

# EXCELSIOR

The  
Human-Animal  
Bond in a  
Dog-Eat-Dog  
World

p. 16



The College's first-ever hooding ceremony was held Friday, July 10, immediately preceding the Commencement ceremony. Ninety-five master's graduates participated in the academic tradition.

The master's hood is a tangible sign of a graduate's accomplishment and becomes part of their academic regalia. It's reserved for those who have achieved a degree beyond a bachelor's, and the color of the hood reflects the field of study and denotes scholarly achievement.

"I thought the hooding ceremony was a great event and made the master's an extra special achievement," said Susan Dillon of Averill Park, New York, who earned a Master of Science in nursing.

PHOTO: KRIS QUA



## FEATURES

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More than 50 graduates are current faculty members, an experience that serves as an endorsement of their own educational journey with the College.

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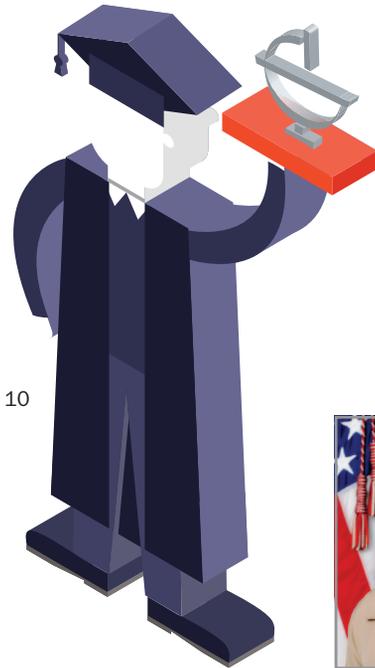
From robust discussion and diverse perspectives to an expanding knowledge base, discover what faculty find rewarding about teaching.

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Relationships between humans and animals promote good health and general well-being, a concept explored and established with people of all ages and circumstances.



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Therapy dog Oliver helps a college student de-stress at exam time, evidence of the power of the human-animal bond. TIMES UNION PHOTO USED BY PERMISSION.



Dr. John F. Ebersole

**E**xcelcior College was founded on the philosophy that “what you know is more important than where or how you learned it,” and since 1971 we have lived up to that ideal by providing adult learners access to a quality higher education. Nearly 160,000 graduates worldwide now count themselves Excelsior alumni—a testament to our personalized and student-centered approach.

Building on this experience, this past summer Excelsior leadership sought and secured approval from our Board of Trustees for a new diversification and growth plan, which once enacted, promises to build a lifelong bond with each of our students.

We are calling this new initiative our “Exceptional Learner Experience,” and it will embrace an array of enhancements to our systems, staffing, and technology that span the student life cycle.

Once fully implemented, prospective enrollees will have access to better information, including a self-serve transfer credit calculator and a quicker turnaround time on transcript reviews. Upon enrollment, dedicated coaches will help students develop an action plan to successfully balance their academics with their familial and social responsibilities. Our data shows the sooner our students begin their academic journey after enrollment, the more likely they are to succeed. Our advisors will transition from a reactive to a proactive model, ensuring new students understand the College processes, services, and support, while teaching them to be responsible for their educational goals and helping them to marry degree and coursework discussions with their professional aspirations. Our advising staff will work hand-in-hand with our new Student Support Center, using advanced analytics to identify and offer early intervention to students in need. Finally, we will renew focus on our alumni services and strengthen our alumni network, whose reach stretches globally.

The Exceptional Learner Experience offers a bold new vision for the future. I hope you share in my optimism as we turn the page and begin an exciting new chapter in the College’s history.

Ever upward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

# EXCELSIOR

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[WWW.EXCELSIOR.EDU/MAGAZINE](http://WWW.EXCELSIOR.EDU/MAGAZINE)

## Wisdom for the Journey

MALONE PROVIDES A “PACKING LIST” OF NECESSITIES



Speaker Beverly Malone, chief executive officer of the National League for Nursing, captured the attention of graduates and guests at the 2015 Commencement with her inspiring words. Malone advised grads on the important things to pack for their journey as a lifelong learner, including caring, integrity, diversity, core values, and creativity. She also suggested the nonessential items to leave behind, such as stress.

But not all things to be left behind are necessarily negative. She urged the graduates that their admiration for their faculty and mentors should remain, so that the instructors can continue to guide others. Malone stated, “Let the world know you stand on the shoulders of giants.”

Malone encouraged the assembly, saying, “The accomplishment of this degree resounds within your very core announcing there may be delays but no defeat anywhere to be found. As long as I have breath, that one minute, I have opportunities, possibilities that I have not yet explored.” ■

To view her entire speech, go to [www.excelsior.edu/webcast](http://www.excelsior.edu/webcast) and choose the Commencement address section.

## Partnerships and Loyal Donors Lead Philanthropy

A generous show of support from alumni, faculty, staff and organizations raised more than \$506,000 this past fiscal year. This included more than 330 new donors to the College and a 12 percent increase in endowment giving.

“During the past year, philanthropy has played a pivotal role in supporting degree attainment and ensuring the achievement of the College’s mission, lifting students over that most daunting of obstacles – the lack of financial resources,” says John F. Ebersole, president of Excelsior College.

Hometown support from businesses and other partners in the Capital Region of New York accounted for more than one-third of annual giving, with the Partners in Lifelong Learning event raising more than \$120,000 – a new high. Since its inception in 2008, the event has provided more than \$650,000 to benefit students who live in the Capital Region, surrounding areas, and across New York State. The event also celebrates partners in lifelong education, and this year GE was recognized for its academic partnership with Excelsior College and its active support of education for more than 100 years.

For students such as Amanda Passaretti, who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2012 and completed her MBA in June 2015, scholarships provided by the annual campaign make all the difference.

“As an adult learner and a working mother to my beautiful 5-year-old daughter, I can



With help from a Partners in Lifelong Learning scholarship, Amanda Passaretti recently earned an MBA at Excelsior College.

appreciate the struggles students experience with juggling commitments to work, school, and family, along with the additional financial stress students are under just trying to make everything work,” Passaretti told the audience at the Partners in Lifelong Learning event in April. “Programs like these make the littlest donation go a long way with helping others achieve their dreams.” ■

To learn more about the impact of philanthropy at the College, view the Honor Roll of Donors at [www.excelsior.edu/honor-roll](http://www.excelsior.edu/honor-roll).

### NEW EXCELSIOR TRUSTEE



**Gen. Charles F. Wald (USAF, Ret.)** was elected to the Excelsior College Board of Trustees in April 2015. As vice chairman, federal practice senior advisor, at Deloitte Services LP, he is responsible for providing senior leadership in strategy and relationships with the U.S. Department of Defense.

Wald retired from the U.S. Air Force as a four-star general after serving more than 35 years in the U.S. military as a command pilot with more than 3,600 flying hours and 430 combat hours. In his last position, he served as deputy commander of U.S. European Command (USEUCOM).

In 2013, Wald was named part of the DefenseNews “100 Most Influential People” listing for U.S. Defense and a Top 100 Airpower Advocate.

## Cybersecurity Programs Achieve National Acclaim

The National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security have designated Excelsior College as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education. The designation covers the academic years 2014 through 2019.

A National Center of Academic Excellence in  
Cyber Defense Education, 2014-2019



In announcing the designation in May, the NSA's Karen Leuschner, the national Centers of Academic Excellence program manager, noted the importance of higher education as a solution to addressing the shortage of professionals with the required skills to protect and defend America's cyberspace. "Your ability to meet the increasing demands of the program criteria will serve the nation well in

contributing to the protection of the National Information Infrastructure," wrote Leuschner.

"Receiving this designation reassures our commitment to academic excellence in cybersecurity education," says Lifang Shih, associate dean of technology for the School of Business & Technology. "This institutional designation validates that our cybersecurity programs are multidisciplinary and cybersecurity education is encouraged throughout the institution."

Excelsior offers degree and certificate programs in cybersecurity, including a BS in Information Technology with a concentration in Cybersecurity Technology, a BS in Cyber Operations, an MS in Cybersecurity, an MBA with a concentration in Cybersecurity Management, and an Undergraduate Certificate in Cybersecurity and a Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity Management. All of the programs are offered in an 8-week format. ■

### YOUR COMMENTS

RE: SPRING 2015 ISSUE

#### RETHINKING PTSD

I read with avid interest your article on PTSD. I never knew women could have it.

Thank you for enlightening me.

MARY O. ENHORNING '81  
QUEENSBURY, NEW YORK

#### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Enjoyed the article by Dana Yanulavich and the contributors regarding Leadership.

I'd like to provide you with another definition of leadership as told to me when I was a young trooper in the Army. Here goes (pertaining to military leadership):

The definition of leadership: telling an infantry company (132 soldiers) that you are going to take them to the gates of hell—and they all look forward to following you there.

CHARLES J. KLUMP '74  
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER TWO, U.S. ARMY RETIRED  
ACTIVE DUTY 1962 TO 1982  
NORTH FORT MYERS, FLORIDA



## ANNUAL EVENT EMPOWERS NURSES

The School of Nursing Annual Educational Institute, held on May 1, featured a full day of presentations related to the theme The Power and Empowerment of Nursing. Helen Connors, the E. Jean M. Hill Professor at the University of Kansas School of Nursing and Center for Healthcare Informatics, was the keynote speaker. More than 60 nurses attended the conference at Excelsior College and another 14 participants from eight states joined online. Conference participants, the majority of whom are involved in nursing education, heard from other speakers and additional podium presenters. They also viewed poster presentations contributed by educators, faculty program directors, doctoral candidates, and others on a range of issues related to nursing power and empowerment. The event was cosponsored by the Robert E. Kinsinger Institute for Nursing Excellence at Excelsior College, the Tau Kappa At-Large Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, and Albany Medical Center.

PHOTO: JOHN BOLLENTIN

## Renewed Accreditation for Business Programs

**T**he International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) reaffirmed the specialized accreditation of the business and management programs offered through the School of Business & Technology. This was the first time the College sought accreditation for its MBA program, as the curriculum was developed since the last reaccreditation. IACBE accreditation is valid for a maximum of seven years; the current accreditation extends through April 2022.

The status of being accredited indicates a program meets the standards of quality set by the accreditation organization, in terms of faculty, curriculum, administration, libraries, financial well-being, and student services. While accreditation does not ensure that every graduating student will become a successful professional, it does guarantee that the student has demonstrated a certain set of skills and abilities that are reflected in the accreditation criteria.

“The reaccreditation of our business programs signals our commitment to quality of student learning and continuous improvement,” according to Karl Lawrence, dean of the School of Business & Technology.

To achieve reaccreditation, the School of Business & Technology completed a self-evaluation, experienced a comprehensive independent peer review, and demonstrated compliance with IACBE principles.

The IACBE, recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), promotes and recognizes excellence in business education in institutions of higher education worldwide. ■

# NOW AT EXCELSIOR LIFE

For more news, go to [excelsior.edu/excelsiorlife](http://excelsior.edu/excelsiorlife)

## Excelsior Experts Tackle the Big Issues

- ➔ President John Ebersole has concerns with one 2016 presidential candidate's higher education proposal.
- ➔ Adjunct faculty member Ruth Kastner teams up with Deepak Chopra to discuss the philosophy of physics.
- ➔ Gary McClain, a course instructor, deals with the unpredictability of living with a chronic condition.

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

WATCH



## Considering a career path in public service?

In this 18-minute video, Robert Waters, dean of the School of Public Service, hosts Parris Glendening, former governor of Maryland, and Julia Leighton, general counsel for the District of Columbia, for a discussion on how to instill leaders among our public servants at all levels of government.

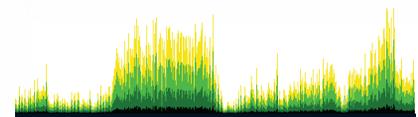
[excelsior.edu/PublicServiceVideo](http://excelsior.edu/PublicServiceVideo)

## Graduate Spotlight: Indulata Jayapal



At 74 years old, Indulata Jayapal proves learning has no age limit.

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



EXCELSIOR.EDU/PODCAST

Robin Berenson, associate dean of the School of Business & Technology, offers online students advice on finding a mentor to help guide them through their professional and academic pursuits.

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

## WERE YOU SEEN?

EXCELSIOR COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT

Nearly 400 adult learners assembled in Albany, New York, on July 10 for Excelsior College's Commencement.

[excelsior.edu/2015Graduation](http://excelsior.edu/2015Graduation)



# Making the Grade

**EXCELSIOR STUDENT  
RECOGNIZED AS VIP**

BY DANA YANULAVICH

**G**unnery Sgt. Radio Chief Victor Martinez, of the U.S. Marine Corps, may have underestimated his potential as a high school student at Rancocas Valley Regional High School in Mount Holly, New Jersey. With a belief that academics weren't his strong suit, he instead applied his competitiveness to service in the military. Yet it was the professional and personal accomplishments he has displayed during his 12-year military career that earned him a trip back to the head of the class at his former high school. In June, Martinez, a student in the Bachelor of Science in Liberal Arts program, was named an RVRHS VIP Alumni.

"I remember seeing the [VIP] plaques in the hall going through the grades," recalls Martinez, adding that he never imagined he would one day join the more than 100 VIPs dating back to 1933. He's kept in touch with some of the RVRHS staff, a teacher and his former guidance counselor, Donna Aromando, who nominated him for the award.

"He just had great qualities as a human being," says Aromando, noting that he displayed integrity and loyalty and was always respectful. And those qualities have carried through to his service in the military.

Martinez is a well-respected and decorated Marine who is entrusted with one of the most important jobs in the free world. He serves as the operations chief, communications systems operator for Marine Helicopter Squadron One—the squadron that carries the president of the United States.

As you can imagine, it takes an exceptional Marine to be chosen to work so close to the president. When Martinez applied for the position, he didn't think he'd have a chance to be accepted. "It honestly was an honor for me to get accepted into it," he says. "There's a lot of Marines who apply for it, but they only accept a few every year and I was one of the fortunate ones, I guess, to get selected."

Among Martinez's many commendations are three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, including one with a combat "V" device for valor during a firefight. He also has received the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and a Presidential Service Badge. Martinez has received multiple



awards for Iraq Campaigns, Sea Service Deployment, Marine Corps Good Conduct, Navy Unit Commendations, and Meritorious Mast.

Guidance counselor Aromando has seen many students come and go over her 32-year career in education. She recalled that Martinez had his sights set on a career in the military early on. Supporting Martinez's own recollection that he wasn't a strong academic student, she's not surprised to learn that he's attending college now. She credits maturity that's come with age and the discipline of the Marine Corps with providing him with the necessary skills to succeed.

"As I got older, I realized that school was very important, so that's when I started talking to some education counselors in the military," says Martinez. Senior enlisted servicemen also encouraged him to continue his education. And, while Martinez has another eight years in the military before he retires, he has set his next goal: to become a JROTC instructor, teaching the future generation his attributes of integrity and loyalty. ■

**ONLINE INSTRUCTOR  
AMY ERICKSON SHARES  
SOME OF HER FAVORITE  
BOOKS FOR THE TOP OF  
YOUR READING LIST.**

**“WHEN THE BODY SAYS NO: THE STRESS-DISEASE CONNECTION”** by Gabor Maté, MD

➔ As a former collegiate coach, I can say without reservation that this is the most important health-related book I have ever read. Dr. Maté examines the way our bodies react to and suffer from stress. The origins of illness and disease are examined as a result of the intersection of the mind and body; not simply the body. I have shared this book with many who have thoroughly enjoyed learning about psychoneuroimmunology [the study of the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems of the human body] and the power they have over their own health.

**“ROAD SWING: ONE FAN’S JOURNEY INTO THE SOUL OF AMERICAN SPORTS”** by Steve Rushin

➔ Steve Rushin is likely the only Sports Illustrated writer who will make references to Faust, Proust, and Gogol. He is a meticulous researcher, a talented writer, and his books are laugh-out-loud funny. Even if you know nothing about sports, “Road Swing” is immensely enjoyable. If he ever takes another road trip, I call shotgun.

**“THE GLASS CASTLE”** by Jeannette Walls

➔ A New York Times Best Seller, Walls’ memoir is nothing short of remarkable. It is a story of childhood survival with questionable, infuriating, and likely, mentally ill and addicted parents. The book has left many feeling that their childhood wasn’t really that bad.

**“SOUL OF A CITIZEN: LIVING WITH CONVICTION IN CHALLENGING TIMES”** by Paul Loeb

➔ This beautiful book encourages readers to connect with a meaningful purpose to enrich the world. Loeb shares historical examples of how simple acts of activism significantly improved the lives of others and encourages us to stand up to injustice. He recognizes the importance of



working toward solutions, even if the results will not be seen in our lifetime. This inspiring read will bring up questions about your own contributions and the legacy you want to leave.

**“THE BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF: STORIES OF PERSONAL TRIUMPH FROM THE FRONTIERS OF BRAIN SCIENCE”**

by Norman Doidge ➔ Even if you are new to neuroscience, this book is fascinating. Doidge shares mind-boggling information about neuroplasticity and how the brain can adapt to and overcome incredible challenges. If you teach or train individuals, understanding how the brain works is vital to your success.

**“HALF THE SKY: TURNING OPPRESSION INTO OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN WORLDWIDE”**

by Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof ➔ Authors Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof sought to answer a question in desperate need of an answer: what is happening to the girls? Their book takes the reader around the world to learn about how girls and women are mistreated. WuDunn also gives a stunning TED Talk

referencing the content of this book and what she calls the greatest injustice of our time.

**“THE EIGHTY-DOLLAR CHAMPION: SNOWMAN, THE HORSE THAT INSPIRED A NATION”**

by Elizabeth Letts ➔ I always say that I appreciate a good fence between me and a horse. This book provided a perfect venue to enjoy a story about a heart-warming connection between a man and his horse. If you aren’t an animal lover, this book will still have you cheering for Snowman. It is a beautiful story about companionship, hard work, and gratitude. Snowman reminded me that sometimes animals know what is best for us.

**“CHANGING THE BULLY WHO RULES THE WORLD: READING AND THINKING ABOUT ETHICS”**

by Carol Bly ➔ This one is personal, because Carol Bly was one of my college professors. Reading this is like hearing her voice again and her enthusiasm for her topic. Bly used stage development theory to examine characters in literature. This results in an enlightening read that brings new insights into your reading. She cared desperately about ethics and encouraging empathy. I frequently return to this book to revisit her thoughtful analysis of many contemporary authors.

**“THE POWER OF ONE”** by Bryce Courtenay

➔ This incredible story follows a little boy, Peekay, as he grows up in South Africa. This book runs the gamut of emotions. Courtenay’s powerful characters experience beautiful friendships and satisfying revenge. This book will stay with you long after you finish it.

**“WRITTEN ON THE BODY”** by Jeannette Winterson

➔ This is my favorite book by Winterson. It is a beautiful, unforgettable and slightly ambiguous love story. I don’t want to give it away, so I won’t say too much about it. Save it for the cold winter months, because this one will melt your heart.

Amy Erickson is a course instructor who teaches humanities and literature courses in the School of Liberal Arts. When she isn’t reading, Erickson enjoys yoga, spending time with her animals, and working in her vegetable garden that she grows for a local food shelf.



# A Conversation Worth Having

Reap the benefits of informational interviewing

BY MARIBETH GUNNER PULLIAM

**C**onsidering looking for a new job or perhaps an entirely new line of work? Before embarking on a full-fledged search, do some research in the desired career field. One of the best ways to gain the most current information is to conduct an informational interview.

An informational interview is a valuable research and networking tool. It provides the opportunity to glean firsthand information regarding an industry, career path, or employer by talking with those employed in the field. The objective is not to find job openings. Rather, it's an effective method to gain knowledge and create networking contacts before becoming a job candidate. In an informational interview, it's the job seeker who initiates, schedules, and directs the questions.

For those who may have taken a job on a leap of faith with hope the position would fulfill expectations—only to discover it actually was not a good

match—the informational interview is key to finding a more suitable and promising career path. With informational interviewing, potential job seekers can clarify goals, become well-informed, and accept future job offers with confidence.

The ideal scenario is to interview someone who is familiar, but a cold call is also perfectly acceptable. Although some may be apprehensive to interview people they do not know, their fears may be unfounded. Most people contacted for an informational interview generally enjoy discussing themselves and their work, and are happy to lend advice to others who have an interest in their field.

Regardless of the degree of familiarity, approaching the interviewee with professionalism and respect for his/her time constraints will establish a foundation for a productive meeting.

Here are some helpful tips, initial steps, and sample questions that apply to informational interviews:

## Basic Tips

- Prior to pursuing an informational interview, assess your interests, abilities, values, and skills to identify your career field and/or occupation of interest.
- Remember, the interview is not about asking for job leads; the point is to gather helpful information.
- Schedule a 20–30 minute appointment. Be sure to arrive and leave on time.
- Be prepared. Conduct research on the company/field prior to the interview. Have questions prepared ahead of time.
- Approach the interview with professionalism. Be enthusiastic. Dress appropriately.
- Before the close of the interview, ask for additional contacts in the field.
- After the interview, create notes of the information gathered. Keep well-organized records, including the contact's name and date of the meeting.
- Send a thank-you note and mention something valuable you learned during the interview. If the interviewee is a member of LinkedIn, request her/him as a contact in your network.

## Identify and Establish Initial Contact

- Seek leads via current personal and professional contacts—family, friends, professors, colleagues, community members. Even people who are not in the field of interest can lead you to people who are.
- Research professional and/or trade associations for potential leads.
- Look into organizations in your field of interest or visit their websites to identify appropriate individuals.
- Peruse social networking sites such as LinkedIn.
- Use your college's alumni network.
- Write or call the contact person. Be sure to provide information on how you can be reached.
- Be polite and concise. State your name and the reason you are contacting the person. Request a brief meeting at their convenience. Be appreciative of their time and assistance.

## BENEFITS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Learn firsthand, relevant information about jobs within a specific field.

Discover new career paths.

Explore and identify appropriate career choices and clarify career goals.

Develop and practice interview skills, and improve self-confidence.

Gain important tips on how to prepare to enter or transition to a particular field.

Obtain job-related knowledge that can help develop an effective, focused resume.

Expand your network of useful career contacts that may eventually help with future job leads.

## Sample Informational Interview Questions

- How/why did you decide to pursue your present career?
- What kind of education or training do you need to do this type of work?
- What preparation or experience has helped you the most?
- Describe the path your career has taken. How did each job lead to your next position?
- Can you describe the responsibilities in this position and how you spend a typical day?
- What do you find most challenging/enjoyable in your job? What do you like the least?
- Describe your work environment. What is it like to work here? What are the expectations?
- What starting salaries/salary advancement can someone expect in this field?
- Can you suggest any professional associations that I should join or journals that would be beneficial to read?
- What are some of the biggest challenges facing your company and industry today?
- What advice do you have for people looking to enter the field?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend I talk to in this field?

Good decisions require good information. Learning something new requires asking questions. When contemplating a new occupation or career path, consider conducting an informational interview to ensure you are well-prepared to meet your future career goals. ■

Maribeth Gunner Pulliam, MS Ed, is director of career services at Excelsior College. She can be reached at [careerinfo@excelsior.edu](mailto:careerinfo@excelsior.edu).



[Excelsior.edu/career](http://Excelsior.edu/career)



[Facebook.com/ECCareerCenter](https://Facebook.com/ECCareerCenter)



# AND SO THE STUDENT BECOMES THE MASTER

## ALUMNI CHANGE ROLES, SHARE KNOWLEDGE AS EXCELSIOR FACULTY

BY DANA YANULAVICH

**E**xcelcior has nearly 50 alumni who now serve on the College's faculty, proving that you can, indeed, go home again. Returning to their alma mater to teach has come naturally to many Excelsior staff members, because, after all, who better to explain, endorse, and enlighten than an instructor who's been in the students' shoes?

Many have been drawn back to the College based on their experience as an Excelsior student and an eagerness to give back to others in support of the institution's mission. In a prophecy fulfilled, Mark Wahl '84, '11, recalls, "I actually told my wife, while [I was] an MS student, that I hope that I can teach/work for an institution as supportive

as Excelsior College once I obtain my degree!" Wahl now is a faculty program director for the associate degree program in the School of Nursing.

Randy Fromm '91 teaches technology classes and serves as a subject matter expert in the School of Business & Technology, and is on the Excelsior faculty as a way of giving back, saying it gave him the opportunity to "pay forward the advantages I was afforded by a non-traditional degree program."

Now teaching in the School of Health Sciences, Lisa Rapple '87, says that Excelsior's mission and its online approach are attributes that appealed to her, while Randall Braddock '11, an instructor in the School of Business & Technology, aligns with the College's commitment to veterans and active-duty military. Kate Eby '05, '07, who

teaches in the School of Nursing, concurs with the military aspects, noting, “Excelsior made it possible for me to complete my RN while serving overseas in the military.”

Wahl’s path was similar to many other Excelsior students with military ties. He earned his first Excelsior degree, an Associate in Arts, while serving in the military. Next he earned a bachelor’s degree in education from another institution, thinking that when he retired from the U.S. Navy, he’d enter the teaching profession like so many others in his family. But as he prepared to transition out of his 20-year naval career, the exercises in “What Color Is Your Parachute” uncovered an interest in health care. Yet, his background as a senior chief personnelman prepared him for working primarily in an office environment. He quips, “If you’re in a conflict or a disaster, you really don’t need somebody to throw a typewriter.”

Flexibility was the name of the game for Wahl, not only in his educational choices but in his career aspirations as well. “Nursing gave me the most flexibility,” he explains. “That was what really drew me specifically to nursing—not only was it in health care where you could directly affect individuals, especially at their most vulnerable time, but there’s a lot of flexibility there in

the profession.” He earned his associate nursing degree at a traditional college and went to work in a variety of nursing jobs ranging from staff nurse, case manager, float nurse, practical nursing instructor, and VA hospital clinic coordinator before eventually landing in the master’s program at Excelsior. “I needed to find an alternative way that allowed me to pursue my education with the flexibility that Excelsior College gave me,” he says.

Sue Irvine ’09, another faculty program director in nursing, found a good fit at Excelsior, too. A diploma nursing school graduate, she earned her bachelor’s degree at another institution, before finding a home at Excelsior for her master’s. “I liked the work I did here as a student. I liked the way the faculty worked with me—they understood that I was an adult with a job, yet I was also respected for what I knew, and yet I had the guidance that I wanted from an educator to learn what I needed to know to become the educator I am today.”

Irvine feels her student experience helps inform her faculty work with students. “I think being an alumna and working here now, I can empathize maybe a little with the students,” she explains. And when she volunteers that she’s an Excelsior graduate, she says it resonates with students, helping them to see success in their future careers. “It’s nice



The hallowed halls of learning take on new meaning for Excelsior alumni Mark Wahl and Sue Irvine. They not only share the same alma mater, but also work across the hall from one another as faculty members in the School of Nursing. Faculty grads bring a unique perspective and understanding to their online classrooms, demonstrating an insider’s knowledge of the challenges faced by Excelsior students and the potential in all to succeed.

PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

to bring forward that you can be successful, and this is where it can get you,” she offers.

Wahl enthusiastically says that “it’s kind of cool” to be an alumnus and faculty member. “I can relate to the students who are doing the work remotely and feeling like they are there by themselves. Because they’re generally sitting in the living room or office in the house or their kitchen or the dining room or someplace, plugging away at their requirements, and so I have an appreciation for that because I went through it myself.”

Supporting these notions of an insider perspective, Dean Mary Lee Pollard, School of Nursing, says that alumni who serve as faculty have an understanding of what it’s like to attend a distance education program as a working adult with multiple responsibilities. They also bring an additional benefit: teaching those who teach. “They can also share the student perspective with the adjunct instructional faculty,” Pollard explains. “When they provide orientation to new faculty or even when they see experienced faculty struggling to make a connection or to assist a student, they can provide them with examples of what made a difference for them as students and also what didn’t work.”

Drawing on his keen understanding of the student experience, Wahl purposefully tries to foster a sense of community in the classes he teaches. He encourages students to interact with each other, and offers times for them to talk to him one-on-one. The goal, he says, is to create the compassionate, caring way he was treated while a student at Excelsior.

Wahl experienced the supportive Excelsior environment when, as a student, he became unexpectedly and critically ill. While he had to take some time off from school to get his life and health back on track, he was impressed by the College’s willingness to accommodate his needs and help him continue his degree pursuit.

Ray Neves ’06, who teaches in the School of Public Service, says that he enjoyed his time as a student and wanted to continue his service to Excelsior because as a graduate he was familiar with the student demographic and the institution. Being an alumnus, he says, “enables me to encourage my students to succeed; I let them know that I was also a student just like them.”

Sometimes achieving that success doesn’t always follow a straight line. Irvine’s original career aspiration was teaching. However, her parents steered her away from that path, fearing she’d have fewer job opportunities. Her second love was medicine, so she followed the nursing path. Now, she says, her life has come full circle as she’s



“I can relate to the students who are doing the work remotely and feeling like they are there by themselves. Because they’re generally sitting in the living room or office in the house or their kitchen or the dining room or someplace, plugging away at their requirements, and so I have an appreciation for that because I went through it myself.”

— MARK WAHL '84, '11, FACULTY PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
SCHOOL OF NURSING

combining both her interests. She notes, “I was able to achieve my life goal to be a teacher by using Excelsior, and I am working with students who are looking to change their lives and that’s my thing: I want to create good nurses. You and I are going to need nurses to take care of us and I want to see that we have good nursing care for our patients, safe patient care. And we can do that. We turn out good nurses here.”

Wahl, too, has similar standards for his associate degree students. “My professional goal, my drive here, is to put out the best product that really addresses the needs of the students to help them make that change from where they’re at now in their health care [career] to become a registered nurse. My main focus is how you get them to think like a registered nurse.” Wahl also is the coordinator of the local chapter of the American Assembly for Men in Nursing (AAMN). Nationally, about 10 percent of nurses are men, whereas 20 percent of students in Excelsior’s School of Nursing are male.

Faculty often lead by example, and Excelsior’s alumni who now are associated with the College in a different light are walking the walk and talking the talk. Emilsen Holguin ’07, ’10, who teaches business and health sciences courses, says it was a natural fit to teach at Excelsior, adding, “I can identify with the challenges of an online learner and provide the level of interactions that I always expected from faculty.” ■

# THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

## FROM THE INSTRUCTOR'S VIEW

What do Excelsior faculty members find most rewarding about teaching? Find out from these recipients of the 2015 Distinguished Faculty Member of the Year Awards as they share the things that excite them in the classroom.



**HEIDI LANGER ATKINSON**  
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

At Excelsior I most enjoy working with students on the discussion boards. I love both the quality and content of the interactions that I can help foster through feedback and my own participation. And, I also love to witness the peer-to-peer support, knowledge sharing, and the gratitude students express for the value of the learning they experience in the discussions.

Along similar lines, I feel the online discussions afford the opportunity to engage students who might be less inclined to participate in a traditional classroom. The virtual platform often gives voice to less confident and more reserved students. The consistent interactions in the discussions and the small class sizes allow me, as an instructor, to reach these students and, through positive feedback and encouragement, push students to share their ideas, knowledge, and to learn the power of collaborative learning.



**JAN TUCKER**  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS &  
TECHNOLOGY (BUSINESS)

I enjoy working with students from all over the world with various backgrounds and experiences. Students bring their own unique perspectives to the online classroom, which makes for a rich and rewarding experience for all of us. I encourage students to apply their own personal knowledge and experiences to the concepts we are discussing in the discussion forums each week. The most rewarding part for me is when students have that 'aha' moment and are able to make a 'real world' connection with the concepts we are studying in the class. Just recently, a student emailed me and said that he always skipped over the business and financial section of the newspaper until he started taking the MBA courses. Now that is the first section he turns to!



**JIANXIN TANG**  
**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS &  
TECHNOLOGY (TECHNOLOGY)**

I find it rewarding when I participate in the discussions. I just like to be one of them and respond to most (if not all) of their original postings so they know if they have a question, I am always there. The most rewarding part of teaching online is that at the end of the semester when students submit their final exam or assignment, or post their final discussion, they say even though the course is challenging (most of the courses I teach are math intensive), they have really learned something.



**ERNEST CLEMENT**  
**SCHOOL OF NURSING**

I think the single most rewarding aspect of teaching online is the fact that I am helping students who are trying to move forward in their education and their careers in the same manner that I did as a student. After obtaining my associate degree in nursing, I started a family and was working full-time. Returning to school in the traditional manner was just not in the cards for me. If it weren't for online programs, I would never have been able to advance my career. I love the fact that I can now help students who are in the same situation as me. Also, the diversity of my students' backgrounds makes for a rich discussion of almost any topic.



**SUSAN HOLMES**  
**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

The greatest reward for teaching online is the opportunity to work with, and learn from, a diverse student population. Unlike a traditional on-campus classroom—where students can often be 'clustered' by similar demographics—the online classroom brings together a virtual world of students. In the last few months online, I've worked with teenagers eager to venture beyond high school, deployed military personnel, stay-at-home parents juggling kids and school, police officers, nuclear plant workers, graphic artists, a couple of folks living (temporarily) in Antarctica, and a Peruvian national taking her first-ever online class in hopes of completing her college degree. (She did.)

More than half came with credits from multiple schools, and nearly a third had never taken an online class before. Our conversations started with the assigned texts and soon expanded to academic studies, journal articles, YouTube videos, and news from around the globe. Add in the family tales, personal anecdotes, and professional experiences, and the result was a continuously evolving knowledge base that enriched our collective academic experience. Learning at its best!



**M. SUE KURITA**  
**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

I love teaching for Excelsior College at USASMA [U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy] because I learn so much from my students. Education is not only about what one learns from books, but more importantly, what one learns from others and their life experiences. My students have overcome many difficulties and perform quite a balancing act in order to attend classes. They appreciate the educational opportunity provided by the College and that makes teaching a very positive experience. They bring real-life experiences to the class, thus making education relevant. Their maturity fosters a rich learning environment. Teaching for Excelsior is very rewarding for me since I get to serve those who serve this great country. I am grateful to the College for providing me with this rewarding experience.



Chico, a pit bull mix, and Abigail, an inmate at the county jail in Albany, New York, share a special bond. The two are participating in the Steps to Adoption Readiness (STAR) Partnership, where Chico gets an improved chance at finding his forever home thanks to the undivided attention and training he receives while living with Abigail in the county lockup. In return, Abigail, as well as her cellmate who is also training a dog, get the dogs' unconditional love. "The dog doesn't care that I'm in an orange jumpsuit. He doesn't judge me and think I'm a bad person," said Abigail's cellmate.

PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

# THE PAWS THAT BIND



The benefits of the human-animal bond lead to less stress, lowered blood pressure, and reduced anxiety

BY DANA YANULAVICH

**O**liver's schedule would leave the most stalwart worker dog-tired. He's already made three stops—a preschool, an elementary school, and a high school, before reporting for his shift at the public library. Earlier in the week, he made the rounds of a local hospital's surgical waiting room and the adult psychiatric ward, more elementary schools, a children's hospital pre-op unit, the local Center for Disability Services, *and* attended orchestra rehearsal. This much sought-after overachiever must be a highly paid professional! And, he is. Oliver receives his compensation in the form of head pats, scratches behind the ears, and the most coveted remuneration of all: belly rubs.

Oliver is a dog. A certified therapy dog. This 110-pound Bernese Mountain Dog's popularity and demanding schedule are just one indication of the value and prominence of the human-animal bond in action.

"Even though he's huge, he's got the right personality, because he really doesn't lick; you can do anything to him," explains owner Happy Scherer of Delmar, New York. "In preschool this morning there were 17 kids around him, leaning on him, crawling on him." And the good-natured, black, brown, and white lovable behemoth takes it all lying down.

## A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP

The connection between humans and animals isn't new. In fact, it dates back to ancient times. Animals were not only part of the survival strategies of the human race by providing assistance while hunting, gathering, and guarding, but also as domesticated farm animals. There's archaeological evidence from more than 10,000 years ago that points to the human-animal bond: domestic wolf-dogs were found buried with humans, suggesting their valued relationship. Other researchers have shown that even before cats were venerated in Egypt, in Cyprus 9500 years ago wildcats were tamed to take on ocean voyages.

While Medieval and Renaissance moralists and theologians tried to quash the notion of animals as companions, claiming that it was morally suspect, the attraction between humans and animals has stood the test

"A dog releases stress, a dog starts a conversation, a dog allows for everyone to take a deep breath and exhale." —Jude Lilly



of time. English philosopher John Locke, for example, advocated for children to have dogs and other small animals as an outlet for developing feelings and a sense of responsibility. And Florence Nightingale noted in 1860 that pets made good companions for the sick.

There are numerous theories that offer insight into the human-animal bond. Attachment theory, for example, whereby humans seek out connections to others, is one interpretation as is biophilia, a hypothesis that suggests that humans seek out other living things.

## PET POPULARITY

Theories and history aside, it's hard to ignore the numbers. According to the American Pet Products Association, there are 70–80 million dogs and 74–96 million cats kept as pets in the United States. Nearly 50 percent of households include a dog and more than 30 percent have a cat. And it's big business: in 2014, more than \$58 billion was spent on pets.

It's not just the monetary investment in pets that points to their importance in our lives; it's the relationships and bonds that are formed, too. More than 58 percent of pet owners regard their pet as a family member. If stranded on an island, 57 percent of respondents to a national survey by the American Animal Hospital Association say they'd pick their pet as the one they'd want to be with! The strong bond that many feel with animals goes well beyond guarding the home and catching mice, with 16 million people considering their pet as their best friend and 5 million valuing their pet as much as their spouse. It's also interesting to note that more than three-quarters of children in the U.S. live with pets; that's a higher number than those who live with both parents.

With so much emotional and monetary value invested in animals, what does that mean for our overall health and well-being? A lot if you examine the research.

## A PLUS FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

"Animals are amazing and very powerful," says Alayna DeFalco. A trained exercise physiologist and dog lover, she designed Excelsior's course, HSC 262 Human-Animal Interactions in Health and Wellness. "The studies that have been done have shown nothing but positive outcomes with physiological changes, psychological changes, social changes, all across the spectrum. They [animals] increase human's quality of life in all areas."

There's no doubt that animals play important roles in our lives, even for those who aren't necessarily dog or cat people. Who hasn't experienced the calming effects of an



Vince Piccinini and Oliver Reichman, first-graders at Hamagrael Elementary School in Delmar, New York, practice their reading skills with the help of Oliver, the reading dog. A certified therapy dog, Oliver keeps a busy reading schedule at schools and the local library and even traveled to New Zealand, where he impressed the Kiwis. "He was such a hit as a therapy dog there [in New Zealand] that he was featured on national television and in the newspaper," recalls owner Happy Scherer.

PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

aquarium in a doctor's office waiting room, for instance? And there are well-established horseback riding programs that promote physical and mental well-being. But among the benefits of human-animal interaction that have been documented, many center on our interaction with dogs.

On the physical side of the spectrum, lower blood pressure and reduced cholesterol have been noted. A UCLA study shows that just looking at a dog, as well as stroking or talking to it, can release oxytocin, a hormone associated with stress release and pleasurable feelings. And pets can help us be more active; one study shows that adults who own dogs take 25 percent more steps per day. From a psychological and sociological standpoint, interaction with a dog can reduce loneliness, anxiety, and depression, while increasing socialization.

"A dog releases stress, a dog starts a conversation, a dog allows for everyone to take a deep breath and exhale," explains Jude Lilly, coordinator of the pet therapy program at Wildwood Programs, an Albany, New York, social service agency that helps autistic and developmentally disabled individuals.

Lilly and Bella, her 13-year-old Jack Russell certified therapy dog that accompanies her to work, have helped many at Wildwood experience positive results. "I can have a consumer who's having the worst day in the world, and Bella will go down and diffuse a student as soon as she would walk in."

**"The whole process of petting a dog is a reciprocal experience where the person feels relaxed as does the dog." —Happy Scherer**



## CERTIFIED THERAPY DOGS

While family pets offer many of the same documented benefits, not everyone can have their own dog. Nursing home residents, hospitalized patients, military servicemembers, and inmates are just some of the many populations that may not be able to have their own pet. That's where the services of a certified therapy dog can yield positive results.

Wildwood Programs offers a course to prepare dogs for certification by Therapy Dogs International. Among the behaviors a dog must successfully perform are getting around people (including those with wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches), being separated from their handlers, sit and stay, and not eating items found on the floor. In return for the free training, participants offer to make pet visits to Wildwood schools and residences. Consumers, too, participate in the classes, helping to hold the dogs and to create simulated hospital or nursing home situations.

"It's social role valorization," says Lilly, explaining that consumers who participate in the pet therapy program gain a sense of importance, self-esteem, and community. "It makes you feel good to help people," offers Deb, a Wildwood consumer who helps with the pet therapy training class.

Positive results have been seen in other areas as well. Oliver, for example, spends a lot of his time with children, helping them build their reading skills. "We call him a reading dog, but he really can't read, but he likes to listen to kids read to him," explains Scherer. Oliver's nonjudgmental listening skills help build confidence in the readers.

Graduates of Wildwood's pet therapy training program, Oliver and Scherer make a unique team. While therapy dog handlers come from all walks of life, Scherer brings the added benefit of 30 years in health care and mental health as a clinician, administrator, and consultant. This makes the team especially valuable on visits to such places as a local hospital's adult psychiatric ward and to a facility for at-risk and troubled children.

Scherer adds, "We've been using him with some social skills training for kids on the autistic spectrum, so for example: If kids are crowding him, he may get up and move a little, so that's kind of a teachable moment: How do you feel when people are right on top of you, and pushing you, and there are too many people? What do you do?"

## BEHIND BARS

Another situation that leverages the human-animal relationship is the Steps to Adoption Readiness (STAR) program in Albany, New York. This partnership between the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society and the Albany

County Correctional Facility is a six-week program in which dogs are placed in the jail and are trained by the inmates with the goal to increase the animals' adoptability.

While the STAR Partnership has been a win-win situation for inmates and dogs alike, there were a few hurdles to work around to bring the program into the jail. Some corrections staff were concerned about possible disruptions and basic canine housekeeping issues, as examples.

"The people who had questioned the program were won over pretty quickly by the dogs themselves and the impact they had on the atmosphere at the facility," says Brad Shear, the humane society's executive director. "Immediately we got the feedback that—from both the corrections officers and the inmates—they felt more relaxed, they had sort of a comforting feeling... The dogs just brought this feeling of relaxation to the place that normally you wouldn't think of in a correctional facility."

County Sheriff Craig D. Apple Sr. agrees with the success of the program, "It's working. It's giving the inmates a sense of ownership, a sense of productivity." Not

only does the program have a calming effect on the tier where the dogs are housed, according to Apple, it also has reduced the number of assaults on staff and other inmates. To qualify to apply for the program, the participants (both men and women inmates) must have a clean behavior record at the correctional facility.

"It's way better [than other jail jobs]," says inmate Abigail during a recent training session as she worked with 3-year-old Brownie. "It keeps you busy and puts you in a good mood." She also mentioned the program's therapeutic effect and that it taught her patience.

The dogs receive the full attention of their handlers, living, eating, and sleeping in the jail tier. This gives the inmate participants plenty of time to practice positive reinforcement techniques with the dogs, strategies that they learn during weekly sessions by a trainer contracted through the humane society. No taxpayer funds are expended to fund the program; food, treats, and training are all donated.

Because 30 percent of the dogs surrendered to the humane society are pit bull mixes, many end up in the



Dan, a county jail inmate, works on perfecting the skills of Lou Lou, a pit bull mix from the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society. The high energy animals are often poorly trained when they are surrendered, but they are well trained and better behaved after their time behind bars. The inmates, too, need to be on their best behavior in order to participate in the program.

PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

STAR partnership. Initially Apple was concerned about having pit bulls at the jail because the breed is often incorrectly characterized as dangerous and aggressive. However, Apple has been pleasantly surprised by the outcome. The positive reinforcement training techniques produce some of the gentlest, well-mannered dogs he's seen. In fact, most of the dogs don't make it back to the shelter for adoption; more than half have been adopted by corrections officers and other staff.

## OTHER IMPLICATIONS

While animals obviously play an important part in many people's lives, sometimes our interaction with them can reveal other less desirable facets of our lives. Research has shown that a family's relationship to pets may often mirror the roles amongst the family itself. Children, for example, may reveal an abusive situation when interacting with a therapy animal. Scherer recalls, for example, an elementary school student who asked to see Oliver's private parts. Was

## MILITARY DEPLOYS THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS WITH ANIMAL-ASSISTED PROGRAMS

### "The dog had my back."

That's how the veteran who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder explained it. He hadn't slept well for months. But then those treating him suggested he try sleeping with a therapy dog. The result? Finally a good night's rest, documented by the various instruments monitoring his sleep. The veteran could finally relax from his hyper vigilant state, one of the symptoms of PTSD, because the "dog was watching out for him."

This soldier's experience with the therapeutic effect of an animal is just one example in a long line of military initiatives. While many may associate animals in the military with guard dogs, cavalry horses, pack mules, or carrier pigeons, there is a legacy of the therapeutic use with the various branches. According to Col. Perry R. Chumley, the military was already using dogs as a form of therapy with psychiatric patients at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. in 1919. A member of the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps and chief of human-animal bond programs with the Defense Health Agency at the time of the interview, Chumley also noted that in the 1940s, the Department of Defense was using farm animals to help emotionally traumatized veterans at New York's Pawling Army Air Force Convalescent Center.

"The Army has a long history with human-animal bond programs," Chumley explains. "Things go way back with things like mascots. It's hard to look at footage of us being deployed to other countries without seeing a dog or cat popping up in the picture." He feels it's a cultural attribute that servicemembers bring with



them wherever they go—befriending puppies and homeless animals.

But it's a double-edged sword, Chumley says. Adopting animals in foreign countries is against General Order Number One that forbids troops from mingling with strays due to the zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, they may carry.

In 1992 the Army created combat and stress control (COSC) teams, and two dogs and handlers were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. "The whole purpose of that program was to break down the barriers," explains Chumley. Military culture doesn't necessarily encourage soldiers to air their feelings, but the dogs had a way of helping them to open up. The social workers would go on walkabouts with the dogs to areas where troops were hanging out during their free time. The welcoming and stress-reducing presence of the dog would help soldiers open up and discuss problems or situations that might be

affecting them. Often the soldiers would then make an appointment to talk to a professional about something that might be troubling them, especially if they knew the dog would be present in the session.

Animal-assisted therapy is available throughout the military and is often supported by volunteer groups. TB MED 4 is the official Department of Defense document that outlines the necessary regulations that must be followed. Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, for example, has had animal-assisted activity programs for 26 years. Sponsored by the American Red Cross, Tripler's program includes dogs, cats, and rabbits for the benefit of patients, staff, and family.

Animal-assisted programs are in place at all major Army installations. Chumley also cites an equine program at Fort Carson and an endeavor at Walter Reed's NICOE (the National Intrepid Center for Excellence). There PTSD patients who haven't responded well to traditional approaches train therapy dogs as part of their treatment. "They're working with Warrior Canine Companions, which is a non-profit, nongovernment organization to provide the dogs and handlers," he explains.

Chumley says that command support for animal-assisted therapy programs throughout the Army is strong as long as those involved follow the TB MED 4 guidelines. The stress-relieving attributes of the human-animal bond are well-established in the Army's therapeutic arsenal.

DISCLAIMER: The views and opinions expressed by Col. Perry R. Chumley are his and may not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army.

—DANA YANULAVICH



Research continues to show that our companion animals have a positive effect on our health and well-being. Not only do we invest our love and affection in our furry friends, but also our money, with more than \$22 million spent on food alone in 2014. Two out of three Americans live with a pet, and studies reveal that these companions can be the glue that holds families together.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

it natural curiosity or indicative of some other situation? Scherer brought the request to the school's attention.

Pet abuse can also indicate abuse at home and vice versa. Because pets often play a central role in many people's lives, they are often used as an object of control in an abusive relationship. Women may not want to leave a bad relationship, for example, because they're worried about their pets and want to protect them. Statistics show that 40 to 92 percent of people in domestic abuse shelters have pets and many reported that threats were made to harm their pets. Albany's humane society offers a Safe Haven program, where animals are housed at an undisclosed safe location, allowing people to leave an abusive relationship without fear of losing their pet or of any violence toward the animal if it's left behind.

The benefits to humans in a relationship with animals are well-documented. But what about the animal?

Instructor DeFalco offers some perspective, noting that animals benefit, too. "When animals are being pet [stroked], as they are stroked, their heart rates lower.

Animals thrive on praise. They're really service animals at heart. When they know they pleased their human, there are physiological changes within themselves." And in the case of dogs with high-energy characteristics, the ability to become a certified therapy dog can help them channel that energy into positive action.

"The whole process of petting a dog is a reciprocal experience where the person feels relaxed as does the dog. So the person feels like he/she is doing something valuable and connecting with the animal—so important for people who feel isolated. Dogs are so social and they love humans so much," adds Scherer. Indeed, a recent Japanese study published in *Science* magazine reinforces that both animals and their handlers experience an oxytocin rush in a positive feedback loop that reinforces the mutual admiration of the human-animal bond.

Whether it's children gaining a sense of responsibility and empathy from taking care of the family pet, to a certified therapy dog visiting hospitalized or incarcerated people who benefit from the physical contact and touch, the human-animal bond remains strong. As humankind has evolved, so too has our relationship with animals. Evidence of the lasting connections and adaptability of our interactions, animals now serve in an increasing number of valuable roles with lasting mental and physical benefits for all.

While every connection can be different, each is equally important. DeFalco emphasizes, "I think every person on this earth has a purpose, and I feel every animal has purpose." ■

**"Animals are  
amazing and  
very powerful."**



—Alayna DeFalco



# ALUMNI EVENTS

**WHAT: MEET THE DEAN****WHEN:** April 27, 2015**WHERE:** Carmine's Italian Restaurant, Washington, DC**WHO:** Robert E. Waters, dean of the School of Public Service, spoke with students and alumni about his vision for Excelsior's fifth school. Also in attendance were staff from Excelsior's DC Center, Alumni Advisory Board member Dwayne Hanford, BS '05, and Alumni Ambassadors Mark Bowman, BS '00, Richelle Rodgers, BS '80, and Tom Snee, BS '98. Photo at left.**WHAT: DINNER WITH 12 STRANGERS****WHEN:** June 7, 2015**WHERE:** Maggiano's Little Italy, Buckhead, GA**WHO:** The second event of its kind, a group of loyal alumni donors gathered for an intimate dinner hosted by Alumni Ambassador Paul Troop, BA '80. The group was joined by Director of Development Marcy Stryker and Alumni Affairs Manager Renee Kelly in a lively discussion about the importance of supporting the College's students and the Excelsior brand.**WHAT: ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING****WHEN:** July 10, 2015**WHERE:** Excelsior College, Albany, NY**WHO:** Before walking across the stage at Commencement, nearly 100 graduates stopped by Excelsior College for the annual Open House and Alumni Association meeting. Hosted by the Alumni Advisory Board, the meeting provided an opportunity for new graduates to learn how to become active in the Alumni Association and to share their inspiring Excelsior stories. This year, for the first time, the meeting was broadcast live online for graduates who were unable to attend the meeting in Albany. If you missed it, you can view the recorded version on the alumni website at [www.excelsior.edu/alumnievents](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumnievents).**WHAT: DINE WITH 9****WHEN:** August 19, 2015**WHERE:** Mundo, A Latin Chic Restaurant, Las Vegas, NV**WHO:** Nine Excelsior alumni in the Las Vegas Valley gathered at Mundo Restaurant for good food and conversation. Excelsior's Dine with 9—the first alumni event of its kind—was hosted by Alumni Advisory Board member Timothy Moon, AS '98, BS '06, MBA '09.**DC SPOTLIGHT:** Alumni in the Washington, DC-metro area were invited to attend the following events during spring and summer 2015:

- Excelsior College Washington DC Center Open House for students, alumni, and partners of the College
- Revolutionary Learning: Using Games and Simulations to Solve Critical Issues in Public Health, a symposium sponsored by Excelsior's Center for Game and Simulation-Based Learning
- National Cybersecurity Institute (NCI) Cyber Network networking event for cyber alumni and students
- The Skills, Qualities, and Roles of the 21st Century Public Servant, a panel discussion sponsored by the School of Public Service



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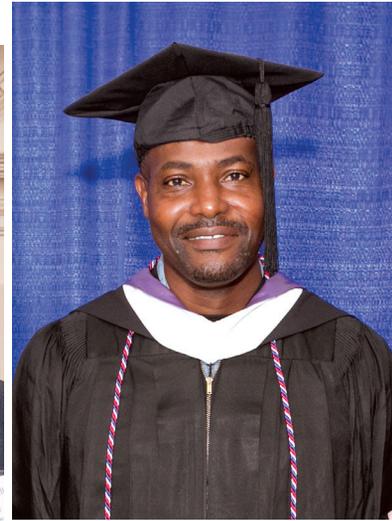
Martin



Roberts



Cranfill



McGowan

## College Celebrates Alumni Award Recipients

Four alumni were honored at Excelsior’s annual Awards Convocation held in conjunction with the College’s 2015 Commencement. The recipients offered inspiring comments at the event, and more information about them and the awards is available online at [www.excelsior.edu/alumniawards](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumniawards).

### S. ATYIA MARTIN, BS '07

#### ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

“One quote for me that’s very important as I’ve gone through all of these trials and tribulations to get here today has been ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.’ For me that represents...the effort, credit, support, love and ultimate sacrifice of my husband, Roy Martin.”

### LISA R. ROBERTS, AS '89, BS '94

#### CARRIE B. LENBURG AWARD

“I couldn’t have gotten my start on my lifelong journey of education without Excelsior. It’s given me the opportunity to care for a huge variety of patients and families all over the world. So, as a nurse educator, I try to inspire my students to keep going, no matter what level they are at.”

### BARRY CRANFILL, AAS '87, BS '90

#### ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

“Quite honestly, them [the Alumni Association] giving me an award is kind of backwards, because [for] the education and the opportunities that my Excelsior journey gave me, I owe them far more than they ever owe me. And as a result, I have a call to action to all of you to do your best, to advocate for your university. Those of you who just graduated, give back to your college, give back to the people who gave you what you’ve got... I’ll accept the award, basically, on behalf of anybody who has ever done anything for an Excelsior student and who has taken the time to advocate for the College and its mission.”

### LARRY MCGOWAN, AS '10, BS '14

#### C. WAYNE WILLIAMS AWARD

“I know my mother, grandmother, and grandfather are looking down smiling, because they are the ones that taught me to always help others and do well by others no matter where my journey takes me.”



## VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

While grateful graduates have been supporting Excelsior through advocacy, recruitment, and outreach for decades, the College's formal volunteer program has only been in existence for about four years. During that short time, the program has amassed 145 Alumni Ambassadors who help the College's alumni program, schools, and non-academic departments in a variety of ways. These generous volunteers hail from 30 states, the District of Columbia, and seven countries. The recent growth of the program motivated the Office of Alumni Affairs to compose an Alumni Volunteer Policy that outlines what volunteers can expect from the College, as well as what the College expects from volunteers. Read about the impact they are having on the College and its alumni and students in the 2014-2015 Honor Roll of Volunteers at [www.excelsior.edu/honor-roll](http://www.excelsior.edu/honor-roll).

For more information about the Alumni Ambassador program, visit [www.excelsior.edu/alumniambassadors](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumniambassadors).



## AUTHOR? AUTHOR!



If you're an alum who has published a book, we'd like to add it to our virtual Alumni Bookcase. It's a virtual space that will list titles published by Excelsior graduates along with a link to where they can be purchased.

If you'd like to put your book on the Excelsior College Alumni Bookcase, send the following information to [alumni@excelsior.edu](mailto:alumni@excelsior.edu) by November 30, 2015:

- ➔ Author's name
- ➔ Complete title of book
- ➔ Link to website from which book can be purchased

Questions? Contact the Office of Alumni Affairs at [alumni@excelsior.edu](mailto:alumni@excelsior.edu).

## MEET US ONLINE

Website: [www.excelsior.edu/alumni](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumni)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ECalumni](http://www.facebook.com/ECalumni)  
Twitter: @ExcelsiorColl  
LinkedIn: Excelsior College Alumni Association Group

2015-2016

## ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD

### OFFICERS

#### PRESIDENT

**Dwayne Hanford, BS '05**  
Springfield, VA  
Serving 2012-2017  
[dhanford@excelsior.edu](mailto:dhanford@excelsior.edu)

#### VICE PRESIDENT

**Shelia Scott, BS '02**  
Conover, NC  
Serving 2013-2016  
[sascott@excelsior.edu](mailto:sascott@excelsior.edu)

#### SECRETARY

**Adrienne Mason, BS '11**  
Endwell, NY  
Serving 2012-2014, 2015-2016  
[amason@excelsior.edu](mailto:amason@excelsior.edu)

### ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

**Sandra Butterfield, BS '86**  
Spring Valley, CA  
Serving 2014-2017  
[sbutterfield@excelsior.edu](mailto:sbutterfield@excelsior.edu)

**Daniel L. Coberly, AS '77, BS '84**  
Hazel Green, AL  
Serving 2013-2016  
[dcoberly@excelsior.edu](mailto:dcoberly@excelsior.edu)

**Kadidia Doumbia, BS '85**  
Washington, DC  
Serving 2010-2016  
[kdoumbia@excelsior.edu](mailto:kdoumbia@excelsior.edu)

**Jennifer Gentry, AS '04, BS '11, MS '15**  
Portland, TX  
Serving 2014-2017  
[jgentry@excelsior.edu](mailto:jgentry@excelsior.edu)

**LCDR Shannon McMillan, AS '07, BA '09**  
Virginia Beach, VA  
Serving 2010-2016  
[smcmillan@excelsior.edu](mailto:smcmillan@excelsior.edu)

**Timothy Moon, AS '98, BS '06, MBA '09**  
Guam  
Serving 2015-2017  
[tmoon@excelsior.edu](mailto:tmoon@excelsior.edu)

**CW 2 Katharin Rice-Gillis, AS '09, BS '13, MS '15**  
Cache, OK  
Serving 2015-2016  
[kricegillis@excelsior.edu](mailto:kricegillis@excelsior.edu)

**SFC J. Kane Tomlin, BS '12, MS '14**  
Panama City Beach, FL  
Serving 2015-2018  
[jkanetomlin@excelsior.edu](mailto:jkanetomlin@excelsior.edu)

**Ronald Tosto, BPT '12**  
Walnut Creek, CA  
Serving 2012-2018  
[rtosto@excelsior.edu](mailto:rtosto@excelsior.edu)

COMING ATTRACTIONS...

# WEB CHATS

Alumni Association 101

TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER  
**10**  
8-9 pm ET

Join the Alumni Advisory Board for an opportunity to ask questions and learn about services and benefits, alumni awards, the alumni volunteer program, and the purpose of the Alumni Advisory Board.

Registration required at [www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg](http://www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg).

The Art of Resumes  
and Cover Letters:

Tips for Painting a Stunning Self-Portrait of Your Career Brand

WEDNESDAY  
DECEMBER  
**2**  
7-8 pm ET

Your resume and cover letter should be a stunning self-portrait of you as a uniquely qualified candidate for the position you seek. In this Web chat, you'll receive essential tips in mastering the art of resume and cover letter development.

Registration required at [www.excelsior.edu/career](http://www.excelsior.edu/career).

Open Forum: Ask the  
Publisher Anything!

TUESDAY  
JANUARY  
**5**  
Noon-1 pm ET

If your 2016 resolution is to get your book published, join this open forum-style webinar. Sue Petrie, director of the Hudson Whitman/Excelsior College Press and a 20-year publishing veteran, fields questions about all aspects of print and digital publishing.

Registration required at [www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg](http://www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg).

## REGIONAL EVENTS

Binghamton Alumni Event

Lost Dog Café, 222 Water St.,  
Binghamton, NY

THURSDAY  
NOVEMBER  
**5**  
5-7 pm ET

Join former Alumni Advisory Board president Robert Williams, BS '95, and current Alumni Advisory Board member Adrienne Mason, BS '11, for a networking reception and learn about ways you can become active in the Alumni Association.

Registration required at [www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg](http://www.excelsior.edu/AlumniEventReg).

San Diego, CA

SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY  
**28**

Raleigh, NC

SUNDAY  
MARCH  
**6**

Visit [www.excelsior.edu/alumnievents](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumnievents) for information and registration instructions.



▲ The 2015-2016 Alumni Association Advisory Board includes (front row, left to right) Sandra Butterfield, Jennifer Gentry, Kadidia Doumbia, Dwayn Hanford, Adrienne Mason, Katharin Rice-Gillis; (back row, left to right) Daniel Coberly, Shelia Scott, Timothy Moon, J. Kane Tomlin, Ronald Tosto, and Shannon McMillan. PHOTO: MIKE HEMBERGER

## WELCOME ABOARD

Meet the new members of the Excelsior College Alumni Association Advisory Board. For full biographies, visit [www.excelsior.edu/alumniadvisoryboard](http://www.excelsior.edu/alumniadvisoryboard).

**TIMOTHY MOON** | An Alumni Ambassador-turned-board member, Tim is employed as a training and readiness program manager for the U.S. Navy. This Navy veteran is passionate about veterans issues and hosts a weekly live call-in radio show called "Veterans Matter," featuring topics of interest to active-duty service members, veterans, and their families. Recently, he interviewed Carolyn Adamczyk, the director of Excelsior College's Lt. Col. Bryant A. Murray Veterans Center on his show.

**CW2 KATHARIN RICE-GILLIS** | Katharin is an electronic warfare warrant officer and instructor in electronic warfare for the U.S. Army. She served tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in 2011, she received a Bronze Star for Leadership Performance. With 19 years of active-duty service and the intent to transition to civilian life in 2016, Katharin completed her third Excelsior degree—a master's in cybersecurity—this year. She is pursuing a doctoral degree in strategic security.

**SFC J. KANE TOMLIN** | Kane is a master diver and platoon sergeant for the U.S. Army, where he serves as instructor and course manager for the Marine Engineer Diving Officer Course at an inter-service training command for soldiers and sailors. He is also the Army's subject matter expert on hydrographic survey and has completed two tours of duty in Iraq. Kane is pursuing a doctoral degree in strategic security.

## WELCOME BACK

**RONALD TOSTO** | Ron was recently re-elected by the alumni-at-large for a second three-year term. Having served two years as secretary of the board, Ron has sent thousands of emails congratulating new graduates. A U.S. Navy veteran, he is employed as a cybersecurity consultant with Verizon Enterprise Solutions. Ron is enrolled in Excelsior's MBA (Cybersecurity Management) program.



# ALUMNI NOTES

## SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY



**Robert W. McGee, BS in Business '83, of Fayetteville, North Carolina,** published a novelette, "Annie and the Senator:

A Story of Vigilante Justice," and other books, including "Justifiable Homicide: A Political Thriller." Associate professor of accounting at Fayetteville State University, McGee has lectured or consulted in more than 30 countries and has earned 13 doctorates from universities in the United States and four European countries. He won three silver medals at the Taekwondo World Championships in July 2015.

**Cecil Vernon Crumrine Jr., BS in Business '86, of Mesquite, Texas,** became a licensed amateur radio operator (ham) with the call sign KG5FKG. He obtained both his technical class and general class licenses in 2015. He also earned a Graduate Certificate in Dispute Resolution at Southern Methodist University in 2004.



**William R. Rath, BS in Nuclear Engineering Technology '10, of Oxford, Connecticut,** was awarded a Juris Doctor from the

University of Connecticut's School of Law on May 17, 2015. He was also awarded a certificate in Energy & Environmental Law, and was elected to speak for his class at the commencement ceremony. Rath intends to continue his studies at UConn Law in the Master of Laws (LLM) program in Energy & Environmental Law.



**Herb Jackson, BS '11, of Corpus Christi, Texas,** achieved Factory Certified Master Controls Technician with Johnson Controls.

He was also recently promoted to controls technical team lead at Johnson Controls' Corpus Christi branch.

**Ramon E. Cordies, BS '13, of Bronx, New York,** recently completed his MSEE at Capitol Technology University and is in the process of obtaining his PE. He took a tour of Europe this summer, including stops in England, France, Switzerland, and Italy.

## SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

**Mel Berkowitz, BA '76, of Jamaica, New York,** is a community access TV producer.

**David McCann, BA '78, of Akron, Ohio,** is enjoying free college classes offered by the state of Ohio to individuals over 60. He writes, "What a blast to be returning to school at age 60. So off I go to join with the dynamic minds of the next generation!"



**Joseph P. Tidwell Jr., AS '78, BS '84, of Mesa, Arizona,** is a self-employed program management and education consultant. He previously held leadership positions in military, government, and industry. Tidwell has presented and published 75 technical books and papers on safety, management, and operations and served on the faculty of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he was recognized as faculty member of the year in 1997. He also has an MBA from Embry-Riddle, and a master's in operations and organizational management from the United States Army Command and General Staff College.

**Robert W. McGee, BS '76, AS '79, AA '80, of Fayetteville, North Carolina,** see School of Business & Technology.

**Michael LaFerney, BS '79, of Lakeville, Massachusetts,** a clinical nurse specialist at Arbour SeniorCare, was named as one of the five recipients of the 2015 Leaders of Tomorrow awards presented by Long-Term Living

magazine. Now in its fourth year, the awards recognize those who are making an impact on tomorrow's long-term care policies, quality initiatives, and senior care culture—whether it be on a national scale or one care site and colleague at a time.

**Harold Geller, BS '83, of Burke, Virginia,** observatory director and associate professor at George Mason University, co-authored a children's book, "A Pluto Story," about the dwarf planet Pluto and a guinea pig named Pluto. He also edited "Multigenerational Starship Design Considerations" that includes contributions from undergraduate, graduate, and high school students and faculty. In 1992, Geller earned an MA in astronomy and a DA in education, both from George Mason University.



**Marcy Goodfleisch, BS '88, MA '08, of Austin, Texas,** received a Provost's Award for Teaching Excellence at Park

University, where she is an adjunct instructor of liberal education.

**Les Mahoney, BS '91, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota,** was featured on the winter 2015 cover of Hollywood & Vine, a publication that provides the latest on showbiz, casting calls, and more. An actor and filmmaker, he is president of Vagabond Entertainment.

**Celeste Joyce, BS '94, of Jersey City, New Jersey,** see School of Nursing.



**Shane Creel, BS '95, of Corpus Christi, Texas,** was named 2014-2015 Teacher of the Year at New England College

of Business, where he teaches Corporations and Compliance and the Culture of Ethics and Competition. He is director of risk management at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. A U.S. Navy veteran with 22 years of service, he also earned an MS in counseling and a PhD in organizational management.



**Allen Dean Peterson, BA '98, of Tallahassee, Florida,** became the library services administrator for the

Florida Department of Corrections in July. He is the head of library services for the department, encompassing 66 libraries at correctional institutions throughout the state. He writes, "None of it would have been possible without my degree from Regents College." He also earned a master's degree in library and information science from the University of South Florida in 2009.

**Richard Russell, BS '02, of Green Cove Springs, Florida,** was elected supervisor for Clay County Florida Soil and Water Conservation Board of Supervisors. A manufacturing analyst at Northrop Grumman, he also earned an MBA at Saint Leo University.

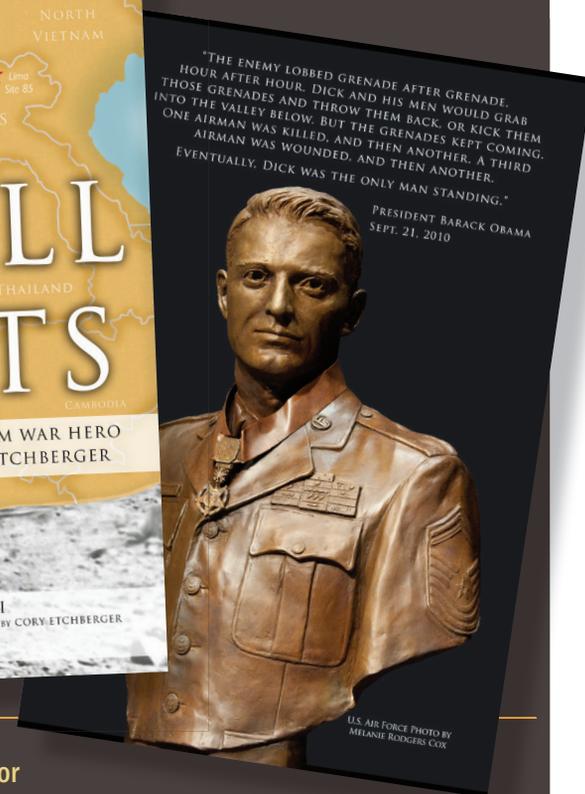
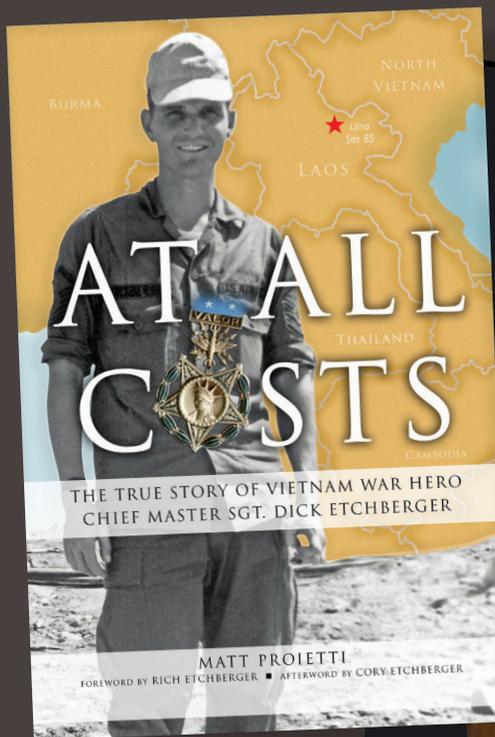
**Phillip J. Bachand, BS '03, of Virginia Beach, Virginia,** is a ballistic missile defense analyst at General Dynamics Information Technology. He is also the president and CEO of the Navy Mustang Association, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, which has recently partnered with Excelsior to offer reduced tuition and fees to its paid members and their spouses.



**Wilma Acosta, BS '06, of Tampa, Florida,** is chief compliance/privacy officer at Maricopa Integrated Health

System. She writes, "Regents and now Excelsior opened the door for not just my dream of becoming a nurse, but opened doors for me to move in circles of academia, management, speaking nationally and today being recognized as a subject matter expert in the field of health care compliance." She is working on a master's degree in science leadership at Grand Canyon University.

# COMBINING TALENTS, GRADS PARTNER ON BOOK



**T**wo Excelsior grads teamed up on a book about a Medal of Honor recipient from the Vietnam War. Matt Proietti '07 of Penn Valley, California, wrote "At All Costs: The True Story of Vietnam War Hero Chief Master Sgt. Dick Etchberger" (Kay Press, 2015), and Ray Sarracino '07 of Fort Myers, Florida, designed the book cover.

The book details the life of Etchberger, a Pennsylvania native who was among 12 U.S. airmen killed in 1968 when a North Vietnamese Army special forces team scaled a 3,000-foot cliff and attacked their secret radar camp. The 35-year-old Etchberger helped rescue three of his comrades, two of whom were severely wounded, and made it safely aboard an evacuation helicopter before being shot through the floor and killed as it lifted off from the mountain.

Proietti first learned of Etchberger's notable career when assigned to write about the Medal of Honor candidate as part of his job in public affairs as a chief master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. He called upon the services of Sarracino, a senior master sergeant in the reserve's public affairs unit, to design the book cover.

The two colleagues discovered they had a lot in common. Sarracino notes, "We were both assigned to the Air Force Public Affairs Agency and we are close in age and experience. He and I built up an instant friendship; it turned out we had very similar life experiences regarding the newspaper industry: He was an editor; I was a graphic artist/photographer and had worked at different organizations throughout my career. We just hit it off." Soon, they made another connection—that they both earned bachelor's degrees at Excelsior in the same year and in the same school!

The men have similar educational backgrounds: college credits gained from military service, DANTES and CLEP exams, and other

colleges. Proietti's 23-year quest to complete his degree was jump-started when the Air Force sent him to a 9-week course of study at the University of Oklahoma. After completing the program, he didn't want to lose the fervor he felt for school, and hooked up with Excelsior for degree completion. He explains, "Once I start something, I'm like a pit bull with a rib eye steak."

When Sarracino's life allowed him to devote more time to study, there was no stopping him either. He recalls, "It was a challenging process, but it was by far one of the most positive and rewarding experiences of my adult life. It was an opportunity that brought a successful college career to a close for me, and made it a tangible possible experience that no one else had been able to define for me as well."

Outside of their Air Force Reserve roles, Sarracino is a civilian employee for the U.S. Army at Southern Command. He credits his position to his Excelsior degree. "I was in my 40s when I got my Excelsior bachelor's degree, and within a year and a half, I had a permanent full-time GS [civilian] position," says Sarracino. "And I firmly believe having that bachelor's degree played a major role in that."

Proietti handles the public affairs for his area's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, a government-supported initiative to help National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families benefit from support information and services when deployed. In his spare time, he continues to promote "At All Costs" and works on a screenplay of Etchberger's story.

▲ Matt Proietti (left) and Ray Sarracino (right) pose in front of Etchberger's name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT PROIETTI

—DANA YANULAVICH

**Cecil Vernon Crumrine Jr., MA '06, of Mesquite, Texas**, see School of Business & Technology.



**Donald E. Hutchinson, BS '12, of Killeen, Texas**, has published his first book, "Mortuary Affairs One."

Retired from the Army, he has reenrolled at Excelsior and is now pursuing a Master of Science in Health Sciences.

**Aaron Smith, BS '14, of New Market, Maryland**, is an all source analyst for BAE Systems Inc.

## SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Diana (Lovely) Sturdevant, AS '95, of McAlester, Oklahoma**, earned a Doctor of Philosophy (Nursing) from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in April 2015. Employed at Mitchell Manor Convalescent Home LLC, she also earned a BSN at Oklahoma Wesleyan University and an MS, Gerontological Clinical Nurse Specialist, from the University of Oklahoma.

**Patricia Pope, AS '96, of Inwood, New York**, is working toward her doctorate at Long Island University. An adjunct faculty member at Adelphi University, she is implementing a mentoring program for novice clinical faculty. She is also on the Clinical Advisory Board at Adelphi University School of Nursing and Public Health.

**Shelley Cohen, MSN '09, of Hohenwald, Tennessee**, is the co-author of a new book, "Essential Skills of Nurse Managers." She is an educator/consultant with Health Resources Unlimited.



**Celeste Joyce, MS '10, of Jersey City, New Jersey**, is a school nurse at Calabro School and was named Educational Services

Professional of the Year by the Hoboken Board of Education.

**Marie Wrinn, BS '10, of Tucson, Arizona**, completed an MSN/FNP at the University of Phoenix in 2014 and is employed as a family nurse practitioner in a family practice. Wrinn served on Excelsior's Alumni Advisory

Board from 2011-2014, and was the recipient of Excelsior's 2010 Dr. Robert Kinsinger Award for her demonstration of excellent academic achievement as well as outstanding service to both her community and international charities.

**Thomas A. McHugh, BS '12, of Barboursville, Virginia**, accepted a position as a staff certified registered nurse anesthetist at the John Cochran VA Medical Center in St. Louis, Missouri. He is pursuing an MSN at Athabasca University.

**Brenda Norris, AS '14, of Orinda, Tennessee**, earned CIC certification in June 2015.



**Melissa Davis, MS '15, of Ballston Spa, New York**, received the 2015 Excellence in Professional Development

Educator/Facilitator Practice Award from the Association of Nursing Professional Development. As part of the award, Davis received a scholarship to attend the ANPD convention. She writes, "I firmly believe this [award] is a direct result of my schooling at Excelsior." Davis is a nurse educator at St. Peter's Health Partners in Albany, New York.

Share Your News  
[www.excelsior.edu/AlumniNotes](http://www.excelsior.edu/AlumniNotes)



**Nina Aoki Clapp, BS '97 and MS '15, of Redondo Beach, California**, delivered the graduate address at the 2015 Commencement. The nursing grad challenged her fellow graduates to share their knowledge and skills in their own disciplines with the rest of the world. She said, "Earning my degrees at Excelsior has been inspirational. The thing about all this knowledge gained is that it is not only a benefit but a responsibility as well. I can confidently say that because of the education I received at Excelsior College, I can function as a leader and change agent, promote holistic patient-centered care, translate evidence into practice, synthesize theory and knowledge into practice, use interprofessional collaboration effectively, and to sum it all up, I know how to be a professional nurse."

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



Thinking about applying for a seat on the Alumni Advisory Board or applying for an alumni award?

The Excelsior College Alumni Association presents awards to accomplished alumni each year to recognize outstanding graduates whose achievements are considered by the Alumni Advisory Board to be inspiring to other alumni and students. Self-nominations for the board and awards can be submitted at any time, though the deadline for the current year is January 15. Award winners are required to attend the College's annual Commencement festivities held in July in Albany, New York, where they will be presented with their awards at the Awards Convocation.

Visit [www.excelsior.edu/AlumniNominationInstructions](http://www.excelsior.edu/AlumniNominationInstructions).  
 Find out more during the Alumni Association 101 Web chat (see page 28).



The number of nations represented by the class of 2015. Graduates nearly spanned the globe, from Australia, Maldives, and Indonesia to Ecuador, Colombia, and Mexico to Japan, Singapore, and South Korea to Italy, Germany, and Gibraltar and beyond.

# 11,651

The number of times a student or graduate accessed EC JobLinks in a 12-month period ending July 31, 2015. Use of this job search database increased significantly during that time, with a total of 2,037 students and alumni using the free service. This is an increase of 147 percent compared with the same period in 2013–2014.

The number of graduates who have earned multiple degrees at Excelsior College, out of the 400 registered to attend Commencement 2015 to celebrate their most recent degree.



# 562

The number of complimentary photos taken at the photo booth the day of Commencement.



The number of Excelsior nominees who were recognized by the National Academic Advising Association this year with certificates of merit. Jennifer Cole, academic advisor in the School of Health Sciences, was recognized in the new advisor category, and Heather Lessard, senior academic advisor (now assistant director of advisement and evaluation) in the School of Business & Technology, was recognized in the primary advising role category. Kat McGrath, director of advising operations in the School of Liberal Arts, received a certificate of merit in the administrator category.



Cole

Lessard

McGrath

# 1,199

The number of questions answered via Find Answers 24/7, a knowledge base in the Excelsior Library available to students, for the 2014–2015 year. Find Answers includes more than 160 frequently asked questions. The topics most often searched relate to documenting sources in APA, finding ebooks or textbooks for a course, how to use the library's discovery tool, and INL 102 Information Literacy, a 1-credit course that satisfies the information literacy requirement applicable to all students.



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power of an  
Excelsior  
degree

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