In celebration of Alverno’s 125th anniversary, alumnae members of the Alverno College Board of Trustees proudly initiated the Vanguard Society as a new tradition for recognizing and celebrating the powerful impact Alverno Women are making locally, across our nation and around our globe. Honoring our most notable alums, the Vanguard Society brings together alumnae whose records of distinguished service, leadership, and achievement have brought pride and distinction to the college. The achievements and strength of character modeled by Vanguard Society members will serve to inspire and challenge Alverno students for the next 125 years.
Debra H. Amesqua
2004
Business and Management

Debra Amesqua was the first female fire chief for the City of Madison serving from 1996 to 2012. Under her stewardship, the department expanded to meet the needs of the growing state capital. Amesqua has been nationally recognized for her work on senior-level management training for fire service women and breaking down barriers for people of color. Under her leadership, the department implemented a citywide smoke-alarm ordinance dramatically reducing fire fatalities in a 3 1/2-year span.

First president of the Women Chief Fire Officers Association, she completed the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Training Program as well as the Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.

“Alverno College has helped me to change my perspective and mind-set about my life and how I fit into this world. I now strive to take it all in with great intensity and focus, until I am overflowing, and then with grace, give it all back without any expectation for reward. I know when I can do this, wonderful things can happen.”

Stephanie A. Arend
1985
Business and Management, Professional Communication

Stephanie Arend is a trial judge in Pierce County Superior Court. Upon her appointment in 1999, she was a partner with Gordon, Thomas, Honeywell, Malanca, Peterson & Daheim, PLLC, in Tacoma, Washington, where her practice focused on land use, real estate and environmental law. Over the course of her legal career she has been a frequent speaker on topics ranging from storm water management to Washington State criminal sentencing laws.

Arend received her J.D., cum laude, from the University of Puget Sound School of Law in Tacoma, Washington, and her B.A., with honors, from Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

“During my time at Alverno, I developed self-confidence and a clear direction for my life – both personally and professionally. I was surrounded by people who believed in me, from President Joel Read and my teachers to my fellow students. I truly owe my life to the amazing people I met at Alverno College.”

• Career Fire Chief of the Year, Fire Chief Magazine, 2011
• Wisconsin Fire Inspector’s Association, Fire Chief of the Year, 2011
• Martin Luther King, Jr. Heritage Award, Madison, Wisconsin, 2012

• Chairs the Presiding Judge Education Committee for the trial courts in the State of Washington
• Serves as the District Convener for the yearly YMCA Youth and Government Mock Trial Competition
Jean Bartels, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Georgia Southern University, formerly held the positions of dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences and chair of the School of Nursing. Bartels also served as the chair of nursing at Alverno College. Before coming to Alverno, she worked as a staff nurse in the intensive care unit at Columbia Hospital.

Bartels has served on educational policies committees, discipline deans committees, curriculum committees, strategic planning councils, and research and assessment councils at Alverno College and Georgia Southern University. She has taught theory and clinical practice in all areas of the nursing curriculum. Bartels has also conducted research in higher education areas, and has written extensively on topics including outcome measurement in nursing education, critical thinking in nursing, nursing education for the twenty-first century, service learning and community-based nursing education.

“I frequently relay that my Alverno education was far and beyond the very best educational experience of the many I have ever had. Without doubt, my development in the areas of speaking, writing, group process, analytic thinking, and problem solving have contributed to my success in the many leadership opportunities that define my career. I am confident and competent, and I owe much of that to the outstanding learning experiences and challenges Alverno’s outstanding faculty provided me. I will be forever thankful that I found Alverno College!”

Mary Beth Berkes is a co-founding partner and retired managing director of Linden Capital Partners LLC, a healthcare and life science private-equity firm headquartered in Chicago. She has been involved in healthcare for more than 30 years focused on medical products, medical devices, and pharmaceutical segments. Berkes has significant governance experience on boards of directors of healthcare companies and organizations, and chairs audit, compensation and organizational development committees. Berkes spent 18 years as a senior executive at Bristol-Myers Squibb in the ConvaTec division. She also worked in cancer and antibiotic research at the Medical College of Wisconsin.


Berkes earned her MBA from Kellogg Graduate School of Business at Northwestern University.

“Alverno instilled in me, and all women who attend the school, a sense of confidence. The faculty and staff did an eye-to-eye with me, as they do with every student, and said ‘don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it. If you’re willing to work for it, you can do it.’ Just showing up doesn’t get you a trophy, and it was up to me – up to each of us – to prove our merit, take risks, and deliver results. That was the start of a path that defined my professional career and life.”
Sister Dorothy Bock
1950
English

Dorothy Bock is the development director and co-founder of Womanspace, a center for the development of women. She has been called “daring, direct and dedicated,” as her life has been devoted to inspiring and empowering women through the creative process.

After studying curriculum development at Northern Illinois University, Bock wrote and piloted an integrative program of literature, art, music, theatre, religion and social studies for high school students. In 1975, she applied the core of this program, along with her extensive background in the humanities, to the development of women through Womanspace.

Bock served as program director at Womanspace until 2008 and still continues as an art instructor. Womanspace’s programs build awareness of interfaith and multicultural realities, while promoting feminism in its deepest sense as a way of strengthening equality, mutuality and collaboration.

Bock has a master’s degree in English literature and an MFA in painting and sculpture.

“In the spirit of Alverno’s creative and connecting method of teaching, I have been inspired to create educational models throughout my professional life. Womanspace has grown and been strongly influenced by our ongoing relationship with Alverno College. It is flourishing today, continuing to excel as a model of creative learning in northern Illinois.”

Patricia Dix Brewer
1968
Biology

Dr. Patricia Dix Brewer practices maternal-fetal medicine, and expertly treats women with diabetes, birth defects, high blood pressure, rhesus disease and pre-term labor. Additionally, she offers gynecologic care at a clinic for medically uninsured patients. Specializing in high-risk pregnancy consultation allows her to focus on giving her patients the level of care that they deserve and to teach them about various conditions that may pose a risk to patients’ maternity and future pregnancies.

Dix Brewer is an award-winning practitioner with a wealth of experience that facilitates her ability to provide well-informed medical decisions. Throughout her more than 30-year career, Dix Brewer has garnered recognition for her first-rate patient care and passion for her profession.

“Attending Alverno College was one of the best decisions I’ve made in my life. It was there that I developed into a thinking adult human being. My education allowed me to live the rest of my life grounded in Catholic principles and social justice. It prepared me for my life as a doctor.”
Margaret Bull  
1973  
BSN

Margaret Bull is a professor and director of the Ph.D. program in the College of Nursing at Marquette University. She has done extensive research and writing on issues affecting older adults.

Bull was awarded a Ph.D. in Urban Social Institutions-Health Policy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a Robert Wood Johnson postdoctoral fellowship in the clinical nurse scholars program at the University of Rochester. Her research at both institutions focused on health care prospective reimbursement policy and the specific impact on older adults and their families. The National Institutions of Health, the Retirement Research Foundation and the University of Minnesota provided substantial funding for her research.

Through her postgraduate publications and teaching and professional activities, Bull has greatly advanced the understanding of selected health care issues and policy implications that have had a major impact on the delivery of health care.

“AS an RN student returning for a baccalaureate degree I developed a keen appreciation for Alverno’s nursing faculty and their willingness to recognize and grant credit for one’s prior educational experiences. I also found that persistence in pursuing goals was fostered at Alverno.”

Jovita Carranza  
2011  
Honorary Alumna

The more you learn about Jovita Carranza, the more you’ll see how she breathes life into every aspect of the Alverno mission, every part of the American dream. Yes, she worked her way up from the mailroom of UPS to be one of their vice presidents. And yes, President George W. Bush appointed, and the Senate unanimously confirmed her, as the Deputy Administrator of the US Small Business Administration. Her list of distinctions, her work with trade ministers from around the globe, and her distinguished contributions to communities would fill this page and more. She made every one of those valuable gifts based on her abilities alone.

Said another way, Carranza is valued for who she is because she uses, synergistically, every part of Alverno’s core curriculum every day. Simply put, just like Alverno College, she helps people and organizations achieve results even they didn’t think possible.

“The unique backgrounds of Alverno students and the exceptional teaching staff is what tightly and neatly seams together the educational experience for women in search of professional solutions. The Alverno promise of discovery and commitment to excellence are the signature characteristics that I systematically developed in all life endeavors.”
Danita Cole Medved is the Executive Vice President and Global Client Advocate for Willis Group (WSH, NYSE), a leading provider of insurance and reinsurance brokerage services.

Throughout her 30 years in the industry, Cole Medved has been the vanguard creating opportunity for women in commercial insurance. Serving in a role usually held by men, she has set the standard for leadership and professional excellence, helping to put women on an equal footing with men and change the perspective of who can be leaders in insurance. Cole Medved drives the Fortune 1000 and Global Risk Solutions strategies for Willis Wisconsin Group as part of the company’s Midwest region.

Cole Medved began her career underwriting with Liberty Mutual and became a broker to work more closely with clients. She progressed through several client-focused leadership roles with multinational brokers in Wisconsin, electing to join Willis Milwaukee as a senior vice president.

Cole Medved is part of Willis’ most elite network of senior professionals with the credentials, credibility and leadership skills required to have responsibility for its largest, most complex risk accounts. She is a frequent speaker at industry and Willis events.

“I know the skill set I acquired at Alverno was integral to my success. Alverno had always stressed the transferability of competencies from course to course, curriculum to curriculum; in real life I found it was, and still is, a huge asset in adapting to changing career environments.”

Sister Frances Cunningham is a leader in the School Sisters of St. Francis having served as a provincial in the Chicago province and as president of the international congregation for two terms.

She has traveled to many countries and specifically in her work with the World Mission Office she has made multiple trips to the Dominican Republic to serve La Sagrada Familia Parish. She has also traveled to Africa, Europe and many of the Central American countries to serve an international community. Cunningham, director of the Archdiocese’s World Mission Office, believes seeing with your heart opens your eyes to the needs that exist in the world.

“I am most proud of the many opportunities I’ve had to support the development of leadership of women in church and society in various countries and cultures. Thanks to the Alverno spirit which challenges me to actively engage difference in my life and in my ministries, I am better prepared to think globally and to act locally with compassion for others.”
Vivien De Back
1954
BSN

For more than 50 years, Vivien De Back has been involved in nursing education and practice redesign. She was director of the Alverno College School of Nursing and directed the U.S. National Commission on Nursing. As editor of the International Nursing Review, she directed content to inform nurses throughout the world.

De Back was clinical professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where she assisted the school of nursing in grant proposal development and increasing community involvement in the school’s activities. As senior consultant to Eastern Europe for Project HOPE Nursing Education Programs, De Back assisted in the redesign of nursing education and practice in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

De Back serves on boards and committees of local, state and national nursing, consumer and health care groups. The Wisconsin Nurses Association rededicated its leadership award, the “Vivien De Back Nursing Leadership Award,” in her honor.

“As an educator at Alverno, I learned and taught a new way of educating. This work gave me new tools for teaching others whose lives I would touch throughout the world. My commitment to others and willingness to give of self are so much a part of my family life, my professional life and my community life, thanks to Alverno.”

Sister Mary E. Diez
1967
English

Mary Diez is the dean of and professor in the School of Education at Alverno College. The former president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Diez currently chairs the AACTE task force on teacher education as a moral community. She is director of a number of projects at Alverno College that support urban public schools, and has worked preparing teachers for National Board certification and professional development.

Diez directs the Southeastern Wisconsin Assessment Collaborative and is co-director of both the Leadership Academy for Character Education and the Milwaukee Public Schools/Alverno College Administrator Mentoring Program.

In the past 20 years, Diez has played a lead role in securing and directing more than $3.36 million in various grants from local and national foundations benefiting Milwaukee schools.

“When I ask my students to try something they think they cannot do, to revise a paper or to take an idea farther, it is because I care about them becoming more of who they could be. When they say, ‘I can’t do it,’ I tell them to put a ‘yet’ at the end of the sentence, to remind themselves that growth is a developmental process.”

• Published over 30 articles and chapters in books and periodicals
• A fellow of the American Academy of Nursing
• Outstanding Achievement Award, YWCA of Greater Milwaukee

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Sister Austin Doherty
1954
History

Sister Austin Doherty is the special assistant to Academics Affairs at Alverno College and was Alverno’s fifth vice president of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean. She was a critically important member of the four person team that worked with the faculty and staff in the introduction and implementation of Alverno’s now internationally famous approach to ability-based instruction and assessment. During her tenure, Doherty has distinguished her profession as a scholar, educator, consultant and administrator.

Among her numerous honors, Doherty has received recognition from Loyola for scholastic excellence and from the Uhrig Foundation for teaching excellence. Her works in future studies and the education of women have appeared in such periodicals as The Journal of Educational Psychology, Counseling Psychologist, and New Directions in Experiential Learning. In addition, Doherty has worked with hundreds of colleges and universities around the world as her reputation as an educator and consultant has gained national prominence.

“During my work at Alverno the signature characteristic I most developed was the ability to listen and collaborate.”

Carole Zinner Dolphin
1962
English

Carol Dolphin is known as an actor and director in theatres throughout Milwaukee and Waukesha counties. She has performed internationally as a professional storyteller.

Now retired, Dolphin enjoyed a nearly 40-year career as educator. At New Berlin High School, she began the city’s drama program. At Alverno College, she was the first lay alumnae director. Dolphin was a professor and statewide department chair in communication arts/theatre at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha. She has also conducted numerous communication workshops in the corporate and non-profit sectors.

Currently, Dolphin plays the role of community volunteer. She has been an Alverno College external assessor from the first year of the program. She is also a Ten Chimneys docent and actor/director for various community theatres.

“The development of Alverno’s signature characteristics – confidence, competency and caring – all have been important in my professional and personal lives. The quality of my education, the skills which I learned, the lifelong friends I made – all have enriched my entire life.”

Vanguard Society

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• Most Outstanding Graduate Student at Loyola University, 1967

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Vanguard Society

• Former Alverno Alumnae Association President
• Arthur M. Kaplan Fellow
• Professor Emerita from the University of Wisconsin
Karen P. Doppke
1964
Physics

Karen Doppke is an Instructor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Harvard Medical School and a radiation biophysicist at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she teaches physicians and physicists and provides clinical physics support. She also serves as a Eucharistic Minister at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Jamaica Plain.

After earning her MS degree in radiation physics from the University of Wisconsin, Doppke became an instructor in the department of radiology at University of Wisconsin Hospitals.

Doppke served on American Association of Physicists in Medicine committees and was president of the New England chapter of the AAPM. As member of the American College of Radiology, she has served as a site reviewer in the Radiation Oncology Practice Accreditation Program.

“The transformation that I experienced at Alverno was how the faculty expected all students to be successful women in all aspects of life, and that it was possible for me. They provided the leadership and educational direction for each student to succeed.”

Catherine D. Dowdell
1991
Professional Communication, Business and Management

Catherine Dowdell retired in June 2012 from her position as Corporate New Product Brand Manager at SC Johnson, where she specialized in new business development, strategic brand positioning, and turning consumer insights into market-winning ideas. Dowdell has held various positions at SC Johnson, including strategic sales support and market research, and has delivered positive sales and share increases for all the brands she has worked on at SC Johnson.

Dowdell’s commitment to Alverno and advocacy of its unique approach to education started as a student and has not stopped. She served on the Alverno Alumnae Association Board of Directors for over ten years, including as co-chair and chairwoman. She initiated a board development task force and chaired the first alumnae wine tasting fund raiser.

“Alverno is like an eco-system. Each part of the institution, from the people to the concepts and the buildings, are critical to accomplishing its mission. It succeeds year after year at the very complex task of developing competency rather than simply teaching courses because everyone understands and is committed to accomplishing that purpose. Whether managing a project, a group of people or my life’s path, it is that level of integration and sustainability that I emulate.”
Judith A. Drinka
1961
English, History

Judith Drinka enjoys a successful career in law and today has her own firm representing individuals and closely-held businesses primarily in the areas of estate planning, succession planning, real estate, marital property and small business organization and tax planning.

After earning her degree at Alverno, Drinka’s plan was to teach, but she instead took a job in a real estate office. Eventually, she was running the office and working with the lawyers in the firm. When she sought out advice about attending law school, a respected colleague told her, “Women aren’t going to make it in law.” She decided to trust her own instincts. In 1975 she received her law degree from Marquette University.

Drinka has served the community on many levels and has been involved with Alverno College as a member of the Board of Trustees since 1966.

“The curriculum and leadership have changed, but the spirit of the school remains the same. It continues to focus on the individual student; and it’s a comfortable environment where students are encouraged and given opportunities to expand their interests and their boundaries.”

Sister Margaret M. Earley
1952
Mathematics

Sister Margaret Earley is Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at Alverno College. Her deep commitment to her faith, to the college and to her students has bestowed upon her the unofficial honor of most beloved professor. Earley’s passion is the ministry of higher education and the development of the “spiritual life” of college women—helping them find the core of faith inside themselves and giving expression to that faith in religious practice and public service.

In her career, Earley taught elementary and high school, studied at the Pontifical Institute Regina Mundi in Rome, Italy, and was a formation minister in the postulancy for seven years. In 1969, she became part of the Alverno College community and began her Ph.D. studies in theology at Marquette University. Upon completion of her doctorate, she began teaching theology at Alverno. She recognizes that different students are at different stages in their spiritual lives and she responds to their needs, perspectives and experiences.

“Alverno prepared me for the opportunities I’ve had in ongoing involvement with current issues and developments in my own field of study as well as in social and civic issues across cultural environments and perspectives. I strongly and gratefully attribute who and where I am today, to my spiritual-centered foundation, to Alverno, as a student and alum.”
Sylvia (Bruff) Edstrom
1991
Art

Sylvia (Bruff) Edstrom and her husband William founded Edstrom Industries in 1969. Employing more than 250 employees, Edstrom and her husband have built the business that started as an animal watering company to one that offers software and hardware solutions for research facilities.

Edstrom did whatever needed to be done to keep the home-based manufacturing company moving forward. Raising a large family at the same time, she never thought much about how to perform, and just jumped on in when needed, eventually becoming the company’s secretary. It was her husband who encouraged her to pursue a college degree. At 55 years old, Edstrom enrolled at Alverno College where she received a well-rounded education and her love of painting was ignited. Throughout the years, she continues to appreciate the value art has brought to her life, and her Northwoods Wisconsin home displays countless pieces of her art work.

Today, Edstrom and her husband Bill are retired, having passed ownership over to their four children ten years ago. Edstrom Industries is recognized worldwide as a leader in the design and manufacture of automated drinking water systems for animals, with representation in Asia, Europe and Canada. Edstrom and her husband enjoy their Northwoods life where they lovingly restore vintage cars.

“I chose Alverno because it was for women… I could actually get a word in! At Alverno, I learned I was smarter than I thought. I gained confidence and became proud of who I am.”

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Suzanne M. Felan
1962
Education

Suzanne Felan has been honored in the teaching profession from the classroom to the administrative level and in numerous volunteer settings. She has been sought out to advocate for students deemed unable to learn; and has developed and guided reading programs that changed the lives of countless young people. Felan has held numerous offices in both local and state organizations, in addition to speaking engagements for parent groups, college classes and church organizations.

Felan has taught on a variety of levels from Red Cloud School in South Dakota to Milwaukee Area Technical College. As an assistant principal with the Richfield School District, she developed special education programs. She was a reading supervisor with the Franklin School District and facilitated district wide in-service training to develop reading and language arts curriculum, and coordinated the IMPACT program for the profoundly disabled in the West Allis/West Milwaukee School District. Felan’s leadership in the field of education was evident throughout 15 years of service as a reading specialist at Ethan Allen School for Boys in Wales, Wisconsin, where she initiated a peer tutoring program.

“I learned I was a capable student able to learn more than I ever realized. As a result, I became a lifelong learner and continue to be so both through my life experiences and ongoing academic pursuits.”
Donna Gaffney
1968
BSN

Donna Gaffney began her career as a public health nurse first with the Milwaukee Visiting Nurses Association and later with the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago where she became an assistant supervisor. She then took a consulting position with the Illinois Division of Services for Crippled Children. Gaffney went on to obtain a Masters of Science in Nursing degree at the University of Illinois in 1976. Nursing education became her chosen career path and she taught at the University of Illinois, Wayne State University, Madonna College, and Oakland University.

As a Guardian ad Litem for the past 15 years, Gaffney has advocated on behalf of neglected and abused children in the Florida child welfare system. Because of her exposure to the problems these children face, eight years ago Gaffney cofounded Suncoast Voices for Children, a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance and resources to fulfill the unmet needs of children in the foster care system.

“Alverno put me in control of my destiny by assisting me in realizing my own inner strength. I left Alverno with an ‘I can do whatever I set out to do’ attitude, an attitude that has served me well and has remained with me to this day. I have passed that attitude on to my son and I am working on my 2 ½ year-old granddaughter!”

Ellen M. Gardner
1969
English

Ellen Gardner was one of the first female CEOs in the state and retired from Ameritech as president of Ameritech-Wisconsin. She began her career with the Wisconsin Telephone Company as a management trainee and gained experience as she advanced through marketing, regulatory, strategic planning and operations.

During her 30-year career with the company, Gardner helped to manage its transition from “The Telephone Company” to a full service, competitive communications business known as Ameritech -- now AT&T.

Gardner earned an MBA at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She has served on a variety of boards, but her most sustaining and satisfying board involvement has been as an Alverno College Trustee. In addition, she has served Alverno as an assessor and alumnae board member.

“As a result of my Alverno education, I learned to assume that a woman could do whatever she wanted to do as long as she was prepared and willing to work hard for it. In the 1960’s that was a breakthrough assumption.”

• Trustee – Alverno College Board
• Alverno College Alumnae Professional Distinction Award, 1998
• Sponsors an endowed scholarship at Alverno College
Marie G. Golanowski
2007
BSN

Marie Golanowski has spent the last four decades in the service of healthcare throughout the Milwaukee area. She is the vice president of clinical integration and practice at Aurora Health Care, where she is responsible for the integration and practice for select clinical services across 15 hospitals and over 100 clinics. Golanowski advanced to the position from regional vice president and chief nurse executive for the four magnet designated Aurora Health Care Hospitals in the Milwaukee Market.

Prior to that, Golanowski was nurse executive at Aurora Saint Luke’s Medical Center where she was responsible as a member of the Administrative Team for inpatient acute care, rehabilitative and critical care nursing in a 600+ bed facility. She has demonstrated quality leadership in the nursing profession at Sinai Samaritan Medical Center and Milwaukee County Medical Complex.

Golanowski has authored several papers and contributed to a number of texts in the healthcare and leadership field.

“The eight core abilities of the Alverno learning model remain an integral part of my growth both professionally and personally through the reflective process/alignment of my personal behaviors with these abilities.”

Cecelia I. Gore
1992 Professional Communication
2008 MBA

Cecelia Gore is executive director for Brewers Community Foundation, Inc. where she leads fundraising and grantmaking efforts for the Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club’s charitable arm. Her focus is implementing philanthropic strategies to assure that the team serves in an actively engaged community leadership role in areas of health, education, recreation and basic needs, with a particular focus on low-income and disadvantaged youth and their families.

Gore previously worked as program director for the Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation, which focuses on the arts and culture, health, education, community and social development. A number of quality initiatives and partnerships were established during her tenure.

Gore previously served as president of the board for the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee and the Wisconsin AIDS Fund and continues to serve the community at a high level of involvement.

“My intellectual curiosity is fostered by the tools I have learned from my Alverno experiences. The Alverno spirit helped me embrace the positive impact that higher education has on women and girls along with the beauty of being a lifelong learner. I always take great pride in sharing the power of Alverno with others.”
Nadine T. Guirl
1982
Business and Management, Professional Communication

Nadine Guirl served as chief human resources officer and senior vice president of human resources for ProHealth Care, Inc. She is a committed continuous learner and dedicated volunteer. Guirl has held executive and leadership roles at Fortune 500 manufacturing firms such as Rockwell Automation and Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company and professional services firm Jefferson Wells International, a subsidiary of Manpower.

Guirl is a past-president of the Alverno College Alumnae Association Board of Directors and has served the community as a former Big Sister and board member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ozaukee County. She was president of the board of Advocates of Ozaukee County, a nonprofit organization working to end domestic violence and sexual assault.

“...I'm an Alverno woman. After more than 30 years since graduation, I'm still recognized for my energetic presence in public speaking; for my collaborative problem-solving abilities and positively regarded for always striving to see the whole picture. Alverno Abilities make my voice heard.”

Barbara Jean Haag-Heitman
1977
BSN

Barbara Haag-Heitman owns a consulting business and advises health care professionals across the country on peer review, clinical practice development systems and creates motivating work environments. Haag-Heitman has been involved in health care for 30 years, and has worked as a staff nurse, educator, clinical nurse specialist, director and regional manager of women’s services for a large multi-hospital health care system. She also is a consultant for the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet program and adjunct professor at Cardinal Stritch University, School of Nursing and Saybrook University, doctoral program.

Haag-Heitman was part of the whole systems-shared governance design team at Aurora Health Care and a team leader for the shared governance design and implementation team at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare.

Haag-Heitman is the co-author of the first nursing books on peer review and the 2009 Shared Governance Tool Kit for the American Nurses Credentialing Center, as well as additional books and articles on peer review, shared governance, clinical practice development and organizational development.

“One of my proudest achievements is helping to establish an Alverno chapter of the international nursing honor society – Sigma Theta Tau International. Delta Gamma At-Large recognizes excellence and exceptional achievement in nursing scholarship and nursing leadership among Alverno graduates and faculty.”
Mari-Anne Hechmann retired as a manager of customer relations from Baxter International in 2000 after 25 years in the Corporate Sales and Marketing Group. In her position, Hechmann interfaced with key customer associations and customer health systems corporate executives and staffs. She was the key internal liaison between corporate officers, public relations, shared values group, and corporate resource liaison to the company’s seven major divisional health system organizations, as well as Allegiance Healthcare Corporation.

During her tenure Hechmann was honored with the Murdough Award, Baxter’s Corporate Sales and Marketing’s highest annual recognition for service and commitment to its customers, employees and family; and the BWI Award, for development and implementation of a formal management mentoring program.

Hechmann is currently a volunteer with the Mano a Mano Family Resource Center, teaching English as a second language and United States citizenship/naturalization to Spanish-speaking adults.

“A signature quality I developed during my time at Alverno has to be thoughtful listening and respect for other opinions. This quality has enhanced my ability to look at issues from other perspectives and find the best answer to the opportunity at hand.”

Sister Agnes Marie Henkel was the executive director at Milwaukee Achiever -- its third executive director in its history. She served in the position until her retirement in 2000. It has been said at Milwaukee Achievers that Henkel is “one of the visionaries whose dreams we live today. Her caring and inspirational leadership has been and continues to be a gift to us all.”

Henkel had the foresight for greater and grander things for Milwaukee Achiever, as well as the wisdom, knowledge and courage to carry them out. Plans for the Pierce Center expansion and renovation began under her leadership, and she also negotiated the first of the W-2 contracts. With her gentle but driving passion for her ministry, she effectively led Milwaukee Achiever into the new millennium. As a woman of faith and strong commitment to God, her religious community, family and friends, she had a contagious belief in the goodness of people helping people.

“Alverno challenged me to take charge of my life and in turn to mutually challenge others as teacher, administrator and mentor.”
**Sister Elaine Hirschenberger**

**1965**

**English**

Elaine Hirschenberger is the executive director and co-founder of Womanspace, a center for the development of women in Rockford, Illinois. She has dedicated her career to growing Womanspace into a beautiful, well-respected, independent, interfaith organization that has as its mission “connecting, empowering, creating and transforming our world, one woman at a time.” Womanspace facilitates women’s creative growth and encourages their service to the community and to the broader world. Hirschenberger has been an administrator, facilitator, art instructor, leader of many initiatives and jack-of-all-trades at Womanspace. Before co-founding Womanspace in 1975, Hirschenberger taught art from kindergarten through 8th grade, art and science in junior high school, as well as high school journalism, drama and art. She has guided Womanspace’s development for more than 37 years, sharing the transformative power of vision that she learned while a student at Alverno.

“My Alverno education transformed me into an effective and articulate teacher through learning from brilliant and exciting educators. They modeled for me an inner liberation that comes from knowing and speaking one’s true vision.”

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**Patricia J. Hoben**

**2004**

**Licensure: Chemistry**

Patricia Hoben is the co-founder and head of the Carmen High School of Science and Technology, a college preparatory school that emphasizes science and the liberal arts and integrates the eight abilities developed by Alverno College in the curriculum.

Hoben earned a doctoral degree in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale University, but left research early in her career to work in public health policy and science education reform initiatives at the national, state, and local levels. Hoben served as a policy analyst on biotechnology issues for the U.S. Congress Office of Science and Technology, then went on to work for the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health as an advisor on science and policy issues. Later she headed the pre-college and public science education program at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, a multibillion dollar philanthropy for funding research, and served as Associate Director of a Minneapolis-based science museum. Her political and legislative experience positioned her for success in establishing and leading a $6 million community collaborative to strengthen K-12 science curriculum and instruction in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Hoben serves on the boards of Schools that Can Milwaukee and Teach for America – Milwaukee. She also served as vice chair of Minnesota’s public-private science and math education reform board.

“A transformative insight I gained while taking courses toward my teaching and administrator’s licenses at Alverno was that a single assessment tool can be created and delivered to a group of students who represent a wide range of levels of understanding and still challenge each student to work at her maximal level of performance.”

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**VANGUARD SOCIETY**

- Editor of 10 volumes of Koroné: Women’s Voices
- Recipient of the Caroline Griffith Award for Outstanding Nonprofit Professional, 2006

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- Milwaukee Business Journal Women of Influence Award for Innovation, 2009
- Charter Person of the Year Award by Wisconsin Charter Schools Association, 2009
Patricia Race Hoefler
1963
BSN

Patricia Race Hoefler is the founder and president of MEDS Publishing. As a leading nurse educator, Hoefler has taught hundreds of workshops and the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) reviews for educators and students throughout the United States. She is also the author of MEDS’ best-selling Successful Problem Solving and Test Taking series and the Complete Q&A for the NCLEX series.

A nationally recognized expert on Test Question Logic (TQLogic), she has consulted with numerous schools on the teaching of critical thinking and problem solving. As an entrepreneur, many of the MEDS Publishing products were considered the gold standard. Hoefler led MEDS Publishing’s continued growth for more than 20 years by developing superior products that offer total curriculum support for nurse educators, hospitals and students. In 2008, after 26 years, Hoefler sold the company.

Hoefler has an active role in creating products and services for healthcare practices that incorporate state-of-the-art technology. With both clinical and educational experience, Hoefler knows what challenges healthcare professionals face on a daily basis and is diligent in her hands-on work to improve the healthcare industry.

“I cherish the liberal arts education I received at Alverno College along with my nursing education, which enhanced my personal and professional life greatly.”

Sister Mary V. Hueller
1943
Organ, Church Music

Sister Mary Hueller was a professor of music at Alverno College for 55 years. She knew from a young age that student learning depended on the passion and commitment of the teacher. Her parents started her in piano when she was nearly 6-years-old. Hueller’s teacher didn’t have the patience for teaching a young child, so her parents were told to wait until she was older. Her lessons started again when she was 9 years old.

Hueller was a natural teacher and clinician of the art. She served Alverno as chair of the music department and the fine arts division. For 10 years, Hueller assumed a leadership role in the Milwaukee Symposia of Composers and Liturgists.

Hueller has been honored throughout her career as a gifted organist. For her, a musician is so intimately involved when performing music because music is a part of a personal expression; and a personal expression is fuller because of abilities and competencies.

“Alverno is unique in its approach to education because we identify what a student could do, and the whole competency approach is what brings Alverno to a higher position in education.”

VAN GUARD            SOCIETY

• Founder and president at MEDS Publishing
• Author of Successful Problem Solving and Test Taking series
• Nationally recognized expert on Test Question Logic

• Milwaukee Archdiocese Vatican II Award for Liturgy, 2010
• Alverno College Outstanding Alumna Award, 1998
• Archdiocesan Liturgical Musicians Association’s Outstanding Service to the Milwaukee Archdiocese, 1987
Mary R. Ingram
1977
BSN

Mary Ingram has performed clinical, educational and administrative duties on
two reservations and one urban Indian health hospital for more than 28 years as
a family nurse practitioner, community health nurse and director of community
health nursing.

As a commissioned officer of the U.S. Public Health Service, Ingram was deployed
to Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As a family nurse practitioner,
she was assigned to provide clinical care to those displaced by the hurricane
in Meridian, Gulfport and Ocean Springs. Along with staffing makeshift clinics in
department stores and churches, Ingram assisted in transforming two hangars
at the Meridian Air National Guard base into a 500-bed hospital with a 250-bed
overflow facility and the ultramodern mobile hospital, Nevada-1, in Gulfport.

Ingram has conducted original research into Lakota health and caring practices
that was adopted as a curriculum model for the nursing program at Oglala Lakota
College and has had her work published in professional journals, books and
websites.

“My critical thinking skill that I developed at Alverno enables me to choose, with
my patient, a compatible treatment modality from a myriad of clinical remedies. I
owe much of my success as a nurse practitioner, researcher, teacher, administrator,
author and leader to this one very important skill that I learned at Alverno
College.”

Georgiana Jungels
1960
Art

Georgiana (Haumann) Jungels has worked in clinical and educational settings
since graduating from Alverno. As a teacher, clinician and professor, she has
worked in various settings from developing college courses, producing films and
presenting at conferences to publishing, consulting and participating in the White
House Conference on the Handicapped and the Geriatric Education Center
Core Faculty. She has testified to the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging and has
served as president of the American Art Therapy Association and on the boards
of directors for People, Inc. and Headway, Inc. Jungels has been an international
exchange professor in Jamaica, England, Egypt and Canada.

Jungels has received research grants and awards for her advocacy work.
Under a NIMH grant, she developed an art therapy training program for both
mental health and developmental disability services at New York State Hospital.
Subsequently, she developed a graduate program in art therapy at State
University of New York. After retiring from state service and the university, she
has continued consulting as a licensed psychotherapist and serving as a board
member of People, Inc.

“The work-study program at Alverno provided a solid and realistic foundation
for my future. At Alverno, we worked hard in our classes and worked hard in our
on-campus assignments. Going from my classes to my work in the kitchen gave me
a solid foundation of how to reach for the stars in ideas and walk on the earth in
my professional and personal life.”
Sister Joannes Klas
1965
Education

Sister Joannes Klas is a pastoral minister, community organizer, teacher, social worker and librarian in the Village of San Jose El Tesoro, Yalpemech, a village of returned-refugees from the 36-year-old war in Guatemala.

After teaching 17 years in Wisconsin, Klas followed her dream to work in the missions among the poor in a small village in southeastern Kentucky. She started a Big Brothers Big Sisters program and a special school working with Cumberland River Mental Health to help children with emotional and psychological problems.

Klas has worked for the Southerners for Economic Justice in Mississippi on labor and race issues, and then followed her dream to work in foreign missions. After studying in Mexico, Klas lived and worked for nine years in Honduras, where she started a school for refugees.

Klas has returned with the refugees to Guatemala where she has lived for the past three decades teaching, supporting and promoting efforts to rebuild communities recovering from the upheaval and trauma of war and displacement. She has been honored by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for her work.

“I appreciate my well-rounded Alverno education. I loved Alverno because I felt the love of the teachers, their genuine interest and willingness to give us all the help we needed. I developed a love for art, literature, music and sociology -- and a love for teaching.”

Barbara A. Kluka
1966
History

Barbara Kluka has been a teacher, lawyer and judge, retiring from the Kenosha County Circuit Court in 2011. Kluka brought passion to the bench, always taking the time to guide new attorneys in her courtroom. Kluka holds the distinction of being the first woman to serve on the Kenosha County Circuit Court. She was first elected to the bench in 1989, after working in private practice, serving as a Kenosha County district attorney, and following a seven-year career as a high school teacher and eleven years in the private practice of law.

Kluka is a former chief judge for the Second Judicial District and served as a member of the Judicial Education Committee, Judicial Conduct Advisory Committee, Planning and Policy Advisory Committee (PPAC) Planning Subcommittee, and as an associate dean of the Judicial College.

Kluka was an instructor in criminal trial practice for judges and law professors in Shanghai and Xian, China. She was a sponsor and mentor for college students interested in law-related careers for University Wisconsin-Parkside and Carthage College; she also taught at the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada. For ten years she taught jury trial management in the Wisconsin Judicial College.

In 2010, Kluka celebrated 25 years as part of the School Sisters of St. Francis mission of giving, healing and defending life, as an associate.

“The biggest transformation I experienced at Alverno was in my faith life. I was fortunate to attend Alverno during Vatican II. Our theology professors were excellent teachers and models for a mature faith life. The experience has seen me through many challenges and changes since then.”
Jennifer Kopps-Wagner is Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Assurant Health. She served as secretary for Assurant Health Foundation until the end of 2011. Kopps-Wagner joined Assurant Health in 1999, holding a succession of positions in its legal department. In her role as Vice President of Legal, she provided legal support and counsel for Assurant Health’s individual medical, worksite and specialty products lines, as well as operations.

Kopps-Wagner was one of 26 women selected to receive the “Women in the Law” award from more than 70 nominations received. Nominees were evaluated for tackling difficult cases, balancing work and family, volunteering time to mentor others and furthering the role women play in the modern legal community.

Among her many accomplishments, Kopps-Wagner has been instrumental in helping Assurant Health to comply with all provisions of the 2010 health care law. As a member of the company’s executive management committee, she plays a critical role in setting the strategic direction of the business.

“Alverno taught me to think critically, to question the status quo and to consider as many sides of an issue as possible. These skills are critical in today’s ever-changing business and regulatory environment.”

Sister Barbara Kraemer
1965
History

Sister Barbara Kraemer is a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis and has served in leadership of her religious community at both the national and international levels. She teaches in the School for Public Service at De Paul University. Throughout her career Kraemer has taught elementary, secondary and higher education students. After earning a master’s degree in education, she became a social studies consultant at the elementary level in the Chicago Archdiocese. She later served as Education Director for the School Sisters of St Francis in the United States and was a member of the Chicago Archdiocesan School Board.

Kraemer served in Central America preparing and teaching courses on Catholic social teaching and formation of local Church communities in Honduras and Nicaragua. She served as President of the corporate members of six institutions sponsored by the School Sisters of St. Francis, including Alverno College. She helped to establish Casa Alexia, a community of six sisters serving the immigrant community at the Texas-Mexico border.

For the College’s 125th anniversary, Kraemer coordinated the preparation of a recently released DVD on the legacy of the School Sisters of St. Francis to Alverno College, “a place where all belong.”

“Two aspects of the Alverno spirit that are important to me are inclusion and engagement in learning. As an educator I try to know my students – what motivates them, how their cultural background affects their learning style, and what supports they need to become self-confident and successful learners.”

Vanguard Society

- One of Women in the Law by the Wisconsin Law Journal, 2011
- Revenue Chair for March for Babies
- CEO Task Force Subcommittee on Recession

- Vice President of the School Sisters of St Francis, 1980-1988; U.S. Provincial, 2003-2011
- Author ‘Honduras: Economic and Social Data on the National Reality’
- Served for nine years on the Alverno Board of Trustees and its Educational Affairs Committee.
- Founded the Center for the Study of Religious Life in 1998
Cathie Kurek-Ovshinsky
1967
BSN

After 45 years in health care, Cathie Kurek-Ovshinsky recently retired from Madonna University as an associate professor in the undergraduate and graduate Hospice and Palliative Studies Department. She practiced as a board certified clinical nurse specialist in psychiatric-mental health for 32 years before receiving her doctorate in clinical psychology.

Kurek-Ovshinsky began a teaching career at Wayne State University in 1973 as an assistant professor in psychiatric-mental health nursing. Ten years later she returned to clinical practice as a primary therapist on an inpatient psychiatric unit at Sinai Hospital-Detroit, after which she joined the psychiatric consultation-liaison team at a level 1 trauma center.

Kurek-Ovshinsky served on a court ordered mental-health team implementing mental health programs in two Detroit area county jails. Kurek-Ovshinsky went on to spend four years as a therapist in the counseling service at Karmanos Cancer Institute. Her dissertation involved open-ended interviews with individuals who had stopped active treatment for cancer and/or were enrolled in hospice. Kurek-Ovshinsky had a private practice for 40 years. She specialized in treating individuals living with chronic illness.

“The signature characteristic developed during my time at Alverno was an understanding that ‘learning’ did not end with a college degree but was a lifelong privilege and with it went the responsibility of continuing to heal the world.”

Norma M. Lang
1961
BSN

Norma Lang is the Howe Endowed Chair for Healthcare Transformation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, College of Nursing and Aurora Health Care. She is a senior research emeritus fellow with the Annenberg Center for Public Policy, and a senior fellow emeritus in the Leonard Davis Institute for Health Economics and the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania. Lang is professor and dean emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and the former dean at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee College of Nursing.

Lang has led the knowledge-based nursing initiative at UWM. This work was a partnership between Aurora Health Care, the Cerner Corporation and the university. She currently serves on the evaluation committee for the Joint Commission Codman awards and chairs the selection committee for the Eisenberg Awards. Lang is vice president of the commission on graduates from Foreign Nursing Schools.

“Alverno modeled leadership by women. My years at Alverno happened at a time when women were not visible leaders. I had the opportunity to have Alverno leaders like Sister Joel continuously demonstrate that women indeed could be leaders. She and her colleagues remain amazing right up to the current time. I formed a belief that I really could make significant achievements.”

- President of the first Alverno National Alumnae Board
- Co-produced “Lost & Found: Young People Talk About Depression” for Children’s Hospital of Michigan; awarded a CINE Golden Eagle

- Recipient of the American Nurses Association’s First President’s Award, the Distinguished Membership Award and the Jessie Scott Award
- Fellow of the Institute of Medicine, the American Academy of Nursing, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia
- Honorary Doctorates from the State University of New York and Marquette University
Kathleen Lawler
1982
Business and Management

Kal Lawler is a recognized pioneer for women in the motorcycle industry. She was Harley-Davidson’s first female vice president, its first employee given an expatriate assignment, and was its leading advocate for marketing to women during her tenure.

Lawler began her career in advertising. Initially on the agency side of the business, she moved to the client side by joining Harley-Davidson in the 1970s. She subsequently moved through the corporate landscape to vice president of marketing, after which she became vice president and managing director for Harley-Davidson in the United Kingdom. Lawler lived and worked in Europe for five years, developing a strategic plan for the company’s pan-European business while growing the U.K. business.

Upon returning to the U.S., Lawler established a corporate communications function at Harley-Davidson. As vice president of communications, she reorganized and led the communications functions for the company.

To honor her parents, Lawler sponsors the Eugene and Joyce Lawler Endowed Scholarship.

“My colleagues describe me as apolitical, in the business sense, and ‘the one in the room who is always willing to ask the tough questions.’ I am inquisitive and undeterred by the elephant in the room.”

Sister Georgine Loacker
1947
English

Georgine Loacker is the senior scholar and one of the chief architects of the student assessment program at Alverno College. While heading the English department, Loacker participated in the development of the ability-based education and student assessment process begun in 1973. She continues to contribute to assessment theory through her writing, research, workshops and seminars on teaching for and assessing student learning outcomes.

“When Alverno began the curriculum, no other institution in the world, including government and business, had used what we now call performance assessment,” Loacker said. “This is the kind of assessment that many educational ministries around the world are calling for today.

Loacker’s talents as a writer and editor are legendary. She was a major force behind many of Alverno’s Seminole publications on ability based education and performance assessment. “Learning is not just knowing. It’s doing what you know,” she said. “We wanted to be accountable to students and help them in their development. Assessment is a results-oriented approach to education and student learning.”

“At Alverno, I learned persistence isn’t just a virtue or habit of mind. Practiced persistence is often the only thing that accomplishes good work.”
JoAnn Lomax
1974
BSN

JoAnn Lomax is the nurse liaison in the patient relations department at Froedtert Hospital, where she serves as a link between hospital administration and a multidisciplinary team of health care providers and patients and family members. Lomax celebrates 53 years in healthcare.

Lomax started her nursing career in 1959 as a nursing assistant and became a licensed practical nurse. Lomax is a strong patient advocate, and part of her role is to perform “rounding” in Froedtert’s four intensive care units daily, where she may deal with a crisis at any moment. Lomax is known for her ability to handle stressful and complex patient and family issues, and she coaches staff in methods to help them in resolving stressful patient/family situations.

Lomax is a co-chair of the Inclusion Advocates Patient Team and is responsible for the creation of the Cultural Ally program, designed to assist staff in cultural issues.

“An Alverno signature characteristic for me was the ability to clearly articulate my beliefs with compassion and understanding.”

Jeanne M. Lowry
1988
BSN

Jeanne Lowry is retired from 20 years of service with the American Red Cross, where she devoted herself to caring for others in the mental health community. Through this agency she developed the Homeless Outreach Nursing Center and other programs and services for homeless people, including a respite care program in collaboration with the Salvation Army. Lowry started the Autumn West Safe Haven, a center that provides mental health-related services to people who are homeless and have a mental illness.

In retirement, Lowry remains active for and dedicated to the homeless community who suffer from mental illness. She teaches part-time at Alverno in the Masters of Community Psychology Program. She also conducts community classes on nonviolent crisis intervention and instructs shelter staff and other agencies on engagement with people who are homeless.

Lowry serves on the boards of directors of Vital Voices for Mental Health and Justice Point and volunteers at National Alliance for Mental Health Illness of Greater Milwaukee.

“My time at Alverno helped me to see my work as collaboration with others, embracing respect for people often held in contempt by society, and an appreciation of a free exchange of ideas as we work together toward solutions.”

• Recipient of the Robinson Humanitarian award
• Alumna of the Year Award from UWM School of Nursing, 2000
• Outstanding Homeless Advocate from the State of Wisconsin, 2009
• Alverno College Outstanding Alumna Award, 2008
Pamela Maxson-Cooper
1984
BSN

Pamela Maxson-Cooper is the retired Senior Vice President of Patient Care Services, Chief Nursing Officer at Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin. Maxson-Cooper began working at Froedtert Hospital in the first orientation class for Registered Nurses and has risen through the ranks. As CNO she established an onsite Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and created a scholarship program for nurses who want to pursue advanced degrees.

Maxson-Cooper also transitioned patient care areas to a “wireless” infrastructure so nurses and doctors have the most convenient access to medical information at the bedside. She also helped Froedtert become one of the first hospitals in the region to implement electronic medication barcode scanning at the patient’s bedside to assure safe medication administration.

The success of Maxson-Cooper’s professional nursing leadership was acknowledged when Froedtert was named a “Magnet” hospital, the prestigious designation for nursing excellence and quality patient care which is held by only 5 percent of hospitals nationwide. She also served as a nursing instructor at Alverno College, held a governor’s appointment to the State Board of Nursing for twelve years, served in leadership roles in Neuroscience at Froedtert Hospital and University Hospital in Madison and leadership and staff roles in two California hospitals.

Maxson-Cooper has published articles on Six Sigma in healthcare and the “unique” Seven Seventy scheduling pattern, which was implemented for nursing when Froedtert opened its doors and is predominately still in use today throughout the hospital.

“The Alverno spirit is to never stop learning and believing in yourself! Alverno taught me anything is possible. I learned to speak publicly with confidence delivering heartfelt messages of my passion for nursing and being able to make a difference in others’ lives forever. Alverno taught me obstacles are blessings and help us endure to be the best in whatever we pursue!”

Jestene McCord
1979
BSN

Jestene McCord is the retired director of medical nursing at Aurora Health Care. She has been a geriatric nurse, unit manager and healthcare executive and has touched countless lives through her care, mentoring and volunteer work. During her career McCord designed and supported a mentoring program for young people interested in healthcare careers. She adopted North Division High School as her major healthcare initiative and was able to pair young people interested in healthcare with professionals in the field.

McCord has worked with InRoads, a nonprofit organization that develops and places underserved youth in business and industry, and prepares them for corporate and community leadership. Upon her retirement, a scholarship was established in her name. McCord volunteers and previously served as one of five women who ran a talk radio show on a volunteer basis at WMCS. She is a mentor, mother, friend, community activist and role model to so many.

In 1996, then-Representative Tom Barrett called McCord “a tireless advocate for the people of Milwaukee and cities throughout Wisconsin,” during a tribute to her at a Black History Month event.
JoAnn McGrath
1957
BSN

JoAnn McGrath is a Trustee of the Highland Street Foundation, which she co-founded in 1989 with her late husband, David J. McGrath, Jr. Since its inception, the foundation has contributed more than $145 million to nonprofit organizations in Massachusetts and California, primarily in the areas of education, housing, mentoring, health care, environment and the arts. She currently serves or has served in a leadership capacity with many organizations including the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, McCallum Theatre, Eisenhower Medical Center Foundation, the Barbara Sinatra Children’s Center, Boston University, the Archdiocese of Boston, Catholic Schools Foundation, and St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center.

Her generosity to Alverno College is unmatched. At Homecoming 2012, Alverno is proud to introduce the JoAnn McGrath School of Nursing in recognition of her extraordinary gift to her alma mater. McGrath also sponsors annual scholarships for nursing students and formerly served on the Alverno Alumnae Association Board.

“The signature characteristic that Alverno instilled in me was an awareness of the whole person. Specifically when I began the nursing program, early on I learned a patient was not just “the appendix in Room 203” but a patient with an illness that also needed attention psychologically, spiritually and mentally. I carried that awareness with me to better understand and help family and friends and to relate to them as a whole person.”

Jean McKey
1996
Business and Management

Jean McKey is president of McKey Perforating Company, Inc. McKey took over the company from her father, Douglas McKey, who died in 1983. In 2000, the company expanded by opening a branch facility in Tennessee. The company, a contract manufacturer, has applications in tight-tolerance custom components for automotive, electronics, construction and agriculture equipment, mining, and many other industries. In 2012 the company was acquired by Reliance Steel and Aluminum – a Fortune 500 company voted one of the worlds “most admired companies.” McKey remains as president.

In 2008 and 2010, McKey Perforating Company was listed as the 12th largest woman-owned and operated Wisconsin business in the Milwaukee Business Journal’s Book of Lists.

McKey is grounded in the community through various philanthropic work with the United Way of Waukesha Co., Rotary Club of Milwaukee, American Red Cross, the Women and Girls Fund of Waukesha and the United Performing Arts Fund.

“My Alverno education helped me identify and take advantage of my own thinking and learning patterns. This knowledge guides me every day in my personal and professional decision making.”

Jean McKey
1996
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“My Alverno education helped me identify and take advantage of my own thinking and learning patterns. This knowledge guides me every day in my personal and professional decision making.”
Sister Jo Ann Miller
1960
History

Sister Jo Ann Miller, a senior education consultant and seminar leader, has worked for Gallup for more than 35 years. Miller has more than five decades of educational ministry as a high school teacher, teacher educator, and Gallup consultant. For the past 35 years, she has consulted with educators and church leaders throughout the United States and Canada. Through her seminar leadership, Miller has taught thousands of school and church leaders the strengths-based approach to personnel selection and development.

Through her work Miller has seen many people grow personally and professionally by adding appropriate knowledge and skills to best use their natural talents. Miller has a positive psychology philosophy that has served her and her students well.

“I have been a School Sister educator since I left Alverno in 1960. To me, this means being a woman of generous giving, excellent service and unwavering hope no matter where I am or with whom I am engaged. I believe in each person’s God-given talent and have been blessed to work for an organization dedicated to identifying and developing human talent.”

Sarah C. Miller
1993
Psychology, Philosophy

Sarah Miller is the senior director of consumer strategy and insights for Del Monte Foods’ Pet Food Division, where she manages innovation and is responsible for developing new products. In the past two years, she has been the strategic lead in over 40 new pet product launches for Del Monte.

Before joining Del Monte, Miller was responsible for brand planning and new business development at a succession of major international marketing firms. She has held executive positions at both a top global digital communications agency and a worldwide ad firm, and has worked with clients such as Gallo Wines, Dell, General Motors, Mitsubishi, Starbucks, Mars Petcare, Merck and more.

Miller was an adjunct instructor in brand planning at the San Francisco Academy of Art. She has received several advertising industry awards for Mitsubishi campaigns as leader of the brand planning team and has been honored with the Milo Award, presented annually to a Del Monte employee who has demonstrated creativity and innovation in strategy and insights.

Miller is active in philanthropic giving with a focus on humane shelters and animal welfare programs.

“Alverno’s Philosophy Department taught me to question assumptions. Many large companies have a set of ‘known truths’ about who their customers are, what these customers believe and how to communicate with them. I ask questions that challenge sacred cows. Philosophy teaches you to think rigorously, to consider and critique assumptions, to pursue essential meanings.”

Vanguard Society

- Co-author of *Teach with Your Strengths: How Great Teachers Inspire Their Students*
- Earned a master’s degree in history from Loyola University in Chicago
- Honored with Del Monte’s Milo Award, 2011
- Two IRI New Product Pacesetter “Rising Star” awards, 2011
- Advertising Effectiveness Award (“Effie”) for Mars Petcare
- New Product of the Year in both 2009 and 2010 (Mars Petcare)
Jeanette Mitchell
1982
Business and Management

Jeanette (Reed) Mitchell is the program director at Cardinal Stritch University’s Leadership Center, where she co-founded the organization in 2001 and was its first Executive Director. Mitchell currently leads the Leaders of Color Practice within the Leadership Center. As program director of the practice, Mitchell, along with diverse teams, creates, designs and implements leadership development programs for targeted groups.

She has more than 30 years of management experience in the corporate world, including overseeing multimillion dollar budgets as well as building and developing cross-functional teams and launching project initiatives.

Before joining Cardinal Stritch, Mitchell spent eight years as an educational program officer at the Helen Bader Foundation. Before joining the foundation, Mitchell spent over 30 years in corporate America in senior management roles at Ameritech/SBC/AT&T. She had a strong track record of success, rising from directory assistance operator to become the company’s first African-American female District Manager.

Mitchell was a three-term president of the City of Milwaukee School Board and has consulted for SEED Boarding School of Milwaukee and the Partnership for Education in Milwaukee. She currently serves on the national board of the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute and is a member of the City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee.

“Alverno unveiled a new passion in me: community service. I remember being asked in one of my classes, ‘When you die, what will your tombstone say: that you just passed through this world or that you made a difference during your journey?’ That question and its answer have stuck with me, and I continue to want to make a difference as an Alverno Woman.”

Judy Murphy
1975
BSN

Judy Murphy is Deputy National Coordinator for Programs & Policy at the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, Department of Health and Human Services in Washington D.C. In this role, she coordinates federal efforts to assist health care providers and organizations in adopting health information technology to improve care. She also works to promote consumers’ greater understanding and use of health information technology for their own health.

Murphy is a nurse who went to Washington, DC in December of 2011 with more than 25 years of health informatics experience at Aurora Health Care in Wisconsin, where she led their electronic health record (EHR) program since 1995, when Aurora was one of the early adopters of health IT. Most recently she was Vice President-EHR Applications and helped Aurora receive Hospital & Health Networks’ “100 Most Wired” award for the last eight years. She was named one of the “20 People Who Make Healthcare Better” in 2007 by HealthLeaders magazine.

Dedicated, passionate, and committed to the transformation enabled by health information technology, Murphy has been a pioneer in the health informatics community, has published and lectured nationally and internationally, and is a tireless volunteer in many aspects of organizational work.

“For me the Alverno transformation was realizing that with hard work and the right attitude, I could do anything I set my mind to.”

• Federal Advisory Committee – Department of Health & Human Services
• Board of Directors and Fellow – American Medical Informatics Association
• Fellow – American Academy of Nursing

• Recognized for starting and developing the African American Leadership Program, 2010
• Recipient of YWCA Today’s African American Heroes Award
• Recipient of the Cardinal Stritch Multi-Cultural Image Award
Sirri Nomo-Ongolo is the founder and medical director at Complete Home Health Services and the Medical Adviser of a member clinic of “The Travel Clinics of America.”

Nomo-Ongolo never intended to change the face of medicine in her communities but she managed to do just that. Following her Alverno graduation, Nomo-Ongolo returned to Cameroon where she grew up and took on a challenge medical professionals dismissed. Surgeons at Yaounde Central Hospital in Cameroon’s capital struggled with shortages of blood for surgery and for treating young children with sickle cell anemia. With the urging of a hospital physician, Nomo-Ongolo accepted the challenge of creating the hospital’s first blood bank.

Also in Cameroon, Nomo-Ongolo tackled diabetes education and created a program for low-literate diabetics to help patients to live healthier, more productive and longer lives. As a result of her groundbreaking work, she was asked to speak at the International Diabetes Federation in Washington, DC.

Nomo-Ongolo’s current volunteer work in the community includes home healthcare visits to the elderly, working with individuals suffering with opiate addiction and providing medical training to volunteers working with elderly patients.

“I arrived at Alverno as a timid teenager and left with the conviction that the sky is the limit. I took Sister Joel’s voice in my mind telling me, ‘You can do it. You might have to work a little harder, but you can do it.’”

Sister Kathleen A. O’Brien
1967
History

Kathleen O’Brien is the senior vice president for Academic Affairs at Alverno College. O’Brien has consulted on student assessment with colleges and universities throughout the world. As an extension of her work on assessment, she directed a team of faculty and staff that developed the diagnostic digital portfolio, software that helps students track their learning progress and that is patented in the U.S.

O’Brien came to the college in 1976 to design and implement the Business and Management degree program and served on the team that instituted Alverno’s weekend college program in 1977. She became Alverno’s academic dean in 1991, serving in that position until 1999 when she was named to her current post. She also served as the interim president of the College in the 2003-04 academic year.

O’Brien’s community service includes membership on the boards of the Wisconsin Women in Higher Education, Milwaukee Science Academy, Milwaukee Montessori School and the Girl Scouts of Southeast Wisconsin, which she now chairs. As a member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee, she works on a committee that assists middle schools in the urban core. O’Brien and colleagues at Alverno collaborated with the Women’s Fund of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Women’s Council to coproduce a 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin report.

“Alverno College is about reaching one’s potential while growing a generous spirit. As an undergraduate, I was challenged by a caring faculty and staff who helped me become a lifelong learner who cares about and serves the broader society. As a faculty member and administrator, I’ve had the opportunity to help foster potential in both students and faculty while working to grow a culture of hospitality and care.”
Silvia N. Perez-Rathell
1998
Social Science

Silvia N. Perez-Rathell serves as the National Senior Director of Corporate and Federal Relations at the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Founded in 1929 and representing over 900 councils across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, LULAC is the oldest, largest and most widely respected Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States of America. Headquartered in Washington, DC, LULAC’s goal is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health and civil rights of Hispanic Americans through community-based programs operated by LULAC councils nationwide.

Perez-Rathell served as the Vice President of Corporate Relations at the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC). Her ultimate goal is to continue to be an advocate at the national level, to find ways to increase the leadership and involvement of the Hispanic communities across the nation and to empower them to bring positive change to make their communities more resourceful and self-sufficient.

“While at Alverno, I was always encouraged to be involved, to choose challenging classes, to volunteer and to help others by becoming a peer advisor and by becoming an Alverno ambassador. My professors challenged me beyond any limits I had set for myself.”

Barbara N. Ramusack
1960
History

Barbara Ramusack is Charles Phelps Taft Professor Emerita of History at the University of Cincinnati where she taught South Asian and Chinese history at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She has published three books and many essays on the princes of India and women and gender issues. Her current research analyzes efforts to improve maternal and infant health in late colonial south India.

After serving two terms as director of graduate studies, Ramusack became the first woman to head the Department of History at Cincinnati. In 1984 she was a co-founder of the Women’s Studies Program (now Department). She was also elected to the national councils of the Association for Asian Studies and the American Historical Association and currently serves as the co-president of the national Coordinating Council for Women History.

“Because Sister Joel Read and Sister Martine Hundelt were such extraordinary mentors, I gained the self-confidence to pursue graduate degrees in history and to teach at the university level when few women did so. Consequently I have tried to be as supportive as they were in my relationships with my undergraduate and especially with my graduate students. I have sought to help my students achieve an understanding of how history can enrich our lives and sharpen our analytical skills, a willingness to accept adventurous challenges and a greater self-confidence in order to pursue their dreams.”

Vanguard Society

• Appointed for two terms – Governor’s Council on Migrant Labor, 2004, 2006
• Board member – White House Policy Briefings for Latino Leaders
• Board member – The National Farmworker Alliance

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Sister Joel Read
1948
History, Social Science

Sister Joel Read served as president of Alverno College from 1968 to 2003. During that time, she became one of the most highly regarded educational reform advocates in the nation.

In 1986 she was singled out in the book, The Many Lives of Academic Presidents, as one of a handful of college presidents who have broken new educational ground in the past 100 years. She has been an involved advocate for local and national educational reform efforts that have taken place over the last three decades.

Read was named a presidential appointee to the United States Commission for the Celebration of International Women’s Year in 1975-76 and served as a presidential appointee to the National Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities during the period of 1978-84.

Read has held numerous leadership positions, including president of the American Association for Higher Education, and has served on the boards of and been an officer of the Foundation for Independent Higher Education, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and the National Catholic Education Association.

“What most transformed me during my time at Alverno – first as a student, then as a faculty member and later as an administrator – were the constant challenges Alverno presented to me; often disguised, they turned out to be opportunities, for which I am most grateful.”

Joan Reardon
1952
English

Joan Reardon is a culinary historian, cookbook author and biographer. Reardon brings to her research and writing credentials as diverse as a doctorate in English literature, a former professorial career at Barat College in Lake Forest, Illinois, and an accredited culinary certificate from Kendall College, Chicago.

Reardon’s cookbook, Oysters: A Culinary Celebration, was published in 1984 to critical acclaim. Her book, M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, and Alice Waters: Celebrating the Pleasures of the Table was nominated for an IACP Award. Her biography, Poet of the Appetites: The Life of M.F.K. Fisher was published in October 2004 and received the International Association’s Award for Culinary Literary Writing. In 2008, her work honoring Fisher’s 100th birthday M.F.K. Fisher Among the Pots and Pans, was published. And she received her second IACP Award for Culinary Literary Writing for As Always, Julia: The Letters of Julia Child and Avis DeVoto in 2011.

Reardon also contributed essays to Scribner’s Encyclopedia of Food and Culture, and to Oxford’s Encyclopedia of American Food and Wine. She wrote the “Introduction” for the 50th Anniversary Edition of M.F.K. Fisher’s Art of Eating. She also publishes and edits the quarterly newsletter, Panache, for Les Dames d’Escoffier Chicago and is on the Advisory Board of “Gastronomica.”

“Perhaps it was editing my high school’s literary magazine and then Alverno College’s creative writing journal, or perhaps it was teaching everything from technical writing to poetry as a college professor that made all this come about. Whatever the reason, my publications tell a story of someone who fell in love with words and never fell out of it.”
Cathy Rick is the chief officer, office of nursing services, for the Department of Veterans Affairs, providing leadership and guidance to VA’s 80,000 nursing personnel, who care for more than six million veterans each year. As the chief nurse executive for VA, she is responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of national policy and strategic planning activities that support the missions of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA): clinical care, education, research, backup to the Department of Defense and emergency preparedness. Rick has over 40 years of experience in clinical, leadership and executive level health care roles.

Rick is an adjunct assistant professor of nursing at the Uniformed Services University and guest lecturer at the George Mason Health Policy Institute.

Rick has published on a variety of topics in nursing and health care and she is a frequent speaker on topics related to advancing nursing practice, patient care delivery models and leadership principles for all nursing roles.

“A signature characteristic that I developed while attending Alverno was a creative sense of inquiry that has shaped my ability to focus on the future while learning from the past...strategic thinking and staying focused on what really matters.”

Sister Catherine M. Ryan  
1969  
History

Catherine M. Ryan is the Executive Director of Maryville Academy, a child care agency of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Maryville provides shelter, respite, residential, and hospital care to approximately 200 children per day, and offers after-school programs to 2000 more children year. Ryan is a member of and the General Treasurer for the School Sisters of Saint Francis, a religious community of women serving in ten countries on four continents.

Prior to her work at Maryville, Ryan was Chief of the Juvenile Justice Bureau, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, where she worked with children who were abused and neglected, or were involved in juvenile delinquency. Prior to that, Ryan was a partner with Chicago law firm of Ryan, Miller & Trafelet, P.C. where she concentrated her law practice in child welfare and family law. She has written for professional legal publications and presents on topics of continuing legal education.

“Alverno opened a window for me to the histories and cultures of the U.S. society and of the larger world. It is a hallmark of Alverno education that we do not simply learn facts, but also consider the questions ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘what if’. It is a gift of Alverno education that we learn to value and work for right relationships in our society and in our world.”
Kim D. Schaffer
1981
Business and Management

Kim Schaffer is currently senior vice president and market manager at Park Bank. She is part of the senior management team and has responsibility for new business development and customer relationship growth for the downtown market’s commercial, private and personal banking team. She is also involved in strategic planning and budgeting. Schaffer manages a $35 million loan portfolio of commercial client relationships and oversees the bank’s leasing division.

Schaffer began her banking career at Park Bank in 1994, but left to help establish Community Bank in Delavan. After 18 months she returned to Park Bank. She continued a lifelong journey of learning by earning an MBA and attending the Graduate School of Banking Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Schaffer is involved in community efforts as a director of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee, a Reading is Fundamental coordinator and a United Way campaign volunteer.

“I have modeled the Alverno spirit by utilizing the eight core abilities in both my professional and personal life.”

Sister Celestine Schall
1948
English

Sister Celestine Schall is career coach and admissions liaison at Alverno College. She has contributed to the College in numerous ways in strategic roles, most notably as the first director of the Off-Campus Experiential Learning (OCEL) program, now known as the Internship program. She laid the groundwork and structure of the program, connecting numerous business people in the community with Alverno. To this day, U.S. News & World Report still ranks Alverno’s Internship program among the nation’s best.

Schall pioneered the College’s career development program, infusing into Alverno’s curriculum career courses with academic credit, founding and directing Alverno’s Career Development (now Career Education) Center and its many community outreach programs, including the Making Alternative Plans (MAP) program, an individual career-counseling program which served clients from the greater Milwaukee area. Also, Schall as Adult Education Coordinator, was promoted to Associate Professor.

Schall has held key roles with the School Sisters of St. Francis. She was elected Provincial Coordinator of the U.S. Province of the School Sisters of St. Francis. At an earlier time, Schall served as Provincial of the Rockford Province in Illinois. She was the assistant dean of Student Sisters – Sister Formation, Alverno College.

“My Alverno College education prepared me to carry forward Alverno’s values: a spirit of service to others, hospitality, a faith-centered focus and a love of learning. On this foundation, I built my life of SSSF service to others in many varied responsibilities that make up my professional/religious career.”

VANGUARD SOCIETY

• Northwestern Financial Review Outstanding Women in Banking Award, 2004
• Advisory Board – Alverno College School of Business
• Board Member – Zoological Society of Milwaukee

• Honored by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
• Honored by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)
• Alverno College Service to the Community Award, 2012
Sister Judeen Schulte
1971
BSN

Judeen Schulte is a professor in the school of nursing and the director of partnerships and study abroad in the International and Intercultural Center of Alverno College. She served as the dean of nursing (1999-2010), the dean of graduate studies (2010-2012), the director of Alverno’s Nursing Center for Wellness (1983-1986), was the FIPSE project director for the Faculty Consortium for Assessment Design (1987-1991) and the FIPSE Consortium for Using Self-Evaluation Protocols (1996-1999). Having been promoted through all the educational ranks, she became a professor of nursing in 1994.

Before joining Alverno, Schulte worked at the Visiting Nurse Association of Omaha as a staff nurse and then supervisor of PHN, LPN and clerical staff (1974-1978). She has worked at the Nebraska Methodist Hospital in Omaha, first as a staff nurse and team leader and then as an instructor in the school of nursing (1971-1973).

Schulte has written several books and articles and has authored a chapter on *Mastering the Teaching Role: A Guide for Nurse Educators*. This book received the AJN 2008 Book of the Year Award. As a nurse educator, Schulte is a national and international consultant.

An active volunteer, Schulte serves on boards of directors of health care and educational institutions as well as on numerous committees for the School Sisters of St. Francis. She also serves as a peer review team leader and member of committees for the Higher Education Commission.

“Alverno’s educational processes emphasize questioning and being open to new learning; these are central characteristics I bring to any endeavor.”

Mary Ann Schwartz
1962
Sociology

Mary Ann Schwartz is professor emerita of sociology and women’s studies and a former chairperson of the sociology department at Northeastern Illinois University, where she co-founded and was actively involved in the women’s studies program. She also served as a faculty consultant to the Network for the Dissemination of Curriculum Infusion, an organization that presents workshops nationally on how to integrate substance abuse prevention strategies into the college curriculum.

Schwartz co-authored two college textbooks: *Sociology: Making Sense of the Social World and Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change*, now in its seventh edition. Currently she is the Board Secretary of Lincoln Park Village, whose mission is to help older people age well in their homes and communities.

“Two lessons I learned at Alverno stand out in my personal and professional life: the importance and need to be a lifelong learner and the obligation (and rewards) of sharing what we learn and giving back to our communities. These two lessons led me to a life of social activism.”
Marilyn Shrude
1969
Music Education

Marilyn Shrude is a composer, pianist, teacher and contemporary music advocate. She has consistently promoted American music through her many years as founder and director of the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music and as chair of the department of musicology/composition/theory at Bowling Green State University.

Shrude’s music is characterized by its warmth and lyricism, rich timbre, multi-layered constructions, and complex blend of tonality and atonality. The result is a bright, shimmering and delicately wrought sound world that is at once both powerful and fragile.

Shrude’s compositions have been recorded by a number of artists; her works for orchestra, wind symphony and choir have led to collaborations with conductors of renown. She has had the honor to work with the impressive musicians from around the world and she has premiered, recorded and presented hundreds of works by living composers both in the United States and abroad.

Shrude was the first woman to receive the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award for Orchestral Music.

“Alverno sowed the seeds for lifelong learning by providing a stimulating academic environment that fostered creativity and encouraged inquiry.”

Rose E. Purpero Spang
1962
Sociology

Rose Purpero Spang is a Senior Financial Representative with the Holter Group, a top ranked office of the Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, and earned “Million Dollar Round Table” status in her first year.

Last year, Northwestern Mutual recognized Spang for her outstanding volunteerism as part of its Annual Community Service Award program for her work on behalf of Alverno, which included a $10,000 grant to the College. This was her second such award from NM. The first was for her work as one of the founders of the Circle of Women for the YWCA, a successful networking and fundraising event for women of all backgrounds.

Spang has also served on the Board of the Italian Community Center and Festa Italiana. She has been honored by the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund for her leadership in helping “to prepare a new generation of leaders.”

Along with her siblings, Spang established the Charles and Rosalia Purpero Memorial Endowed Scholarship Fund in honor of her parents. To date, 57 women have been awarded scholarships.

“I see how so many Alverno alumnae are doing meaningful, momentous work to positively transform our communities – and I’m honored to be part of that movement.”

• Fellow – Guggenheim Foundation, 2011
• Honored by American Academy of Arts and Letters
• Honored by the Rockefeller Foundation
• Honored by Chamber Music America/ ASCAP

VANGUARD            SOCIETY

• Sponsors the Charles & Rosalie Purpero Memorial Endowed Scholarship at Alverno
• Recognized as a “Woman of Influence” by the Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee
• Alverno College Outstanding Alumna Award, 1973; Spirit of Alverno Award, 2005; and Alverno Ambassador Award, 2008
Mary E. Staten
1981 Biology
1998 MA Director of Instruction

Mary E. Staten has over 18 years of experience in public education. She currently is a
instructor and supervisor in science education for Alverno College and Marquette University.

Recently retired from Milwaukee Public Schools as the K-12 science curriculum specialist, Staten led the development and implementation of science curriculum, instruction and assessment. Staten began her career in education with MPS as a high school science teacher and has worked in the capacities of teacher leadership, project/grant management, and partnership development in science education.

Staten has served on the Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process development committee and in 2010 was one of only two MPS district administrators to successfully complete the portfolio process for the Master Educator license from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Staten currently serves on the Wisconsin State Superintendent’s Science Leadership Team to support the implementation of the new science standards and the review of teacher licensing in science.

“Sister Leona Truchan’s teaching, mentoring, and friendship greatly influenced my decision to change my major from medical technology to biology so that I could do a microbiology lab internship at Miller Brewing which eventually led to a position at Miller as a microbiologist. This internship, in addition to Alverno’s ability-based program, also helped to build my confidence interacting with others one-on-one and in group settings in both my personal and professional lives.”

Mary C. Stryck
1986
Music Therapy

Mary Stryck is a Rehab Services coordinator for Acute Inpatient Services and manager of the Day Treatment Program at the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division. Stryck also is an adjunct faculty member of the Alverno College Music Department, where she has taught a music therapy clinical course for the past 12 years.

Stryck is an active member of the American Music Therapy Association and serves as a delegate to the AMTA assembly. She has also served as the national chair of the Association Internship Approval Committee.

Stryck has served her profession on both a regional and state level. She has given presentations for music therapy conferences and state meetings, as well as for the Department of Health and Human Services-Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services of the State of Wisconsin.

Stryck balances her commitment to working with people with mental illness with her other passion; playing the violin in Southeastern Wisconsin and the Chicagoland area. Since her youth, she has been actively involved in music ministry and continues to play violin in area churches.

“To thine own self be true’ is a hallmark of the educational philosophy at Alverno. Through this philosophy, I have learned to move beyond competing against others to the never-ending journey of taking self-inventory and working towards development and growth. It has changed me as a person, giving me the ability to accept and value myself while still learning, growing and changing.”

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“To thine own self be true’ is a hallmark of the educational philosophy at Alverno. Through this philosophy, I have learned to move beyond competing against others to the never-ending journey of taking self-inventory and working towards development and growth. It has changed me as a person, giving me the ability to accept and value myself while still learning, growing and changing.”

Mary C. Stryck
1986
Music Therapy

Mary Stryck is a Rehab Services coordinator for Acute Inpatient Services and manager of the Day Treatment Program at the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division. Stryck also is an adjunct faculty member of the Alverno College Music Department, where she has taught a music therapy clinical course for the past 12 years.

Stryck is an active member of the American Music Therapy Association and serves as a delegate to the AMTA assembly. She has also served as the national chair of the Association Internship Approval Committee.

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Mary Stull
1979
BSN

After graduating from Alverno in 1979, Mary Stull pursued her Ph.D. in Nursing Service Administration Research at the University of Illinois Health Science Center in Chicago. After completion of the program in 1984, she served as Director of a federally funded grant which spanned the 13 Midwestern states. Stull has held administrative and executive positions in healthcare consulting and service at organizations such Northwestern Memorial Healthcare and Watson Wyatt Worldwide. She currently holds the position of Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Elmhurst Memorial Healthcare in west suburban Chicago. Stull speaks nationally on topics such as population health management and integration of physician practices. She has been married for 31 years to Dale Tauke and has 5 grown children.

“The signature characteristic that I developed during my time at Alverno is confidence. This confidence has allowed me to continually challenge myself both personally and professionally.”

Kiyoko Toyama
1981
Business and Management

Kiyoko Toyama retired from NKK Switches in 2012, where she served 13 years as president. At one time, she was the only female president in the multibillion-dollar American switch industry and one of few female presidents of a Japan-based technology company. She is an influential leader with vision and business savvy.

Toyama’s bilingual, bicultural background and intuitive management skills proved advantageous in her career in the technology industry. She began her career in the operational department when Nihon Kaiheiki (NKK) opened its U.S. operations in 1981. Her business expertise focused on applying switch technology to industries in the U.S. and Canada, and a commitment to exceeding customers’ expectations. Her significant accomplishments were rewarded with a promotion to vice president and director in 1984 and president in 1999.

As president of NKK Switches, Toyama determined the direction of the company in the market and in products and resources. She developed and executed business plans and guided employees to achieve company and technology goals.

Toyama is scheduled to be a guest lecturer at Arizona State University’s business school sharing her expertise and experience of being a female executive of a Japanese-based corporation.

“I transformed from a passive learner to a student who not only internalized subject matters but was able to communicate them effectively in front of an audience or in a group setting through interactions by taking various roles dependent on a situation and matters at hand.”
Sister Leona C. Truchan
1953
Biology

Sister Leona Truchan has moved to new ventures from Alverno College where she taught for more than 50 years, as a professor of biology and science education. Her research areas originally were in developmental biology and chronobiology. Truchan earned her doctorate in ecology, animal behavior and chronobiology. She focused on effective science teaching and assessment, and conducted workshops and consulted with teachers from kindergarten through to university about teaching, learning, and assessment processes as related to outcomes.

Truchan has served as the dean of science, math and technology division, chair of the biology department and chair of the environmental ability department.

Truchan has a history of challenging Alverno students to become more than their original intent. There are alumnae who have gone on to be academic and medical doctors and researchers and who can directly credit Truchan for the support, inspiration and belief in their ability to reach beyond their grasp.

“Throughout my 61 years of teaching, I have dedicated myself to making my students the center of learning. It has been a privilege working with students, and it has always been my goal to find ways of teaching concepts in a manner that is meaningful to them.”

Sister Paula-Jane Tupa
1949
History, Social Science

Sister Paula-Jane Tupa, an educator and diagnostician, has a long history of giving children, teens and adults with learning disabilities hope for the future. Tupa has an uncanny ability to figure out why a child, a teenager or even an adult struggles with learning.

Tupa has been a special needs diagnostician and instructor at every level of learning. She has taught from Chicago and New York to Loyola Marymount in California. She has been recognized and honored for her work with special needs students. Tupa’s nonprofit school, Escalade Academy in Lake Forest, Ill., lives up to its philosophy of “providing the forward thrust that every child deserves in order to develop his/her talents.” The emphasis is on success, not achievement.

The learning disabled person may have any of the variety of learning disabilities, from dyslexia to non-verbal learning disorders, each requiring specific remediation, and Tupa starts where they are, not where one thinks they should be. Tuupa has also established schools, tutoring programs and workshops for instructing teachers to learn her methods.

“The gift of teaching is only successful when you can identify the true gifts of ability inherent within each student.”
Linda Umbdenstock
1968
Social Science

Linda Umbdenstock’s professional career spans nearly 40 years in education, primarily in community college research and planning. She has developed college effectiveness planning and evaluation systems, infrastructures for decision-support and a data tracking system for the California Community College Economic Development Network, and numerous innovative grants for student success.

Umbdenstock is a past-president of the Research and Planning Group of the 109 California Community Colleges. She served on statewide task forces for planning and evaluation and as an agency evaluator for regional accreditation. She was a founding organizer of the California Assessment Institute and the Strengthening Student Success Conference. Most recently, she was the Executive Director of the Hewlett Leaders in Student Success program.

At Drew Postgraduate Medical School, Umbdenstock’s work included providing analytical and planning support for the Robert Wood Johnson funded Perinatal Regionalization Project and the interagency Adolescent Resources Coalition.

“I think there’s a Franciscan charisma in an Alverno education: I was not only routinely engaged intellectually by smart, caring women, I was also challenged to take learning into the community and apply it to the issues of the day. Today people say I too am a bridge person, vigorously engaging heart and mind, connecting past and future across various cultures, adapting the strategies of the arts and sciences and natural ecosystems for work with social justice issues.”

Maria Varela
1961
Speech

Maria Varela is an economist, educator and community organizer. She has also been an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico (1983-1992) and Colorado College (1997-present).

Varela began her organizing career for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee civil rights movements in Selma, Alabama, in 1963 and in 1968 moved to New Mexico to work for the Hispano Land Grant movement and rural activists in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico.

Varela received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for her work of promoting culturally sustainable development in poor rural communities and was the subject of a Smithsonian magazine article on conflicts between environmentalists and land-based people. She was listed as a “Hero for Hard Times” by Mother Jones magazine and was one of the activists featured in the 1996 PBS documentary, Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.

Varela is co-author of Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities and contributor to Hands on the Freedom Plow. Her photographs of the civil rights movements in the South have been widely exhibited across the country.

“The theology of Rerum Novarum, a ‘Magna Carta for subsequent social teachings for decades’ was most influential in my growing consciousness. It called on Catholics to reconstruct society altogether, a task which would have to engage people at all levels of society beyond their personal acts of piety or works of mercy.”

Vanguard Society

- Honored – Lifetime Achievement Award from Academic Senate and RP Group
- A founding member of the California Assessment Institute
- National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Excellence Award, 2005
- New Mexico Governor’s Award for Outstanding New Mexico Women
- Hispanic Leadership Award
- One of 1000 Women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, 2005
Sister Marion Verhaalen is currently working on an updated international history of her School Sister of St. Francis Congregation. She is an educator, musician, composer and author.

Verhaalen’s doctoral dissertation was on two Brazilian composers, and she was awarded a research grant from the Organization of American States to spend a year in Brazil working with composers Camargo Guarnieri and Francisco Mignone. At the time, her research on Brazilian music was some of the first works done in this area.

Verhaalen returned to Alverno College to study and teach, then went on to teach piano and piano pedagogy at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. She was an instructor and coordinator of piano for Milwaukee Public Schools for nearly two decades. While at MPS, she wrote Keyboard Dimensions, the piano curriculum for MPS students. In 2005, she began teaching at Cardinal Stritch University.

Verhaalen has conducted piano pedagogy workshops in this country and in Brazil and has been a Fulbright professor at the Federal University in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

“Working in a creative art – music – it was very apparent that the gifts each of us brought really belonged to all of us. We worked together to create something new (that spirit) that none of us could have created alone. That is a treasured spirit that does not always exist in other institutions.”

Sister Mary Jane Wagner is the director of music ministry at St. Joseph Center Chapel, where she develops programs in music, liturgy and spirituality for musicians in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the larger ecumenical community. She also is an adjunct professor of music at Silver Lake College, Manitowoc, and is a member of the summer graduate faculty in the Rensselaer Program of Church Music & Liturgy, Rensselaer, Indiana.

Wagner has been the director of music for a number of parishes, including Milwaukee’s Cathedral of St. John, for 15 years. She has been on the faculty of Alverno College and St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee. Wagner was among the first women nationally to be named a cathedral music director, and while at the Cathedral of St. John she inaugurated The Play of Daniel, a medieval music drama, which was presented annually from 1985-1992 and remains an outstanding accomplishment of the fine arts series.

As an educator, Wagner shares her love of music. She has taught at various levels, including National Pastoral Musicians Organ School, and conducted workshops and master classes at regional and national music conventions. Wagner has been a guest organ recitalist throughout North America, including performing at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. honoring the beatification of Edith Stein.

“Ever striving for excellence along with maintaining integrity and generosity of spirit were significant qualities of my Alverno learning experience. Outstanding faculty, especially Sisters Theophane and Seraphim, Sisters Mary Hueller and Agnes Meyenburg provided marvelous opportunities and experiences.”
Filippa C. Weber
1992
Business and Management

Filippa “Flip” C. Weber is the president of the Filippa DiBella Foundation, a nonprofit grant-making foundation.

A retired Harley-Davidson executive, Weber culminated her career as director of labor/management relations, where she worked with two international and five local unions in leading Harley-Davidson toward a high performance work environment through an empowered work force. Her professional background of more than 25 years of diversified human resources leadership directed a staff that provided a full range of human resources services at several facilities.

Today, Weber continues her involvement in business and community efforts. She is a partner and member of the board of directors for Enterforce, Inc., and the president-elect of the executive committee and board of directors for the Woman’s Club of Wisconsin and Woman’s Club of Wisconsin Foundation. She serves on the board of directors and is co-chair of the president’s council of IMPACT – Changing Lives for Good. Weber is a director of the College Endowment Association and co-chairs the Alverno Alumni Campaign Awareness Committee.

“My Alverno education helped me with confidence in recognizing my abilities and capabilities. Believing in myself also gave me confidence in partnering with others in my work environment and acting as a mentor to other women in the business world.”

Patricia Milliken Wilde
1961
Chemistry

Patricia Milliken Wilde, retired teacher, brought the love of science to high school students before teaching chemistry at a community college in Illinois for 25 years. Wilde received her Master of Science degree from Clarkson University and did postgraduate work at the University of Illinois. She also worked at Northwestern University Medical School conducting research in endocrinology.

Today, Wilde enjoys volunteering. In 2007, she and her husband were honored with the Leadership Award from Catholic Charities recognizing their longtime commitment to the community and parish. She received the Baraboo Area Literacy Council Award in 2004 for her ongoing commitment to children reflecting her commitment to Kids’ Ranch, which serves children through educational and recreational programs. Wilde also founded Ozanam House, a shelter for homeless women and children located in Reedsburg.

“My Alverno education helped to develop the intangible aspects of my life, such as: the imparting of love for learning; the realization that education is truly a lifelong process; and a challenge to develop the gifts we have been given.”
Barbara Wyatt Sibley
1982
Business and Management

Barbara Wyatt Sibley is the executive director of the Milwaukee Christian Center, a faith-based organization focusing on meeting the needs of all people in our community regardless of race or age.

From 2002 to 2005, Wyatt Sibley was the president and CEO at YWCA of Greater Milwaukee. She was appointed by Gov. Jim Doyle to be deputy secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing and was one of the first African-American women to hold a top position in a state department.

Wyatt Sibley spent much of her career in a corporate setting. During her 30 years at AT&T, she was in management/operational site environment. While there she helped establish the Ameritech Black Advisory Committee and the Leadership Forum. Wyatt Sibley has been a consultant with Fortis Healthcare (now Assurant), and was a regional manager at Time Warner Cable.

Wyatt Sibley is a longtime community and civic activist as she continues service on a number of boards. She is a trustee on the Alverno College board and is the co-chair of Alverno’s academic and student affairs committee.

“The spirit of the Alverno community has been with me since graduation. It gives me pleasure to give back to the college whenever I can. I have been an assessor, class speaker, on the Alumnae Association and now a trustee. I am truly proud to be an Alverno graduate, ‘a place where all belong.’”

- Honored as the YWCA Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award, 2000
- Honored as one of the Community Leaders of the Girl Scouts of Milwaukee Area
- Honored with an Alverno College Alum Service Leadership Award
On April 1, 2012, Alverno College lost a beloved and ardent supporter with the passing of Carol Meils. In addition to a distinguished medical career and numerous accolades, including Wisconsin’s first recipient of the American Heart Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Meils also passionately shared her time, talent and expertise to the benefit of Alverno College. She served on the Board of Trustees for eight years and, for countless young women, was looked up to and viewed as an amazing female trailblazer whom they could learn from and emulate. However, it is Carol’s spirit and zest for life that will be missed most of all. Her enthusiasm was unsurmountable, making her presence so memorable.