

# CRIMSON & BLACK

CENTRAL  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
CELEBRATES  
PRESIDENT  
JAMES L.  
GAUDINO



**JUNE 5, 1949**

Born in Napa, California, to Peter and Lersedna Gaudino

**JUNE 1964**

Earned Eagle Scout Badge from Boy Scout Troop 85

**DECEMBER 1966**

Honored for football prowess and scholastic achievement as a senior by the Northern California Chapter of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame

**JUNE 1967**

Graduated from Napa High School

**JUNE 1972**

Earned BS degree and was commissioned as a second lieutenant from the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado

**MAY 1976**

Obtained MS in Management from Troy University, Troy, Alabama

**MAY 1988**

Awarded PhD in Communications from Michigan State University (MSU), East Lansing, Michigan; hired as assistant professor in the Department of Advertising at MSU

**1988-2003**

Served as executive director of the National Communication Association, Washington, D.C.

**SEPTEMBER 2003**

Hired as founding dean of the College of Communication and Information, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

**JANUARY 2009**

Became 14th president of Central Washington University

**OCTOBER 2011**

Opening of \$19.2 million Hogue Hall expansion

**APRIL 2012**

Opening of renovated Hogue Hall main building

**SEPTEMBER 2012**

Opening of \$37 million Barto Hall, a new 368-bed residence hall for students

**DECEMBER 2015**

Completion of a comprehensive overhaul and updating of campus information systems at CWU

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

Opening of \$64 million Discovery Hall (originally called Science II)

**JULY 2017**

CWU transitions to a new budget management system

**SEPTEMBER 2018**

Opening of \$61 million Samuelson Hall

**SEPTEMBER 2018**

Renovations of Lind and Bouillon halls, Tomlinson Stadium, and Recreation Complex

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

Opening of \$48 million Dugmore Hall, a new 402-bed residence hall for students, and Northside Commons dining facility

**JUNE 2021**

Officially stepped down from his position as President on June 6, 2021

**JANUARY 2022**

Opening of \$60 million Health Sciences Building





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# Gaudino Embodies CWU Spirit

By Richard Moreno

Several years ago, I received an email from a woman who was eager to share her story. She and her son, soon to be a first-year student, were visiting the CWU campus in Ellensburg for the first time and needed to stop by the Registrar's office. They had mistakenly gone to Barge Hall, where they were told they needed to go to Bouillon Hall. Confused and a little frustrated, they stopped the first person they encountered outside of Barge to ask for directions. The man responded by immediately offering to guide them to the Registrar's office personally.

As they walked across campus, she said the man chatted about some of the buildings they passed and asked what the woman's son planned to study. He extolled the virtues of Central and told the young man he had made a good decision. He walked them into the Registrar's office and then asked the staff to help the woman.

"Certainly, President Gaudino," one of them answered.

In her email, the woman said she had no idea the nice man who had been so helpful was the head of the university, and she was impressed that he was so approachable, friendly, and kind. She was certain her son had made the right choice in deciding where he wanted to go to college.

Stories like that define the tenure of President James L. Gaudino at Central.

He has made that welcoming and approachable spirit the school's external image, and its reputation. It is not surprising that Central has experienced record first-year enrollments and is now the most diverse public university in the state.

Since arriving in January 2009, Gaudino has also presided over an institution that has experienced an unprecedented building boom. The university has modernized its enrollment management, budget management, and data management systems.

"I am proud of those accomplishments, but I cannot take credit for them," he said about his CWU achievements. "All that we have achieved over the past 12 years is the result of working with the people that I've been surrounded by. Central is a team, and the credit goes to the community we have built.

"No president does it alone," he continued. "No one person has the time, the breadth of experience, or the monopoly of good ideas. Success is the result of working with and relying on the people around you."

That reliance on a team to succeed can be traced to Gaudino's youth, when he was a standout athlete in school and later during his years serving in the Air Force.

"I most proud of our efforts to improve our culture and systems of shared governance. That has allowed us to achieve, and encouraged us ask ourselves collectively, 'can we be better tomorrow than we are today?'" he said. "The answer is always that we can, and our sense of community gives us the strength to constantly improve. That is the hallmark of a great university."

Gaudino said what he will miss most about leaving his position are the people he worked with during the past 12 years. "I have had the honor and privilege of working with a talented and dedicated group of faculty, staff, and students," he said. "One does not often find that in life, and we're going to miss it."

Gaudino said the reward of being president is the pride he has felt in the achievements of others: "My private conceit is feeling that I that helped facilitate the work of others."

To illustrate his point, he thought back to a few years ago when he and his wife, Katie, accompanied CWU's student jazz band to the New Generations Jazz Festival in Monterey, California.

"It's a by-invitation-only college competition that included big-name schools of music from USC, UNLV, and the University of Miami. I thought that it was an honor to be there," he said. "The end of the story is that Central's jazz combo ended up winning the competition and then being invited to perform at the famous Monterey Jazz Festival itself. Katie and I felt joy in sharing that experience with our faculty and students, even though we played no direct role in their performances."

Gaudino often slips into the plural "we" when describing his role as president. He noted that his wife had been a true partner throughout his time as president,

attending countless meetings, university events, and other functions.

“We have done everything together. She has been at my side and I at her side throughout our life together,” he said. “About the only time Katie does not share equally in her passion for the activity is on a cold football Saturday. She is more likely to be in the heated press box while I tend to be pacing the sidelines,” he added with a smile.

“Without her encouraging me on the bad days and keeping me humble on the good ones, it would not have been possible for me to do this job for 12 years.”

As for his legacy, Gaudino is reluctant to go there.

“Legacies are the things that other people remember,” he said. “So I will leave that for others to consider. My hope is that Central continue its efforts to enhance the culture of giving, sharing, and achieving that is so central to our success.

“It is sometimes said that a past president is a bit like the last sandwich on the picnic table, the one that has been the sun for too long,” he added. “It is time for a fresh tray to arrive. Of course, I am speaking of Dr. Jim Wohlpart and his wife Sasha. I hope they get the same support that Katie and I received and that thoughts of our legacy fade as they work to build theirs.”

Speaking about his successor, Gaudino had a few words of advice: “My biggest challenge was needing to have patience. Most presidents I know are competitive, goal-oriented individuals, and those qualities can some-

times conflict with an institution’s commitment to deliberation and shared governance. Change takes time, and it took me time to fully appreciate that fact.”

He also encouraged the new president to “trust the great people who make up Central Washington University. Katie and I found it essential to be the authentic versions of ourselves and never to play roles. The university and local community prize honesty, candor, and authenticity.”

Gaudino is less certain when it comes to discussing his own future plans. He admits to being the type of person who must remain active, *doing something*.

“I have considered myself a person with hobbies, though I rarely engaged in them,” he joked. “I play golf, but infrequently and poorly. I flyfish, but not very well. I like to work with wood, but I don’t have my tools anymore. I want to restore old cars, but I have been working on the same project for 10 years, and it is still in pieces. So, one or all of those things.

“We have two wonderful sons that we want to visit with more often, and Katie and I were recently blessed with a granddaughter. So, I suspect we will be traveling and spending time with family,” he said.

“Whatever we do and wherever we are, we will remember the many students, faculty, staff, and alumni we had the privilege of meeting over the last decade,” he continued. “And we will also be tuning into *The Burg* to keep track of the Wildcats.” ■



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# First Lady Keeps CWU Close to Her Heart

By David Leder



Katie Gaudino hasn't been in the spotlight as much as her husband over the past 12 years, but CWU's first lady almost always has been nearby.

From President Gaudino's first day on the job in 2009 to his final commencement speech, his wife of nearly 40 years has been by his side.

"My role has always been helping share the good news coming out of CWU with everyone I greet or meet," Katie Gaudino said. "I not only want them to feel welcome; I want them to walk away knowing something positive about CWU that they may not have known before."

Fortunately for her, opportunities to share the university's success stories were abundant and frequent. Over the years, she has had the opportunity to interact with thousands of Central students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents across the region.

By joining her husband to host dozens of new-student welcome receptions, alumni dinners, and holiday gatherings at University House, the Gaudinos have demonstrated first-hand how friendly and welcoming CWU is. Even more gratifying is when people remember the impact those events had on their lives.

"When we travel, Jim still gets recognized in public by parents who approach him to offer their heartfelt thanks for that session on the lawn," she said. "That always makes me smile."

The popularity of University House events led the Gaudinos to start hosting regular student dinners, allowing them to interact with young people on campus and learn how the university administration could help them achieve their goals.

"(The dinners) helped give us both a deeper understanding of what needed more focus and how to be better advocates for their needs as they define them," Gaudino said. The dinners expanded to include faculty members, classified staff, and other groups on campus.

"We found this one-on-one time with the everyday CWU stakeholders to be some of the most helpful conversations we were able to have," she said.

Spending time with alumni over the years—at sporting events, award ceremonies, and fundraising efforts—also helped paint an exemplary picture of the university in Gaudino's mind.

"CWU alumni are simply some of the best people I've ever known," she said.

A number of things have changed for the Gaudinos since they joined the CWU family in 2009. They're grandparents now, and they are ready for their next adventure.

But before they go, Katie Gaudino wants everyone in the CWU and Ellensburg communities to know how much she and her husband appreciate their willingness to learn and grow with them over the past 12 years.

Most of all, she hopes people will remember President Gaudino for his commitment to improve the lives of Central students.

"I think his commitment to students will be his legacy," she said. "I know he certainly approached his every day actions and decisions focused on how to make every student's journey through CWU a richer, more valuable experience. He always put students first, for without them, there would be no call to do anything else." ■



Kim Dawson



Delores "Kandee" Cleary



Elvin Delgado



Dave Haglund

# In their ow

During his tenure, President Gaudino established himself as a "man of the people." From his interactions with prominent figures around the state, region, and country, to others who are behind the scenes, CWU's 14th president has left a lasting impression.

**Kim Dawson, executive assistant to the president and the CWU Board of Trustees:**

*"It has been great working with Jim. Not only did he help us streamline many processes in the office and upgrade technology, he also provided us with our daily dose of D&M Coffee and the occasional cappuccino—that he would make. Our office discussions of 'The Big Lebowski' and the banter regarding the Seahawks vs. the 49ers were always a highlight. All teasing aside, Jim is a very supportive person and is totally committed to CWU."*

**Dr. Delores "Kandee" Cleary, vice president of diversity and inclusivity:**

*"As a member of the Cabinet, I have had the pleasure of working closely with President Gaudino for many years. His commitment to improving the lives of minoritized students, faculty and staff at Central Washington University is commendable, sincere and genuine. He has the ability to look beyond current concerns and issues to see what we need to do now to ensure that our CWU community is one characterized by belonging. I will always value his mentorship, commitment to equity, and friendship."*

**Elvin Delgado, chair, CWU Faculty Senate**

*"As a member of the Faculty Senate leadership, I have had the pleasure of working with President Gaudino. He is a person with vision and boundless enthusiasm, who is open to new ideas and always focusing on the best ways that we can work together to improve the university."*

**Dave Haglund, commissioner, Great Northwest Athletic Conference:**

*"Jim Gaudino made an enormous difference at Central, and he was a difference-maker for the GNAC as well. Always willing to offer assistance or provide counsel, he understood the value of intercollegiate athletics at the campus, conference, and national levels. Thousands of student-athletes across the conference footprint benefited from his expertise and good judgment. Everybody knows Jim as a big fan; count me as one of his biggest."*



# n words...

**Robert Nellams, director, Seattle Center,  
vice chair, CWU Board of Trustees:**

*"As a member of the Board of Trustees, I've had an opportunity to work closely with President Gaudino for the past several years. I think what has impressed me most during that time is how genuine he is. He is authentically curious about things and truly cares about the people at Central. He showed it to me when he first came to talk about Central years ago and continues to show it every day he walks across campus, stopping to talk to everyone from the groundskeeper to a student reading a book, asking 'How's your day going?' He has been an inspiration to me and all of the Trustees and I am honored to call him my friend."*

**Don Sodergren, retired custodian, Barge Hall, CWU:**

*"I absolutely love that guy. He, obviously, was the boss, but I always wanted to be his friend. I enjoyed interacting with him very much—and he always listened. He had empathy for the people he worked with and around; it didn't matter what you did. It didn't matter if you were the custodian, a student, or the president of a company, he treated everyone the same. That's the quality of a true leader."*

**Bruce Tabb, mayor, City of Ellensburg:**

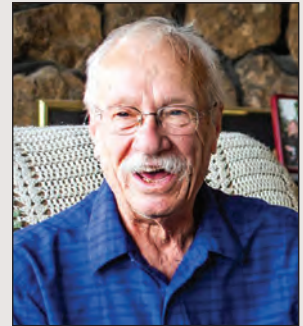
*"Jim arrived in this community holding the belief that the university and the city of Ellensburg were irrevocably linked. That linkage was mutually beneficial. He acted on that belief by building and supporting concrete interactions and ongoing communication at the administrative, staff, and educational levels. That investment has built a strong town-gown relationship that can only benefit us all as we move into the future."*

**Lindsey Wiesnewski, sports journalist, NBC Sports Northwest:**

*"I was serving at Suncadia when the president and CWU Board of Trustees were dining and meeting about business matters. Dr. Gaudino and the board called the servers back to their table and asked what we were studying at CWU. I explained that I wasn't enrolled, as I could not afford to pay out-of-state tuition and was saving to go back to school. 'We'll fix that,' he said. He gave me his business card and told me to send an email and the school would find a way for me to attend. Dr. Gaudino came through. The school offered me a scholarship and helped me apply for a WUE (Western Undergraduate Exchange) waiver to knock down my tuition costs. At CWU, I found my passion for journalism. Without his generosity, and being at the right place at the right time, I wouldn't be where I am today."*



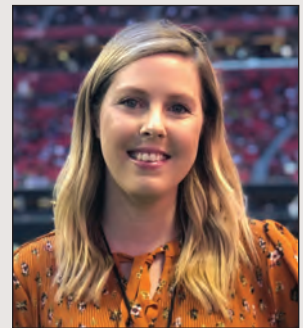
Robert Nellams



Don Sodergren



Bruce Tabb



Lindsey Wiesnewski

Photo of Don Sodergren courtesy of Yakima Herald.



*"I think if there is something that I am most proud of it's that we have built a culture of improvement, a culture of achievement, where we really do ask ourselves, 'can we be better tomorrow than we are today?' —and then we strive to become better. I'm very proud of that."*

Central Washington University presidents James G. Pappas (interim 1992), Ivory V. Nelson (1992-1999), Jerilyn S. McIntyre (2000-2008), James E. Brooks (1961-1978), and James L. Gaudino (2009-2021) walk down Walnut Mall November 6, 2009.

