison Enterprises, Matt and his team have identified some key areas for growth in the increasingly competitive world of classic cars. With customers around the world—including Germany, Japan, France, Sweden, South Africa, Puerto Rico, and the Middle East—he understands the need to amplify AME's niche in the international marketplace.

The company's leadership believes there is still plenty of room to grow if they focus on a top-notch website, artmorrison.com, strong digital advertising, and an engaging social media presence.

"Our goal is to keep growing," Matt said. "Our main priority right now is to get out of five separate buildings. We just need to keep expanding our profit line, and eventually we'll get to the point where we can move all of our operations into one single facility."

AME is currently looking to increase its presence in the four-wheel-drive arena by diversifying its Ford, Chevrolet, and Jeep product lines. The company is also looking to expand its selection of Mopar parts and accessories. This fall, AME is releasing a new bolt-in Mopar part that it believes could revolutionize the industry.

"I think we're just getting started," Lisa said. "When you look at where the industry is heading, you have to stay on top of the latest products and trends. You have to develop new products if you want to stay relevant, and I think we're doing a good job of branching out beyond what we've traditionally done."

No matter where their journey takes them, the Joneses are grateful for the opportunity to lead a well-established family business like AME into a new era.

The couple has been around long enough to know what works—and what doesn't—yet they're young enough to create their own identity in the fast-paced world of classic car rebuilds.

"I'm so proud of what Matt has accomplished so far," Lisa said. "He's an incredibly hard worker and he's very honest—someone who other people can look up to. He's a genuinely good person and role model, and it's going to be fun to see where this company goes under his leadership." ■





# Re-Writing His Life Story

**CWU graduate creates new future for himself  
and his son after serving five years in prison**

By David Leder





2023 CWU graduate Luis Moreno has overcome more than most in his life. Now, he is flipping the script as a PhD student at The Ohio State University.  
Photo: Logan Wallace, Ohio State University



When Luis Moreno was released from the Washington State Department of Corrections in 2021, the contents of a few cardboard boxes and a prepaid phone card were all he had to his name.

He had just completed a 60-month sentence for 10 felony convictions that stemmed from a life sprinkled—and, at times, saturated with—bad choices. Yet Moreno was determined to turn his life around. He knew an education would give him an opportunity to start over, so he enrolled at CWU during his time at the Ahtanum View Work Release center in Yakima.

“I told them, ‘I don’t want to work; I want an education,’ and they said, ‘We’ve never had anyone do that here, but we will figure something out,’” Moreno said. “Most inmates are anxious to stack up some cash before release, but I didn’t see how a couple thousand dollars would change my life.”

Supported by friends and family, Moreno managed to scrounge together enough money to buy a computer. He caught another break when the work release center allowed him four hours of internet access and six hours of computer privileges per day.

Despite his unconventional arrangement at Ahtanum View, he found a way to complete his first quarter of English literature classes through CWU Multimodal Learning.

“I didn’t always have access to Canvas, so I had to have the uncomfortable conversation with my instructors about the possibility of downloadable lectures,” Moreno said, referring to the online course management system used by Central. “Fortunately, my professors were willing to work with me.”

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**“I will never have the words to express my appreciation for CWU. Part of their mission is to nurture culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students, and I can certainly attest to CWU’s commitment to that objective.”**

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Luis Moreno

Once Moreno completed the work release program, he returned to his hometown of Cowiche, about 13 miles west of Yakima. It didn’t take long for remnants of his past to start creeping around, so when trouble came knocking, he decided to pack up his things and move 1,660 miles away to Junction City, Kansas, along with his teenage son.

“I had a lot of people stopping by to say hi, and I decided that the only way I could get away from my past was to move half-way across the country,” said Moreno, who lived in Junction City from 2007–08 while serving in the Army. “I have full custody of my son and I don’t want him to make the decisions I made. The best thing for us was to move.”



Photo: Logan Wallace, Ohio State University

*Moreno talks with Dr. Tiyi Morris, an Ohio State University professor of African American and African Studies, on the OSU campus in early October.*

## In Pursuit of Positivity

Upon arriving in Kansas, Moreno secured a job as a COVID screener for a health clinic. Two promotions later, Moreno’s role as patient resource coordinator allowed him to continue his redemptive path by providing transportation and health care resources to patients. His new position gave him a chance to help community members connect with resources, while also opening the door for him to serve on a number of local committees.

The flexibility of that role afforded Moreno the time he needed to complete his CWU coursework and to be around for his son, Damien, who started his senior year of high school this fall.

The move to Kansas proved to be exactly what Moreno and his son needed to start a new life—one free of trouble and rooted in education and positive choices.

“Before my release, my son was struggling in school, but he’s a completely different kid,” Moreno said. “He’s getting mostly As and Bs now, and I’m trying to talk him into going to college. He’s not sure what he wants to do yet, but he’s on a good track.”

The same can be said for Moreno, who completed dual degrees in English literature and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies through CWU last spring. He also participated in the McNair Scholars program and worked as a writing tutor and English grammar peer tutor in the Learning Commons.

Now, he’s taking his newfound knowledge and training with him to pursue a PhD in English at The Ohio State University. He moved to Columbus in August and is taking the first steps toward an advanced degree this fall.

“I’ve had a lot of grace on my side when applying to both Central and The Ohio State,” Moreno said. “When I decided to accept OSU’s offer, I contacted the director of Graduate Studies for the English Department and said, ‘This is my situation.’”

He had prepared himself for a letdown, but when the director checked the box, Moreno's acceptance was placed on hold pending a secondary review.

He thought to himself: "Even if they say no, I was accepted into a top 35 school. No one can take that away from me."

## Renewed Focus

As grateful as Moreno is to Ohio State for offering him such a high-profile opportunity, he knows he may not have gotten to this point if it weren't for the support and guidance he received at Central. He said he can't thank the CWU faculty and staff enough for everything they did for him over the past two years.

Moreno has paid his debt to society, but he also recognizes that he isn't owed anything. It has taken people to believe in him to get where he is today.

"I will never have the words to express my appreciation for CWU," he said. "Part of their mission is to nurture culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students, and I can certainly attest to CWU's commitment to that objective."

Central played an integral role in helping Moreno discover the next step in his journey, but what truly set him up for success was his own drive to create a better life for himself.

After receiving a 91-month sentence in 2016 for drugs, weapons, burglary, and assault convictions, he was initially sent to Stafford Creek Corrections Center in Aberdeen. Early in his sentence, a counselor pulled him aside and told him that his sister had died. The counselor gave him a phone number to call, and it turned out to be a dead end.

"I eventually found out that she hanged herself," Moreno said. "I also found out about a close family friend—who was a brother to me—that was shot and killed the same week. That's when I decided that I needed to start making some changes in my life."

From that point forward, Moreno used his time on the inside to reinvent himself. He enrolled in a business management certificate program at Grays Harbor Community College, which led him to start pursuing as much knowledge as he could through books and personal interactions.

"After I finished the certificate, I asked to be transferred to Walla Walla State Penitentiary because of the associate's degree program," he said. "I eventually switched my AA to a bachelor's degree track through a direct transfer agreement and built up 180 college credits. I just kept taking every class they had—even the classes I didn't need. Then I became a teacher's assistant, and that's what led to me to apply to Central."

While serving time in Walla Walla, Moreno connected with Dr. Bill Krieger, a retired college professor who still works part time in the Washington State Penitentiary Prison Education Program.

After taking classes with Krieger for a year and experiencing the many benefits of his mentorship, Moreno believes he has found his calling.

"Dr. Krieger is an amazing man and he inspired me to become a teacher," he said. "I would like to serve others in the same way he does. In a perfect world, I would be able to go back to the Walla Walla State Penitentiary and teach someday."

Moreno's motivation for becoming an educator in the prison system is to use his acquired privilege to, in the spirit of Gayatri Spivak, create the conditions so that the subaltern can speak.

"I have lived all across the U.S. and Mexico, and some of the best people I've ever met were on the inside," he said. "My hope is to one day be in a position to help others."

## Relatability Equals Respect

Krieger said he is honored that one of his former students—especially someone as gifted as Moreno—would want to follow in his footsteps. And while he appreciates a former student wanting to emulate him, he gives all of the credit to Moreno.

"Luis is the kind of student I hope for," Krieger said. "The first thing that impressed me was that he was so reliable; there was never a doubt that he would turn something in and that the work would be exemplary. He's had to work hard to increase his knowledge, skills, and insights, and I genuinely admire him for that."

Krieger believes Moreno will make a superb educator someday because of his intrinsic ability to connect with other humans. He doesn't just understand concepts; he can present information in a way that others can comprehend.

"I would have him explain things to other students in my class, and the information he relayed to them was spot on," said Krieger, who hired Moreno as a TA. "But, most importantly, it was the way he relayed the information that was so helpful. That's not an easy skill to master, and he's already a natural."

Future teaching potential aside, what impressed Krieger most was Moreno's character and the authenticity he exhibits in his interactions. Krieger believes that side of him will carry him far in the profession.

"Luis really cares about people, and that's huge for someone who wants to go into teaching," he said. "Above all, you have to care about the people or it isn't going to work."

Krieger noted that if Moreno does end up teaching inmates someday, he will bring an extra layer of insight into the classroom because of his own experiences as an inmate.

That's one intangible that few other educators can offer.

"If he ends up working with incarcerated people, he will have a personal connection that I didn't have," Krieger said. "He's a very empathetic person, and he can look at a situation from someone else's perspective and see what they are struggling with. He knows deep down that these people are good, and it's his own strength of character that allows him to see that side in everyone."



## Strong Advocates

Moreno absorbed as much as he could from Krieger while in Walla Walla, and upon his release to the Ahtanum View center, he took the next step in his education by enrolling at Central.

He first became interested in CWU because it was close to home and, as a result of the pandemic, offered an increasing variety of online degree options. As the admissions process unfolded, the team of counselors made him realize that he didn't have to be ashamed of his past; he really could start over at Central.

"CWU was awesome the entire way," Moreno said. "At first, I was worried about the stigma and limitation that come with a criminal history. But no one there judged me or tried to marginalize me. The staff supported me and gestured toward new doors for me to be successful."

He credits Dr. Barry Shelton in the CWU English department for helping him secure the TA position in the Learning Commons, a job that became a focal point on his graduate school applications.

Concerned that Shelton may rescind the offer once he knew everything Moreno had done in his younger years, Moreno told his professor about his checkered past. But Shelton put his faith in Moreno and gave him a life-changing opportunity.

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**"CWU was awesome the entire way. At first, I was worried about the stigma and limitation that come with a criminal history. But no one there judged me or tried to marginalize me. The staff supported me and gestured toward new doors for me to be successful."**

Luis Moreno

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"Dr. Shelton took a huge risk on me, and I will forever be grateful to him for that," Moreno said. "He told me, 'you're one of my best students, and I have no doubt you can do it.'"

Another instructor who helped Moreno live into his potential at Central was Dr. Sarah Sillin, an assistant professor of transnational American literature and an affiliate faculty member in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program.

She admires Moreno for his ability to embrace the online learning environment through wildly different circumstances than his peers.

"During the pandemic, everyone was trying to figure out how to make online learning work for themselves, and Luis seemed ahead of his time in that way," said Sillin, who had Moreno in her Principles of English course in 2021 and, later, African American Literature.



*Top: Moreno and three fellow prisoners were the first class from the Walla Walla State Penitentiary to be inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. Bottom: Moreno receives his Phi Theta Kappa sash in the Walla Walla state prison.*

"He recognized that the experience is a lot better when students have a chance to interact with one another and talk about things they can't figure out on their own."

Sillin complimented Moreno for being proactive about finding collaborators in the class so they could work through different theories together. She was impressed by his ability to understand, analyze, and explain English-language theories at an advanced level from the start.

"That class can be kind of intimidating, and it was great to have a student like Luis who liked taking on questions he didn't already know the answer to," Sillin said. "That is very much his sensibility. He's really good at that kind of thinking, and as he moved through the program, he was able to apply different theories to talk about race systems, racism, and related topics."



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**“I’ve experienced things that a lot of people never will. ... But what I gained at Central changed how I view myself in relation to the world.”**

Luis Moreno

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## A New Chapter

After Moreno demonstrated such prowess during his short time at Central, Sillin and her colleagues—specifically, Dr. Shelton and Dr. James Seth—were more than happy to write him letters of recommendation for graduate school.

Moreno applied to three PhD programs, and The Ohio State quickly rose to the top of his list. He found that the cost of living in Columbus was affordable, even for a single parent, and after visiting campus last spring, he knew OSU was where he needed to take the next step in his education.

“I got to meet some people in the English and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments, and I was really impressed with everything about The Ohio State,” he said. “It seemed like a good place for me and my son to live, and we’re going to make it work.”

Now that he’s a PhD student at a top-tier institution, Moreno knows he’s going to have to prove himself. And while the road ahead may feel uncertain at times, he has already overcome so much that pursuing a graduate degree doing something he loves doesn’t really feel like work.

At the same time, he is also keenly aware that he wouldn’t be where he is today without everything he has been through. Now, he’s ready to write the next chapter in his life story—and it certainly won’t be the last.

“I’ve experienced things that a lot of people never will,” Moreno said, adding that he doesn’t want his past to define him.



“I’ve lived a lot in 36 years. I’ve been a deacon at a church, I volunteered at a drug rehab center, I went to Bible college. I’ve also sold drugs, been in more fights than I can count, and been in a couple high-speed chases.”

Moreno’s previous life also included dropping out of his first year of high school, working as a night watchman, volunteering at a hospice facility, serving in the Army, and doing five years in state prison.

Combined, those experiences have all made him stronger. He believes they have prepared him for whatever the future holds, and he welcomes the challenge.

“Those experiences created the lens through which I interpret texts, and it’s those experiences that govern the tone of my prose,” he said. “But what I gained at Central changed how I view myself in relation to the world.”

“I don’t know what’s next, but perhaps that’s the point. Venturing into the unknown, I borrow from Zakiyya Iman Jackson: ‘Redefining my being’ must be done ‘in improvisational terms rather than in fidelity to those inherited from’ oppression.” ■



*Top: “The second saddest Christmas tree of my life”—a 6-inch tree at the Walla Walla State Penitentiary. Bottom: Moreno attends a Mexican Cultural Celebration Day event.*





*CWU Sustainability Officer Jeff Bousson  
is spearheading the Climate Action Plan.*



# Vision for a Greener Future

Experts across the university combine efforts to implement long-range Climate Action Plan

By Rune Torgersen

After another summer of record-breaking heat, severe wildfires, rising ocean temperatures, extreme weather events, and devastating ecological disasters across the world, it's becoming clear that if humans want to have a livable planet for current and future generations, we must take urgent and decisive action to address climate change.

It is with this urgency in mind that CWU Sustainability Officer Jeff Bousson has gone about creating a campus-wide network of collaborators for the university's upcoming Climate Action Plan, which will outline an ambitious pathway to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030, and build out new sustainability initiatives with the overarching goal of becoming a zero-carbon campus in the next 15-20 years.

"It's becoming more difficult to ignore the climate crisis, which means I don't have to spend a lot of time trying to convince people of the urgency of the challenges we face," Bousson said. "We know for a fact that human activities, such as burning fossil fuels like gas and coal, are primarily causing the changes we are seeing in the Earth's climate, and we have a pretty good idea of what we can do about it, too."

Over the past year, Bousson has been hosting Sustainability Cafés (which will be known as CWU Sustainability Forums going forward) and facilitating other opportunities to gather community input and feedback on this upcoming comprehensive plan. He stresses this will require a sense of shared responsibility and ownership across campus to achieve a safe, resilient, and equitable zero-carbon future.

Since sustainability is a deeply complex concept, with nuance that stretches into every conceivable field of study—as well as every department on a college campus—Bousson noted that it has been imperative to bring together as many campus partners as possible, in order to benefit from their expertise and ensure no potential burdens or challenges are being overlooked.

"There's so much intellectual capital that we can leverage from faculty, staff, students, and community partners" he said. "That's what sets us apart as an academic institution. It's the unique connections and expertise we have here on campus, and our willingness to listen and learn from





*An architectural rendering of the North Academic Complex (NAC), which will be heated and cooled by a nearby geothermal well.*

each other, which ensures that a diverse array of ideas are being brought to the table and we approach this work with creativity and open-mindedness. We need all the help we can get to find the gaps in our plan. What are we missing? What are the things we haven't even thought about in terms of how our efforts to address climate change could disproportionately burden the most vulnerable members of our community?"

Because sustainability is an issue that must be tackled on multiple fronts, the Climate Action Plan is structured to begin work on each of these issues simultaneously.

## Innovation in Action

One of the biggest contributors to CWU's greenhouse gas emissions is our dependence on natural gas for heating and cooling via the campus-wide network of steam ducts. With the \$103 million North Academic Complex (NAC) replacing Farrell Hall and the Language and Literature building within the next few years, Capital Planning and Projects is taking the opportunity to address the natural gas issue through the construction of a geothermal well on north campus, capable of heating and cooling up to 500,000 square feet of space using the naturally occurring aquifer underneath campus.

This trail-blazing technology will be housed partially in a see-through building, allowing students to see the inner workings of the kind of solution that may one day end up sustaining our world.

"What this helps teach our students is that there's more than one way to help the planet by reducing our carbon emissions, and even though one approach might have historically worked well, it might not be the best option in the long run," said Director of Capital Planning and Projects Delano Palmer. "The wheel is a great invention, but people have always been coming up with new tires, axles, and drive trains to advance what it's capable of, just like we're doing with our approach to sustainability. We owe it to ourselves to constantly challenge the status quo."

Palmer explained that Capital Planning and Projects' involvement with this work is much broader than the other NAC projects, extending into every on-campus building. Since the Ellensburg campus is made up of buildings of varying age, opportunities to address inefficiencies are everywhere. They also carry with them the possibility of enhancing students' education.

"A lot of the students here are going to be first-generation students," Palmer said. "We want to offer them the most incredible first impression of the collegiate experience that we can, and to do that, we need to be constantly innovating and improving on the spaces they see when they come to campus. It needs to be inviting, inspiring, and educational, all in one, and with these new building projects, we have an opportunity to elevate that."

"Spaces like our new Health Sciences building are designed to become their own living classroom, surrounding students with knowledge and inviting them to learn more at every turn, and that's what we want to do with the North Academic Complex, too."



## Education for Tomorrow

As the campus' buildings are being upgraded for efficiency and enhanced learning, faculty are being encouraged to infuse sustainability into their curricula to prepare students for a job market that values such practices. Chief Financial Officer Joel Klucking explained that these sustainability efforts play into CWU's commitment to prepare students for the real-world application of their education.

"It's a whole sector that's quite small right now, but will be much, much bigger in the near future," he said. "Preparing our students to think in terms of sustainability will make them incredibly valuable employees in tomorrow's job market. Colleges in general have been on the vanguard of responding to climate issues going back as far as the '60s.

"One of our main charges is building sustainability knowledge and understanding, and equipping our community to think about the challenges we face in this regard. Embedding that in our curriculum is really important."

A group of eight Information, Technology and Administrative Management (ITAM) master's students recently were presented with the opportunity to aid the SURC's preparations for becoming a community shelter in case of an environmental emergency (e.g., community power going out as a result of a natural disaster). Senior Lecturer Elizabeth Fountain, who introduced her students to the project, said it helped them see themselves contributing to the cause as they enter the workforce.

"There are sustainability aspects to practically every field out there," she said. "A lot of my students had never seen themselves taking an active role in sustainability work until we did this project, and it has really broadened their horizons."

## Geo-Eco Plant to Boost Green Energy

The new North Academic Complex (NAC) on the Ellensburg campus will feature a geothermal (Geo-Eco) plant.

- **ESTIMATED COST:** \$8.8 million
- **ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:** 2026
- **KEY BENEFITS:** Plant will allow CWU to "trade" energy between buildings as CWU connects more buildings to Campus Eco-District.

### What will the plant do?

- Reduce CWU's dependency on natural gas to provide steam power
- Limit CWU's overall energy use, reducing our carbon footprint
- Extract water from underground aquifer using well and injection systems
- Use heat exchanger to heat and cool water for 500,000 sq. ft. of building space
- Heat and cool the NAC and up to three additional buildings
- Return groundwater to source, resulting in net-zero utilization

Senior Lecturer Liz Fountain (second from left) talks with students Corinne Grieve, left, Adrienne Zimny, Vernée Hemphill, Angus Beaton, and Kelly Zakel-Larson about their proposed project to install solar-paneled covered parking in the SURC parking lot.





The students were tasked with conducting a feasibility study of installing a smart, solar-powered microgrid in the SURC, which would allow the building to remain powered and operational in case of a failure of the local electrical grid. After examining similar efforts across the globe, the group determined that the best way forward might be a solar canopy constructed over the SURC parking lot, as the angles of the building's roof are not ideal for efficient solar paneling.

"These are the things that make me proud to be at CWU," said Vernée Hemphill, a student in Fountain's class and an alternative media specialist with Central Access. "The fact that we're even playing with the concept of a solar canopy speaks to the school's commitment to its cause, and the fact that we got to apply our classwork to a real-life, local subject was very cool."

While the decision on whether to implement the solar canopy concept is pending, the benefits of involving students in the planning process are undeniable. Adrienne Zimny, another student in the class and a program coordinator with Central Access, says the process gave her and her fellow students a new appreciation for what they can contribute to the campus.

"This is a great approach to reaching all students in a meaningful way," she said. "It's one thing to have the opportunity to

volunteer your time outside of class, but to have it actually tied in with our classwork gave so much depth to the project and our learning. It gives you that pride factor, and makes you feel like you're contributing to your school."

## Vision and Mission in Focus

Besides properly preparing our students for the world to come, this work will also help CWU live into our new mission, which includes the phrasing: "We are committed to fostering high-impact practices, sustainability, and authentic community partnerships that are grounded in meaningful relationships."

Klucking believes the inclusion of sustainability is more than just marketing.

"Sustainability is baked into our mission statement in order to keep it a priority for our institution," he said. "This cements it as an intrinsic feature of who we are as a school, and what our purpose is. That's how committed we are to seeing this work through."

Bousson added that another key piece of the puzzle in meeting that expectation will come in the form of community-led, peer-to-peer education.

*Constituents across the institution are coming together to put CWU's Climate Action Plan into motion.*





“On a personal level, making lifestyle changes and reducing your footprint is a positive for sure, but at the institutional level, I think we have the opportunity to inspire a lot of action and engagement,” he said.

“I often hear from people that they feel they can’t do enough to make a difference, but work like this really proves that when we come together, we can achieve incredible things. When we have students, staff, and faculty recognizing that their voices matter, and this is an opportunity to make a positive difference, that helps alleviate some of the understandable anxiety about the situation we find ourselves in.”

Composting, sustainable food sourcing, emissions reduction, transportation, energy efficiency, and peer education are all just a small part of the multi-pronged approach being developed by Bousson, the Sustainability Council, and several departments across campus, in partnership with the City of Ellensburg.

While CWU’s Climate Action Plan is complex and ever-evolving, its payoffs are straightforward and universally beneficial. Cleaner air, lower energy costs, and students equipped with the tools they’ll need to help move the whole world forward are all rewards the university could reap through these initiatives. CWU Sustainability anticipates that the Climate

Action Plan will be completed in February 2024, which will create several opportunities for the campus and local communities to be involved in the implementation of decarbonization strategies for many years to come.

This approach also makes clear to prospective students that we walk our talk.

“Having a plan and taking our climate action seriously makes us a much more attractive university for students,” Klucking said. “People want to see that we’re doing our part in addressing the needs of the climate, and leveraging our position as a university to educate the public.”

Bousson wants alumni to get involved in the sustainability efforts, too, as their workplace experience, connections, and passion for their alma mater would all be boons in the ongoing effort to corral the kind of collaboration necessary to see this work through.

“We have a long way to go, but there are a lot of reasons for optimism, too,” Bousson said. “There is not a more exciting time to be working in the sustainability space, and with the kind of engagement, support, and commitment we’ve experienced already, Central is going to be a leader in the field for many years to come.” ■

An aerial photograph of the Central Washington University campus. The image shows a mix of brick buildings, including a large modern building with a flat roof and several older, multi-story brick buildings with gabled roofs. There are many green trees scattered throughout the campus. In the foreground, a road with a crosswalk and some cars is visible. The background shows a valley and distant mountains under a clear sky.

**Interested in supporting our  
sustainability initiatives?  
Email [sustainability@cwu.edu](mailto:sustainability@cwu.edu).**





*The 64-year-old Nicholson Pavilion reopened this fall after a major renovation that started in late 2021.*



# CWU EYES FUTURE WITH NORTH CAMPUS UPGRADES

Renovated spaces will benefit a wide range  
of academic and athletic programs

By David Leder

CWU's Department of Sport and Movement Studies (SAMS) has a new home this fall after the \$60.5 million Health Education Project was completed.

The multi-phase project, which broke ground in December 2021, features long-awaited renovations of the 63-year-old Nicholson Pavilion and Purser Hall, including classroom upgrades, additional meeting space, an expanded fieldhouse, two new weight-training areas, and the construction of a lobby/vestibule area, among other improvements.

The new academic spaces opened during fall quarter, while the athletic programs began using the upgraded locker rooms, weight rooms, and gymnasium in August.

The overarching goal of the Health Education Project—funded by the Washington State Legislature and private donors—is to provide SAMS faculty, staff, and students with the resources they need for 21st century instruction and development.

In addition to having larger, more modern office and classroom spaces, the department will be able to take advantage of a dedicated weight room that will be used only for academic disciplines.

SAMS houses the state's largest teacher preparation program in physical education and school health (PESH). Until now, the department has shared classroom and weight room spaces with CWU Athletics, but the vastly improved facilities will allow both departments to work more independently.

"One of the benefits of this project is we now have our own spaces," SAMS co-department chair Brian McGladrey said. "But we will continue to work together to manage the facilities so we can meet both of our needs."





*The varsity weight room inside Nicholson Pavilion is “one of the best university weight rooms in the state,” according to Athletic Director Dennis Francois.*



*Nicholson Pavilion now features elevated walkways and an arena-style layout so fans can stay engaged with the action while they are in the concourse.*



*Despite significant upgrades inside, the pavilion maintained its distinctive roof-support cables on the exterior.*

Physical activity courses such as weight training, yoga, Pilates, basketball, volleyball, soccer, and ultimate frisbee continue to be popular with students, and each discipline now has more indoor and outdoor space to utilize. The renovated facilities also provide staff and faculty from the Northwest Center for Sport with dedicated offices and meeting spaces.

McGladrey noted that the dance and physical education teaching programs also have been building momentum.

“We are very excited that we were able to create a separate space on the second floor of Nicholson for a much larger dance studio than we previously had,” he said. “The dance program now has a lot more space to work with, and it’s right next to our new Pilates studio. We really believe it’s going to enhance our program.”

Academic programs such as PESH, sport management, physical activity, and dance are the primary beneficiaries of the Health Education Project, but CWU Athletics also stands to benefit from the upgraded exercise facilities, offices, and classroom spaces.

Another primary goal of the project was to transform Nicholson Pavilion—built in 1959—into a state-of-the-art venue that can host large gatherings, such as CWU and high school commencement ceremonies, as well as statewide youth sports tournaments and community events.

Athletic Director Dennis Francois and his team are ecstatic about the impact the renovated pavilion, expanded fieldhouse, and other state-of-the-art facilities will have on student-athletes, coaches, staff, and fans alike.

“This project will have a significant impact on the academic experience of our students and faculty, as well as the student-athlete experience in everyday practice, training, and competition,” Francois said. “The renovations of the outward-facing spaces will greatly enhance the overall experience for fans, and it will further position CWU as a highly desirable location for local, state, and regional athletic events at the high school and collegiate levels.”

Among the highlights, the in-game experience inside Nicholson Pavilion has been transformed by the inclusion of elevated baseline walkways, an open concourse, video ribbon displays for sponsors, an enhanced video display, and other amenities.



*Former state Senator Jim Honeyford, left, CWU President Emeritus Jim Gaudino, CWU President Jim Wohlpart, and state Representative Alex Ybarra cut the ribbon for the renovated Nicholson Pavilion at an October 20 ceremony.*



“The new layout really gives it an arena feel, more like if you were at a Mariners or Seahawks game,” Francois said. “That’s going to be a huge enhancement. But the baseline walkways are also a pretty major upgrade, allowing fans to walk from one end of the arena to the other while staying engaged with what’s happening on the court.”

Nicholson Pavilion also features a top-flight varsity weight room—“one of the best university weight rooms in the state,” Francois proclaimed—plus new locker rooms, training rooms and an expanded fieldhouse, which is 75% larger than the previous facility.

In total, the renovations at Purser Hall and Nicholson Pavilion added about 80,000 square feet to the existing 100,000 square feet.

“That is a pretty significant chunk of new usable space,” Francois said, “and it’s going to benefit nearly all of our athletic and academic programs.”

The new-and-improved fieldhouse features a six-lane, 70-yard straightaway Mondo track, a 70-by-40-yard artificial turf surface (the same FieldTurf product as Tomlinson Stadium), drop-down batting cages for baseball and softball, and new LED lighting.

Add it all together and CWU’s sports and activity programs have a lot to look forward to.

“The fieldhouse is going to be a great space for soccer, baseball, softball, track, rugby, football, and more,” Francois said. “When a prospective student-athlete sees all that CWU has to offer, they’re going to be blown away.” ■



*The Nicholson Pavilion renovation brings the 64-year-old venue up to 21st century standards, benefiting CWU students, faculty, staff, and student-athletes.*



# New-Look North Campus

The north campus renovation project combined Purser Hall and Nicholson Pavilion to develop new classroom, office, and training spaces for the Department of Sport and Movement Studies and CWU Athletics. The main gymnasium was redesigned to create an arena-style environment.

- **COMPLETED:** Fall 2023
- **TOTAL COST:** \$60.5 million
- **TOTAL SPACE:** 180,000 sq. ft.  
Renovation added 80,000 sq. ft.
- **FUNDING:** Washington State Legislature and private donors

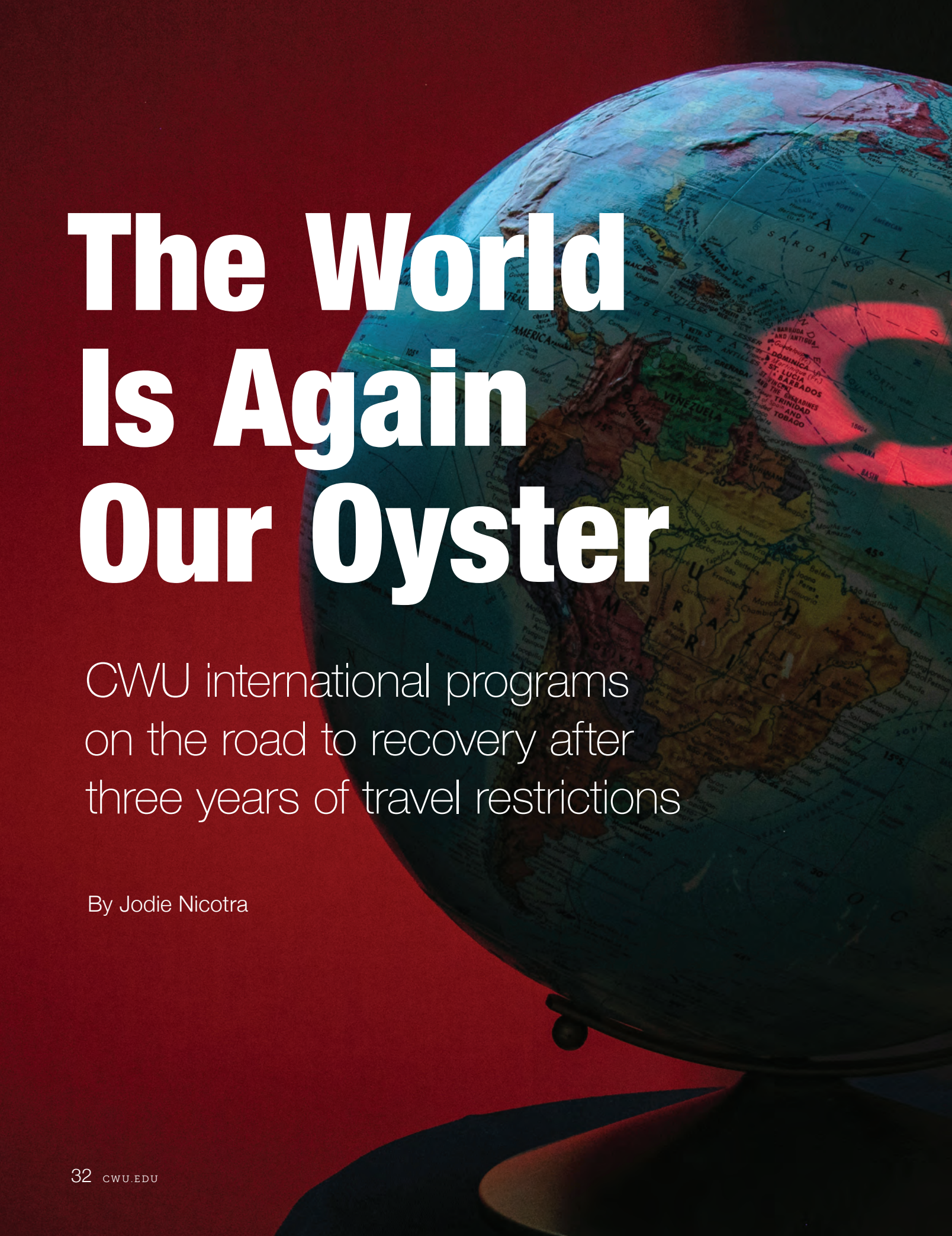
## Academic Highlights

- Dedicated weight room for teaching, training
- Remodeled, expanded dance studio
- Separate gym space for sport activity courses
- Classroom, office space for NW Center for Sport

## Athletics Highlights

- Upgraded arena for volleyball, basketball games and community events
- Elevated baseline walkways, open concourse, enhanced video displays
- Expanded fieldhouse with 70-yard Mondo track, artificial turf, drop-down batting cages
- Dedicated varsity weight room and locker rooms





# The World Is Again Our Oyster

CWU international programs  
on the road to recovery after  
three years of travel restrictions

By Jodie Nicotra





*After three years of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, CWU's international programs are thriving again, with hundreds of students coming to Washington and traveling abroad.*

The past three-plus years have been anything but normal for CWU's international programs.

With travel to and from the university severely limited due to pandemic restrictions, Central students, staff, and faculty were forced to recalibrate their expectations about exchanges, study abroad opportunities, and even tourist visits.

While international students and education abroad programs experienced perhaps the most extreme turmoil between 2020-23, the pandemic also provided opportunities for fresh thinking that have proven highly beneficial to how CWU approaches international education.

## Years of Building Goodwill

The confusion and uncertainty created by the pandemic threw every university's international exchange programs into disarray. But Central's long-term relationships with foreign institutions like Asia University allowed CWU to receive international students earlier than most.

"They trusted us and we trusted them because we'd historically worked so closely together," said Nicki Kukar, director of CWU's International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) and the Asia University America Program (AUAP).

Central proposed a two-month AUAP trial program in February 2022, when travel was still restricted in most countries. Thanks to Central's strict safety protocols, a small cohort of Japanese students from Asia University came and studied for seven weeks, with almost no issues.

CWU was then able to parlay that successful pilot into exchanges with other institutions outside of the U.S.

"Our Japanese partners ended up sending quite a few students to Central, because other places either weren't open yet or weren't ready," Kukar said. "Central was at the forefront, saying 'Yes, we want students. We're ready.'"

ISSS's bold stance paid off, and CWU's international student population recovered before many other colleges and universities.

"Our numbers last fall were really healthy because of the backlog of students who wanted to study internationally and because we were primed before most U.S. schools," Kukar said. "We were ready to take that chance."

There are currently around 440 international students from 67 countries at Central—368 of whom are degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students. Many come either on their own or as cohorts through exchange programs like AUAP. Some enroll as English language learners through the University English as a Second Language (UESL) program, and many are transfer students at Central's eight university centers and instructional sites.

Prior to the pandemic, ISSS had hired an international student recruiter to increase the number of degree-seeking students at the centers. Preliminary recruitment efforts were successful, until the pandemic forced closures of many programs



appealing to international students. Now ISSS has changed its focus to recruiting for information technology and computer science programs offered in Ellensburg and at the centers.

“We’re working together more with departments to make sure that the transition for international students is really smooth,” said Stacy Soderstrom, associate director of ISSS. “It’s a lot more cross-collaboration.”

Another unforeseen benefit is that after being forced to conduct courses and other business online during the pandemic, many aspects of ISSS have been permanently altered, often for the better.

The shift to Zoom allowed for “combined coursework,” where international students match up with a CWU course. For instance, Central students taking East Asian geography might meet with Japanese students on Zoom to talk and share information. Or, former AUAP students living in Japan might meet virtually to talk about Japanese culture with CWU students about to visit Japan.

“The students from Japan who were here had been helped—maybe not by these Central students, but by others, so they want to repay that,” Kukar said. “It’s just really neat. To me, that’s what international education is all about: providing opportunities for students to connect with students.”

## Reimagining Recruitment

Zoom has also eased some aspects of recruiting international students. Pre-pandemic recruiting required arduous travel to reach would-be students and partner programs. Now, it often only requires being able to wake up and turn on the computer in the middle of the night.

“We pivoted to all online virtual recruitment: webinars, virtual fairs, virtual high school visits, drop-in hours, tons and tons of events,” Soderstrom said. “I think what was great about the pandemic was allowing us to think more broadly. We were able to recruit in countries and regions we haven’t been to yet because we hadn’t had the budget or the time to travel there.”

The virtual approach to recruiting has quickly become a major success story for CWU. Applications have increased, and the international student population has diversified significantly. In just eight years, the number of countries represented rose from 30 to 67, with students now coming from places like Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Rwanda.

“A lot of the increase is the result of being more deliberate in connecting with students in their area,” Soderstrom said. “Being able to put Central’s name out there and be more visible to more of the world has been a really exciting part of this new realm of recruitment.”

Soderstrom added that a significant side benefit to virtual recruiting is that it is far less physically demanding on recruiters.

“Traveling internationally is one of my favorite parts of my job,” she said. “But, you know, I’ve also gotten really settled with

being here, so I’m okay not being on the road for tons of time. Being in five to eight countries and being gone for six weeks every fall is kind of exhausting.”

Of course, Zoom hasn’t entirely replaced physical travel. In December 2022, Kukar and others, including former Provost Michelle DenBeste, visited some of Central’s mainstay partners in Japan. Soderstrom and another recruiter planned to hit the road this fall to Brazil, Vietnam, and Qatar, among other locales.

And although some international transfer students enjoyed the flexibility of online coursework, students are generally happy to be back in person.

“Everything’s open, travel’s a lot easier, and there are fewer restrictions,” Soderstrom said. “Students can fulfill their university dream and lifestyle more easily than they could during the pandemic, which is nice. Participating in all of the activities, events, sports, going on trips with friends, all that good stuff. They’re excited to be back.”

## Study Abroad Is Back

While CWU was more prepared than other Washington institutions to receive students from other countries, it was not ready to send our students abroad. Pre-pandemic, around 240 Central students per year participated in short- and long-term education abroad programs. But in 2022, only 109 students studied abroad, and most of those were individual programs through either CWU exchanges or third-party sponsors.

“We had a surge last fall of students wanting to study abroad, most of whom had been planning on it since before the pandemic,” said Steve Cook, associate director of education abroad. “But looking at next year, there are fewer students who want to go, at least for the full-semester and academic-year programs.”

Prior to 2020, the bulk of international study abroad opportunities had been small, faculty-directed programs. But the uncertainties of the pandemic, and the need for extensive contingency planning, led most faculty to postpone their programs.

With pandemic restrictions loosened, short-term, faculty-led programs began to pick up once more, with groups this year going to Japan, Ireland, and Ecuador.

Based on his observations evaluating application essays for a national study abroad scholarship program, Cook thinks it may take some time for study abroad numbers to reach previous levels.

“I think the pandemic did a number on people psychologically,” he said. “Students on campus are feeling the after-effects, and some of that manifests in just focusing on the classes they need for graduation.”

To bolster student awareness of education abroad, Cook’s office has increased its presence at orientations and admitted student days.

“I’ll talk to parents about what’s possible as far as study abroad, with the idea that maybe they’ll talk to their students. And their student will eventually come to us,” Cook said, adding that



once the effects of the pandemic wear off, he hopes numbers of both individualized exchanges and faculty-led education abroad programs will rebound.

In the meantime, his office has a variety of initiatives that are designed to make education abroad more appealing to students. One effort involves creating more focused possibilities to make the experience feel less overwhelming.

“We’re working with our language department so that, in addition to regular exchanges, we have some options for students who may want a different type of experience, maybe shorter term,” Cook said. “We have specific exchange partners and we can say to students, ‘This will be your dedicated partner and program.’”

## Looking Ahead

The Office of International Studies and Programs is also working on a branded internship abroad program to help students gain experience in international business and other disciplines.

“The idea is that, hopefully, that makes decision-making a little easier for students,” Cook said. “We’d essentially be putting together a package for students who want the simplicity of having something prepackaged.”

Another key pillar for the International Studies office is to establish a stronger presence at the sites and centers. Cook hopes

to not only encourage nontraditional students to get involved in education abroad; he wants to invite instructors to include these students in their plans for faculty-led study abroad programs.

“We’re trying to encourage faculty to develop directed programs, as most of them are here on the main campus, to make sure students at the centers have the same opportunities,” he said.

One thing is certain: while the pandemic created serious disruption for international student exchanges at CWU, it also gave everyone the opportunity to take a fresh look at how they approach international education.

“Before COVID, people took international exchanges for granted, and they didn’t throw themselves into it or appreciate it like they do now,” Kukar said.

After being forced to navigate pandemic travel restrictions, students and faculty now have a renewed appreciation for education abroad, she added. As a result, the value has become much more apparent.

“Once it was gone and the world stopped turning, then suddenly everybody’s like, ‘Wait a minute, something’s missing,’” Kukar said. “And now it’s back. And there’s just a lot more joy around it. People are just thrilled to be involved.” ■

*AUAP students (from left) Takeda Ako, Maeda Chihaya, and Ishii Sesena get to know other international students at CWU’s International Student Welcome event in early October.*





# Brother-Sister Duo Helps Drive Alumni Mentorship Program

By Robin Burck

Siblings Teresa and Joe King are using their CWU educations and professional experience at The Boeing Company to give back to current students by becoming mentors.

After earning her undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering technology (MET) and graduate degree in engineering technology from Central, Teresa ('91, '02) has enjoyed a long career in the aerospace field. She has spent the last 17 years at Boeing, where she is currently the cabin development and integration senior project manager.

Likewise, her brother, Joe ('96), earned his degree in MET and has spent the bulk of his career at Boeing, where he leads the Functional Integration Single and Multiple Failure team for the 777X development program, supporting certification deliverables.



CWU alumni Joe and Teresa King.

"The MET degree I earned at Central helped prepare me for my professional career," Joe said. "I wanted to share this experience with CWU engineering students. Teresa and I recognized that soft-skill development is key to success in any professional career, so we developed the mentoring program to emphasize that throughout their senior project work."

Not only do Teresa and Joe work with their mentees on topics pertinent to working in the MET field; they also spend time focusing on soft skills, such as communication, leadership, adaptability, and teamwork.

This soft-skill development includes facilitating in-person dry-run presentations of the students' senior project presentations and a résumé writing workshop that helps them put their best foot forward when applying for jobs.

This well-rounded approach helped four of the students Joe and Teresa mentored last year find jobs with Boeing after graduation. This year, Teresa mentored five students, three of whom have already been hired into careers in their field. She is also working to place the other two as entry-level engineers.

"Both Joe and I have been very fortunate that we had such a great mentor in our MET chair when we were at Central," Teresa said of the late Walt Kaminski. "He was our champion. He truly believed in his students, and I personally feel I would not be where I am if it weren't for his unwavering support. I thought this would be a great way to honor his legacy, and I saw it as a chance to give back."

Looking to the future, both Teresa and Joe plan to continue mentoring Central students and encouraging other alumni to give it a try.

"A lot of alumni think the only way to give back is financially," Teresa said. "I would encourage alumni to think outside the box because giving back can come in so many forms. Alumni are doing great things, and many students could benefit from their expertise. I have gotten so much out of mentoring that I wish I would have done this sooner."

If you're interested in becoming a mentor to CWU students, visit [cwu.edu/alumni](http://cwu.edu/alumni). ■

## NSF Delivers \$15 Million to Fund Regional Earthquake Research Center

A \$15 million, five-year grant from the National Science Foundation will fund a multi-institution earthquake research center to study the Cascadia subduction zone and bolster earthquake preparedness in the Northwest and beyond. The Cascadia Region Earthquake Science Center (CRESCENT) will be the first center of its kind in the nation focused on earthquakes at subduction zones. Led by the University of Oregon, CRESCENT includes researchers from 14 institutions, including CWU, the University of Washington, and Oregon State University.



## National Association Honors Zentner for Public Service

Longtime CWU Geological Sciences Professor Nick Zentner was presented with GSA Public Service Award from the Geological Society of America (GSA) at an October ceremony. Best known for his work on the Emmy Award-winning "Nick on the Rocks" program on PBS, Zentner has earned the respect of his students and colleagues alike for his ability to connect with them while sharing his extensive knowledge about geology. Zentner also serves as the science outreach and education coordinator for his department.



# Study Abroad Year Evolves into Overseas Teaching Career

By Robin Burck

For some, studying abroad means spending a short time in a foreign country before returning home to finish school, graduate, and find a job. For others, like Dustin Kidd, it's a chance to fall in love with a new place and decide to stay there.

Like many young people, Kidd wasn't sure where his path would lead after high school. When faced with choosing which college to attend, a simple, personal touch made one institution stand out in his mind.

"The real kicker for me choosing Central was the acceptance letter," said Kidd ('00), who grew up in Pasco. "Every other college addressed my letters as 'dear prospective student,' but my letter from Central was addressed to me, by my name."

He began learning Japanese at Central and decided to continue his studies at the University of Shimane, a CWU sister-university in Japan. He had such a positive experience there that he knew he would want to go back someday.

After graduation, Kidd returned to Shimane for three years as an assistant English teacher in elementary and middle school. He then taught only elementary students for two years.

That's when a connection from Kidd's time at CWU—a person who came from Shimane to Central via the exchange program—offered him a teaching job at a private school in Hokkaido.

"The way I got that job showed me that it all kind of connects back," Kidd said. "After a couple years, I really started to miss Shimane and got a job teaching at a private high school back there before teaching part-time on campus."

After five years of teaching part-time, Kidd was hired full-time in 2014, when he began teaching classes about observing



*Dustin Kidd ('00) teaches Japanese students English and intercultural understanding in Shimane, Japan.*

cultures from different perspectives, focusing on intercultural understanding.

Kidd also participated in a professor exchange program when he was a student. He enjoyed his time at Shimane University so much that he still works there as an English education lecturer in the Faculty of Education.

This year, he is involved with the student teaching committee, which organizes student teaching practice with their affiliated kindergarten, elementary, and junior high schools.

"It is fun because the students are always bringing new ideas and new perspectives," Kidd said. "I have the opportunity to teach culture and guiding, focusing on visiting sightseeing spots in the area, but looking at them from a perspective of explaining them to a person who is not from Japan."

Kidd put this concept into practice when he brought groups of students from Shimane to CWU each summer for about three weeks prior to the pandemic. While in Ellensburg, the students learned more about the American culture with a chaperone who knew the campus and the town.

Kidd enjoyed coming back and visiting while showing his students where his journey to becoming their professor began.

"Before I was an exchange student, I helped out with the ESL program and took students from Shimane University around Central's campus when they came to visit," he said. "I was on the receiving end of helping students, and now that I'm over in Shimane, I had the chance to bring students over to Central." ■



## College of Business Welcomes New Dean This Fall

Dr. Faiza Khoja joined CWU this fall as the new dean of the College of Business. In her 20 years of experience in academic, professional, and administrative roles, Khoja has championed experiential learning and career readiness. She previously served as CEO of a nonprofit school for special needs students, chair of the board of directors of a federal credit union, and dean of the College of Business Administration at Texas A&M University-Central Texas.



## Violin Professor Receives Arts Treasure Award

The Ellensburg Arts Commission selected longtime CWU music Professor Carrie Rehkopf as the recipient of the 2023 Arts Treasure Award last spring. The award is presented annually to a local artist in recognition of their contributions and/or service to the community. The Arts Commission said the award celebrates Rehkopf's "contributions to the arts and to the cultural and creative life of Ellensburg for the past 33 years."



# Five Wildcats Play Key Roles in Seahawks' Success

By Robin Burck

When you have your sights set on working in the National Football League, nothing is better than landing a job with your home-state franchise. For a small fraternity of CWU alumni, that dream has become a reality.

All five Wildcat graduates have worked hard to prove themselves in the NFL, and they now hold prominent roles within the Seattle Seahawks organization.

The head athletic trainer for the Seahawks, David Stricklin ('03), began his NFL career in 2002 with the San Francisco 49ers as a summer intern while he was still a student trainer for several sports at Central.

"When I was a student trainer, we were pretty immersed in what we were doing," Stricklin said. "My favorite memories are the relationships that were created with my fellow student athletic trainers. They played a major role in my development as a person and athletic trainer."

Stricklin took a season-long position as an athletic training intern for the Seahawks in 2005, and then became a full-time assistant for baseball and football at Oregon State University. He returned to the Seahawks in 2010 as an assistant athletic trainer, ultimately becoming the head trainer in 2019.

*Wildcats working for the Hawks, from left: Greg Olson ('86), quarterbacks coach; David Stricklin ('03), head athletic trainer; Aaron Hineline ('05), director of college scouting; Nolan Teasley ('07), assistant general manager; and Kirk Parrish ('92), senior college scouting coordinator and area scout. Photo by Rod Mar, Seattle Seahawks*



## CWU Football Coach Selected for Bill Walsh Fellowship

CWU football assistant coach Ronnie Scott accepted the Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship with the Pittsburgh Steelers last spring. The fellowship, named after the late Pro Football Hall of Fame head coach, provides experience to outstanding coaches from diverse backgrounds. The program was designed as a vocational tool to increase the number of full-time NFL minority coaches. Amanda Ruller, a graduate assistant and offensive analyst for the Wildcats, completed the Bill Walsh Fellowship program with the Seattle Seahawks last season.



## Governor Appoints Mitchell as CWU Student Trustee

Washington Governor Jay Inslee appointed CWU senior Sasha Mitchell as the student representative on the Board of Trustees for the 2023-24 academic year. She will serve as a voting member, as well as a liaison between the board and the student body. Mitchell is an English language and literature major minoring in law and justice who plays for the Wildcat softball team. She also serves as a volunteer for the Diversity and Equity Center and works for the Wildcat Pantry.



Another Seahawks coach and CWU alum, Aaron Hinline ('05), was a running back for the Wildcats. After graduation, he was working as a graduate assistant when the Seahawks sent out a flyer to several schools in Washington.

CWU's coaching staff passed along the message to Hinline, knowing that sharing the news would likely mean losing him to the Seahawks. As the Wildcat coaches expected, Hinline was hired within the pro personnel department, where he worked for the next four years.

When head coach Pete Carroll joined the Seahawks in 2010, a role opened up for Hinline in the college ranks, taking him and his family to Oklahoma, where he scouted college players across the country. It wasn't long before he became the Seahawks' director of college scouting, managing and overseeing all of the area scouts while also evaluating players.

Hinline is happy that he has spent his career with the Seahawks, saying, "We are all very fortunate to be working for our hometown team and recognize that Central was a big part of why we have the opportunity to be where we are."

Hinline's friend and teammate, Nolan Teasley ('07), also played running back for the Wildcats. The two stayed in touch after leaving Central, and Hinline noted that good timing and irony led him and Teasley to work together again.

"Nolan randomly texted me at a time that we were looking to bring another local guy into the organization, and I knew Nolan's work habits and knew he was motivated for the right reasons," Hinline said. "He has skyrocketed through the organization at this point, and it is well-deserved."

After joining the Seahawks as an intern in 2013, Teasley quickly climbed the organizational ladder. He held several roles in the pro personnel department and most recently was promoted to assistant general manager earlier this year.

When asked what his new role looks like, Teasley said, "There is no typical day in the National Football League. It depends on the time of year and depends on the day of the week. In my role, I look over our processes and try to find ways to be more efficient

and improve our roster to be a consistent, championship-caliber football team."

In 2019, Teasley received a 4 Under 40 award from CWU, which recognizes individuals who excel in their industries or communities through their leadership roles and commitment to personal growth and community involvement.

He and his 2007 teammates also were inducted into the CWU Hall of Fame that year.

"I look back on my time at Central fondly and have a ton of great memories," Teasley said. "I met my wife and lifelong friends there. Revisiting campus and seeing all the things that they've done and are doing, I am proud of the direction it is going in and I'm excited to be involved moving forward."

Another CWU Hall of Fame football player and the Wildcat with the longest tenure with the Seahawks is Kirk Parrish ('92), the team's senior college scouting coordinator. Now in his 25th year with the team, Parrish maintains college prospect

information, manages university relations, and serves as the club contact for the NFL Combine and college all-star games.

The most recent CWU alumni addition to the Seahawks coaching staff is Greg Olson ('86), who was also a student-athlete while earning his degree. He returned to Central's coaching staff as the offensive coordinator from 1990-93, mentoring future Seahawk quarterback Jon Kitna.

Olson has enjoyed a long and successful career with eight NFL franchises. This year he had the opportunity to return to his home state as the Seahawks' quarterbacks coach.

When you look at the growing list of CWU alumni who work for the Seahawks, they not only share a love for the game of football; they are also proud to call themselves Wildcats.

"I am very grateful for the experience I had as a student-athlete at CWU," Olson said. "From the outstanding professors in the education department who taught me the importance of preparation and presentation, to the coaches who taught me the value of competition, I couldn't have picked a better place to prepare me for my future." ■

**"We recognize  
that Central was  
a big part of  
why we have the  
opportunity to be  
where we are."**

Aaron Hinline



### **Rugby Standout Named National Player of the Year**

CWU Athletics celebrated its second national player of the year award of 2023 when rugby standout Keia Mae Sagapolu was honored with the MA Sorensen Award as the top women's rugby player in the nation. The graduate student from Tacoma became the first Wildcat ever to win the award. She joined CWU basketball standout Samantha Bowman, who won the Division II National Player of the Year Award in March.



### **CWU Professor Selected as English Language Specialist**

Professor of Education Dr. Kate Mastruserio Reynolds traveled to Egypt in August after being selected by the U.S. State Department for the English Language Specialist program. Reynolds, a member of the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) faculty, spent 23 days in Cairo and Luxor, familiarizing local English teaching supervisors with transformational leadership and mentoring teachers.



# The World Is His Canvas

By David Leder

Photos courtesy of  
Rex DeLoney

Back when sports illustration was booming in the 1980s and '90s, Rex DeLoney was on his way to becoming one of the most prodigious artists in the industry.

Long before he came to CWU to pursue a master's degree in teaching, DeLoney ('00) became known for his paintings of pro and college sports figures, including Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Charles Barkley, Shawn Kemp, Drew Bledsoe, and Ken Griffey Jr.

His wall of fame also includes the likes of Phil Jackson, John Paxson, Horace Grant, Napoleon Kauffman, Jeffrey Leonard, Dale Ellis, and Kenny Easley—just to name a few.

Among DeLoney's most notable sports illustrations were the multiple inside cover paintings he created for Beckett Sports Magazine. He also created commissioned paintings for members of the Seattle Seahawks, Seattle SuperSonics, and the Bledsoe family.

"I knew Scottie Pippen when I was at the University of Central Arkansas, and he would put my paintings on his wall," said DeLoney, who is now approaching the end of his teaching career in his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas. "One year I did a collage of the Bulls before they won the title and got everyone to sign it—even Michael Jordan. ... I kept that one."

In 1992, DeLoney was recognized as one of the top sports artists in the country for the painting of Barkley. Around that time, NBC Television featured him for a series of illustrations he did of Kemp, one of the Sonics' stars during their NBA Finals run in 1996.

His work was displayed at poster shops and restaurants in Seattle and Yakima, and he was getting paid handsomely for his work. DeLoney's passion for sports illustration was starting to show significant promise, but as the genre's popularity began to wane in the 1990s, he chose to focus his attention on teaching.



**"One of the things  
I've always said is  
I'm an artist educator.  
I was born an artist  
and I'm from a  
family of artists.  
And even when  
I retire in a couple  
of years, I will  
continue to create art.  
It's just who I am."**

Rex DeLoney

To see more of Rex DeLoney's  
work, visit [rexdeloney.com](http://rexdeloney.com).





*Seen So Much*

“After freelancing for a few years, I thought it was going to blossom into something really big,” he said. “My sports illustration work was really taking off in the early to mid-’90s, but I couldn’t devote all of my energy to it because I was teaching.”

DeLoney moved to Washington in 1989 and worked as a paraprofessional in the Yakima School District for three years. One day, former Eisenhower High School art teacher Chuck Naasz invited him to present his sports illustrations to his class. The session went so well that Naasz encouraged DeLoney to go back to school and earn his teaching certificate.

“Chuck was really pivotal in my decision to become a teacher, and he’s a big reason I chose to go to Central,” he said, adding that his mother—a high school teacher in Arkansas for 30 years—also inspired him to go the teaching route.

After completing his master’s degree in Ellensburg, DeLoney returned to Yakima as an art teacher and football coach. In 2002, he went home to Little Rock, where he is now in his 34th year as an educator.

“One of the things I’ve always said is I’m an artist educator,” he said. “I was born an artist and I’m from a family of artists. And even when I retire in a couple of years, I will continue to create art. It’s just who I am.”

When DeLoney isn’t in the classroom, he can usually be found at his studio in North Little Rock, in the same location where his parents owned an antique shop for many years. His mom gifted him the building in 2020 and he converted it into a studio and gallery called Studio Henry.

He’s still a sports fan at heart, but his artistic inspiration nowadays is derived from religious themes, historical events, family settings, and issues that are influential in society.

“As I matured, my art evolved into what I’m doing now—things that are relevant in today’s culture,” he said.

One of the recent exhibitions DeLoney is most proud of is titled “Brothers By One,” which depicts Black athletes throughout history who have fought for social justice. He drew inspiration for the piece from historical icons, such as Bill Russell, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Muhammad Ali, and modern-day social justice advocates like Colin Kaepernick and Jaylen Brown.

Another of his most memorable recent works is titled “A Heated Moment,” which depicts the parallels between Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin, two African American boys from different eras who were killed unjustifiably.

“I like creating works of art that speak to these issues and put them out there for people to see,” DeLoney said. “I really enjoy sharing the history of African American culture, and I have been told that my work stands out due to my use of color and the messages that come across. I want my art to be impactful, and these paintings tend to leave a lasting impression.” ■



*Light Unto My Path*



*Former Seattle SuperSonics star Shawn Kemp*



*Not My Anthem: Wayne Collette and Vince Matthews at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.*



*Dreamcatchers*





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## HELP BUILD FUTURES

The Wildcat Promise helps close the gap between aid students receive and the total cost of attending CWU. The program provides guaranteed funding for students to supplement their existing federal, state, and other financial aid support for four years if they remain in good academic standing.

Make an impact on the futures of CWU students by supporting The Wildcat Promise.

**[cwu.edu/give](http://cwu.edu/give)**

CWU is an EEO/AA/Title IX Institution. For accommodation e-mail: [DS@cwu.edu](mailto:DS@cwu.edu).

