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ST. MARY'S

U N I V E R S I T Y

Gold & Blue

SPRING 2011



ST. MARY'S RECEIVES CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION

REFLECTIONS: AN ICON RETIRES

ON THE FRONT COVER:

Jan. 28, 2011 was a beautiful winter day—even by San Antonio standards—with the temperature a balmy 70 degrees and the sun shining brightly.

So, when Obama Cabinet member and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson asked if a Q&A session with St. Mary's students that was being held in a classroom could be moved, it was an easy call. More than 150 students, faculty and staff gathered at the outdoor amphitheatre adjacent to Java City on the Quad to hear what Jackson had to say about keeping the Texas environment safe for all of its citizens.

ON THE BACK COVER:

Fast forward one week to Feb. 4, 2011, when the weather was more akin to that of the Northeast than of South Texas. And although the one-to-two inches of snow recorded in San Antonio that day doesn't compare to the 14 inches that blanketed the city 25 years ago, it was just enough to cancel classes for a rare Snow Day.

Making Connections

With the click of a mouse, you can stay up-to-date on St. Mary's groundbreaking news and reconnect with old classmates.

St. Mary's is now on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr, and you can even subscribe to your favorite St. Mary's RSS feeds. To get started, be sure to visit:

www.stmarytx.edu/socialmedia



E-Talk, St. Mary's electronic newsletter, is another way to stay connected. Sent in early September, November, February, April and June, this feature-filled newsletter helps us to keep you current on what's happening on campus. E-Talk is mailed electronically to your preferred e-mail address, as long as we have it on file.

Need to update your e-mail or other pertinent information about yourself? Go to www.stmarytx.edu/alumni and click on Alumni Update Form. Here you can also provide updates about new jobs, marriages, recent accomplishments and more.

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and friends three times a year by the
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ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY



MISSION

St. Mary's University,
as a Catholic Marianist University,
fosters the formation of people in faith
and educates leaders for the common good
through community,
integrated liberal arts and professional education,
and academic excellence.



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FROM THE EDITOR

You may have noticed that over the years, and especially during this past year, St. Mary's has been recognized often for its effectiveness in helping our students fulfill their academic, personal and career goals. St. Mary's has garnered much praise, from The Education Trust, *Washington Monthly*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Princeton Review*, *Hispanic Monthly*, and others.

Part of our mission—and a cornerstone of the St. Mary's educational experience—is commitment to service. "To educate for service, justice, and peace" is one of the five *Characteristics of Marianist Education* that has become part of the fabric of our University. So, receiving The Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification—a coveted designation that publicly recognizes St. Mary's ongoing commitment to service and engagement—is fitting, and something about which we all can be proud. Our commitment to service is unwavering, and it is vital to working for the common good and the pursuit of justice and peace.

In this issue you'll read about St. Mary's community members living our mission to serve. There's Professor Richard Cardenas who, with his physics students, touches the lives of some 2,500 school children each year. More than 70 percent of our students participate in myriad service programs, including our student-athletes, some of whom have even initiated their own service projects. And there's Valeria Escobedo, among San Antonio's inaugural Teach for America corps, who is reaching out to build a college-going culture among her students.

Recognitions are nice, but the daily examples of St. Mary's mission in action is what's most important. And many of you are taking notice. In fact, one alumna (who wishes to remain anonymous) wrote a \$50,000 check for scholarships and sent it with a note that said, in part, "Seeing St. Mary's continue to rank so highly nationally, especially in opportunities for deserving yet needy students, is very uplifting—truly reward enough!"

— Candy Kuebker

president's message

FULFILLING VISION 2012 GOALS PARAMOUNT DURING PRESIDENCY

At the Feb. 11, 2011 Trustees meeting, I informed the Board that I plan to return to teaching, full-time, at the end of my term as president in May 2012. After careful reflection, I believe this is the right time for me to make this change, which coincides with the end of the *Vision 2012* strategic plan period. The strong leadership of our vice presidents and deans ensures there will be a smooth transition for my successor. A Presidential Search Committee is being formed, with the goal of having a new president on board June 1, 2012.



While there is still much to do between now and May 2012, with your support we have achieved many of the goals set forth in *Vision 2012*, among them establishing new academic chairs, centers and programs; endowing a school; extending our reach internationally; improving the overall quality of our student body; and advancing information technology. These accomplishments, and many others, reinforce the University's primary focus on our mission of teaching excellence and service.

Realizing strategic goals while fulfilling our mission has led to national recognitions of which we all can be proud, for it is because of your support that we have the resources to create the best learning environment for our students. Most recent among these recognitions are The Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, which further acknowledges our educational successes and mission-driven focus on academic excellence, community service and civic engagement, and inclusion on the *Forbes* magazine's list of the 20 Best Colleges for Women in STEM, which recognizes our high graduation rates for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics majors.

INNOVATION ADVANCES STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Among *Vision 2012* goals is to advance academic quality and innovation while keeping education accessible and affordable. It is a goal that we strive to fulfill every day and recently we created the Four-year Pledge, an initiative to help make the cost of education and our students' financial investment more manageable. We will extend the Pledge to incoming freshmen starting next fall. The program is a collaboration between the University and our students to fulfill agreed-upon responsibilities so that they earn their undergraduate degree in four

years. If both partners meet their responsibilities and the student does not graduate, St. Mary's will cover tuition for the remaining courses needed to complete their degree for two semesters if necessary.

While St. Mary's graduates nearly 60 percent of its students in six years (among the highest in Texas), and has a four-year graduation rate in the State's top 20 percent,

there is always room—and a commitment—to improve. Our responsibility is to empower and motivate students to graduate in a timely manner so that they can move forward with their careers and aspirations. It is who we are as a Catholic and Marianist institution.

FOCUSING ON THE WORK THAT REMAINS

The Four-year Pledge is but one of many initiatives that have been accomplished since *Vision 2012* was endorsed four years ago, but our work to build a better St. Mary's is never complete. With the full partnership of faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends, I pledge to achieve much more before returning to the classroom.

Most importantly, we will expand financial resources available to our students by increasing scholarship funds. By initiating new strategies to engage our constituents—including through communications and social media—we will engender greater support of the University.

We will continue planned enrollment growth and improve retention and student quality. We will further expand our international reach. We will persist in revitalizing the neighborhoods surrounding St. Mary's, guided by a comprehensive strategic plan. We will create more institutes to augment student learning and outstanding teaching.

In addition, we will improve facilities on our campus by developing a campaign to build a new science complex, renovating St. Louis Hall, breaking ground for an outdoor sports complex and completing a residential master plan.

Much remains to be done. It continues to be my great privilege to serve as president of St. Mary's University. I know that, together, we will accomplish much more during my term. I then look forward to remaining an active and engaged part of the St. Mary's community as an alum, teacher and colleague.





Short Subjects

Carnegie Foundation Recognizes St. Mary's Service

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has recognized St. Mary's University's dedication to service learning and community collaboration by selecting the University for the prestigious Community Engagement Classification.

The classification is granted to colleges and universities with an institutional focus on community engagement, and was first offered in 2006 as part of a restructuring of The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Schools that wish to participate submit extensive documentation describing the nature and breadth of their engagement with the community at the local, national or international levels. The Foundation's classifications are intended to address elements of institutional mission and distinctiveness that are not represented in the national data on colleges and universities. *(Read feature on page 8.)*

EPA Administrator Discusses Environmental Justice

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson visited the St. Mary's campus on Friday, Jan. 28, with a message to students about addressing environmental challenges.

"America's young people are stepping up to face some of the greatest challenges of our time. Here at St. Mary's, I see hardworking students who want to find innovative solutions to our future challenges, who are learning how to create those solutions and make them into careers, and who are thinking about how to pass that on to the next generation," Jackson said, during a forum with about 150 students. With her was Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chair and St. Mary's University alumnus, U.S. Rep. Charlie Gonzalez (J.D. '72).

The agency selected St. Mary's as one of its stops on a two-day environmental justice tour. The tour was part of the administrator's initiative to highlight the impact of environmental issues on communities throughout the country.

As head of the EPA, Jackson leads the agency's efforts to protect the health and environment for all Americans. She and her staff work across the nation to address health threats from pollution in our air, water and land, utilizing science and law.

She praised St. Mary's outreach programs, such as Fiesta of Physics, which strive to interest young people in science.

St. Mary's Hosts City Visioning Session

What do you want San Antonio to look like in 2020? What do you love about San Antonio?

In a unique civic engagement opportunity, St. Mary's students, faculty and staff—along with citizens from throughout the city—were encouraged to voice their opinions at a gathering of SA2020, a community-wide project to determine what San Antonio's citizens want for the city's future. Led by Mayor Julián Castro, the goal of SA2020 is to create achievable goals to make San Antonio a leading city in the next 10 years.

On the December evening, nearly 800 participants gathered in Bill Greehey Arena for the third community forum of SA2020 to discuss what might lie ahead for San Antonio. Thanks to the efforts of Charlotte–Anne Lucas, an adjunct professor in English–communication arts at St. Mary's, the SA2020 forums were live streamed, complete with a chat function that allowed those viewing the events online to post comments and ideas.



Trevor Hall (second from left), Heather Haywood (third from right) and Marion Reilly (far right) beat 25 other teams from across the country for the national championship title.

Moot Court Team Wins National Championship

A St. Mary's moot court team was crowned national champion at the Civil Rights and Liberties Moot Court Competition at Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, adding another title to the St. Mary's advocacy program's impressive résumé.

The team of Trevor Hall, Heather Haywood and Marion Reilly beat out 25 other teams from across the country for the national title. In the final round, the St. Mary's team topped last year's champion, Michigan State University School of Law. Reilly was recognized as Best Brief Writer at the competition for a second straight year. Hall won the Best Advocate Award for the finals round.

The team attributes much of its success to the influence of Coach Ricky Poole (J.D. '90), who has his own law practice in San Antonio.



Marianist Heritage Award Winners Announced

Alfonso de la Torre–Narvarte, who graduated *Summa cum laude* with a quadruple major in economics, international relations, philosophy and mathematics, sits with his fellow graduates during the commencement exercises in December. Torre–Narvarte, a native of Lima, Peru, was awarded the 2011 Marianist Student Leadership Award, which recognizes faithfulness in supporting the Catholic and Marianist education mission. The other three award winners were the Rev. John A. Leies, S.M., St. Mary's president emeritus; Bahman Rezaie, Ph.D., chair of the engineering department and professor of electrical engineering; and Liza Sánchez, media specialist with the Academic Media Center.

WEB extras



Want more news?
Go online!

www.stmarytx.edu/spring_extras

Honoring the Marianist Charism

And the Faculty Award Winners Are...

MARC Gets Two Thumbs Up!

Journey of Hope Leads to Death Penalty Examination

Pennsylvania Elects a Governor Who's a Rattler

HAPCOA Award Goes to Alum and Former Ambassador

It's a Match for St. Mary's Future Doctors and Dentists

St. Mary's Ranks 4th in Hispanic Law Degrees

The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine has ranked St. Mary's University School of Law fourth in the nation for educational institutions conferring the most law degrees on Hispanics.

The magazine named the Top 25 schools that award the most degrees to Hispanic law students. The University of Texas topped the list, with The University of Miami and American University tied for the second position, and St. Mary's tied for fourth place with Florida International University and Saint Thomas University.

St. Mary's is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) that is, on average, the second highest law school in the state for minority enrollment.

The *Hispanic Outlook* information is based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data.

E-Scholars Win Big at National Competition

St. Mary's undergraduate students and the Algur H. Meadows Center for Entrepreneurial Studies won three first-place awards at the Collegiate Entrepreneur Organization's National Conference in November.

Alexandra McCoy, E-Scholar and English major, took first place and \$2,500 in the Elevator Pitch Competition for her business concept. In the competition,

students have 90 seconds (the time of an average elevator ride) to deliver their business ideas. (Read about McCoy on page 22.)

Dyana Garcia, marketing major and E-Scholar, won the award for "Best Student Leader" for her leadership as CEO of Rattler Enterprises, St. Mary's student-managed business in the Bill Greehey School of Business.

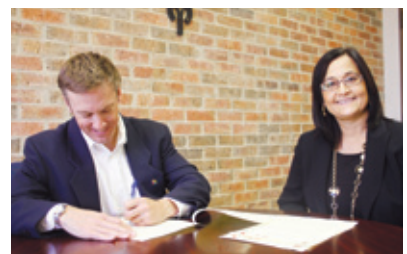
The third award went to the Meadows Center for Entrepreneurial Studies for "Best In-Person Networking Opportunities for Students."

The Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization is the premier global entrepreneurship network, which serves more than 200 universities and thousands of students. Each year, more than 1,600 students attend the national conference, with hundreds competing for these awards.

Alliance Agreement to Benefit All Students

St. Mary's students will benefit from global initiatives and opportunities offered through a new partnership agreement with the Free Trade Alliance Education Foundation, a San Antonio-based not for profit public-private organization.

Students can participate in a variety of educational programs, including mentorships, internships and other networking opportunities. Moreover, the formation of a Free Trade Alliance Future Global Leaders Coalition student group on campus will allow students to prepare business plans for international companies. The agreement was stewarded by Jeffrey Johnson, Ph.D., director of the Center for Global Business Studies in the Bill Greehey School of Business.



Tanuja Singh, Ph.D., dean of the Bill Greehey School of Business (right), sits down with Kyle Burns, president and CEO of the Free Trade Alliance, to sign a new partnership agreement with the Alliance's Education Foundation.

GRADUATION



More than 310 joined the ranks of St. Mary's alumni during the December commencement exercises held in the Alumni Athletics & Convocation Center. Of the 313 graduates, almost 40 percent reported that they had already secured employment by graduation, with more than 90 percent of those staying in Texas. Another 42 percent said they are planning to attend graduate school.



St. Mary's National, State Leader for Women in Science, Engineering

Forbes magazine has named St. Mary's University 15th in the nation and first in Texas for helping women succeed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Forbes' Best Schools for Women listed institutions that are graduating women and minorities with STEM degrees at similar rates to their overall student populations. *Forbes* ranked schools based on how closely their STEM classrooms look like the school's overall population. For example, a school with a 60 percent female and 40 percent male student population would have STEM classrooms that basically mirrored that breakdown.

Data for the lists was collected from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Post-Secondary Education Database (IPEDS). St. Mary's was the only school in Texas included in that list of 20.

"The global community is facing monumental challenges in areas as diverse as energy, healthcare, environmental issues and information security. Universities such as St. Mary's, where all STEM disciplines are housed under a single roof, are well positioned to play a significant role in addressing the challenges that we face today, as well as the ones that we will have to address in the future," said Winston Erevelles, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Science, Engineering and Technology.

"This recognition acknowledges the emphasis that St. Mary's places upon the inclusion of not only women but all minority groups and celebrates the significant contributions they continue to make in the areas of science and technology." Erevelles noted that the priorities for the school include continued emphasis on an environment of academic excellence for all students while increasing diversity in STEM majors, particularly through outreach with the region's youth.

Newsmakers

President Obama Praises Physics Professor



CARDENAS

St. Mary's faculty member Richard Cardenas, Ph.D., has received the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

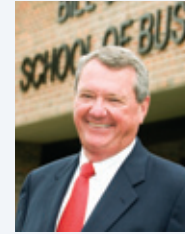
Cardenas traveled to Washington D.C. to receive the award from President Barack Obama. This honor is awarded each year to individuals or organizations in recognition of the crucial role that mentoring plays in the academic and personal development of students studying science or engineering, particularly those students from groups that are underrepresented in these fields.

"These individuals and organizations have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the United States remains on the cutting edge of science and engineering for years to come," President Obama said. "Their devotion to the educational enrichment and personal growth of their students is remarkable, and these awards represent just a small token of our enormous gratitude."

Cardenas, who joined St. Mary's in 2000, is chair of the Department of Physics and Earth Sciences and associate professor of physics. He was one of 11 individuals and four organizations recognized, and will receive \$10,000 to continue his outreach efforts. Cardenas was nominated for a variety of mentoring efforts, both with St. Mary's students and with elementary and secondary students. However, his primary mentoring efforts come through the community outreach programs conducted by the Society of Physics Students and the Fiesta of Physics program, which reaches out to students in low-income areas and introduces them to the fun of science.

Each year, more than 2,500 school children, their families and teachers are part of the various programs offered through Cardenas' outreach efforts.

Greehey Wins Lamar Medal



GREEHEY

On Jan. 26, 2011, St. Mary's alumnus and Chairman of the Board of NuStar Energy, Bill Greehey (B.B.A. '60), was presented with the Lamar Award for serving Texas higher education in an

extraordinary manner. St. Mary's President Charles L. Cotrell, Ph.D., nominated Greehey for the honor.

Greehey has long supported education in South Texas, highlighted by \$25 million gifts to both St. Mary's University (to endow the Bill Greehey School of Business) and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio to create the Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute.

The award is named for Mirabeau B. Lamar, the second President of the Republic of Texas and a staunch supporter of education. The medal was presented to Greehey during the 34th Mirabeau B. Lamar Award Ceremony, which is hosted annually by the state's three sectors of higher education: the Council of Public University Presidents and Chancellors, the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas, and the Texas Association of Community Colleges.

Law Professor Chosen for Prestigious Institute

Michael S. Ariens, St. Mary's School of Law associate dean for the Evening Law Program and professor of law, was recently elected to membership in the American Law Institute (ALI). Widely considered the most prestigious law reform organization in the United States, ALI generates scholarly work to clarify and modernize the law. ALI membership is a distinct professional honor for lawyers, judges and law professors, with the number of members limited to 4,000.

A Constitutional law scholar, Ariens has taught at St. Mary's since 1987 in areas of church and state, American legal history, evidence and Constitutional law. He is a member of the American Society for Legal History, the American Culture Association



ARIENS

and a former program chair of the Association of American Law School's Law and Religion Section. He earned his bachelor's degree from St. Norbert College, his juris

doctorate from Marquette University, and his LL.M. from Harvard University.

Other St. Mary's law faculty who are ALI members include School of Law Dean Charles E. Cantú, Vincent Johnson, Geary Reamey, Bernard Reams and David Schlueter. St. Mary's graduates who are members of ALI are Texas Supreme Court Justice Paul Green, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Barbara Hervey, Fulbright & Jaworski LLP Partner Robert Newman, and Michael S. Goodrich, partner at the firm of Goodrich Postnikoff Albertson & Petrocchi LLP.

Good Deeds

Alumni Form Winning Teams

Thanks to our Winning Teams, St. Mary's is building winning traditions. Through the Campaign for Excellence in Academics and Athletics, alumni have joined together to inspire St. Mary's students and to shape their futures.

Funds raised for Academic Excellence will support existing and new scholarships, and will create professorships to attract and retain the caliber of faculty for which St. Mary's is known.

Support for Athletic Excellence will fund an outdoor sports complex of national stature that will meet the needs of St. Mary's athletes and serve the greater community. When asked why she supports the campaign, Norma Villa Cardenas (B.S. '92) said, "I am grateful not only for the extraordinary education I received, but also for the meaningful relationships and life-long friendships I developed." She adds, "It is time we help St. Mary's write the next chapter of its story."

If you would like to help St. Mary's, please join a Winning Team or start a new one. Visit us on the web at www.stmarytx.edu/winningtraditions.



Chaminade Anniversary Student Scholars Recognized

St. Mary's Trustees (left to right) Harvey Najim, Maj. Gen. Alfred Valenzuela and the Rev. Martin Solma, S.M., present Amanda Chavez with the Chaminade Anniversary Scholarship.

The annual St. Mary's President's Dinner is always a night to remember. Each fall, the President publicly thanks the individuals, corporations, and foundations whose support helps St. Mary's to carry forward its educational mission. This year's dinner offered something special. Made possible by the generosity of University Trustees, a \$2,500 Chaminade Anniversary Scholarship was presented to 11 remarkable undergraduate students.

The recipients, their majors and hometowns, are: Stephanie Annor, biology, Houston; Jake Becerra, history, San Antonio; Lidia Ceniceros, international business and marketing, Phoenix; Amanda Chavez, biology, El Paso; Christopher Childree, political

science, San Antonio, and Caleb Diaz, history, San Antonio. Also receiving scholarships are: Yaritza Flores, political science, San Antonio; Emily Flowers, reading, Helotes; Arthur Furlong, biology, McAllen; Monique Mendoza, mathematics, El Paso, and Jared Selman, criminal justice, Houston.

The scholarship was created in honor of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, the founder of the Society of Mary. Father Chaminade, whose life and formation was shaped in part by the tumultuous and violent years of the French Revolution, called for Marianist institutions to educate for formation in faith, to work for justice and peace, and to be a force of positive change in the world.

Sports Corner

Former Volleyball Coach Named to Hall of Fame

Former St. Mary's University volleyball Coach Laura Neugebauer Groff was recently named to the San Antonio Sports Hall of Fame. She was part of a five-member Class of 2011.

Neugebauer Groff (M.A. '96) guided the Rattlers to remarkable success during her eight seasons at the helm from 1993-2000, posting an .805 winning percentage en route to claiming 256 victories. The Rattlers made three national tournament appearances and posted single-digit-loss campaigns in five of her years at the school.

She was an All-American volleyball player at the University of Texas, where she led the Longhorns to four Southwest

Conference Championships. She also played professional volleyball for two years. Neugebauer Groff, who majored in educational leadership at St. Mary's, currently coaches at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Men's Golf Receives Another Academic Honor

The St. Mary's men's golf team was once again honored as one of the nation's finest academically.

Golf Coaches Association of America recently recognized the Rattlers as one of the outstanding academic golf programs in NCAA Division II for the 2009-10 school year. St. Mary's, which had to maintain a team grade-point average of 3.0 or higher, won the association's national academic championship in men's golf in 2009.



Jones Goes Overseas to Play Pro Ball

Rachel Jones became the first St. Mary's women's basketball player on record to go on to play professional basketball.

Jones, a point guard who last played for the Lady Rattlers in 2008-09 and graduated *Magna cum laude* in 2010 with a business degree, recently signed with the Hapoel Tel Aviv (Tel Aviv, Israel) of the Euroleague-Israeli League Division 1.

"This is such a blessing and it's definitely a dream come true," said Jones, a native of Little Rock, Ark. "I'm very excited and I'm working hard to make the most of this opportunity."

Jones averaged 12.2 points, 6.3 rebounds and 4.0 assists as a senior with the Lady Rattlers, helping lead them to a 24-5 record. She ranks fifth in program history with an average of 3.5 assists over 58 games. For her career at St. Mary's, she averaged 10.7 points and 5.9 rebounds.

Diaz, Hernandez Named All-Region

Soccer players Joseph Diaz and Carolina Hernandez were named to the Daktronics Inc. South Central Region men's and women's teams following successful senior campaigns.

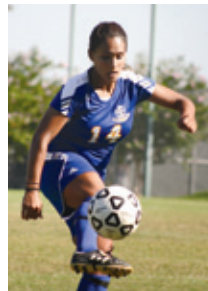
Diaz, a biology major from San Antonio, also was named to the ESPN Academic All-District team for maintaining a 3.88 grade-point average.

Hernandez, a native of El Paso, led the women's soccer program to its first 10-win season since 2006. She scored a team-high eight goals to go along with two assists, good enough for her to also be named to the All-Heartland Conference first team.

Hernandez also recorded just the ninth hat trick in school history, netting three goals in a 3-0 blanking of Texas A&M International University last September.



DIAZ



HERNANDEZ

Meyer Inducted into Heartland Hall of Fame



MEYER

Retired St. Mary's men's basketball Coach Buddy Meyer Jr. (B.A. '65) was inducted by unanimous vote of university presidents into the Heartland Conference Hall of Fame. Meyer was the head coach at St. Mary's for 27 years (1978-2005).

He served as the athletics director at the school for 21 years, including during the transition period from NAIA to NCAA Division II.

Meyer is also a member of the St. Mary's University Athletics Hall of Fame, the NAIA Hall of Fame, and the San Antonio Sports Hall of Fame.

McCarver's MVP Season Fueled Magical Year in Volleyball



All playoff talk came to a screeching halt when the Lady Rattlers' record dipped to 6-13 midway through this past volleyball season. But that only served to make what they ended up achieving all the more remarkable.

Behind senior setter Kori McCarver's (No. 8, pictured at left) award-winning season, St. Mary's won the Heartland Conference Tournament championship for the first time since 2000 and qualified for the regional tournament for the first time since 1998—all in Jenny Warmack-Chipman's first year coaching the team.

McCarver also was named the Heartland Conference's Most Valuable Player after a season in which she averaged 8.13 assists, 2.25 digs and 1.66 kills.





Mission in Action: More than 600 members of the St. Mary's community participated in this spring's Continuing the Heritage day of service.

St. Mary's Earns Prestigious Carnegie Classification

President guides University through comprehensive self-study that leads to national recognition

by Jennifer Speed, Ph.D., Director of Foundation Relations

During the first week of 2011, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching announced that St. Mary's had been awarded its coveted Community Engagement Classification.

This prestigious recognition publicly celebrates the University's ongoing commitment to service and engagement as an integral part of our educational mission. At St. Mary's, academic excellence, leadership development, and experiential learning are inseparable from a commitment to working for the common good and the pursuit of justice and peace. University President Charles L. Cotrell, Ph.D., talks about this Carnegie Classification and what it means for St. Mary's.

Speed: St. Mary's recently announced that it was awarded a special Carnegie designation. Why is this significant for St. Mary's?

Cotrell: The Community Engagement Classification underscores why a St. Mary's education is distinctive and worthwhile. At St. Mary's, we prepare our graduates to be a transforming presence in the world. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have explicitly called for Catholics to be responsible citizens who engage the world around them and work for change. This designation is a reminder to us and to everyone else that St. Mary's students seek and work for the common good long before they are college graduates. They seek out opportunities for service and community engagement while they are still students. For them, the experience of being a student is one that connects classroom learning with lived experience. Here, community engagement is part of the learning process, because it teaches students how to work with others in

service, to analyze political and social issues, and to enjoin others to work for common remedies to shared problems. Significantly, St. Mary's students see that community engagement and service is modeled by faculty and staff from every department. We don't just talk about the importance of engagement—we live it out as part of our Catholic and Marianist mission.

Speed: What is the Community Engagement Classification and how did St. Mary's earn it?

Cotrell: This new designation is known as an elective designation, that is, it is one that we sought out. This Community Engagement Classification recognizes mutually beneficial cooperation and reciprocity between an institution of higher education and its larger community. The application process was lengthy and rigorous and took months to complete. It required that we study and report on dimensions of community engagement that are part of the St. Mary's culture, its academic life, and its programming. We gathered information about community engagement from individual faculty, from department chairs and deans, and from staff across campus, in order to understand how the entire University community was reaching outside of our classrooms and our campus to be of service in meaningful and lasting ways. We submitted our report to The Carnegie Foundation and they evaluated it over a period of four months.

Speed: St. Mary's has always prided itself on being engaged with and oriented toward a community that is broader than its faculty, staff, students and alumni. How hard was it to prove that to someone else?

Cotrell: The application itself was daunting, there's no doubt about it. The Carnegie Foundation demands information about community engagement from every corner of the University. They want to know what we do to engage our larger community, how we promote that engagement, and how we support it with financial and other resources. We approached it as a learning process and as an opportunity for self-study. In completing the application, we were required to carefully examine our strengths and weaknesses, reflect on our priorities, and think about the ways we not only serve the greater community but also learn from it. Our model of community engagement—and that of The Carnegie Foundation—is based on partnerships and reciprocity. We have to serve and be engaged in a way that is meaningful for everyone, not just for us. Perhaps most importantly, as an institution of higher learning, we have much to offer the community but we have to be open to what we can learn from those whom we serve.

Speed: Were there any surprises that came out of the application process?

Cotrell: Absolutely! Because we had to do such a thorough investigation of community engagement across every department and division of the University, we found that community engagement at St. Mary's is even more dynamic and vibrant than we had imagined. We were overwhelmed at what we learned about the efforts of student leaders, faculty and staff, who engage and are of service to some population—large or small—in our community. We certainly make

community engagement part of our strategic goals and priorities, and those are shaped by our Marianist charism. We celebrate service to others and promote a commitment to the common good. What we saw during the application process, however, revealed that community engagement is really part of the fabric and the soul of St. Mary's.

Speed: Will this Community Engagement designation change anything at St. Mary's?

Cotrell: In some ways, this external designation will help to keep us on our toes. The Carnegie Foundation Classification publicly recognizes and rewards what we already do. But we can't stop there, because we always have room for improvement. We have a moral imperative, as an urban Catholic university in a democracy, to ensure that our students can connect academic and professional excellence with thoughtful citizenship. Because we educate tomorrow's leaders, we must take that imperative seriously.

Speed: Are there many other schools that have this designation?

Cotrell: In fact, very few schools have this designation. Only about seven percent of Carnegie-classified schools have this Community Engagement Classification. The 2010 application process was very competitive. Fewer than half of the schools that applied were actually awarded this designation. St. Mary's is one of only 13 schools in Texas to have this Community Engagement designation, and the only one in South Texas.

Speed: Does St. Mary's have another Carnegie designation?

Cotrell: Indeed we do. In fact, nearly every accredited college and university in the United States (roughly 4,300 schools) has a designation from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Those classifications reflect a college's size, its residential population, whether it is private or public, the type of degrees it offers and some other characteristics. It allows for some comparisons among similarly classified institutions. The basis of those all-inclusive classifications is data that each school submits to the Department of Education, but they don't tell the full story about what makes a particular school distinctive. The Foundation created the Community Engagement Classification to recognize important aspects of institutional mission and action that are not reflected in the national data.

Jennifer Speed, Ph.D., earned a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's University, a master's from Marquette University, and a doctorate from Fordham University before returning to St. Mary's as the University Advancement Director of Foundation Relations. In her position, she is responsible for initiating and managing foundation relationships, representing St. Mary's and its needs to the foundations community, and soliciting funding resources for the University community. She is a Fulbright Scholar (Spain, 2001) and is active as a professional historian.



Above: St. Mary's students make it a day on—not a day off—by participating in San Antonio's Martin Luther King Jr. March. Below: Students, faculty and staff give back to their community during the Continuing the Heritage day of service.





MARC student Chrystal Loya studies tissue cells under a microscope.

The Secret to Their Success

For almost three decades, a St. Mary's program has guided minority students toward high-level research careers

by Gina Farrell, Director of Media Relations

For almost 30 years, a federally funded program with a long name and lofty goals has been quietly helping talented St. Mary's University students find their purpose in research careers toward which they might not otherwise have gravitated. It's called the Minority Access to Research Careers Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research program, and for current students like Chrystal Loya and Perla Rodriguez, and alumni like Vincent Aguirre, M.D., Ph.D., it has been the secret to their success.

"The MARC program served an unbelievably important purpose in my life. It is a wonderful opportunity for the students of St. Mary's and other similar schools to be exposed to the wonders of science—something they might not otherwise be exposed to," said Aguirre, a San Antonio native who earned a combined M.D. and Ph.D. at Harvard University after graduating from St. Mary's in 1992.

Timothy Raabe, Ph.D., himself a biomedical researcher and professor of biology, directs the St. Mary's program, known in short as MARC U-STAR. St. Mary's MARC program is supported with funding from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, within the National Institutes of Health. For the past 27 years, it has produced dozens of St. Mary's students who go on to earn Ph.D.s in areas such as biology, chemistry, biochemistry, physics, and engineering science.

The federal program was started to encourage minorities to consider educational trajectories toward doctoral science research. Raabe noted that because minorities have traditionally been underrepresented at research institutions, this program looks to help reduce that gap. In the program, faculty works with the students to offer research opportunities, specialized courses, seminars and workshops. While the pre-MARC program targets first-

and second-year students, the regular MARC program is for junior- and senior-level undergraduates.

CIMADEVILLA'S VISION

The late Jose Miguel Cimadevilla, Ph.D., a long-time St. Mary's professor, brought MARC to campus in 1983 (and led the program until his death in 2005). Today Raabe continues the work Cimadevilla began, estimating that about half of MARC students will earn doctoral degrees—much greater than the percentage of the regular student population that earns a doctorate.

The program works by making early contact with students who might fit the bill for MARC and whetting their appetite for research. Admission to MARC is competitive, with only six slots (three for juniors and three for seniors), making the pre-MARC training program valuable. It gives interested students a preview of what a research career would involve and a leg up in applying for the six coveted spots.

Current biology major Chrystal Loya believes her experience in the pre-MARC program made the difference for her. Loya had big dreams long before she ever heard of the MARC program, and she came to St. Mary's intending to complete her undergraduate degree and then move on to medical school.

"My freshman year, I had the mindset of becoming a doctor. But I also knew that I had a passion for biology and that I found the mechanisms in molecular biology fascinating," Loya said. After hearing Raabe talk about summer research opportunities as a pre-MARC student, she was hooked. "The idea of working in a lab for the summer seemed interesting, but after completing the summer research for my first time, my interest grew exponentially."

Like Loya, chemistry major Perla Rodriguez came to St. Mary's with a plan for medical school. And like Loya,

her plans changed. Through MARC, Rodriguez has worked in five different labs, including at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research and the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio. "I learned science in the lab that I know wouldn't come across in textbooks," she said. "The MARC program is a great opportunity for me to get ahead of the game. I took advantage of working in different labs to figure out, more or less, what I want to research in grad school."

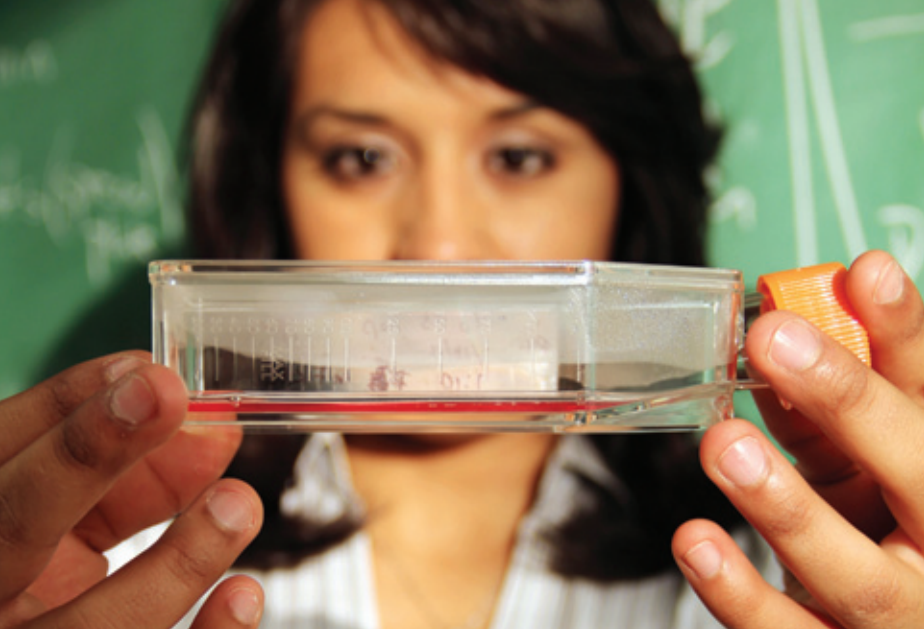
Graduating this May, Rodriguez plans to work toward a Ph.D. in biomedical science, and has applied to six graduate schools with two interviews already scheduled.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

The competitive nature of the MARC program is built not only on the unique undergraduate research opportunities, but also on the financial benefits. Participants receive a significant stipend as well as \$15,000 a year in tuition, to minimize students' financial worries so that they can focus on research.

When Loya graduates, she plans to pursue a doctorate, likely in biochemistry, and then one day become a biology professor herself. In the meantime, Raabe is guiding Loya and the other MARC students on a path that will lead to more educational and professional success. Reflecting on how Raabe's guidance has benefited her, Loya said, "He gives helpful advice, but allows me to make my own decisions. The MARC program means to me education, guidance, experience and opportunity."

Loya was first attracted to St. Mary's because of the University's success in preparing students for medical school. Historically more than half of graduates who apply are admitted to medical and dental schools, well above the national



FRUIT FLIES AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Senior biology major Chrystal Loya is nearing the end of her college career at St. Mary's University. As an undergraduate, she has had many of the typical educational experiences of any St. Mary's student. But she's also had opportunities a bit more out of the ordinary, like picking the brains of fruit fly larvae.

That's right: Loya has basically conducted surgery on a fly larva's brain. When asked just how one goes about such delicate work, Loya matter-of-factly explained that you need a good microscope and some "really sharp tweezers." What might seem out of the ordinary to some has been a matter of course for this El Paso native who started in the pre-MARC program the summer after her freshman year, and then moved into the regular MARC program her junior year.

With the answer to "how?" out of the way, the next question was "why?" Of course, Loya's work on fruit flies' brains was in the name of a good cause. Working with research scientists at the Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio, Loya explored a possible cause at the molecular level of brain tumor formation. In this case, the subject was fruit flies.

In fact, Loya found that the expression levels of one particular binding protein (Musashi RNA) were directly correlated to brain tumor growth by influencing the expression of other genes involved with regulating cell proliferation, the cell cycle, and apoptosis (or programmed cell death). She was recently honored at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) in Charlotte, N.C.,

for her poster presentation on her research titled, "Overexpression of Musashi RNA binding protein in neuroblasts to promote tumor formation in *Drosophila melanogaster*."

While the work at the Cancer Research Institute continues there, she is now on a new project with Veronica Contreras-Shannon, Ph.D., a St. Mary's assistant professor of biological sciences, researching the molecular changes brought on by treating schizophrenia. Loya is looking at what anti-psychotic drugs do to muscle cells that might lead to serious side effects for patients.

She enjoyed her previous research, and said she was lucky to have had such an advanced opportunity so early in her college career, but she wants to explore many different directions for biochemical research. "I wanted to try something different to see if I am interested in other areas as well," Loya said.

The goal of the MARC program is to prepare students for graduate-level research, and that is just what Loya has been doing for two years now. She started in the cancer research lab doing basic preparation work, but by the end of that first summer, she was on her way with her own research project. She said that without the experience of the MARC program, she likely would not have considered graduate school, since medical school had been her first priority.

"Not a lot of people are exposed to this. In high school, they talk a lot about getting you ready for college, but there isn't much said about getting ready for graduate school." Loya added.

In the MARC program, she has discovered her pathway to success.

average of 35 percent. Once she realized her true interest was in research, Loya was pleased to find that St. Mary's offered opportunities like MARC to prepare her for graduate school as well.



The current MARC program students are, front row from left: Tanya Lerma, junior; Chrystal Loya, senior; Justin Haloot, senior; second row: Perla Rodriguez, senior; Daniel Araujo, senior; and Jacklyn Bermudez, junior. MARC Program Director Timothy Raabe, Ph.D., pictured far left.

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN RESEARCH

Winston Erevelles, Ph.D., dean of the St. Mary's School of Science, Engineering and Technology, recognizes the importance of having rigorous and vibrant programs that attract students to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

"It goes without saying that we need to attract more students into STEM careers in order to be competitive as a nation. We also need to do more to address the national imbalance and shortage of minority students in these fields," Erevelles said. He noted that as a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), St. Mary's "is in a key position to attract Hispanic students into STEM careers."

The research process is valuable on a much larger scale—it causes students to explore, to do scientific inquiry and to further develop the profession and the student.

"Research programs such as MARC provide students opportunities to work closely with faculty mentors and delve deeper into a selected topic in the sciences and engineering. In addition to developing a more robust understanding of the subject matter and learning to apply research methodologies, students are exposed to members of the scientific community and get a taste of what research careers entail," Erevelles said.

"While such sustained research is not common for many undergraduate students, for MARC students it is an integral part of their experience at St. Mary's."

→ To read more about current and former MARC students, go to Web Extras online at www.stmarytx.edu/spring_extras

Ratliff Roams Romania



Fulbright Scholar Seeks to Improve Life in Romania

by Lauren Madrid, Web Communications Coordinator

What doesn't Dan Ratliff, Ph.D., know about Romania? A lot. But he knows more right now than when he started his blog called, "Discovering What I Don't Know About Romania," a chronicle of his year teaching at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania as a Fulbright Scholar. His teaching project is titled "Enhancing Social Services for Children and Families in Romania."

Ratliff's journey to Romania actually started with the St. Mary's Spain Semester Program. "My wife, Nancy, was the program director for the program in 2000, and I accompanied her," he said. "We moved our whole family to Madrid and had a wonderful experience." Since then, he's been looking for another opportunity to conduct research and to travel abroad with his family.

As a Fulbright Scholar, Ratliff will continue his research in social services while living in a new place with his family.

In his work as the director of St. Mary's Family Life Center, Ratliff has been involved with efforts to improve social services for children and families in San Antonio. He's applying those skills to teach courses in non-governmental organization (NGO) program development, professional ethics, and techniques of family therapy so that NGOs in Romania can better work together to improve services for children and families.

"In Romania, for the past 10 years, development has focused on governmental advocacy, legislation, external funding and organizational capacity," Ratliff said. "My proposal focuses on 'downstream' development and provides assistance with direct services, outcomes assessment, and developing sustainable partnerships with other organizations."

Ratliff arrived in his new surroundings last September, and he's still trying to get his bearings. Life in Romania is remarkably different from life in the States, and he and his family learn something new every day. Though no longer Communist, there are remnants of the Communist life throughout Romania.

"Bureaucracy is a fact of daily life here. Every transaction with a public institution requires multiple signatures and stamps, which means a lot of waiting in lines," Ratliff said.

The red tape extends to social services in Romania as well, where the structure of services is not standardized like it is in the United States. There, agencies are creating social services from the ground up. This, combined with Romanian bureaucracy, makes for a sometimes frustrating experience.

"Social service agencies must employ one full-time social worker just to take care of all of the reports and forms that the bureaucratic funding agencies require," Ratliff said. "The idea of starting a new

initiative in social services to meet the needs of Romanian society is strangled by the bureaucratic burden."

Not knowing much of the language hasn't kept the Ratliff family from participating in Romanian life. They've traveled around the country, visited museums and attended church services. They're renting an apartment from a retired couple who grow their own produce, a byproduct of the food shortages during the Communist era. The Ratliffs often share meals with this couple, eating traditional Romanian fare. They've introduced their hosts to American food, too, by having a turkey and trimmings for American Thanksgiving.

Even though he's currently abroad, Ratliff is thinking about how his San Antonio students can learn from his experiences. "My students can learn about how all the services to solve human problems can fit together, and how well the services meet the needs of their clients," Ratliff said. "By looking at the big picture of social services in the San Antonio area, we can improve services for children and families."

To follow Dan Ratliff's adventures abroad, read his blog at romaniawhatidontknow.blogspot.com.



Left to Right: Dan Ratliff, U.S. Ambassador Mark H. Gitenstein, Nancy Ratliff and Cami Ratliff.



The Ratliffs wait for the bus in Bucharest.



THE NAME OF THE GAME IS GIVING BACK



Off the courts, Rattlers embody mission in action

by Chad Peters, Sports Information Coordinator

The look on the children's faces said it all.

Cheering every Rattlers' point, dancing along at every break and smiling non-stop, a group of Somali Bantu children looked as if they were being treated to the times of their lives over a pair of St. Mary's volleyball matches last October.

Their many hardships were, momentarily at least, left behind.

Volleyball players and Somali children find common ground

Slaves in their homeland, the children—all girls, ranging from ages 9 to 17—came to Texas as refugees nearly six years ago. Life was rough back home, where several of the kids were said to have witnessed their parents' murders.

Rattlers' junior volleyball player Adrianna Keys heard about their unforgettable story from her fiancé, Jean Michel Yable, who hails from West Africa.

Determined to do something—anything, really—to help these children, Keys established contact with Thomas Rein, a volunteer who had been assisting the kids in their efforts to adjust to American life.



Adrianna Keys,
a biology major,
with Somali Bantu refugees



1, 3 "Operation: Drive to the Basket" could become an annual initiative for the men's basketball team following its first success.

2, 4 The Lady Rattlers hosted their annual "Dig Pink" match last fall to support breast cancer research.

"These kids have been through so much craziness," said Keys, glowing with joy when surrounded by the children following one of those October volleyball matches. "It's so great to see them happy like this, like nothing's wrong. They're amazing."

Keys, you see, figured a night of fun on the volleyball court might lift the kids' spirits. But she didn't stop there. She has been volunteering as a coach for the children's start-up recreational volleyball team, developing quite a bond with the girls along the way. Just weeks into their friendship, several of the girls were already calling Keys "Mom."

Keys says teaching her sport and hanging out with the girls—helping them to adjust to what must surely be an overwhelming situation—is the least she can do.

"It's just another way to get them comfortable and interacting with other people," said Keys, who along with the rest of the Lady Rattlers stayed long after their matches to spend more time with the girls.

But Keys isn't the only member in the St. Mary's Athletics Department making a difference in the community...not by a long shot.

Rattlers keep the spirit of service alive

During their fall season, the entire volleyball team was part of an initiative called "Dig Pink," the name of the breast cancer awareness rally that takes place in gyms all over the country during breast cancer awareness month (October). The goal of "Dig Pink" is to raise funds for research and "living with cancer" organizations. "The 'Dig Pink' event has a good tradition at St. Mary's as well as throughout the volleyball community, and we truly enjoy taking part in it," said volleyball Coach Jennifer Warmack-Chipman, whose squad sold baked goods and raffled off game-worn pink jerseys to benefit the Side-Out Foundation, which sponsors "Dig Pink."

One never has to look too far to find someone whose life has been impacted by

breast cancer, and that certainly holds true with the Lady Rattlers. Assistant Volleyball Coach Gary Payne lost his aunt to cancer in July. "Breast cancer research is an extremely important cause to support," Warmack-Chipman said.

Another coach's brainstorm didn't involve helping save lives—just improving the lives of those who serve to protect each of us on a daily basis. And the idea came to life with the help of Lt. Col. David Guarriello, professor of military science at St. Mary's, and St. Mary's ROTC cadets, especially Susan St. Martin.

"Operation: Drive to the Basket" reaches out to deployed alumni

Men's basketball Assistant Coach Bubba Meyer's service initiative is one that gives back to the troops who are on active duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. By launching "Operation: Drive to the Basket," Meyer and the basketball team helped to raise goods and cash donations for St. Mary's ROTC alumni who are deployed overseas.

"Along with coaching basketball, I teach some exercise science classes," Meyer said. "I've had a bunch of ROTC kids in the past, and there are some of them I still stay in contact with."

"The University's mission is largely based on service, and I don't know what greater service there is than what those young kids are doing, being part of the ROTC program here and then deploying around the globe to take care of all of us back at home."

Each drive brought in hundreds of dollars of donations, at a minimum.

"Operation: Drive to the Basket" coincided with the men's basketball team's home opener last November, with goods collected on campus during the week leading up to the game and a grand fundraising event held during the opener. Care packages containing the accumulated goods were sent to the troops following the game.

Meyer had his basketball players join the St. Mary's Marian Guard for hours in the Diamondback Café on campus, where together they collected donations and spread the word about their cause. Meyer himself even sprinted around campus, hanging posters to advertise the event in the days leading up to the game.

At the game, members of the Marian Guard passed around Kevlar helmets seeking cash donations every time the Rattlers made a 3-pointer. Fortunately, the Rattlers made several that night.

Athletes, ROTC cadets, coaches and military science staff members collected everything from toothpaste to magazines. In all, nearly \$350 in cash was raised at the game, to go along with nine duffle bags that were stuffed with goods to send to deployed Rattlers.

The donations were spread among several St. Mary's ROTC alumni, including: 1st Lt. Barry Johnson-Rivera (B.A. '08), 2nd Lt. Monique Recio Culver (B.A. '09), Capt. Nicole Gonzalez (B.S. '07), 2nd Lt. Robert Vadney (B.A. '09), 2nd Lt. Andres Zermeño (B.A. '08), and 1st Lt. Ricardo Delbrey (B.A. '08), all of whom are stationed in Afghanistan, as well as 1st Lt. Daniel Garcia (B.B.A. '07), who is in Iraq. In addition, "care packages" went to Afghanistan to 1st Lt. Alexandra Brenner, a graduate of University of the Incarnate Word and the St. Mary's ROTC program, as well as 1st Lt. Brian Kemper, a longtime friend of the Rattler Battalion stationed in Afghanistan.

"Operation: Drive to the Basket" was a simple thing we could do to try to raise some money, get some gifts and maybe put smiles on the faces of these courageous young alumni," Meyer said. "I think it's a good start."

"And hopefully anybody hearing about this will take part next year, knowing what a good cause it's going toward."

Putting St. Mary's mission into action: it's become part of the Rattlers' playbook.



FACING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP WITH FAITH

by Valeria Escobedo (B.A. '10)

Editor's note: Valeria Escobedo has seen America's achievement gap first-hand—the inequity in education between groups of students that is often based on socioeconomic factors. Her decision to “Teach for America” has taught her to approach the gap with faith, an open mind and a lot of heart.

“Be sure to have your rough draft completed for homework. See you tomorrow!” Another typical Wednesday in my classroom comes to an end, and the final bell rings in the hallway. As I shut off the overhead projector and arrange 30 copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* on the shelf, it hits me—I am the teacher. Those are my students. How amazing!

STRIVING FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

At St. Mary's University, I majored in English language arts and reading with certification to teach grades 8-12. I even had a successful 15 weeks of student teaching at O'Connor High School, part of San Antonio's Northside Independent School District.

One year ago, I paced back and forth in my dorm room, anxiously reviewing my applications for two well-known and recognized teaching programs: Teach for America and The Alliance for Catholic Education. I researched both programs and planned to submit the applications simultaneously in hopes of getting responses at the same time. After saying a prayer, I clicked “submit” and off they went—two possible outcomes for the beginning of my professional life.

Why did I apply to these teaching programs when I was getting ready to

teach anyway? I became interested in The Alliance for Catholic Education because of its partnership with another Catholic school, Notre Dame University. After attending St. Mary's, I was drawn to the idea of teaching academics and faith side-by-side.

Teach for America, on the other hand, captured my interest for two reasons: I knew two friends from high school who were part of it, and I was drawn to its mission of closing the achievement gap and bringing educational equity to students all over the country.

In the end, I took Teach for America's offer because I could be part of the San Antonio Charter Corps—the city's very first Teach for America group in the same city in which I studied education and did my student teaching. What better transition into the professional world than building on an existing foundation? Even though

I chose Teach for America, I figured I could exhibit my faith in either program by helping children that need the most guidance. With Teach for America, I felt like I would be able to become a teacher and make a difference.

All Teach for America corps members attend regional induction ceremonies and then integrate with other regions at a teacher-training institute. It was "at institute," as most corps members refer to it, in Houston that I truly understood what it meant to be part of such a dedicated program.

I arrived at institute knowing that I had more familiarity with the teaching world than other corps members did because I had already completed student teaching. However, what I learned there was essential to the way I see teaching today; it is actually difficult to envision my teaching without it.

The sense of urgency and the idea that effective action must be taken now in order to close the terrifying achievement gap was prevalent throughout my teacher training. In other words, the education background I gained from St. Mary's, coupled with the inspirational talks from Teach for America leaders, morphed into the most clear and meaningful reason for why I teach.

CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR GOALS

Eighteen weeks of teaching later, I realize how up close and personally I face the achievement gap every day. I teach English to freshmen at Lanier High School in the San Antonio Independent School District and am responsible for 130 students. Our school is located in the heart of the city, the pride of the west side. Ninety-nine percent of our students are Hispanic, most at risk of not graduating. Some of my students have been held back a grade or two, and some have just recently been released from a juvenile detention center. A few of my students are expecting a child and some are already parents.

I teach a wide variety of students, but all are welcome in my classroom, no matter from what walks of life they come. The majority of my students want to learn, are eager to understand what English class is all about, and want to be the very first in their family to graduate from high school and go to college.

Ms. Olivas and Coach Betancourt were those special mentors for me when I attended Hanks High School in El Paso. During my undergraduate years, Teacher Education Professors Daniel Higgins, Ph.D., and Barry Crist, Ed.D., inspired me as I asked thousands of questions about teaching. And a trio of English professors—

TEACHING

is by far one of the most challenging careers in our society. ”

They ask me, "Ms. Escobedo, why did you leave O'Connor High School and come teach here? That school's all nice!" I tell them, "I came to Lanier to teach students like you, because you are very much like me. We come from similar backgrounds and have some of the same goals. I'm here because I want to help you reach those goals, no matter what."

Everyone at our campus tries their very best to help our students succeed, no doubt about that. New administration at Lanier High School is implementing favorable changes that are slowly but surely benefiting our school's learning environment and student body.

TEACHING WITH PASSION AND AN OPEN HEART

In my new career as a teacher, I have already learned that teaching is a life-changing experience. Teachers often choose the profession because of a great teacher they had who left a strong impression, making them desire to repeat the same

pattern. Brother Fred Halwe, S.M., Melissa Scully and Kathleen Maloney, Ph.D.—were so passionate about their subject, it often made me wonder how much knowledge could possibly fit into a human body.

Teaching is by far one of the most challenging careers in our society. It requires much time, dedication and heart. I plan to continue teaching at Lanier in hopes that the more students I teach, the more opportunities I will have to convince them that they, too, have the capability to not only set goals, but to actually accomplish them. A teacher once gave me this same piece of advice—needless to say, I took it.

El Paso native Valeria Escobedo graduated Magna cum laude from St. Mary's in May 2010. While a student, she kept active in SEAL (Student Educators Association for Leadership) and was a President's Ambassador for three years. Although she teaches 130 students at Lanier, she still finds time to coach junior varsity tennis at the high school.

IT'S "TAKS" SEASON: Valeria Escobedo preps her ninth-grade English students for the TAKS test in her classroom at Lanier High School.



Reflections



Sister Ann Semel, S.S.N.D., Ph.D., retired at the end of the fall semester. A fixture at St. Mary's for 43 years, by her own account she'd taught some 10,000 students, maybe more. We've picked three of them to reflect on her influence on their lives.



THE MATRIARCH OF OUR COMMUNICATIONS FAMILY

by Ken Slavin (B.A. '83)



Ken Slavin

I can't imagine St. Mary's without Sister Ann. She was the first teacher I met when I enrolled as a freshman in 1979. I can still picture her standing in the broiling August sun as we lined up outside the Life Sciences Building, waiting to register. Despite the heat and the crowd, Sister Ann was unflappable. Having attended Catholic schools much of my life, I was used to "take charge" nuns who seemed larger than life. That's how Sister Ann seemed to me—minus the habit, of course.

I majored in English-communication arts—a fairly new degree program and the only one of its kind in the nation. Sister Ann was the creator, adviser and key instructor. In those days, there were few "EA" majors on campus. We felt like a small family with Sister Ann as its matriarch.

She had high standards and expected the same from her students. But she also knew how to balance those expectations with kindness and fairness—and an occasional firm "nudge" when necessary. She was never a pushover.

I was often overly committed to extracurricular activities, and occasionally missed a writing deadline or didn't do as well as I should have on a test. She gave me leeway when I needed it, but always firmly and fairly graded me—sometimes to my dismay. Once she allowed me to turn in a paper a day or two past deadline. I got a "B-minus" on it. She said, "Ken, this should have been an 'A.'" But that would be unfair to those who were on time." She was right.

More than once, she told me, both in red ink and face-to-face: "You can do better than this." Right again.

Sister Ann taught me to appreciate literature both as an art form and as a pathway to critical thinking and analysis. Her soft-spoken lectures were quiet performances. She pulled you in until you were completely absorbed in the subject and, before you knew it, you had actually learned something of importance.

She was also a pragmatist. That's why she created the English-communication arts degree. She wanted English majors to have marketable skills. So we studied business, advertising, journalism, TV and radio production, and more. Her Career Seminar is legendary and became a model for other universities around the country.

After graduation, Sister Ann often invited me to speak to her classes. I couldn't possibly say "no" to a woman who helped me so much and taught me so well. Over the years, we became true friends. I will always cherish that friendship.

Ken Slavin owns his own public relations consulting business and is a professional jazz singer. He lives in San Antonio and is an active alum of the University, having served on the Alumni Association Board of Directors and as a volunteer for various activities.

Slavin's photo courtesy of Oscar Williams

AN ICON RETIRES

Semel created a first-of-its-kind communications degree

TEACHER, MENTOR, FRIEND

by *Lucinda Vela-Wick* (B.A. '83, M.A. '88)



Lucinda Vela-Wick

When I think of Sister Ann Semel, from a first introduction in 1980 as my professor, to the time of her recent retirement, I recall each time she influenced my life and the lives of so many others.

I have read that a teacher is someone who envisions what can be accomplished, not what cannot be achieved. This is what gives Sister Ann the timeless reputation among her former students of being “tough, but the best professor

I ever had.” A favorite class for many of us was Career Seminar—a course for communications students with the goal of preparing them for employment and career development. Now I have the pleasure of teaching this course at St. Mary’s, still sharing what I learned years ago from the pro. Regardless of the advances of technology, some things are essential in our careers: professionalism, communication skills, ethics and commitment. They are at the core of what Sister Ann taught her students, and they remain constant through the text and curriculum she wrote for Career Seminar (and that are still used today).

Sister Ann becomes a mentor during our college years and remains so, even as we leave St. Mary’s. For me, she would clip want ads from the newspaper that “matched my skills” and call after I graduated to keep track of my career. One of those calls brought me back to St. Mary’s as an admission counselor for a few years. And then, the mentor proclaimed me a mentor by inviting me to join her Career Seminar class as a “communications professional in the real world.” Once again, Sister Ann was teaching us, this time on how to be good mentors.

Her famous red beans and rice. Na’wllins. Party at Sister Ann’s. “Cook it and they will come,” and we did, time after time. You were always welcome, whether they were departmental gatherings, graduation celebrations, special masses led by Father John Rechten, S.M., art showings that changed her home into a gallery of inspiration, or even just private conversations with her. Sister Ann befriends for life.

At one of her retirement parties, I heard her say she enjoyed math in college and could have pursued that field of teaching. Selfishly, I’m glad she didn’t. I can’t fathom the English-Communications Arts Department without Sister Ann. I can’t picture my life without her. She has created a legacy for future students, and although they may not have the opportunity to meet her, they sure will know her through all of us.

An adjunct professor at St. Mary’s University, Lucinda also owns her own product development and marketing business, Create2Market and is a partner in Green River Pet, a manufacturer of organic, eco-friendly pet products.

THE PROTAGONIST OF A TRANSCENDENTAL STORY

by *Twister Marquiss* (B.A. '97)



Twister Marquiss

The one class I remember taking with Sister Ann Semel, American Transcendentalism, might make for an apt title for any piece reflecting on her influence in my life—as a student, scholar, and today as a college English instructor. She took the subject matter far beyond the transcendental notion that divinity pervades all nature and humanity, such as we saw in the works of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. In fact, in the challenges she posed to us as students, she applied what seemed to be philosophical

transcendentalism: the idea that in order to understand the nature of reality, one must first examine the nature of experience.

It’s that “experience” that led me to where I am.

Sister Ann became my adviser when I changed my major to English. She guided me through personal rough patches and academic logjams. She pushed me toward grad school and she directed my thesis, which included some of my earliest substantial fiction writing.

She also provided a role model in the classroom: her exceptional knack for shepherding discussion of texts always led to new discoveries and insights and opened class to more insightful dialogues. I try to employ a similar discussion method in teaching my own courses at Texas State University by establishing a catalyst and then steering class discussion. I can only hope that some of my own students are getting as much from the course as I gleaned from Sister Ann.

There was, of course, another connection from Sister Ann to where I now stand. In 1997, she introduced me to Scott Blackwood and Gene Browning. Scott was a coordinator at the St. Mary’s Learning Assistance Center and Gene was an adjunct faculty member in the English Department. Both were recent graduates of the MFA program in creative writing at Texas State (then Southwest Texas State). Gene helped kick-start my fiction writing, and Scott became the mentor who guided me from small workshops to an MFA program. In 2002, I completed my own MFA in creative writing (fiction) at Texas State, where I have been a literary editor and program faculty member in English ever since.

So, it was Sister Ann who guided me—sometimes directly, sometimes by causality—to this point in my academic life. Her retirement reminds me of her profound impact, not only on myself but on scores of other students as well. For many of us, she will always be the protagonist of a transcendental story.

In addition to teaching English at Texas State University, Twister Marquiss is assistant editor for three journals: Southwestern American Literature, Texas Books in Review, and The Journal of Texas Music History. His fiction has appeared in Narrative Magazine, Callaloo, Carve Magazine, South Dakota Review, and elsewhere.



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SNOW DAY

Almost two inches of snow blanketed the campus on Friday, Feb. 4, 2011, giving St. Mary's students, faculty and staff an unexpected holiday. The flurries weren't much compared to the 14 inches that fell in 1985, but they were enough to make some Texas-sized snowmen.



Thanks to Brother Dennis Bautista, S.M., Shari Biediger, Austin Newton and Cassandra Stefanovic for the fun photos!



▲ 1985 | 2011 ▼

