A CELEBRATION OF
Outstanding
Adult Students

WEDNESDAY ■ APRIL 26, 2023
MEMORIAL UNION GREAT HALL

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Outstanding Adult Student Celebration and Reception

Welcome
Martin Rouse, associate dean and director, Adult Career and Special Student Services

Opening remarks
Joe Parisi, Dane County executive

Recognition of Badger Ready graduates and transfer students
Autumn Sanchez, Badger Ready Program manager, Adult Career and Special Student Services
Ace Hilliard, Badger Ready Program outreach coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

Transfer Students
(successfully completed Badger Ready requirements)
Jayvonna Flemming  Keerun Ismail  Avenash Pernankil
Robert Foster  Todd Johnson  Amie Swanson
Marek Higley  Kevin Marshall  Stacy H. Tran

Graduates
Mark Clark  Benjamin Hickey  Suzanne Sweetnam
Lee Duong  David Meyer
Alexandra Hentzen  Mayra Olguin

Presentation of Scholarships
Martin Rouse, associate dean and director, Adult Career and Special Student Services
Anne Niendorf, scholarship coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

The following scholarships are funded by the listed organization and private donors to the Adult Student Scholarship Fund.
Alma Baron Second Chance for Women Scholarship
Sandra Carr         Amy Elbe         Yolonda Hairston

American Association of University Women-Monona/Madison Branch Scholarship
Sanne Kelly

Joe Corry and Barbara Weston Corry Scholarship
Luccas Contreras    Anna Lamonica

Crankstart Reentry Scholarship
Deann Crawford      Nicole Knutson     Amie Swanson
Melissa Daniels    Christopher Malecki Zalissa Zongo Kafando
Nolan Frank        Kevin Marshall
Jed Heckman        Amanda Sauri

Stuart Daily Seeds of Learning Scholarship
Emily Akins         Raymond Kennedy

Nancy W. Denney Memorial Scholarship
Yolonda Hairston    Rebecca Parmentier

Kindness Matters Scholarship
Lindsay Lewerenz

Bernice D. Kuney Scholarship
Luccas Contreras    Deann Crawford

PLATO (Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization) Scholarship
Luccas Contreras    Nicole Knutson
Raymond Kennedy    Anna LaMonica
Returning Adult Scholarship
Emily Akins  Sean Harry  Corey Saffold
Sandra Carr  Megan Horvath  Meg Wilson
Luccas Contreras  Lindsay Lewerenz  Katie Woeste
Deann Crawford  Grace Lorentz
Rachel Davidson  Kaycee Rogers
B Dowling

Single Parent Undergraduate Scholarship
Leah Goldblum  Rebecca Parmentier  Amanda Sauri

University League Scholarship
Raymond Kennedy

Cynthia McCreary Holbrook Youmans University League Scholarship
Katie Woeste

Bernard Osher Reentry Scholarship
Leon Barrett  Jennifer Halvorson  Christopher Malecki
Tierney Cushman  Jed Heckman  Kevin Marshall
Amy Elbe  Sanne Kelly  Amie Swanson
Nolan Frank  Amber Kirkpatrick  Zalissa Zongo Kafando
Leah Goldblum
Outstanding Undergraduate Returning Adult Student Awards

These awards were established in 1981 by the Dean of Students Office to honor returning adults who have arrived at senior status while juggling all the commitments of adult life. As the call for nominees states, these are students “whose unusual determination and perseverance have enabled them to pursue academic goals and to contribute to the community by demonstrated leadership and/or service.”

Presentation of Adult Student Awards

Mari Magler, director, McBurney Disability Resource Center

Autumn Sanchez, award coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

Nominees

Marcus Baker
Amy Bartosiak

Cisseba Kaba
John Vetterli

Hezouwe Walada
Jaime Wendt

Finalists

Annie Lewis

Meg Mercy

Erin Vranas

Winners

Christine Fifarek

Robert Hall
Student Stories

After making the difficult decision to take a break from school due to financial challenges, Emily Akins was able to return to her studies in the fall of 2021. She is a graduate student in the master of social work program at UW–Madison, with a focus on mental health. After she graduates and earns her license as a clinical social worker, Emily will expand her current business, Naturally Listening, LLC. Emily’s goal is to serve a wider population as a Spanish-speaking psychotherapist. Emily wants to make her services accessible and affordable to all clients. At the same time, she will work on social justice issues she is passionate about including poverty and homelessness.

Marcus Baker wanted to attend UW–Madison from the first time he visited campus for a football game at age thirteen. He was admitted and started attending just after high school. He attended for two years but was unsure of what he wanted to do and had to work multiple full-time jobs to afford school, so he dropped out. Jobs with Northwest Airlines and then Union Pacific piqued his interest in the transportation sector but life had other plans for him. After a layoff and the premature birth of his twin sons he became a stay-at-home dad. Learning to care for his sons while they were in the NICU, Marcus became interested in nursing. He became an RN and worked for several years but never gave up on the idea of returning to college. He will graduate this year with a BSN and hopes to achieve a leadership role in the OR where he has worked for the past ten years.

Leon Barrett, after a lifelong pursuit of a bachelor’s degree and being the first person in his family to graduate from college, is finally fulfilling his dream of achieving a bachelor’s degree in fine arts at UW–Madison. He had to take multiple breaks due to financial strain but he’s currently in his second year and letting nothing stand in his way of excellence and honing his skills in the fine arts. He’s driven to be successful while also being a full-time father for his son. His goal is to graduate with a BFA focusing in drawing and painting, and pursue a career in Illustration while also taking care of his young son.

Over the past 20 years, Amy Bartosiak had thought about going back to school to finish a degree. She started at UW–Madison many years ago but ended up leaving when burnout from working, going to school, and grieving her father’s passing took its toll on her. She left school, moved out east, and worked as a licensed massage therapist. But Covid 19 shut down her business for three months and that, along with turning 50, was the push she needed. Familiar with the health care industry and deeply affected by her experience with hospice care while her dad was dying, Amy decided to pursue a nursing degree. She continues to work as a massage therapist while juggling the demands of being a nursing student. When she graduates this spring, she is undecided about her path but knows she wants to combine her knowledge of the alternative
and integrative medicine fields.

**Sandra P. Carr** grew up in Colombia and came to the U.S. in 1994. It wasn’t long after Sandra had graduated with a degree in management that she realized her dream was to become a teacher just like her grandma. She fulfilled that dream and after years of teaching, she decided she wanted to focus on teaching students with special needs. It wasn’t until much later that she got a break and was able to pursue a master’s degree in special education to become a certified teacher with financial help from UW–Madison.

**Mark Clark** graduated in August 2022 with a bachelor’s degree in political science. Mark is a husband, father, and business professional. After starting college right after high school, he was unable to finish his degree and thought that was the end of his academic career. However, after nearly 20 years, he decided it was time to roll up his sleeves and finish what he started. Political science has always been a passion of his. Moving back to the Midwest after nearly a decade on the West Coast, he was excited by the opportunity to complete a degree at a flagship university like UW–Madison. Mark is excited by the opportunities that come along with having a bachelor’s degree and is looking forward to seeing where it might take him. He is also excited about setting a good example for his children and being part of the community at UW–Madison.

**Luccas Contreras** is finishing a master’s degree in social work at UW–Madison and is dad to three boys under the age of seven. He has worked in the field of social work and mental health for 14 years, and is currently a behavioral health facilitator in a county Medicaid-funded program called Comprehensive Community Support (CCS). CCS is intended to assist individuals who need care outside of inpatient settings and may have ongoing needs that, if left unaddressed, could result in hospitalizations during times of crisis. He works with people across the lifespan including many teens and coming-of-age boys/young men.

**Deann Crawford** is a returning adult student after 20 years in the workforce. She built a career in the nonprofit sector and hopes to use the knowledge she gains through a management degree to help mission-based organizations stay financially healthy. After completing an associate degree in accounting at Milwaukee Area Technical College, she enrolled in the online business management program through UW–Madison. Born, raised, and still residing in Milwaukee, Deann enjoys traveling and has been to over 14 countries and counting.

**Tierney Cushman** is a single mother to a beautiful 9-year-old boy named Jax. After graduating from high school, she moved among three states for work. In 2013, she delivered her son one month earlier than his due date. After a traumatic delivery, he suffered from two spots of brain damage. Tierney and her son worked together to fully recover from the complications of his delivery. When he was ready for school, she moved home to Wisconsin to pursue her lifelong dream of attending UW–Madison.
She is now a competitive bodybuilder and strives to continue her education in nutritional sciences to potentially work as a prenatal or pediatric nutritionist so she can pay it forward to those that have helped her and her son along their journey.

**Melissa Daniels** is a Wisconsin native who enjoys dogs, music, cycling, and travel. Her path to UW–Madison began three months after her high school graduation in 1992. As a resident of Ogg Hall, she spent an inordinate amount of time riding the elevator to her room on the penthouse floor of the building. Fast forward 30 years (has it really been that long?!), and she is back at the university. This time she has chosen the dual enrollment option for the BSN@Home degree. As she completes an associate degree in nursing at Milwaukee Area Technical College, she will work towards a bachelor’s degree in nursing at UW–Madison.

**Rachel Davidson** grew up in Bison, Kansas, and then attended Texas A&M University, where some of her classes had a greater number of students than the population of her hometown. She came to Madison to study history, but decided to change course instead of pursuing a PhD as planned. She left the program with a master’s degree and a spouse that she had met in class. She and her husband now have a three-year-old daughter. Rachel began a full-time position at the Sequoya branch of Madison Public Library in 2014, and she was promoted to librarian in 2021. She is currently working toward a degree in library and information studies.

**B Dowling**, husband and father of two, returned to his alma mater in 2019 to pursue a doctorate. After receiving a bachelor’s degree, he went on a journey across state and country borders, educating and researching in both private and public sectors. However, B realized that autonomy in research was hard to achieve in these settings and that returning to school was key to further pursuit of his passion for Chinese. Today, B is no longer confined to research and presentations on what management wants, but he has the freedom to write and teach content he truly believes in. He looks forward to the day when he can teach full time in higher education.

With a long held dream of wanting to be part of the human effort to harness fusion to generate power, **Lee Duong** knew that completing a degree was crucial to continue advancing his goals and dreams. Graduating with a bachelor’s degree in applied math, engineering and physics from the College of Letters and Sciences in spring 2022, Lee was accepted to graduate school and is now pursuing a master’s degree in electrical and computer engineering.

**Amy Elbe’s** family has attended and graduated from UW–Madison for generations including her grandfather, father, uncle, and both children. Becoming UW alumni is a goal and source of pride for her entire family. Amy moved to Madison after high school to attend UW–Madison. After completing general education courses, she transferred to Madison Area Technical College to complete two
Robert Foster has always loved problem-solving, puzzles, and especially math. He'd also flatter himself by thinking that he's decent at math. For years, he intended to study math and start a career that at the very least heavily involves it. Despite his best efforts, he had to put this on hold for a few years shortly after he began college. Finally, he feels ready to move forward towards his goals again, and he intends not to let himself down. He is extremely grateful to UW–Madison in general and the Badger Ready program specifically, for giving him the opportunity to pursue his dreams once more.

Christine Fifarek left college after three years overcome with student loans, the burden of self-sufficiency, and lack of a social network. She had left home at age 18 with no family support as she started college. Unsure what to do next, over the next few years she tried out a variety of career paths and jobs in search of her true calling. When she didn’t find that calling, she decided to join the military. Without really knowing much about it, she selected the job of 68C, Licensed Practical Nurse Specialist from a long list of options. She soon found herself surrounded by leaders who believed in her and encouraged her to start working towards a BSN. When her daughter was born she was determined to be a role model for her. After graduating, Christine plans to gain experience on a ICU/Critical care unit, then apply to the nurse anesthetist doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) program at Marquette University.

Wanting to serve as a pillar for foster youth and give back to a community that has given so much to her, Jayvonna Flemming believed continuing her education at UW–Madison was a necessity. As a spring 2022 transfer student, Jayvonna seeks to earn a bachelor’s degree in social welfare from the College of Letters and Sciences.

As a nontraditional scholar, Nolan Frank is devoted to both the personal and collective processes of values-based problem-solving. He enjoys designing collaborative educational, counseling, and artistic spaces. He has been nurtured in journalism, theatre, educational psychology, as well as human ecology and history. His love for learning is a gift shared by both parents, in different but complimentary ways. He tries to network the compassionate heart, his desire to activate, and a creative (monkey) mind to remedy imbricated biopsychosocial problems, with the shared common sense and wisdom of his peers. He loves stoicism, Zen Buddhism, yoga, cultural anthropology, social history, and way too many other things to reasonably juggle or master. Momento mori - carpe diem - agape.

Leah Goldblum has a 6-year-old daughter associate degrees. She took a break from college to raise a family and start a career as a veterinary technician. She has been active in the veterinary community working in private practice, doing community work with Madison Cat Project, helping educate veterinary students at Madison College and UW–Madison, and working on the Access to Veterinary Care Coalition Project.
named Hazel who loves science. Growing up in Madison, Leah always pictured herself going to college and being a Badger. Like her daughter, she has always been curious about how things work, why they work, and what can be changed to make them work in a different way. That is why she decided to join the School of Human Ecology and learn how, what, and why people work they why they do. With this degree, she plans to make a difference within herself and her community.

Yolonda Hairston is a reentry student that traveled many roads. During her journey she was faced with many challenges that left an emotional indentation; silence kept her from seeing what was possible for her. Yolonda likes working with mothers, especially mothers without village, who are newcomers, and those that have faced many challenges. She started this work volunteering in the local library and learning centers to teach adult ESL students how to navigate grocery stores, hospitals, etc. She then began working full-time at a literacy center supporting mothers who were in the ESL program with social and emotional challenges. Now that her sons are in college, she wants to continue this work and solidify it academically and continue serving families wherever they are.

Robert Hall will graduate from UW–Madison this year with a double major in genetics and history. Along his journey he has overcome incarceration, poverty, and homelessness. Initially hiding his nonviolent felony convictions from those in the academic world, he realized that being open about his past was freeing and helped him progress and excel in his coursework. Throughout his time at UW–Madison, Robert has been involved with research, mentored students, given presentations, served on panels, and been a part of several campus organizations all while successfully completing a bachelor’s degree. His legacy to campus was starting Liberated Intellects, the first formerly incarcerated led project aimed at aiding other previously incarcerated individuals in fostering their education. Robert will begin an evolutionary biology PhD at Stanford University in fall of 2023, where he plans to continue Liberated Intellects.

Jennifer Halvorson is a nontraditional, returning adult student who initially graduated from Madison Area Technical College in 2016 with an associate degree in surgical technology. After working in rural Reedsburg for the last seven years, she plans to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in nursing and give back to her community. She hopes to obtain a doctorate of nursing practice degree and become a certified nurse midwife with a focus on providing healthcare to underserved rural areas. She would like to credit her coworkers and managers at Reedsburg Area Medical Center for always supporting her educational efforts, and her family and friends for surrounding her and lifting her up when she needed it most.

Sean Harry is a doctoral student in educational psychology with a doctoral minor in counseling psychology. Originally from London, he received a BA (Hons) from Kingston University and MSc from the Institute of Education (UCL). Sean has
STUDENT STORIES (continued)

been researcher at the Institute of Psychiatry (KCL) and University of Surrey; and before joining UW–Madison lived in Chicago and worked at Northwestern University. Upon graduation, he intends to become a clinical psychologist and is interested in supporting adolescents and young adults living in poverty and marginalized communities who’ve experienced complex trauma. Outside of studies, Sean has served as president of the APA Division 16 Student Affiliates Board, and serves on a school safety taskforce.

Jed Heckman grew up in central Wisconsin and moved to Madison to attend UW–Madison in 2000. Lacking certainty about what academic direction he wanted to pursue, he decided to leave school after three semesters. He worked in the landscaping industry and played music with many local bands in Madison over the intervening years, and has used access to advanced production classes in communication arts to sharpen skills that will benefit him in future artistic endeavors. With the encouragement of his girlfriend Elizabeth, Jed enrolled again at UW–Madison for the spring 2021 semester. He has been blessed with five children, Elias (14), Rory (10), twin boys Ira and Isaac (2), and baby Violet born in April of 2022.

As active duty Navy nuclear scout in Chicago, Alexandra Hentzen believed that completing her degree would assist with upward progression in the Navy. In fall 2022, Alexandra graduated with a bachelor’s degree in math from the College of Letters and Sciences.

As an active duty member of the United States Air Force, Benjamin Hickey wanted to complete a goal that he had for a long time: finishing a degree in computer science to pursue a profession working for a big tech company. In summer 2022, Benjamin graduated from UW–Madison with a bachelor’s degree in computer science.

After high school, Marek Higley started his post-secondary education at Madison College, hoping to eventually transfer to UW–Madison. However, addiction disorder got in the way, and his education was waylaid. Marek began working in construction, primarily as a carpenter and plumber. After a few years of working as an apprentice, he got his general contractor’s license and started his own small business doing maintenance and remodeling. During this period, after years of trial and error, he put together a long stretch of sobriety, started a family, and began ruminating about whether he was finally ready to reclaim his dream, once deferred by addiction, of graduating as a UW Badger. Enter Badger Ready. Since being admitted to Badger Ready, he has worked and cared for his family, maintaining a 4.0-grade point, while pursuing a double major in geography and cartography GIS and a certificate in either environment studies or sustainability.

Megan Horvath is a proud first-generation college student. The 11-year-long path to earning that title came with financial and emotional barriers. Despite having to take many years off while she earned a bachelor’s degree, she remained tenacious and hopeful. In her time
off, she discovered her true passion for mental health and set her goal even higher. Megan is in her first year of the master of social work program. She plans to become a licensed clinical social worker so she can serve neurodiverse girls and women. She believes that everyone should have access to mental health care by professionals that show understanding, compassion, and humility.

The Badger Ready Program gave Keerun Ismail a second chance at education. She is a 37-year-old first-generation college student majoring in human studies and family development. After graduation, Keerun intends to pursue a master’s degree in counseling psychology. She hopes to apply her knowledge and skills in the mental health field. Her inspiration for her career choice came out of her own mental health journey. She hopes to support trauma survivors like herself in their healing. In her free time, Keerun loves to spend time in nature with her dog Leo and traveling with her husband Mourad.

With a passion for teaching the youth and a desire to make his aunt proud, Todd Johnson decided to return to the classroom to complete his degree. As a spring 2022 transfer student, Todd seeks to earn a bachelor’s degree in art from the School of Education.

Cisseba Kaba graduated from Madison Area Technical College in 2010 and began working in a skilled nursing facility. It was always her intention to earn a BSN but life got in the way. The pandemic motivated her to return to school. With a family and work, she had to relearn how to be a student. Her husband was her greatest support and instilled in her the confidence to make her dream come true. Unfortunately, he became ill and Cisseba cared for him until he passed away. She is sad he will not see her graduate but knows he would be proud of what she has accomplished. Her goal is to provide holistic nursing care and advocate for her patients. Right now, her son is her biggest priority as she is deeply involved with his life and activities.

Sanne Kelly was born in Switzerland and moved from Holland to the U.S. when she was five. She lived in Wisconsin during middle school and was very active in sports, clubs, and was a very good student. After moving to Maryland, it was difficult to adjust and it triggered a major depressive episode, but she remained a good student and was active in soccer and French club. She traveled the world and became a yoga teacher and performer, and has inspired many people on their spiritual and healing journeys. She is a devoted teacher and friend to many people, and mother of one. She is a also student at UW–Madison, a place she has worked very hard to get to.

After years of struggling with substance abuse, ending up in numerous jails and rehabilitation centers throughout Pennsylvania, Raymond Kennedy was recruited into the Community College of Philadelphia’s reentry program—a program that goes to local jails and recruits offenders to enroll in the program. He was among the first three students to successfully graduate and transfer into a four-year university.
where he graduated with honors. After graduating he applied to and was accepted into UW–Madison’s master of social work program. He wants to be a licensed clinical social worker and work in correctional and reentry settings where his adverse social experiences with the criminal justice system will benefit current offenders, giving them hope that they can change and that they too can succeed.

Amber Kirkpatrick lost her GI Bill when she left the military to raise her family, but she wouldn’t let that hold her back. She received an associate degree in surgical technology from the Milwaukee Area Technical College 14 years after graduating from high school. A love of caring for patients, has led her to the UW–Madison School of Nursing. Being a first generation college student has made her more determined than ever to show her children that it is never too late to obtain higher education and make her family proud.

Nicole Knutson first enrolled at UW–Madison in the fall of 2008, but her academic journey came to an abrupt halt due to the overwhelming presence of mental illnesses. Throughout the years after leaving college, she worked diligently to overcome the many obstacles she faced. She persevered and her success propelled her to return to finish the adjourned educational quest at last. She is now fervently pursuing her lifelong dream of obtaining a bachelor’s degree in personal finance. She hopes one day to provide education and guidance to others that will impact their financial futures and help them achieve their financial goals.

Anna LaMonica is a first year doctor of nursing practice (DNP)-population health degree student. Her first degree is in nutrition. She plans to utilize both her nutrition and nursing degrees to become a nurse leader in direct community programs, participating in healthcare policy and legislation, and teaching future nurses at a doctorate level. With her nutrition and cardiac nursing background, her professional goals include creating community interventions to promote primary prevention of diseases leading to more positive health outcomes within underserved populations. Anna is a single parent to her beautiful three-year-old daughter. Through her work as a DNP nurse leader, she hopes to teach her daughter that you can accomplish anything you set your mind to with hard work and determination.

Lindsay Lewerenz is a mom of three boys and a nontraditional PharmD candidate at UW–Madison’s School of Pharmacy. Health issues prevented her from pursuing her PharmD in 2006, so she pivoted and became a pastry chef/cake designer. Never truly happy with that career, she took the opportunity to stay home full-time with her kids in 2015. She decided in 2019, as her youngest was approaching school age, to pursue her dream of becoming a pharmacist. After a year of prerequisites, she was accepted to the PharmD program. She started in fall 2020 and has maintained a GPA of 3.89 while keeping up with three busy boys and volunteering in multiple student organizations, kids’ sports associations, and Parent-Teacher
Organizations.

As an aestheteician, Annie Lewis fell in love with the hands-on healing nature of the work. When the pandemic forced her to take a break, she realized it might be time to complete the bachelor’s degree she started right out of high school. At the time, health challenges prevented her from staying at UW Oshkosh. She then pivoted and worked for an international pharmacy chain where she quickly rose to corporate executive. She had found success but not happiness. That’s when she became an aesthetician, work that she still does today having started her own business in March 2022 while an undergraduate. This spring, Annie will graduate from UW–Madison with a major in health promotion and health equity. She plans to focus on the overlap between her work as an aesthetician and being a health education specialist.

Grace Lorentz has worked as a graphic designer for the past 17 years. During those years she got married, had two daughters, and pursued her own art in her spare time. Both her daughters attend public school in Madison. Over the years, she has noticed how much the schools need funding and staff. In 2022, she realized she could combine her desire to help out at the public schools and her love of art by becoming an art teacher, so she enrolled at UW-Madison with the plan of pursuing a degree in art education through the School of Education.

Christopher Malecki returned to his scholastic journey after a thirteen-year struggle with mental illness fueled by substance abuse. Returning to university has provided him with the tools and experiences to build a future that seemed so far from the realm of possibility when he first began his journey in 2016. After discovering a latent interest in mathematics and computer science, Christopher was able to parlay his passion for creative problem solving. He has been immensely grateful for the opportunity to help others in recovery navigate their transitions to community college. As he embarks on this new chapter at UW–Madison, Christopher is committed to balancing his responsibilities as a parent and sharing his inspiring story of recovery with others.

Kevin Marshall’s attempt to get a bachelor’s degree at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities was interrupted by severe depression. He returned to Madison and earned an associate degree as a systems analyst from Madison Area Technical College, but was later turned down for many jobs for lack of a four-year degree. After twenty-some odd years of depression and sleep disorder, Kevin discovered the worst of it was caused by a vitamin D deficiency. With the mental illnesses in retreat, he sought out an opportunity to return to college and found Badger Ready. Now he’s working to get a bachelor’s degree in applied mathematics, engineering, and physics and hopes to work with family friend, Dr. Tom Kelly. Dr. Kelly’s company, Steam Instruments, is currently working on developing a device to detect viruses in real time, a potential life-saving asset in our ever-more connected world.

Meg Mercy started at UW–Madison nineteen years ago as a first-generation
STUDENT STORIES (continued)

A student with dreams of becoming a doctor, but without the ability to access financial aid, she couldn’t continue. She spent 10 years as a low-income single mother to her two daughters before she returned to school in 2020. In the meantime, she became involved with domestic violence advocacy, writing, speaking, educating, and making films. She has spoken at conferences and trainings, at the UW–Madison School of Medicine and Public Health (UW-SMPH), at the UW–Madison Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, and area churches. Meg became an advocate for major reforms to the Dane County family court procedures. She has won awards for her community service work and several scholarships for her academic work. Meg will graduate this year with a bachelor’s degree in social work. She has been accepted to and will start medical school this summer while continuing to research, write, and advocate.

With the belief that “third time’s the charm” David Meyer believed that giving higher education one more try could aid in switching careers and achieving the goal he had years ago: to graduate from college. In spring 2022, David graduated from UW–Madison with a bachelor’s degree in applied math, engineering, and physics from the College of Letters and Sciences.

Mayra Olguin wanted to pursue a career where she could give back to her community after realizing nursing was not for her. Seeking higher skill advancement opportunities in her career combined with her passions, UW–Madison was key in pursuing those goals as it had the program that she felt was right for her. In fall 2022, Mayra graduated with a bachelor’s degree in human development and family studies and a certificate in Chicana/o Latina/o studies.

In her journey, Rebecca Parmentier has been finding the pieces of herself that were lost, and through school is putting them back together in health and happiness. As she embarks on her final year of earning her degrees in psychology and theatre, along with a dance therapy certificate, she is profoundly grateful for all the support and love she has received. In studying empathy and self-expression, she has put structure and form to her desire to help others reclaim themselves. When a human being heals, they can help to heal others. With her education, she plans to perform in theatre while doing research in body/mind medicine to advance knowledge and bring access to nourishing therapies that help people heal from trauma.

Avenash Pernankil left a career in the service industry to pursue his true calling: social work. He was recently accepted into the BSW program at UW–Madison for fall 2023. He would like to practice clinical social work, perform research on medication-resistant mental illness, and use his voice as one of the few Asian American men in the social work field to contribute to destigmatizing mental health treatment among men and among Asian Americans. The Badger Ready program gave him the tools to succeed as a returning adult student and opened many doors for his future. Outside of his academic pursuits, Avenash loves to rock climb, cook, garden,
future. Outside of his academic pursuits, Avenash loves to rock climb, cook, garden, and spend quality time with his cat Piper and fiancée Michaela.

Kaycee Rogers is a first-generation college student from a large family in rural northwestern Wisconsin. She was a teacher for many years before becoming a teacher educator in 2016. Now, she is pursuing a PhD in curriculum and instruction studying teacher education, ESL education, and rural education. She also works as an ESL program coordinator in the secondary teacher education graduate program here at UW–Madison. Kaycee balances her work, her studies, and her family every day. She is a mom of two elementary schoolers, an elderly dog, and wife to a supportive spouse. There are not many rural first-gen scholars represented in academia, and she is excited to see how her identities and experiences inform her research and scholarship.

Corey Saffold has been a nontraditional student since pursuing higher education in 2006. He found his voice in the UW Odyssey Project, a program aimed at providing a jumpstart to adults wanting to return to school. After completing the UW Odyssey Project, Corey worked full-time for the Madison police department while studying criminology at UW-Whitewater. In 2022, he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in criminology. Today he is the director of crisis management at the Verona Area School District and will attend UW–Madison law school part time. Corey appreciates the opportunity to access education in ways that help working adults.

While on the Board of Regents for the UW System, he expanded programming that maximized educational access to nontraditional students.

Amanda Sauri has always been grateful for education and the opportunities it can give someone. Less than a quarter of foster children graduate from college, so as a foster child she always dreamed to go down the road not commonly taken. Despite the challenges she has faced, she is ready to start school again after four years and succeed. She is eager to further her knowledge in business in order to hopefully become a project manager in the general contracting industry. While tackling school and being a full-time single mom, she is ready to work toward a successful future for her family.

Amie Swanson is a nontraditional student pursuing a undergraduate degree in psychology. The Badger Ready program allowed Amie to return to college at UW-Madison for the fall 2021 semester. Once Amie finishes her undergraduate degree she plans to work as an at-risk youth counselor, with a long-term goal of earning a master’s degree in psychology and becoming a licensed mental health therapist. Experiencing her own childhood trauma she had many people in her life show her support, including professional therapists. Her previous career as a chef and food cart owner helped establish her love for the Madison community. Amie lives in Madison with her son and husband who are very supportive in her pursuit to change careers to help others.
Suzanne Sweetnam was born and raised in Madison and went to West High School. After high school Suzanne attended Vassar College for two years and then returned to Madison. She worked different jobs during a prolonged pause in her formal education and had a second chance to complete a bachelor’s degree through her participation in the Badger Ready Program at UW–Madison. Suzanne completed the Badger Ready Program in 2020 and completed a bachelor’s degree in social work in December 2022. Suzanne is now applying to graduate programs to pursue a master of social work. Suzanne currently works as a substance abuse counselor and hopes to eventually become a licensed clinical social worker to provide dual diagnosis counseling for residents of Wisconsin. Through her participation in the Badger Ready Program, Suzanne has been given new opportunities, and was able to complete her college education, work in her desired career, and provide a needed service in the local community.

Stacy H. Tran is a first-generation student pursuing a bachelor’s degree in education studies and a certificate in Asian American studies. Her journey at UW–Madison began with Badger Ready and continues with the immense support of her former advisor Ace, brother Anthony, and partner Austin. With her studies, Stacy aspires to work in spaces that address social inequities in accessing education and research culturally relevant pedagogy. She is forever grateful for the advocates in her life and the opportunities extended her way.

When John Vetterli moved back to his hometown to be near his family and help care for his father, his sister suggested he volunteer with the local emergency medical service (EMS). It was a pivotal moment which eventually led to his desire to finish a bachelor’s degree and pursue physician’s assistant (PA) training. The local EMS paid for him to attend EMT school. During his clinicals he shadowed a PA which was a great learning experience and planted the seed for him to become a PA. While at UW–Madison, John has continued to work full-time as a paramedic, parent his 3-year-old son, and do research in the molecular virology lab. He is grateful to his family for the support.

In the years after Erin Vranas chose to leave UW–Madison in 2008, her life took many wonderful turns. She traveled around the world and lived in several countries, started a small cheese company in Puerto Rico, coached advanced-level figure skating, built up and sold an e-commerce business, worked in several restaurants, married her business partner, settled down back in Madison, became an owner of Parthenon Gyros restaurant on State Street, sat on several industry boards, and founded the snack foods company, Yips Snacks. But even with all her success, she felt something was missing so she came back to UW–Madison in order to complete a business degree. While in school, she works, is involved with the community, volunteers, and sit on various restaurant-related boards. A long-term goal of Erin’s is to form an investment fund that invests in and mentors startup women-owned companies in the Midwest. Post-graduation she will likely pursue an
MBA in anticipation of another long term goal of becoming a business instructor.

**Hezouwe Walada** was seven when he made the decision to become a physician. At the time he was living in Togo and his village was experiencing a malaria epidemic. He attended a highly selective school 15 miles from his home, walking there and back each day. Despite being chosen to attend medical school in his home country, he won the Togo lottery for a U.S. visa and set out for Madison knowing UW–Madison was a top medical school. He was seventeen when he arrived here, speaking no English and with no money. Thanks to ESL classes at Madison Area Technical College, a jumpstart through the Odyssey Project, the Badger Ready pathway, and his own perseverance Hezouwe will graduate this May with a bachelor’s degree in biochemistry and a global health certificate.

When **Jaime Wendt** left school, it was always her intention to return, but as she settled into her banking career she felt less inclined to do so. Then she hit a ceiling at work which caused her to lose sight of her future and she struggled. A calling to serve as a lay minister in her faith community inspired her to continue her education but she was concerned her past grades would be an obstacle. Enter the Badger Ready program which gave Jaime a pathway to admission as a transfer student at UW–Madison. Despite maintaining her job in banking, albeit fewer hours, she has been quite successful in her courses. In addition to school and work, she has accepted positions as a Senior Interfaith Fellow at the Center for Religion and Global Citizenry and as a federal judicial intern with U.S. Probation and Pre-Trial Services. After graduation this spring, she intends to pursue a career in public service, to care for and minister to people affected by incarceration.

**Meg Wilson** is an artist and researcher interested in the interactions between the human and more-than-human and the possibility for caring our way into best possible worlds. Over the last 20 years, Meg has been a practical nurse, homebirth midwife, photographer, and parent of two. Born in New Mexico, Meg lived and traveled across the U.S. and multiple countries. After returning from living in the Philippines in 2007, Meg moved to rural Kentucky and started farming 48 acres, raising sheep, goats, and bees with their spouse, until returning to school in 2018. They graduated summa cum laude from Berea College in 2021. Meg is a second-year graduate student in art and art history at UW–Madison.

**Katie Woeste** is a nurse who plans to use her advanced degree in nursing to make a positive impact on the care patients receive. Katie sits on the board of directors for her local health center is and is the chair of the quality committee for the board. She plans to use her experience and newly gained doctorate of nursing practice knowledge to make healthcare better for patients, staff, providers, and communities. She enjoys spending her free time on Wisconsin lakes with her kids and cheering them on in their sports.

**Zalissa Zongo Kafando** is married, the
mother of three children, and a first-generation undergraduate student who returned to college after over ten years away. She was born and raised in Burkina Faso, a West African country. She has an associate degree and worked for a telecommunication company for over ten years. She then moved with her family to Wisconsin in 2018 due to political instabilities, insecurities, and to find a better life-changing opportunity. She studied for two years at Madison Area Technical College starting in 2020, then transferred to UW-Madison to study computer science. She has a passion for software management and problem solving, and is determined to succeed to be a role model for her children.
Acknowledgements

Adult Career and Special Student Services in the Division of Continuing Studies would like to thank the following donors for their generosity:

The Alma Baron Second Chance for Women Scholarship was established by Alma Baron in 2001 to support a female returning adult student over the age of 45, given her own personal experience of returning to college at age 51 to earn a doctorate in adult education. Following Alma’s death in 2006, friends and family continue to support the fund in her memory. We are especially grateful to her daughters, Dr. Jill Baron and Professor Ellen Jo Baron, for their generous contributions.

Support by the American Association of University Women (AAUW)–Monona/Madison Branch dates to 1993 with the establishment of the initial Single Parent Scholarship Fund. In addition, our Returning Adult Student Award program receives funds each year in remembrance of Annie D. Swenson and Lois Mathews Rosenberry. Swenson was the first president of the Madison branch in 1909. Mathews Rosenberry was dean of women and professor of history at UW–Madison from 1911 to 1918. Both were among the founding mothers of the national AAUW.

Mary K. Rouse and Roger P. Bruesewitz Beyond Bars Scholarship supports UW–Madison adult/nontraditional students, especially those with past involvement in the criminal justice system. Roger P. Bruesewitz spent more than a dozen years in prison and, while inside, began taking courses at UW–Madison through a study-release program. He earned a journalism degree and went on to become a copyeditor at the Law School. Roger developed a lifelong friendship with former Dean of Students Mary Rouse who was entrusted with Roger’s estate upon Roger’s death in 2019. Mary donated $25,000 of his estate to create this scholarship.

Alumni Joe Corry and Barbara Weston Corry established the Joe Corry and Barbara Weston Corry Scholarship Fund in 2000 after devoting a combined 53 years to the university as academic staff members. Barbara Weston Corry retired as a senior editor at the Center for Demography and Ecology and Joe Corry as an associate vice chancellor in the Office of Academic Affairs. Their scholarship supports a single-parent student.

Crankstart is a program supported by husband and wife, Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman. The Crankstart Reentry Scholarship assists nontraditional students who, after experiencing a cumulative gap in their education of five or more years, are completing a first baccalaureate degree.

To support a returning adult graduate student, Karen Doerfer Daily established the Stuart Daily Seeds of Learning Fund in 2004 in honor of the memory of Stuart G. Daily, a teacher
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of much to many. Daily taught in England and at UW–Madison and worked in the corporate world. Always an athlete, he died unexpectedly after leading his rugby team to victory. Daily’s most valuable asset was his knowledge, and he encouraged others to gain knowledge.

The Nancy W. Denney Memorial Scholarship was established by friends, family and colleagues in memory of Nancy Denney, a devoted professor of psychology and a single parent who died of breast cancer in 1995. The goal was to continue Denney’s advocacy for students who faced joint responsibilities of parenting, work, and study. The scholarship exists due to a generous initial contribution by the Evjue Foundation and contributions by numerous private donors moved by her advocacy for student-parents.

The Sosa family started the Kindness Matters Scholarship to give returning adult students with financial need and strong academic history the opportunity to focus on achieving their target degrees. Beth and Brandon’s daughter Aanya chose the name Kindness Matters considering their family belief that, above all, love and kindness are most important.

The Bernice D. Kuney Scholarship was established in 1989 with a gift from Edith Martindale. It honors her mentor, Bernice Kuney. Kuney taught English for 40 years at UW-Extension, serving adults returning to college for degree work or professional development. Martindale, class of 1944, devoted her professional life to better understanding and responding to mental illness and mental disability, topics she explored in her work and writings.

The Bernard Osher Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life through support for higher education. The Osher Reentry Scholarship Endowment assists adults who wish to return to college to complete their undergraduate degrees after a significant break in their studies. UW–Madison is one of 88 universities nationwide selected to receive the endowment.

PLATO (Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization) is a learning-in-retirement program whose members organize and lead its courses. Historically, PLATO supported the degree-completion goals of single-parent undergraduates. Beginning in 2013, PLATO Scholarships became available to a broader group of returning adult and nontraditional students striving to complete UW–Madison degrees.

The University League has supported a scholarship for a returning adult student since the fund was established in 1993. In 2004, it added a second scholarship to support students, the Cynthia McCreary Holbrook Youmans Endowed Scholarship. This award honors a former president with a distinguished history of community and campus service.
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