

# EXCELSIOR

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IN THE  
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# EXCELSIOR

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**ON THE COVER:** Bullying, or horizontal or lateral violence, isn't in the job description but might be part of the culture.





## Our Student-Centered Focus

**E**arlier this year, Excelsior College President John Ebersole was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a blood disorder potentially related to his exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam. In June, John took administrative leave to concentrate on his health and begin treatment. While a timetable for his return has not been set, he remains in good spirits and is recovering.

On June 15, I was appointed as acting president by the Board of Trustees after previously serving as the College's executive vice president. Stepping into John's shoes will be a challenge. Since John became president of the College in 2006, more than 50,000 adults have passed through our doors on the way to graduation. The impact that each graduate is making on the world is a testament to John's visionary leadership.

Today, Excelsior College is among the most respected adult-serving institutions in the world, and a model for all those seeking to offer a quality academic credential at a reasonable cost. As acting president, I can assure you this work will continue unabated.

At the same time, the higher education market has never been more competitive, which has led Excelsior to deeply reflect on our core mission.

Over the coming months, Excelsior will make significant investments in the student experience, from a user-friendly website and streamlined enrollment and course registration processes to a more engaging learning environment and personalized services for both students and alumni.

The institution's 45-year track record of success is the result of putting our students at the forefront of all that we do. We will not compromise when it comes to providing access, affordability, and excellence in higher education.

That is my commitment to you.

Ever upward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James N. Baldwin".

JAMES N. BALDWIN, JD, EdD  
ACTING PRESIDENT



## Suite of Programs Prepare Workers for Cyber Jobs

In October, the first group of students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Cyber Operations began their capstone, the final course in a program aligned with the standards set by the National Security Agency (NSA). The program, like other cybersecurity offerings at Excelsior—which is recognized by the NSA and the Department of Homeland Security as a National Center of Academic Excellence—focuses on preparing working adults to move into or move up in the burgeoning field.

More than 209,000 cybersecurity jobs in the U.S. are unfilled, and the market is expected to grow from \$75 billion (in 2015) to \$170 billion by 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, demand for information security analysts who prevent hackers from stealing critical information or causing problems with computer networks is projected to grow 18 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average rate of growth for all occupations.

“Through the redesign of the undergraduate and graduate programs, students will be ready for the workforce,” says Andrew Hurd, faculty program director for cybersecurity. “As a Center for Academic Excellence, our

cybersecurity curriculum is aligned to recommended guidelines meant to prepare learners to be valued in the industry. Through the offering of academic certificates [in cybersecurity], Excelsior College offers alternatives to complete degree programs that individuals can obtain to target specific jobs and skills needed in the industry. I believe the incorporation of different modalities for our students to complete their academic goals is very important and is a high priority.”

This year, Excelsior renamed its Bachelor of Science in Cyber Operations program to Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity to reflect the breadth of its curriculum. The program offers a concentration in cyber operations, which prepares students to be on the front lines of cybersecurity, working to prevent and respond to cyber incidents. The program also offers a concentration in health care cybersecurity, as well as a general track that allows students to customize their studies by choosing from a range of technical electives.

Changes were also made to the Master of Science in Cybersecurity program. Program concentrations now include information assurance, medical data security, and policy administration. Students may also choose to

follow a general track at the master’s level and take courses across the concentrations that align with their career goals.

To meet the more immediate needs of those looking to enter the cybersecurity field, the College’s Center for Professional Development offers a comprehensive overview through a four-month, online noncredit Cybersecurity Foundations course. For those already established in the field, the Center is developing a sequence of test preparation courses aligned with leading industry certifications, says Ruth Ann Murray, executive director of the Center for Professional Development. These offerings are anticipated to carry credit recommendations, which would allow them to be applied to a degree program.

Faculty program directors and administrators envision cybersecurity education in other academic programs. Plans are underway to include a cybersecurity concentration in the Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering Technology program. The concentration will provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenges of working in today’s nuclear and energy industry. ■

## New Honor Society Recognizes Achievements of Veteran Students

Excelsior held the first induction ceremony for its SALUTE Veterans National Honor Society chapter on July 7, the day before Commencement. The College recognized 27 graduates who have served or who currently serve in the military, National Guard, or Reserves and have met certain academic and ethical standards.

SALUTE is an acronym for service, academics, leadership, unity, tribute, and excellence. The honor society acknowledges members for applying the courage, strength, leadership, excellence, and perseverance they demonstrated in their military endeavors to their academic careers. Excelsior established its SALUTE chapter in the 2015–2016 academic year. Thirty percent of students at the College are active military and 10 percent are veterans.

Veteran James Lettko, chief operating officer of Excelsior College, addressed honorees at the induction ceremony. Lettko served in the U.S. Army and New York National Guard for more than 25 years,



culminating as the deputy commanding general at Joint Task Force Guantanamo, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Prior to that assignment, he served as the chief of staff and director of military personnel for the New York Army National Guard.

All inductees received a challenge coin, membership certificate, and a purple and

▲ **Michael Hampton receives his SALUTE induction certificate from James Lettko, chief operating officer of the College, and Judith Reed, the director of veterans services and outreach.** PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

silver honor cord. Those who attended the induction ceremony wore their honor cord at Commencement. ■

## Grant Funds Research into Quality Assurance for Alternative Education

How can adult learners be assured of quality when they choose to spend their money with a provider of innovative, low-cost educational products and services? How can institutions be sure to select quality innovative providers when forging partnerships to create alternative pathways? Those are some of the questions Excelsior is exploring through a \$150,000 planning grant from USA Funds, a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance preparation for, access to, and success in postsecondary education.

The grant supports an investigation into the creation and viability of a collaborative quality assurance group for alternative education providers. The Presidents' Forum, a collaboration of accredited, national, adult-serving institutions and programs hosted by Excelsior College, and the Distance Education Accreditation Commission (DEAC) lead the project, and several national higher

education organizations dedicated to online learning, assessment, accreditation, and quality assurance are participating.

The group, recently named the Collaborative for Quality in Alternative Learning (CQAL), has been exploring issues and challenges related to assessing quality in the emergent sector of innovative providers. Specifically, the group aims to: share information about available quality review approaches to alternative programs or providers; advance the discussion about the need for a set of national principles for quality and for quality review processes, enhance credibility and confidence in alternative learning experiences that have met quality assurance standards; and establish shared thought leadership and expertise in the quality assurance field.

"Each organization involved in CQAL brings a unique area of expertise to the

"It is our hope that collectively we can serve as a conduit for more successful integration of innovative pathways..." —Tina Goodyear

quality assurance discussion. It is our hope that collectively we can serve as a conduit for more successful integration of innovative pathways into higher education and as a source of information and experience in the field," says Tina Goodyear, chief operating officer of the Presidents' Forum.

The grant ends in December 2016 with the publishing of a white paper that will explore the issue of quality assurance in this unregulated sector and suggest a model for an entity that will strengthen collaboration and advocacy in the recognition of alternative forms of earning credentials. ■



## STUDENTS SAVE MONEY WITH OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Open educational resources (OER)—materials available for free on the web, such as videos and podcasts to virtual laboratories and simulations—are not new in higher education, but it's hard to pinpoint exactly when the trend caught on. One fact is certain, though, according to an internal Excelsior College study: OER save students money.

In addition, open educational resources also eliminate a student's fear he or she may fail a class because of the inability to afford the textbook, says Kim Barss, interim lead instructional designer in the Center for Learning Design, Delivery and Technology. Eliminating this sort of barrier is critical to a student's success, and a way that Excelsior can help improve a student's experience.

At the College, there are currently 80 courses supported by OER. Barss, along with several helping hands, has been conducting the internal study to measure OER effects on student satisfaction, as well as on financial savings per student. So far, they have examined OER use in the School

of Business & Technology, and they plan to research the impact in the School of Health Sciences, School of Liberal Arts, School of Public Service, and School of Nursing.

Barss randomly selected 53 courses in the School of Business & Technology and found about 65 percent of the learning materials were OER-based. The School currently offers 28 courses that use *only* open educational resources. Study results indicate that in 26 of these courses, students saved an average of \$217 per course on materials by using OER instead of traditional resources. In effect, OER can save students hundreds of dollars per course, leading to thousands of dollars over the span of a degree program.

Open educational resources are beneficial to students for a number of other reasons. For instance, they are carefully selected by faculty so that they match the learning objectives of the course; are digital, which means they can be accessed anywhere there is an Internet connection; are available on the first day of a course; and are more up to date than traditional textbooks. ■



## Excelsior Broadens ABET Accreditation

Excelsior College has achieved specialized accreditation for its bachelor's in information technology and renewed accreditation for its programs in nuclear engineering technology and electrical engineering technology.

The Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET Inc., a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), recently approved the initial accreditation for the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology program after conducting a site visit in November 2015.

The Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission (ETAC) of ABET reaccredited the Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering Technology and Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering Technology programs.

The College is one of four online institutions to receive ABET accreditation for its IT program and one of two online institutions to have ABET accreditation for its nuclear engineering technology and electrical engineering technology programs.

The recognition demonstrates the high quality of Excelsior's technology programs. "ABET accreditation criteria are developed

by technical professionals, members of 35 professional societies," says Lifang Shih, acting dean of the School of Business & Technology. "This specialized accreditation validates that a collegiate program has met the global standard for technical education in the associated profession. Graduates from the accredited programs can be confident that their educational experience is current, rigorous, and practical, which provides them with technical and professional skills and knowledge needed to succeed." ■

## College Offers Benefits to Federal Civilian Workers

An alliance negotiated by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on behalf of all civilian federal employees and their spouses provides access to reduced tuition at Excelsior College. More than 3 million federal workers and their spouses or domestic partners are eligible for this benefit.

The alliance was announced in May as part of the federal government's continuing efforts to support career development, address government-wide and agency-specific skills gaps, and attract new employees. Excelsior was one of three

More than 3 million federal workers and their spouses or domestic partners are eligible for this benefit.

higher education institutions invited to be part of the alliance.

"The College's tradition of credit aggregation and recognizing prior learning was especially attractive to the federal government. About 30 percent of federal employees are veterans; Excelsior's experience serving active duty military and veterans made this alliance a logical fit," says Jeanne Contardo, vice president of regional operations for Excelsior College.

Since the alliance was announced, federal employees have shown interest in academic programs across the College, particularly in nursing, health sciences, and business administration programs. Excelsior continues to spread the word about the alliance by hosting informational webinars monthly and through other outreach activities. ■

For more information on the OPM alliance, visit [excelsior.edu/web/partners/feducation](http://excelsior.edu/web/partners/feducation). Federal employees and others who would like a member of Excelsior's outreach team to visit their agency may contact Gabriel Clevenger, national director of strategic alliances, at [gclevenger@excelsior.edu](mailto:gclevenger@excelsior.edu).



The latest event in the Nyquist Leadership Series, Strengthening Communities by Bridging Health and Economic Development, brought together professionals working in public health and economic development to discuss the relationship between health and the investment of resources into neighborhoods, buildings, and businesses. Moderator Dorcey Applrys (right), faculty program director for public health at Excelsior College and member of the Common Council for the City of Albany, listens to Albany Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan (center) at the June 7 panel. At left is Kaitlyn W. Meirs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. View the panel discussion at [leadership.excelsior.edu](http://leadership.excelsior.edu). PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER





## Sopczyk Assumes Role of Interim Provost

Deborah Sopczyk, the dean of the School of Health Sciences, was named interim provost in September. Mary Beth Hanner, the provost and chief academic officer since 2011, has taken a medical leave of absence.

Sopczyk, an RN, joined Excelsior's School of Nursing in 1984, and was named dean of the School of Health Sciences in 2007. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, Master of Science in Child Health Nursing from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and PhD in Social Welfare from the State University of New York at Albany.

"Debbie is known as a skilled and decisive leader and a sought-after expert on education, teaching, and assessment issues," said Acting President James Baldwin in an announcement of the appointment to the College. "The growth and success of the School of Health Sciences is a testament to her ability to promote a shared purpose. She has earned the trust of her colleagues by leading by example and confidently embracing new challenges."

Laurie Carbo-Porter, the associate dean of the School of Health Sciences, was named acting dean of the school following Sopczyk's appointment as interim provost. ■

"Debbie is known as a skilled and decisive leader and a sought-after expert on education, teaching, and assessment issues."

—James Baldwin, Acting President

# Now at Excelsior Life

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Keylla Capote, a 2016 graduate with a BS in nursing, discusses her experiences.

[excelsior.edu/keylla](http://excelsior.edu/keylla)

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# Dual Studies

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS START ON THEIR BACHELOR'S DEGREE WHILE WRAPPING UP THEIR ASSOCIATE DEGREE** By Mike Lesczinski

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**F**or the past 15 years, Christopher Chesley of Rhinebeck, New York, has devoted his life, in one capacity or another, to empowering differently abled individuals. He currently works for a nonprofit organization in Wappingers Falls, New York, providing services for individuals with cerebral palsy in a residential setting.

Like many individuals without a college degree, Chesley felt his career options were limited. He knew he wanted to help others, and nursing seemed like the most logical way to incorporate his passion and build upon his skill set. In 2009, he enrolled in a two-year nursing program at a local community college.

Students enrolled in brick-and-mortar associate degree nursing programs often find themselves caught in a waiting

period for nursing specialty courses after completing their general education requirements. But Chesley won't have to worry about that, because he's taken advantage of Excelsior College's Concurrent Enrollment Program (CEP) for Nursing, a collaborative effort between Excelsior and select academic partners.

This innovative program allows qualified students to pursue their associate degree in nursing at partner schools while simultaneously working on their Bachelor of Science in nursing at Excelsior—one of about 30 schools nationwide selected as a Center for Excellence for Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing.

Excelsior recognizes that today's health care market places a premium on bachelor's-educated nurses. This program avoids

delays in students' transition to the job market and the potential to dissuade them from seeking an advanced credential.

Under the program, nursing students at partner colleges are provided the opportunity to work, via online courses or exams, on their general education requirements for Excelsior's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. Once the student graduates from the partner school with their Associate in Applied Science in Nursing degree — and becomes a Registered Nurse — they can continue on with their studies at Excelsior, often with only 25–30 credits left to earn their bachelor's degree.

So far, six institutions — American River College, Dutchess Community College (DCC), Memorial College of Nursing, Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing, SUNY Adirondack, and Westchester Community College — have signed concurrent enrollment agreements with Excelsior.

“Being 35 years old and a homeowner, having the opportunity to use my downtime in the RN program to make my way towards my BSN for a reasonable cost was an easy decision.”

—Christopher Chesley

When Chesley, a student at DCC, first learned of the program, he leapt at the opportunity, knowing a bachelor's in nursing opened up additional career pathways.

“Being 35 years old and a homeowner, having the opportunity to use my downtime in the RN program to make my way towards my BSN for a reasonable cost was an easy decision,” says Chesley.

Katrina Cutten, a full-time student and new mother, enrolled in DCC in 2012 to earn her associate degree in nursing. When she learned of the concurrent enrollment program with Excelsior, she also didn't hesitate to enroll.

“Concurrent enrollment programs save nursing students like Chris and Katrina both time and money and put them in position to attain a credential that may have otherwise eluded them.”

—Barbara Pieper

“It is becoming more difficult to find employment as a nurse in my area with just a two-year degree and no experience,” explains Cutten. “The concurrent enrollment program will make me more employable.”

Barbara Pieper, PhD, RN, associate dean of Excelsior's School of Nursing, expects the program to continue to expand as industry demand for bachelor's-prepared nurses increases. In 2010, the Institute of Medicine called for 80 percent of the nursing workforce to hold BSN credentials by 2020.

“Concurrent enrollment programs save nursing students like Chris and Katrina both time and money and put them in position to attain a credential that may have otherwise eluded them,” says Pieper. “Bachelor's-prepared nurses are increasingly in demand and valued as much for their clinical skills and competencies as for their holistic patient care.”

So, what does the future hold for these students? Chesley sees it as a chance to give back to the community.

“(In five years), I see myself either working for a not-for-profit as a nurse helping differently abled individuals or working for my local VA hospital,” says Chesley.

Cutten, meanwhile, sees her educational journey continuing on. “I'm considering a graduate degree,” she says. “I am very passionate about education — it's essential to providing quality preventative medicine.” ■

Mike Lesczinski is the chief communications officer at Excelsior College.

*This story first appeared as an advertorial in the Times Union (Albany, New York) in May 2016.*





# Social Savvy

**POSITION YOURSELF FOR CAREER SUCCESS  
USING SOCIAL MEDIA** By Alicia Audino

**A**s of early 2016, there were more than 2.3 billion active social media users. You may be one of those active users, or perhaps you are still skeptical of putting your information on display. Whether you're contemplating creating your first social media account, or you were one of the first Facebook users in 2004, there are some important considerations to make while using social media when job searching or for making career connections.

## AUDIENCE AND ACCOUNTS

When considering your social media accounts, ask yourself, "Who is my intended audience?" Your tone, images, and types of engagement on social media will all depend on for whom you are posting. While your friends and family may find it adorable, potential employers are not interested in the latest trick your cat learned (unless of course you are an animal trainer!). On LinkedIn users often share articles or images related to their industries, employer, or professional accomplishments. These posts display to an employer or colleague a user's areas of interest and expertise.

Your answer to the audience question may also impact which social media platform(s) you engage in. You might choose to use Facebook and Instagram to engage

with friends and family, but use LinkedIn and Twitter for professional development and networking. This allows you to use social media for both personal and professional audiences, but also have a defined separation between the two. Your career path will have a huge impact on this decision as well. If you are interested in cybersecurity, you may forgo social media altogether, but if digital marketing is your chosen path, social media engagement will be necessary and encouraged.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

In today's world of technology, your online presence will be used by employers to gather information about your candidacy. With this in mind, your social media presence can both hurt and help you in your job search. What comes up when you Google your name? Unprofessional images and negative posts about previous employers can land your application in the "no" pile. Be sure to audit your social media accounts at all times, especially if you are job searching. Remove photos that you would not want a potential employer to see, and replace them with a headshot or photo of you giving a presentation. Additionally, if you have a common name, your results may show up buried in a list of John Smiths. Actively participating on a social media platform like LinkedIn—by engaging with your connections and posting

updates on a regular basis—will help you rise to the top.

## CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The content your social media accounts contain can greatly impact your job candidacy or even networking opportunities. Quality vs. quantity is a good mantra to follow when it comes to social media content. While you want to maintain active accounts, over-posting can lessen the importance of the information you are disseminating. Additionally, it is key to balance between creating original content, posting third-party content, and sharing content from your connections. Mastering this balancing act helps show potential employers that you are a supportive team member, current with hot topics in your field, and have demonstrated expertise and writing skills.

Your online presence serves as a digital portfolio. Through active use of social media, you can build connections, showcase your experience and expertise, and learn from others in your network. By becoming a savvy social media user, you can position yourself for career success. ■

Alicia Audino is assistant director of career services. She can be reached at [careerinfo@excelsior.edu](mailto:careerinfo@excelsior.edu).



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COURTESY OF CHRIS COLTER

# Urgent Care

## CHRIS COLTER DELIVERS LIFE-SAVING TREATMENT By Simone Arrington

Nothing in his 20-year medical career, Chris Colter says, compares to the moment the mobile stroke unit he works on went into operation.

Colter, of Riga, Michigan, serves as both a critical care nurse and paramedic, working alongside a CT technology expert and medical doctor on Michigan's only mobile stroke unit. An operation of the Mercy Health Neuroscience Institute in Toledo, Ohio, the unit provides urgent, on-site medical attention to patients suffering from cases of hemorrhagic strokes, blood clots, and other life-threatening circumstances. The unit is the fourth in the United States.

Studies show the mobile stroke units are quicker to diagnose strokes and related conditions and deliver life-saving treatment than conventional approaches.

"What we're doing is bringing the emergency department with us," says Colter of his role. The mobile units resemble an ordinary ambulance, making it "an emergency room on wheels." On a typical day, the mobile stroke unit is able to assess for the possibility of a stroke through use of a CT scanner and convey both to the family and patient the best way to treat a diagnosis. "We have a lot of responsibility that goes along with being on the cutting-edge of stroke care and we take that very seriously," says Colter, a July 2016 graduate of the RN to Master of Science in Nursing program who also earned an Associate in Applied Science in Nursing at Excelsior College in 2013.

Colter has found a common ground for aligning his passion for helping others with his personal and academic career. He worked as

a paramedic for 15 years before becoming an RN, and while pursuing his degree, he volunteered as a firefighter and fire chief for his local fire department.

Colter began working on the mobile stroke unit during his final year of the master's program. "I was using what I learned at Excelsior as I was working in this role. In fact, I did my final project for my Excelsior degree on mobile stroke units," says Colter. He presented on the topic of "Integration of MSU into the Community" at the Mercy Health Neuroscience Institute Stroke Symposium in June.

"The skills in leadership and research I learned at Excelsior have combined with my experience to help me to effectively research and communicate at conferences," Colter says. "I plan to do more presentations at events for hospitals, fire departments, and to EMS providers. I also will be working to help communities learn about this new technology."

Being a part of the mobile stroke unit has sentimental value to Colter, a husband and father of four. His daughter has Moyamoya disease, a genetic disorder in which certain arteries in the brain are blocked, causing blood clots and disruption of blood flow. "This program really hits home," says Colter. "Knowing that there is a service like the mobile stroke unit 10 minutes from my home really adds a comfort level for my family. Our hope at the mobile stroke unit is that we are able to provide that same comfort for the rest of the community."

Simone Arrington is the communications coordinator at Excelsior College.

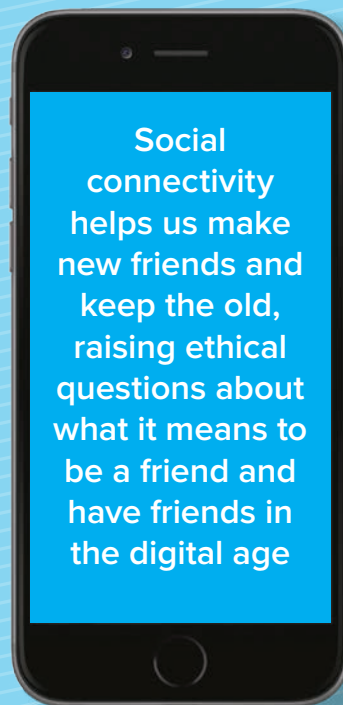
*Excerpted from Excelsior Life*



# So Happy We're (But







BY LAURA KOPLEWITZ



# Friends!

## Have We Ever Met?)

**O**n a 24/7 basis, thanks to a remarkable wrinkle in time and space made possible by digital technology, millions of people engage in what feels like a natural form of 21st-century communication. As if we are physically present in a room together, we share ideas, we laugh, we cry, we gesture, we see one another clearly—albeit distantly—in cyberspace. Each day, we point, click, tap, and swipe our way into and out of each other's lives and engage in a process of being friends.

What may have been impossible to consider even a generation ago, is the number of people you may consider to be friends, many of whom you may have never met, or met only briefly in a physical, tangible way. The average number of “friends” for any one person

on Facebook, for example, is 130. If we look at the ubiquity of social media today for communication among friends, we may be connecting online far more often than interacting face-to-face.

Enter a course titled the Ethics of Friendship in which groups of students, who are themselves virtual to one another in the digital classroom, explore how friendships are created and sustained in today's digital world, and whether we, as a society, are transforming fundamental notions of friendship.

Since the course premiered in March 2015, hundreds of students have chosen to jump into the discussion of modern friendship, by examining related morals, values, and beliefs. Although the course covers more than social media and online friendships, students express a great deal of interest in the digital aspects of friendships. Interest appears particularly high in the behavioral and philosophical differences between the more superficial friending online, and befriending as a deeper friendship connection that takes place generally face-to-face and grows over a period of time.

While other ethics courses at Excelsior focus primarily on professional, work-related ethical behavior, Ethics of Friendship stands out for its unique approach to individual ethics at a deeply personal level. The course explores how individuals conduct their everyday lives according to their own ethics and how these inform their interactions within close communities of family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. The course encompasses a personal and cultural exploration of what it means to be a friend and enact friendships in today's world. Readings ranging from Aristotle to contemporary philosophers and what-if life scenarios are offered as prompts for students to reflect upon individual ethics of interpersonal communication.

Students in the course are asked to consider how society influences the individual in determining his or her ethical standards of interpersonal communication. What are the internal codes of behavior we live by? If society does not mandate a uniform set of laws of friendship, then how do we discover, forge, choose, and develop a frame of reference for interacting with friends? And what are the ethics one lives by in friendships today?

Students discuss ethics as a philosophical framework that concerns itself specifically with moral philosophy. How do we organize and prioritize our systems of values and beliefs? And how do our values become translated into our behaviors?

Conversely, how do our behaviors reveal our values? By exploring friendships through the lens of ethics, we can ask how we conduct our friendships in a manner that sustains and enriches all our lives. Friendships tend to exist not in isolation, but often as networks. As people thread their way into and out of one another's lives, what one person does or says often impacts others in a ripple effect that either helps communities to cohere, or fractures a sense of cohesion.

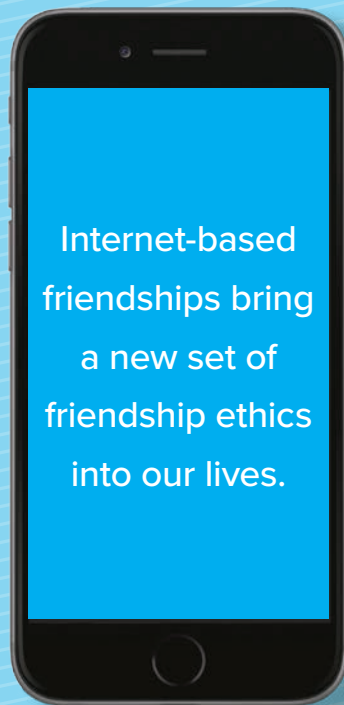
A key component of the discussion is the tenor of friendships at a distance, and the impact of many modes of digital communication, particularly social media, upon the growth and sustenance of friendships.

While critics have decried the notion that friendships based upon social media such as Facebook are necessarily superficial in nature, others have touted the benefits of friendship at a distance. The upside of social media includes being able to keep in touch with distant family and friends. Perhaps you are deployed and overseas. Video chat lets you say hi to your 2-year-old son and hear—and see—him speak his first words. You celebrate birthdays and anniversaries at a distance and it feels closer to have the connection that is a visible, tangible evidence of your loved ones. Over 1 billion people have joined social media networks such as Facebook, and millions of people use other social networking websites and apps. You can connect with your friends anywhere, anytime, for any reason. As trivial or as significant as a moment in life might be, you can share it immediately with the hundreds, even thousands or millions of people who are standing ready to listen, read, and respond. Our human community has

never been more available to us. This is, for many, an exhilarating friendship ride in cyberspace.

The downside? According to a 2013 article in the peer-reviewed publication *Psychiatric Journal*, researchers presented the concept of Internet Addiction Disorder, a category under debate and potentially to be included alongside the already-established Internet Gaming Addiction, as a new DSM-V psychiatric disorder. Particularly concerning is research on social anxiety among teenagers using social media for friendship networking. The article presents a documented decline in the “subjective well-being” of young adults as their use of social media goes up. Among adults, online dating is on the rise along with its corollary, an increase in online-based relationship infidelity.

Friends across the world can be accessed in an instant, yet so can enemies. “Flaming” is prevalent online, and almost



everyone who has ever used the Internet to send an upset message to a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance has experienced the jabbing sensation of “point, click, and regret.”

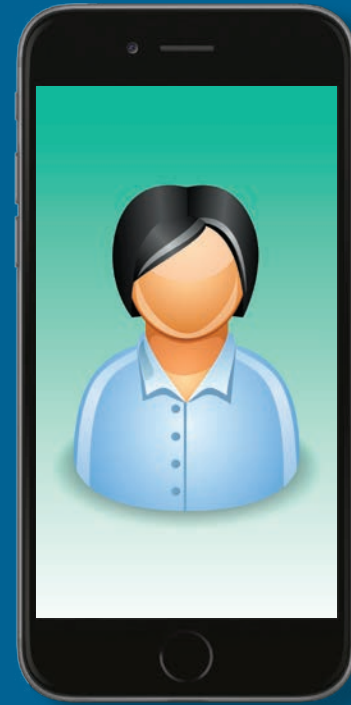
Internet-based friendships bring a new set of friendship ethics into our lives. Consider the immediacy of gossip online, and the fact that a comment, a video, or a photo can go viral in an instant—and not ever be deleted or recalled from public consciousness from that moment forward. In grade schools and high schools across the country, educators and parents are considering how to combat the highly problematic issue of cyber bullying as a dangerous consequence of the use of the Internet in terms of the psychology of peer pressure, especially among youngsters. The instantaneous—and irrevocable—nature of Internet-based communication is that “what goes out there stays out there” as compared with a presumed friendship ethic that “what is stated in confidence between friends, stays between friends.”

As students enrolled in the course discuss the differences between contemporary friending and the more philosophical concept of befriending, they consider the views of philosophers from Ancient Greece and Rome on the art of friendship. Aristotle noted, “Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit.” Plato stated, “True friendship can only exist between equals.” To Cicero, “Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable than fidelity. Faithfulness and truth are the most sacred excellences and endowments of the human mind.” Students examine these perspectives juxtaposed with current-day research into the contemporary problematics of friendship, such as bullying and how social networking intersects with the workplace.

Students tackle such complex topics as the ethics of honesty between friends, considering this in both non-digital and digital realms. They consider the question, “If a friend asks for advice, and you know the friend hopes to hear a particular view from you, but you actually hold a different view, will you say what you think your friend wants to hear, or what you actually think?” The course explores whether there is a difference between feigning, dissimulation, and tact. In social media-based friendships, there is an even greater possibility that dissimulation may take place, from overt lies such as a false identity to less obvious forms of misrepresentation of self.

In friendship, we may be faced with more than one pathway, more than one course of action, at an ethical level. We are enjoined to examine our values and beliefs as we travel the crowded online highways and byways of friendship in the 21st century. ■

Laura Koplewitz, PhD, has taught Ethics of Friendship at Excelsior College. She teaches undergraduate and graduate students both online and face-to-face in philosophy, multiculturalism and diversity, and the humanities and arts, as well as in women's studies. She has worked recently for Excelsior College on grant research related to adult learning theories. When wearing her second professional hat, she is an orchestral and chamber music classical composer.



## True Friendship

**That we can get to know people without ever spending much, if any, face-to-face time together perhaps gives pause for thought. Here are three questions as you consider your view of friendship in today's digital world:**

- 1** Do you consider the individuals you meet online but have never met in person to be your friends?
- 2** If you were to count your friends in terms of a close friendship circle, how many friends do you feel are your genuine, authentic friends? And how many are friends in a ‘sort of’ way? Should you have more?
- 3** Are your virtual friendships as important to you as the friends you see in your physical day-to-day life? In what ways do your Internet-mediated friendships offer you a sense of connection with the human community?



Keep the conversation going on Excelsior's Facebook page.





# A HARD PILL SWALL



# D TO OW

**BULLYING IN THE  
NURSING FIELD EXPOSES  
THE POSSIBILITY OF  
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE,  
AND PROVIDES A  
STARTING PLACE FOR  
EXAMINING HEALTHIER  
BEHAVIORS**

BY DANA  
YANULAVICH

“I decided that I was going to end my life,” says Maureen Sileo. “I could not conceive what had transpired and how belittled I was as a caring person.”

What could have pushed Sileo, a nurse with more than 20 years’ experience, to the breaking point? Bullying.

While most often associated with playground politics and adolescent school situations, bullying is a far too common occurrence in the workplace, and alarmingly prevalent in health care. And although we may have been exposed to it in some shape or form in our own lives, it’s surprising to many to learn about its prevalence in nursing, a profession associated with nurturing, caring, and healing rather than harming, belittling, and undermining.

Fortunately for Sileo, who earned associate and master’s degrees in nursing at Excelsior College, her husband intervened. When she asked for the combination to their safe where the Glock semi-automatic pistol was stored, he knew it was time to act. He had already seen the signs: an 18-lb. weight loss and uncontrolled crying that signaled Sileo was at a dangerous crossroads. Together, they went to Sileo’s doctor, and she started on the road to recovery.

“Bullying is persistent, repeated, malicious, offensive, and intimidating behavior which humiliates, degrades, and displays a lack of dignity and respect for the target, resulting in them feeling vulnerable and threatened,” explains Susan Strauss, a registered nurse who holds a doctorate in organizational leadership. She’s a harassment, discrimination and bullying consultant who serves as a trainer, expert witness, and investigator. Based in Minnesota, Strauss consults nationally and internationally.

So how is bullying manifested in the health care environment? And what brings out these behaviors in those who ascribe to the words included in the Florence Nightingale Pledge, “I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous...”?

Research and theories abound. Bullying is often associated with workplaces that are hierarchal. Studies have shown that it

is particularly prevalent in workplaces that are predominately female, such as nursing.

“One of the big theories as to why nurses may in fact be bullying each other is that of oppression,” says Strauss. “And with oppression it can sometimes be unconscious, but the nurses don’t have a voice, they’re not always respected, and they begin to take on that feeling of not being all that important and start to feel powerless. With the powerlessness comes a sense of hopelessness and a sense of helplessness.”

Fueling those feelings of inadequacy is a shame and blame culture that leads to finger-pointing rather than embracing a situation as a learning opportunity. New nurses are often at the mercy of senior staff who continue the hierarchal cycle by exerting power over the newcomers. It may also be a misguided notion of needing to protect the patient whereby a nurse feels no one else can offer comparable care. Consequently, information is not readily shared, and at its most extreme, sabotaging behaviors may ensue.

“I know a lot of times when you have new nurses come in, the older nurses eat their young so to speak,” shares Cathy DeChance, a faculty member in Excelsior’s School of Nursing, who previously worked as a recruiter for an upstate New York hospital. “When you talk to them about that, their response is



Maureen Sileo, standing outside the New York State Capitol, shared her workplace bullying experience with her state legislator, who is supporting proposed legislation. PHOTO: KRIS QUA



mostly ‘that’s how I learned, that’s how I was taught, that’s how I was treated’ so they think that’s the way it should be done. Changing that mindset is a little tougher.”

Many nurses feel such treatment comes with the territory. Based on her nearly 40 years in the consulting field, Strauss notes that they think, “It’s just part of my job to be treated disrespectfully by patients, by patient’s families, by doctors, and by the coworkers. It’s just part of the job of nursing.”

Bullying is also known as horizontal or lateral violence. In essence, it’s a form of workplace violence. “A lot of people think it [workplace violence] won’t happen where they work, because of perceptions that it’s a more caring environment or more nurturing, or more female populated. [But] all of those are really debunked by the empirical research,” explains Michele Paludi, editor of “Bullies in the Workplace: Seeing and Stopping Adults Who Abuse Their Co-Workers and Employees.”

Sileo, for one, never saw it coming. She had left a management position to enter into a homecare practice. Her previous work had been recognized with glowing commendations, yet in her new position, it didn’t seem like she could do anything right. She recounts that her supervisor was highly critical of her note taking, and questioned the former ER nurse’s patient assessment skills. The supervisor lobbed demeaning and sarcastic comments. Sileo recalls, “As time went on, she would critique my notes that I wrote on the patient—this was like within the first month—and she just looked at me and she’d pull out pieces of my notes, and she said, ‘Where did you get your nursing license...in a Cracker Jack box?’” The unwarranted criticism of her work undermined her self-esteem, and her values were challenged when her supervisor asked her to alter her records.

While some horizontal violence is overt, much of it is covert. It can include gossip, innuendo, scapegoating, passive-aggressiveness, cliques, and sabotage. According to one study, among the most common bullying behaviors in nursing are being given an unmanageable workload, being ignored or excluded, having your professional opinion ignored, being assigned impossible deadlines, and having relevant information withheld.

The damage caused by bullying is pervasive, invasive, and extensive—no matter the workplace. It has negative effects on productivity and organizational stability, and in the health care field, it impacts patient care and increases medical errors. High staff turnover may also result, leading to an unwelcome expense to refill the positions. One study estimates that the cost to replace a nurse ranges from \$22,000 to \$64,000. And an article in MEDSURG Nursing suggested that overall, bullying in the workplace costs over \$4 billion a year.

In some health care cultures, the bullying bent can come from the top-down and is thus viewed as an acceptable

**I think that nursing should applaud itself for being willing to study this and get some research in their peer review journals and in their trade journals, because they [the nursing profession] can be a role model for women who work in other industries. —Susan Strauss**

management style and path to promotion. “I think that in today’s world of health care, I think that everybody’s stressed and having to compete for their positions, and I think they have to make themselves look better,” says DeChance. “Picking on the low man on the totem pole’s going to make them look better.” But such behavior undermines an organization and can tarnish its image and reputation.

On an individual level, bullying can negatively impact an organization by leading to excessive absenteeism, tardiness, poor attitude, and low productivity. And its effect on an individual’s health can be devastating, as evidenced by Sileo’s experience with weight loss and suicidal thoughts. It can also lead to sleep problems, headaches, stress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD, among other serious symptoms.

And it’s not just the nurse-victim who suffers. The bystanders may also suffer collateral damage. Strauss explains, “...what the research also suggests is that the witnesses or the bystander is impacted by this bullying almost to the same degree as the target. So, if you hear it, if you see it, and even if you hear about it, you are going to be caught up into that sense of not having a voice....”

With so much at stake, what can be done to ameliorate the situation? Plenty according to the research, starting with training, education, and policy setting. “Certainly, you need to do training, but training in and of itself does not change the behavior, usually. So, you’ve got to have management, strong, strong management that can fight the system by creating a strategic plan, a task force: how are we doing to do this, how are we going to make our health care system much more healthy,” notes Strauss.

Some states have workplace violence legislation or are considering it. Sileo, for example, spoke to her state Assembly representative about the situation in supporting New York’s proposed legislation. “I’d like to see that the organization has to be accountable for their employees’ safety and health, and there should be a zero tolerance policy in every organization on this topic,” says Sileo.

Aside from formal policies and legislation, an individual can take action, too. In some instances, the individual who’s bullying another doesn’t realize they’re doing it. This may be

## COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, AND CIVILITY

### **Change, even when undertaken with**

the best of intentions, can have unanticipated effects. A remodeling effort in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Albany Medical Center Hospital is one such an example. With the goal of improving patient care and the family environment for parents of the newborns, the move from a 50-bed bay-style unit to a much larger 60-bed single-room design had unintended consequences. The stress of a different layout with new procedures and technologies strained the staff, leading to concerns about incivility.

"We were moving into a new environment which put huge stress on staff," explains Cheryl Dunton, education and professional development coordinator at the large upstate New York facility. "We probably underestimated a little bit the social implications of changing to a single-room design."

In order to meet the challenge head-on, a staff survey was administered to target the causes and to solicit possible solutions. The resulting plan, "A Civility Project: Changing the Culture in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit" was drafted by Dunton, who earned her Master of Science in Nursing at Excelsior College in 2015. The survey identified the need to improve communication, increase

accountability, and bolster recognition for achievements. Dunton's plan addresses those areas and more.

The first step was to reiterate the professional expectations and behaviors that Albany Med has documented in several policies. Once the groundwork was laid, Dunton, the leadership team, and NICU staff implemented monthly activities, morale boosters, recognitions, team-building exercises, and mentoring efforts. She was invited to present her work at the 2016 Educational Institute, "Promoting a Just Culture Through Nursing Education," sponsored by the Excelsior College School of Nursing, Albany Medical Center, Robert E. Kinsinger Institute for Nursing Excellence at Excelsior College, and the Tau Kappa At-Large chapter.

Dunton cites the Excelsior courses in interpersonal relationships and conflict management as integral to her progress with the civility project. She says, "They were absolutely crucial in helping me develop a foundation to be able to relate to my staff. They were the best electives I've ever taken actually. And probably the two courses I use the principles from all the time."



▲ Cheryl Dunton, a graduate of the MS in Nursing program, presented on creating a civil culture at the 2016 Educational Institute.

PHOTO: ISLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

Returning to the classroom to work on her master's after 25 years in the nursing field was sparked by receiving a Pillars of Nursing Award from Albany Med for an educational program she had developed. She always knew she'd return to school one day, and the award gave her the confidence to begin.

In reflecting on her degree, she says, "This has been such a great journey. I am really so grateful. It's absolutely the best thing I've done for myself in many, many years. It was just so empowering for me as a person, as nurse, and as a woman to know that I could accomplish this."

—D.Y.

because it's a learned behavior or an accepted part of the institutional culture. Thus, the targeted individual needs to take a stand before the situation escalates. Sileo suggests talking frankly with the individual and documenting the behavior in case help is needed from management or the human resources department.

While some nurses may feel the topic of horizontal violence has been sensationalized and received more than its fair share of attention, it is not an isolated phenomenon. In one survey of readers of the journal *Nursing Management*, 50 percent of the respondents reported experiencing bullying at work; another showed that 65 percent frequently observing lateral violence among coworkers. As the profession of nursing continues to examine the issue, the results may be far-reaching.

"I think that nursing should applaud itself for being willing to study this and get some research in their peer review

journals and in their trade journals, because they [the nursing profession] can be a role model for women who work in other industries," says Strauss.

The effects of bullying can be far-reaching, but through examining the issue, solutions and preventative measures can be developed. Steps can be taken so that victims will not be forced out of the profession, but rather, as in Sileo's case, rise above its challenges. Now a part-time instructor at Malloy College and working on her doctorate, she has returned to emergency medicine.

"You can only get stronger by surviving," says Sileo. "It takes a lot of courage to face your demons, and get help. And getting help wasn't easy for me, because I'm a nurse: I usually help, I don't get the help." ■

Dana Yanulavich served as senior editor for Excelsior College Magazine from 2007 to her retirement in July 2016.

# A PASSION FOR EDUCATION

**Murray H. Block has traveled to more** than 200 countries, held 17 positions since retiring in his late 50s, and shared 10 years of his decades-long career in education with Excelsior College. He's been a donor to Excelsior since 2005, the year he joined the College, and he established two endowment funds. The Murray and Estelle Block Scholarship Endowment Fund supports students with financial need, with preference given to students in the School of Business & Technology. The second fund created the Murray H. Block Leadership Education and Development Center to support leadership education and development for employees of Excelsior College.

His gifts reflect his own passion for lifelong learning, both in the funds' support of students and in staff members' growth. He believes that by growing the capacities of staff for leadership, the College grows and can better support its mission. "Excelsior has been a pioneer in offering the maximum flexibility to its students," says Block in commenting on what he appreciates about Excelsior College. "Its motto, 'What you know is more important than where or how you learned it,' is a mainstay of its mission."

Block sees the College making a difference in the lives of students. He adds, "Providing these educational opportunities with intensive advising services and at relatively moderate cost, is a tremendous service to those who otherwise find it difficult to pursue and complete college degrees."





# Questions

WITH THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE ALUMNI LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## MARK BOWMAN '00 – HOUSTON, TX

**Q:** Tell us your Excelsior volunteer story.

**A:** My re-association with the College began when I received the Alumni Achievement Award in 2014. I am a bit ashamed to admit that for the first 13 years after I graduated, I did not feel much like an alumnus. [I did not feel] a tangible connection with the College until I traveled to Albany for that Commencement ceremony in July of 2014. I had never “walked” for my Excelsior (Regents) diploma, so I took that opportunity to do so. I felt such a surge of emotion and sense of pride as I walked across the stage. [That] marked the moment I really felt connected. Hearing the stories of fellow graduates at the events surrounding Commencement and how their associations with the College had changed their lives made me want to pitch in and give back a little.

**Q:** You work for NASA. Can we call you an astronaut?

**A:** I have always said that I am a bit of a “half-astronaut!” But seriously, even though I am not an astronaut, I am so incredibly blessed and fortunate to work with them on a day-to-day basis. It was a bit intimidating at first, to share an office with people so incredibly accomplished who have lived and worked in space. Each day I walk into the “sanctum sanctorum” of human space flight, and I am surrounded by the “cream of the crop” of scientists, engineers, physicians, and test pilots! From the time I was a child, I wanted to be an astronaut; they were my childhood heroes. While my eyesight and a few life choices made that impossible, working with them daily is the next best thing. They have made me feel “at home” as a support engineer in the astronaut office, and my job is truly a dream come true. I cannot believe they pay me to do what I do!

**Q:** What piece of advice would you give to Excelsior students?

**A:** Never give up on your dream. Set goals and work hard to achieve them—that is how to achieve that dream. We live in an amazing time with incredible opportunities. For me, Excelsior College (then Regents) gave me a second chance to achieve the credentials I needed to make my dream come true.

**Q:** What is the best advice you have ever been given?

**A:** The night I graduated from high school, a man I greatly respected (who had been one of my Boy Scout leaders, a leader in my church, a great mentor, and astronaut) pulled me aside, shook my hand, and said, “Mark, congratulations! Enjoy how you feel tonight, because at this moment you feel the smartest that you ever will. From now on, your life will be a process of learning just how much you don’t know.”

**Q:** Do you have a favorite quote? What is it?

**A:** I think my favorite quote is this stanza from a poem by William Wordsworth entitled, “Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.” I am a deeply religious person, and with these words, Wordsworth captures well my belief that our mortal life is just a small part of God’s larger plan:

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!”

## STERLING BROWN '96, '98 – DENVER, CO

**Q:** Tell us your Excelsior volunteer story.

**A:** I am an avid reader of the Excelsior Alumni News and the Excelsior College Magazine. When I saw an opportunity to self-nominate for the Alumni Leadership Council, I jumped at the chance! I am so excited to serve the Excelsior College community and support the great work being done by this institution because of the profound effect the College has had on my life. I remember that back in 1994, Excelsior was just about the only school that seemed to appreciate that learning beyond the classroom was quantifiable to learning within the classroom. Excelsior pioneered the idea of “experiential learning” — now universally accepted and even commonplace. I received my bachelor’s degree 18 years after high school and it was made possible only because of Excelsior’s educational perspective. Now, I enjoy an exciting career in human resource development and leadership coaching, and I am a doctoral student of business administration. Excelsior is where it all began!

**Q:** You’re an experienced human resources and organizational development professional. What would you say is the most important quality employers should look for when they hire for any position?

**A:** I believe the most important quality an employer should look for in a candidate is integrity. How is that determined? This question begins with the analysis of a candidate’s resume—if it is honest and accurate—to the answers a candidate provides in the interview process, to questions about real-life experiences they’ve had in their professional or personal lives. For example, if the candidate says they “perform effectively on a team” but is unable to provide examples of positive real-life experiences they’ve had in a team format, an employer may not be convinced they possess this competency.

**Q:** Who do you admire the most?

**A:** I am a big proponent of integrity and that people need to be able to keep fear in perspective as they lead their lives. I admire Nelson Mandela, the late former president of South Africa, for his fearlessness and integrity. Mandela stood against the forces of a brutal apartheid government and sacrificed much of his life in the name of equal treatment and human rights for all South Africans. Again for me, this idea of fearlessness resonates especially in a principled life where doing what one “ought to do” is not always popular or easy.

**Q:** Name three things you think will become obsolete in 10 years?

**A:** Pre-employment testing for cannabis (marijuana), belief in the efficacy of a two-party political system in the U.S. and fat-free diets.

**Q:** What advice would you give your 20-year-old self?

**A:** I would say, “Don’t worry, it is ‘perfectly OK’ to be gay!”

## EDGAR MONTALVO '97 – TINLEY PARK, IL

**Q:** Tell us your Excelsior volunteer story.

**A:** I had volunteered to be an ambassador and received an email from Excelsior asking if I would be interested in representing the college at [a corporate partner]...I had a great time explaining my educational journey and encouraging those interested to seek additional information, and getting their contact information to the appropriate resource for follow-up.

**Q:** You’re an experienced project manager, a civil engineer, and have experience as a CFO. What’s the most important skill or ability you possess that helps you succeed in those fields?

**A:** Whether I am working as a project manager or chief financial officer, I believe that the most important skill or ability that allows one to succeed is effective communication. I have never encountered a situation where the cause of a problem was over communicating, but I often run into problems whose root cause—if not at least a contributing cause—is lack of effective communication. Rarely today does a professional deal with an issue in complete isolation, but instead must work together with others. Those that can craft messages that pass along information as intended to the target audience, achieve greater results. This also means using the appropriate means or method to transmit the message.

**Q:** Name something you’ve recently taught yourself.

**A:** I had to “relearn” calculus as part of my Master of Civil Engineering program. It has been more than 30 years since I first learned the subject, and haven’t had a real reason to use it much since. But I had to take and pass not one, but two math courses that required both calculus and differential equations. Needless to say, the tools available today, such as programmable graphing calculators and online websites, made the task much easier this time around.

**Q:** Who do you admire the most?

**A:** I admire my wife Cecilia the most. She is a registered nurse, currently working as a health coach at a wellness clinic, the mother of our two great college students, a homemaker, business partner, church volunteer, and my greatest supporter and best friend. We met in high school and not a day goes by where she isn’t a critical aspect of my life. I know that I can be very difficult to deal with sometimes, yet she doesn’t just tolerate me, she helps me to make the most of our lives together despite even the worst of circumstances.

**Q:** Do you have a favorite quote? What is it?

**A:** Actually, I have two. The first deals with self-motivation; the second with the importance of leadership:

“In order to succeed, we must first believe that we can.”

—Nikos Kazantzakis

“I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.” —Alexander the Great

**TANYA WHITNEY '86, '91 – SORRENTO, LA**

**Q:** Tell us your Excelsior volunteer story.

**A:** I retired from the Army in 2010 and decided to start volunteering my services to veterans. As a graduate from Excelsior in 1986 and 1991, I felt I had something to offer veterans and military service members also trying to go back to school and earn a degree. I volunteered to serve as a mentor and through that started to become more involved with the school. In 2014 as the recipient of the C. Wayne Williams Award, I learned more about the alumni council and the programs now being offered. I wanted to get more involved and represent Excelsior College. I hope to make others more aware of the Excelsior opportunities in my local region.

**Q:** You're very involved in community service. Tell us about that.

**A:** Between several different groups, I probably volunteer an average of 40 hours per week. I try to make time to help with events that honor local women veterans, including World War II veterans, and to give speeches to various college programs on how women in the military helped shape our society. As chair of the Ascension Veterans Memorial Park, I have been creating programs to honor and educate the local population on the efforts of Ascension Parish residents serving our country from the American Revolution to current operations. In addition, I usually help coordinate events for veterans and their families. As a coach, I have increased the number of students participating in cross country and pole vaulting by more than three times the normal numbers. I have worked to create workout programs that are fun and safe for the athletes to build cardio and conditioning for running and vaulting.

**Q:** Name something you've recently taught yourself.

**A:** As a former softball player in school and in the Army, I wanted to find a physical sport that I could compete in when I retired. Softball was out as my knees and shoulders would no longer work due to the stress of running and throwing. A friend told me about the Senior Olympic Games. I decided to learn how to throw a discus, shot put, and javelin. Though I have had some assistance with altering my techniques due to my physical limitations, I have pretty much learned the mechanics on my own. I have competed in several events and hope to qualify for the National Senior Games in 2017.

**Q:** Is there a story behind your name? What is it?

**A:** My first name came from a magazine article my mother read in high school. It's kind of funny because it was a story about a Russian woman named "Tanya" in the late '50s, early '60s at the height of McCarthyism and the hunt for Communist sympathizers. In addition, my middle name often causes people to do a double take. Especially when I tell them I was named after my father's favorite aunt. My middle name is Russell.

**Q:** What advice would you give your 20-year-old self?

**A:** Don't change a thing! ■

## ANNUAL FUND



## The Chair's Corner

Since the early days of Regents College and the University of the State of New York, there have been many degrees of success at Excelsior College. In addition to offering accredited degree programs that open doors to new opportunities, Excelsior also inspires confidence and competence in its adult learners, and helps grow future leaders who improve the communities in which they live and strengthen our world.

As alumni, we can easily give back — and pay it forward — to lift up those who follow in our footsteps by making a contribution to the Excelsior College Annual Fund. It's about more than writing a check or making a gift online. It's about offering someone like us a degree and a chance for a promotion, a new job, and a better life. That's the best reason to give. I hope you'll join me in making a positive difference in the lives of Excelsior's students in the year ahead with a gift to the Excelsior College Annual Fund. Visit [excelsior.edu/yourgiftmatters](http://excelsior.edu/yourgiftmatters).

Ever Upward,

Daniel Coberly '77, '84  
2016–2017 Chair,  
Excelsior College Annual Fund

COURTESY OF DAN COBERLY



## New Graduates Support Current Students

**M**ore than 100 graduates from the Class of 2016 attending this year's Commencement contributed to the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund, to provide scholarships to students with financial need. Through this Pay It Forward appeal, more than \$3,000 was raised for student scholarships. Donors received a purple honor cord to wear with their cap and gown, which identified them as contributing members of the Excelsior College Alumni Association.

This new philanthropic effort kicked off in June when graduates registered to attend Commencement received an email asking them to make a gift of \$25 or more to the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund as a way to pay it forward. There is great need for financial assistance among Excelsior students. For the 2015–2016 academic year, 7,300 students received financial support by way of federal financial aid and/or institutional scholarships.

Based on this year's response, future graduates will have the opportunity to contribute to the fund after their degree conferral. "As alumni, we have the opportunity to ensure that future students, with the same hard work and determination we demonstrated, can achieve what we have achieved," says Dwayn Hanford, president of the Excelsior College Alumni Association. "I hope you'll join me, in solidarity, to support others who are following in our footsteps."



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Smiles all around on Commencement day as some members of the Alumni Leadership Council, two alumni award recipients, and a member of the Board of Trustees make their way to the ceremony. PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER



## **MODERN SUPERHERO: TIMOTHY COLOMER**

**To Timothy Colomer's 3-year-old son, his father is Superman.** But the veteran Marine wouldn't even describe himself as "inspiring." Instead, he says, he just hopes to educate others.

"I wanted to be an artist," Colomer recalls. A self-described Renaissance Man, Colomer's enjoyment of the arts and outdoors stems to his younger days; still, today he is always curious, always exploring. If there is something worth doing, Colomer believes in doing it to the fullest. He says, "If you're gonna call yourself a mountain climber, you better go out and climb a mountain." This fortitude led him to join the Marine Corps, and to pursue his BA from Excelsior and his MA from George Washington University.

In 2006, while on a mission in Iraq with his Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit, Gunnery Sgt. Colomer suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) when an improvised explosive device detonated, injuring him and other Marines. Today, he still experiences physical and mental side effects from a compressed spine and PTSD/TBI. His injuries, however, have not held him back. He has used his experience to give back to fellow servicemen and women, but he doesn't think he's doing anything out-of-the-ordinary. He says, "...for veterans, it's not about inspiring or aspiring to be a hero or something extraordinary, it's really about sharing with your veteran brothers and sisters; how you can help them."

Based in Humble, Texas, Colomer is an ambassador of the EOD Warrior Foundation, whose mission is to improve the quality of life for EOD veterans and their families by providing emergency financial relief, scholarship opportunities, and physical, social, and emotional support. "I share with these guys... how to be successful and how to transition out of the military into a successful civilian career, and how to move forward and to keep trying to get better," says Colomer, the recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award.

He steers many of the Foundation's members toward higher education. If someone isn't interested in pursuing their degree, though, Colomer helps them find placement in safety-oriented careers, such as x-ray technicians at hospitals or radiological safety officers at chemical plants.

Why does he do it all? It's hard to explain, he says; there's a tremendous amount of love felt for each other when you're in the military. He describes how hard it was to lose 50 fellow Marine Corps EOD members, and emphasizes how important it is not to give up or give in. "I wanna make sure... we honor them the best way that we can by doing the best we can."



## **UNEXPECTED TEACHER: JANET IVERS**

**Janet Ivers never wanted to be a teacher. If her work at home and overseas as a nursing instructor has proven anything, however, it is that she has a knack for educating others.**

Ivers, who received associate (2005) and master's (2011) degrees in nursing from Excelsior, started down the nursing path as far back as high school, when she was a volunteer in a hospital. "I just really liked the people," she says. "I went into nursing because I liked the people."

It wasn't until she joined her husband in the Peace Corps that she embraced a love for teaching. With a BS in Microbiology, she traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire) to teach high school science while her husband taught English. She remembers that while working on a chemistry lesson, she thought, "I really enjoy this. I really like taking this information and getting it to the point where the students can understand it." Following that revelation, she returned to the United States and obtained her teaching certificate in secondary science.

In 2016, she completed her second stint in the Peace Corps when she joined up with Seed Global Health to be a nurse lecturer at Kamuzu College of Nursing in Blantyre, Malawi. The medical challenges in Malawi oftentimes made teaching difficult. "The only thing I could do," she explains, "[was] teach them how to care for their patients." A shortage of basic hygienic supplies such as paper towels, toilet paper, hand soap and gloves; no electricity; and crowded classrooms were common difficulties. Despite these obstacles, Ivers saw a thirst for knowledge and dedication in her students.

Her proudest teaching moments were when her students had those "a-ha!" moments, but it wasn't just in the nursing school that Janet Ivers saw the spark in pupils' eyes. She would often visit the local schools to help the children read. She explains, "I would go to fifth and sixth grade and have them read to me in English, and then ask them questions. That was a lot of fun; I really enjoyed that."

The Carrie B. Lenburg award recipient now teaches pharmacology to nursing students at a community college near her home in Libby, Montana. She encourages anyone to go into nursing, particularly in the realm of education. "The neat part of nursing is that it's so vast," Ivers clarifies, indicating there are many areas and disciplines to work in. Additionally, Ivers hopes to have some input on the direction the State of Montana is taking with its practical nurse and RN program. "...Hopefully I can be involved in that transition and in teaching both levels of nursing. That's what I'd really like to do."



## **MODEL EDUCATOR: ALTON NELMS**

**In his acceptance speech for the C. Wayne Williams Award** this past July, Alton Nelms quoted Jackie Robinson, saying, “What good is your life unless it’s dedicated to helping other people?” The ex-baseball player/Navy veteran/social worker/minister/teacher whole-heartedly follows number 42’s mantra, adding that it’s important to remember that in education, we are not only working to further ourselves, but also to further the lives of others.

“As we pursue education,” Nelms says, “we often forget that the education is really not for us. It’s not required to make you better or make you egotistical or proud. It’s really designed to equip you to serve and help other people.”

Nelms’s history with leadership stems back to his early days when he served as team captain on the Central State University (CSU) baseball team. He was later inducted into CSU’s Athletic Hall of Fame and drafted by the Cincinnati Reds. Perhaps it was a combination of his time in organized ball and the Navy that led to Nelms’s strict sense of discipline.

“I was 30 when I joined the Navy,” he recalls. It was actually via a suggestion from a brother. At first, Nelms thought his brother was joking, but upon further reflection, he decided to enlist. It was there that he decided the last thing he wanted to do with his life was to “push a pencil” for his day job. Enter his strong belief in the importance of education.

When Nelms attended Excelsior (then Regents) College, he needed 20 credits to complete his bachelor’s degree. He describes how a degree can make a world of difference in someone’s life: “In that process with that degree, you have to determine to continue to grow and develop as a person, so that when people look at you, you can model the way and then they can come at you because you’re accessible.”

Today, Nelms wears many hats around his home in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is a licensed social worker, drug counselor and prevention specialist, certified sports counselor, and trainer. In addition, he serves as an adjunct instructor at Cincinnati State, Chatfield College, and Solid Rock Bible College. Nelms tells us, “The model of education that I believe is that without it, you can’t be an example; that without it, you can’t give people advice; that without it, you can’t grow and expand...”



## **TEACHER OF LIFE: THOMAS SNEE**

**The Snee family motto, “Neither to oppress nor to be oppressed, but to serve,”** emphasizes the idea that the way to truly accomplish anything or get anywhere in life is to be there for other people. It is a simple phrase passed on by Thomas Snee’s grandfather, but one to which Snee continues to adhere.

Executive director of the Fleet Reserve Association in Virginia, Thomas Snee is the recent recipient of the Alumni Service Award. Having become an Eagle Scout and lifeguard in Willoughby, Ohio, Snee learned early on how to be a leader. Following high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he served for more than 30 years.

While in the Navy, he assisted with administrative duties, particularly in helping his fellow sailors further their careers. He helped one fellow sailor prepare for exams, simply by reading stories in the monthly Reader’s Digest and discussing writing together. He later became director of training for the Navy, where he focused his attention on the individual learning habits of the students. It’s something he even carried into his years as a middle school teacher.

Snee worked to foster the minds of his students by encouraging class participation and using techniques such as a chess club to improve focus and strategic thinking skills. “Education should not be a labor,” he explains, “it should be something you want to do.”

His mentorship hasn’t stopped in the classroom. Thomas Snee stops by his local Dunkin’ Donuts and over coffee and doughnut crumbs, offers direction to three community college kids. “All they want,” he explains, “is someone to give them a direction, not necessarily give them the answers.” Snee recently encouraged one of them to get on track to further his education by applying for a Pell Grant.

In 2014, Snee’s passion for education led him to serve on the Congressional Reform Panel for Education (a position he credits to a previous meeting with Excelsior College President John F. Ebersole as the catalyst). Snee says “education has got to continue,” and today he is following his “dash theory,” the belief that we all have a start and end date, but what we do in between—the dash—is what really matters. So he’s paying it forward, helping others, and continuing to grow. He says he’d like to go back to teaching and inspire a new generation.

Snee explains that it’s our job to encourage the next generation so that they may succeed. “We have to be mentors and advocates for each other,” he says.

—JENNA KERWIN



<b>The Shift Report Webinar</b> 8–9 pm ET	TUESDAY NOVEMBER <b>15</b>
Join Sandy Butterfield, BS '86, RN, for this informative webinar that explores issues that nurses and health care professionals face in the workplace.	

<b>Meet Up at the Metropolitan Museum of Art</b> New York City	SATURDAY NOVEMBER <b>19</b>
NYC alumni, you're invited to join your fellow graduates and College staff for lunch and a guided tour of American Art. You won't want to miss this enjoyable afternoon at the Met!	

<b>Alumni Association 101 Webinar</b> 8–9 pm ET	THURSDAY DECEMBER <b>1</b>
Join the Alumni Leadership Council for a chance to ask questions and learn about services and benefits, alumni awards, the alumni volunteer program, and the purpose of the Council. If you're thinking about applying to serve on the Council, you won't want to miss this informative session.	

<b>Career Webinar: Executive Insights Series</b> 1:30–2:30 pm EST	WEDNESDAY DECEMBER <b>7</b>
Hear firsthand advice from a successful executive who has interviewed hundreds of candidates.	

<b>Career Webinar: Careers in Cybersecurity</b> 7–8 pm ET	WEDNESDAY MARCH <b>8</b>
It is predicted that by 2020, there will be 1.4 million job openings in cybersecurity and not enough skilled workers to meet the demand. Learn which skills are in the highest demand and where the jobs will be.	

<b>The Shift Report Webinar</b> 8–9 pm ET	TUESDAY MARCH <b>14</b>
Join Sandy Butterfield, BS '86, RN, for this informative webinar that explores issues that nurses and health care professionals face in the workplace.	

Registration is required for all alumni events at [WWW.EXCELSIOR.EDU/ALUMNIEVENTS](http://WWW.EXCELSIOR.EDU/ALUMNIEVENTS).

## #ExcelsiorProud

Thanks to your feedback, we've changed our alumni Facebook community from a page environment to a group environment. Now, you can discuss topics and trends that are of interest to you with Excelsior alumni, students, faculty, and staff. The old page will be deactivated soon, so join us today in the Excelsior College: Alumni Association Community. Don't forget to use our alumni hashtag, **#excelsiorproud!**

## #ExcelsiorCares

We know that our graduates give freely of their time and talent to help make this world a better place. Tell us which organizations you volunteer with by posting on the Excelsior College: Alumni Association Community on Facebook using **#excelsiorcares**.



## CALL FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Excelsior College Alumni Association presents awards to accomplished alumni each year to recognize outstanding graduates whose achievements are considered by the Alumni Leadership Council to be inspiring to other alumni and students. Nominations for awards can be submitted at any time, though the deadline for the current award year is January 15. Award recipients are required to attend the College's annual Commencement festivities held in July in Albany, New York, where they will be presented with their awards at the Awards Convocation. To read about previous award recipients, or learn about award criteria, visit [www.excelsior.edu/alumniawards](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumniawards) and plan on attending the Alumni Association 101 webinar on December 1!

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
& TECHNOLOGY

**Ronnie Saturno, BS '14, MS '15, of Wahiawa, Hawaii**, is an avionics electrical technician first class with the U.S. Coast Guard. After earning his Excelsior degrees, he applied for a direct commission to the Coast Guard. He received his commission as an ensign on May 23, 2016 and began work in the Cybersecurity Policy, Compliance, and Audits Branch at Coast Guard Headquarters.

SCHOOL OF  
LIBERAL ARTS

**Jeffrey Baker, AA '73, BS '75, of Fairport, New York**, was elected vice president of the New York State Conference of the American Association of University Professors. He previously served as delegate-at-large. He is also adjunct director on the Faculty Council of Monroe Community College where he holds the rank of professor (adjunct) of psychology. Baker is a member of the online faculty at Excelsior College where he acted as subject matter expert for the design of two psychology courses. He formerly served as a volunteer academic advisor, alumni trustee, and secretary of the Alumni Association in the Regents College days. Baker earned a MS at Syracuse University and a PhD at Capella University.

**Francis C. Campbell, AA '74, BS '79, of Mesa, Arizona**, co-wrote "The Studebaker Wagon: An Inspirational Novel." His first book, it is based on a story he heard in his teens.

**Howard A. Daniel III, AA '75, of Dunn Loring, Virginia**, published his seventh book, "Democratic Republic of Viet Nam Coins

& Currency, 2nd Edition," in February. It describes all of the known financial instruments from 1945 to 1978.

**Victor Stolberg, BS '78, of Bloomfield, New Jersey**, assistant professor and counselor at Essex County College, authored a book, "Painkillers: History, Science, and Issues." It examines painkiller drugs from a variety of perspectives, including medical, historical, economic, and social.

**Neil S. Gardner, BS '82, of Fairfax, Virginia**, is a retired health services researcher who credits his Excelsior degree with his future academic success. He writes, "I would not have been able to complete a bachelor's degree in 1982 without the opportunity provided by the NYS Regents External Degree Program (now Excelsior College). Building upon that success, I have been able to continue my higher education to earn two advanced academic degrees. THANK YOU!!!" He went on to earn a Master of Public Administration from Long Island University and a Doctor of Health Administration from Central Michigan University.

**David E. Bradley, BS '86, of Leicester, North Carolina**, authored "Wilderness and Disaster Emergencies Survival Guide," which provides information on animal dangers, environmental dangers, natural and man-made disasters, and general survival information.



**James M. Lally, BS '87, of Upland, California**, was the recipient of the American Osteopathic Foundation's Physician of the Year Award

in September 2016. He is president and chief medical officer of Chino Valley Medical Center. Lally is also the chief medical officer for the International Shooting Sports Federation medical committee and a member of the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission. He earned an MMM from Carnegie Mellon University and a DO and MSHPE from the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific.



**Dennis Lewis, BA '92, of Colorado Springs, Colorado**, professor at Colorado Technical University (CTU), earned a Doctorate of Management in Global Leadership in 2014 at CTU. His dissertation, "Mentoring Russian Orphans as Leaders in the Workplace," was informed by his nine trips to Soviet orphanages to help Russian orphans.

**JR Reagan, BA '93, of Haymarket, Virginia**, was appointed vice dean of strategy planning at the John E. Endicott College of International Studies (Woosong University) in Daejeon, South Korea, for a two-year period beginning September 1. He has more than 25 years of management consulting experience in more than 20 countries. He has taught at the Carey Business School of Johns Hopkins University since 2008, and his research interests include innovation, analytics, visualization, and cybersecurity. He earned a doctorate in organizational leadership from Shenandoah University and a master's in management information systems from Bowie State University. He is a graduate

of NSA National Cryptologic School; Advanced Korean Language Studies Program at Yonsei University (Seoul, Korea); Graduate School of Banking Technology & Operations (Vanderbilt University); Program on Negotiation for Senior Executives (Harvard Law School); and New Market Growth Innovation Workshop (Harvard Business School).

**Joseph Conron, BS '97, of Sayville, New York**, senior developer at Tradepoint Systems LLC, was awarded U.S. Patent 9.235.610 B2 "Short String Compression" on January 16, 2016. He explains, "Today, much of computer science involves the storage and transmission of sequences of short codes. Example short codes include, but are not limited to, the file and directory names used by operating systems, chat conversations having very short statements, and website URLs defined by a single short sequence of characters within a limited character universe. This compression algorithm reduces the size of these short messages by as much as of 35 percent." Conron also earned an MS in Computer Science at New York University.



**Danny L. Scott, AS '01, BS '02, of Conover, North Carolina**, was selected as the Most Exceptional Military Person of the Year by the Elks Lodge in 2016. He was also

named as the Most Influential Mentor of Catawba County by Olive Garden Restaurants and presented with gift card worth a minimum \$25,000. But his greatest accomplishment of 2016 was saving the life of an 86 year-old WWII veteran who fractured his skull and benefited from Scott's medical assistance.



**George Conley Jr., BS '07, of Chula Vista, California**, is director of military and veterans affairs at Apollos University. He also earned a Master of Arts in Business Management, a Master and Doctor of Theology, and most recently, a Doctor of Business Administration.



**Duane K. L. France, BS '11, of Colorado Springs, Colorado**, is the director of veteran services at the Family Care Center. He earned a MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Adams State University. France recently applied for and received a \$140,000 capacity-building grant from the NBCC Foundation (NBCCF). Chosen from among 17 finalists, this grant will provide mental health counseling to veterans at no cost, in order to bridge the gap between the need

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for services and the connection to long-term care. In addition to being a combat veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan, France is a National Certified Counselor (NCC), and a 2015 NBCC Foundation military scholarship recipient. He wrote, "Without the support of Excelsior, this would not have been possible."

**James Scott Robbins, BS '11, of Montrose, Minnesota,** earned a Juris Doctor at the University of St. Thomas in 2016. A student attorney in the Minnesota Public Defender's Office, he writes, "I've already won cases at the pre-trial stage and my first trial is set for June."



**Carlos Nathinell Floyd, MA '13, BS '06, of Saint Joseph, Missouri,** wrote the book, "Missouri's Young Adult Black Males: An Endangered People." He writes, "Contrary to the title, the book analyzes the entire U.S. but does narrow its focus to Missouri." He served in and played football for both the Navy and the Army.

**Cheryl Kennedy, AS '13, BA '15, of Troy, New York,** is economic development coordinator for the City of Troy, New York. She is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing marketing strategies to promote the retention and expansion of business and development in Troy.

**Marlon Young, BS '15, of Ormond Beach, Florida,** recently published his first book, "Wisdom to Win With: Biblical Principles For Good Success."

## SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Susan McConn, BS '85, of West Palm Beach, Florida,** retired as the vice president of Otterbein Homes Small House Neighborhoods. She led the vision of the organization to "liberate elders and those who serve them from the mindset of institutional care." McConn was responsible for the operation of five small house neighborhoods and the building of an additional four neighborhoods over a period of three years. This made Otterbein Homes the largest provider of this type of skilled nursing care in the nation. When she retired, Otterbein Homes Board of Trustees passed a resolution and named the Union Township Ohio Small House Neighborhood the Susan F. McConn Small House Neighborhood.



**Marcia Mayer, AS '95, of West Palm Beach, Florida,** received the 2015 Association of Florida Colleges Lifetime Achievement Award. Since graduating from Excelsior, Mayer gained extensive nursing experience in international nursing, including Peace Corps Nurse (1995–1997) in Paraguay; seven deployments with Doctors without Borders; four deployments with Medical Teams International; multiple deployments with other international teams; and eight deployments with the American Red Cross on national disasters. She's now semi-retired, working summers as a nurse manager at a sports camp.

# Smooth Sailing

## GRADUATE CHARTS A COURSE TO HELP KINDERGARTENERS, PLEDGES COLLEGE TUITION

By Dana Yanulavich

### Boats have played a big part in Marty Burbank's life.

A lifelong sailor and U.S. Navy vet, Burbank met his wife on a boat, got engaged on a boat, and got married on a boat. And it's a boat that plays a big part in his latest life achievement—that of philanthropist.

The California lawyer charted a new course with funds initially earmarked to purchase a 40-foot Catalina or Beneteau yacht. Inspired by the words of his pastor at Eastside Christian Church, Burbank has pledged to pay the college costs for 26 kindergarteners at Rio Vista Elementary School in Anaheim, California.

"I planned to buy a boat, and I was sitting in church, and my pastor was talking about charity and sacrifice," Burbank recalls, "and I realized that buying the boat was not the best investment I could make with my money and investing in these 26 kindergarteners was a much better plan."

Burbank, whose practice specialty is elder law and veterans benefits, had been helping out at the school for a while. Along with his wife, Seon Chun-Burbank, Early Childhood Education faculty chair at Vanguard University, Burbank had assisted with painting, clean-up, and landscaping at the school. Through their church, they have also been involved with providing granola bars, notebooks, iPads, and audio books for Rio Vista. That's how they got to know Tessa Ashton and her class of kindergarteners.

The kids, they learned, are all English-language learners. Coming from some of the most economically challenged situations, many of the students struggle with food and housing issues. In order to encourage the kids to think about higher education, the school hosts a College Friday, and each class adopts a college or university. In Mrs. Ashton's class, it's her alma mater—Indiana University. Burbank supplied the kindergarteners with Class of 2032 Hoosier t-shirts and sweatshirts to help motivate them.

"So, when I was handing them the sweatshirts..., [and] as I was leaving the classroom, I told the teacher I had one more thing to tell them," Burbank says, recalling that day in December 2015. "And that was that I was going to pay their tuition." The momentous proposal didn't faze the children too much because they really didn't quite understand it, but what did make an impression on the children was that Burbank and the teacher were so moved by the generous offer that they began to cry. "They were worried about us, because to them tears meant something was wrong. So the teacher explained to them happy tears and one of the kids brought me a tissue," he explains.





COURTESY OF CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Surprisingly, Burbank had not planned the life-changing offer in advance. He had neither mentioned it to school administration nor the teacher. In fact, he hadn't even cleared it ahead of time with his wife. "I do recommend anyone doing this, do talk to their wife ahead of time," he advises, somewhat sheepishly. But as an educator and faithful supporter of the school, she realized the importance of the gift. "It only took her a few seconds. When she realized that I was serious about it, she just said that we would be blessed for doing it."

But this kind of support comes with some planning on the Burbank's part. He figures it will cost more than \$1 million for tuition at a California state institution for the 26 kindergarteners assuming 5 percent inflation. It will take a concerted effort for the Burbanks to accomplish this feat. "We figure we're going to save \$80,000 a year and invest it to have the money there," he says.

The gift, however, comes with one stipulation: the kids need to stay in touch. Each year, they need to write the Burbanks an essay or draw a picture, showing what college is going to mean to them. He explains, "I want them to visualize that goal every year, think about college enough to write an essay and draw a picture. And keep that goal in front of them."

Burbank's own educational goal and career journey was not all smooth sailing. He did not graduate high school with his peers; instead, he fulfilled his requirements two years later at an adult high school. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and served 12 years, the majority of which as a medical deep-sea diver working with Navy Seal teams. As he matured, school became increasingly important to him. It was through the Navy that he was introduced to Excelsior College, and in 1996, he earned a degree in liberal arts. "I really feel blessed and grateful that Excelsior was there to help me finish my bachelor's degree so that I could do this today. I'm sure I would not have been

able to help these 26 kids out if it hadn't been for Excelsior helping me finish my bachelor's degree."

The importance of education is not lost on the Burbanks. Both are the first in their families to graduate from college. Since completing his degree at Excelsior, Marty has gone on to earn not only his juris doctorate but also a Master of Law (tax). In addition to her bachelor's degree, Seon has two master's degrees and a doctorate.

Burbank's generosity didn't go unnoticed. When the vice principal posted the info on the school's Facebook page, the local news picked up the story. The coverage began to snowball, and soon Burbank was appearing on the CBS and NBC national nightly news, People magazine, and the "Meredith Vieira Show." He hopes such publicity will inspire others to similarly support students.

Dismissing the adage that money can't buy happiness, Burbank says, "Spending it on stuff doesn't buy you happiness, but spending it on 26 kindergarteners will definitely buy you happiness. I've had so much joy since I've pledged this money for these kids, it's incredible." ■



◀ Marty Burbank and his wife, Seon Chun-Burbank, are volunteers at Rio Vista Elementary School in Anaheim, California, where he made a surprise announcement to pay college tuition for a class of kindergarteners.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARTY BURBANK

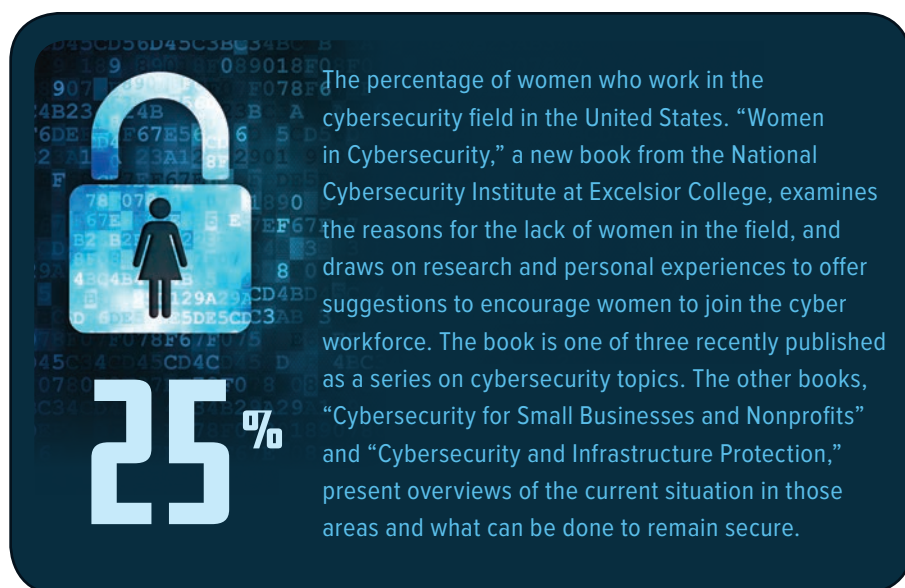




Excelsior College achieved national recognition in May when it was ranked No. 1 among the Best Colleges for Returning Adults, in a study by College Factual. The study was reported in a Forbes story, “10 Great Colleges for Adults Returning to School.”



The percentage of students who work while enrolled at Excelsior. Of these students, 76 percent have a full-time job and 11 percent work part-time.



The percentage of women who work in the cybersecurity field in the United States. “Women in Cybersecurity,” a new book from the National Cybersecurity Institute at Excelsior College, examines the reasons for the lack of women in the field, and draws on research and personal experiences to offer suggestions to encourage women to join the cyber workforce. The book is one of three recently published as a series on cybersecurity topics. The other books, “Cybersecurity for Small Businesses and Nonprofits” and “Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection,” present overviews of the current situation in those areas and what can be done to remain secure.

# 2021

The year to which the School of Nursing’s designation as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education extends. After a rigorous peer-review process, the National League for Nursing awarded Excelsior this designation for the fourth consecutive time. Excelsior has been a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education since 2005. This year’s designation recognizes efforts to create environments that enhance student learning and professional development. More than 17,000 students are pursuing degrees in the School of Nursing.



# 22

The number of countries represented by graduates of Excelsior College in the 12 months ending June 2016. Achieving its mission, the College met students where they are — in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, England, Georgia, Gibraltar, Iceland, India, Israel, Lebanon, Maldives, Mexico, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States, in addition to Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.







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## Leave a Legacy That Shows You Care About Adult Learners

**T**he Nyquist Legacy Society honors the legacy of the late Ewald B. "Joe" Nyquist, a civil rights leader and former New York State Commissioner who fought to desegregate New York schools. Through his efforts to extend educational opportunities to learners of all ages, Nyquist became the "visionary author" of Excelsior College.

You can support Nyquist's vision by becoming a member of the Nyquist Legacy Society. To join, simply provide a visionary gift to Excelsior College in the form of a general, residual, or contingent bequest. This can be done by adding just a single sentence to your estate plan.

Let your legacy emphasize your passion for lifelong learning by becoming part of this valued group of contributors.

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To learn more, speak with Keith Barrows, vice president for institutional advancement, at 518-738-8847.

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