A Day that Changed her Life

When Laura Mellody '02 was “teacher for a day” along with her eighth-grade classmates at St. Mary of Mount Carmel School, Dunmore, she never suspected it was a day that would change her life.

“I was selected to teach the first grade class,” she explains. “I loved teaching the students, helping the ones who needed a little extra attention, and seeing their smiling faces glowing with pride. It was unforgettable.”

That day inspired Ms. Mellody to become a teacher. A real life role model – her dad, Anthony F. Mellody ‘81 – influenced her decision to return to The University of Scranton to pursue a master’s degree and follow in his footsteps after earning her bachelor’s degree in elementary education.

“I had such a great four years attending The University of Scranton that when I decided to return to school, I knew no other school would be better for me than Scranton,” says M’s. Mellody, who is pursuing a graduate degree in school counseling.

Her decision to attend the University was based not only on its academic reputation, but also because “it’s somewhat of a family tradition,” she said. In addition to her father being a University alum, her two older sisters, Maurya Mellody Carr ‘97 and Sarah Mellody Shedlauskas ‘99, are proud Scranton graduates.

Now employed as a sixth-grade teacher at Northeast Intermediate School, Ms. Mellody found that upon graduation, she is truly “real world ready,” and uses what she learned in the University’s classrooms every day.

“Being able to work in a public school immediately following graduation, I was able to see firsthand the benefits of attending Scranton. I was prepared, confident, and ready to handle any obstacle I may face.”

And though there are obstacles for both M’s. Mellody and her students, she knows she can help them through her dedication.

“I know that some of my students may not have the best family life at home, but being their teacher, I can provide security, support, and friendship to them even if only for those few hours a day,” she says.
A Formula For Award-winning Teaching

Students in Vincent Pricci's Geometry classes at Abington Heights High School, Clarks Summit, get lessons in history, as well as in geometric formulas and calculations.

Ninth- and tenth-grade students enrolled in Mr. Pricci's Honors Geometry classes are likely to study the history of the Pythagorean Theorem. Students might also learn about a definition of pi (π) that can be traced to the Bible in I Kings and II Chronicles.

Weaving a bit of history into Geometry classes gives students a competitive edge in solving complex problems, according to Mr. Pricci. In Geometry, as in life, solving the problem is easier if you understand its history, as Mr. Pricci points out.

"If students understand what they're learning, they're more likely to grasp the concept," he says.

This novel approach to teaching has gained Mr. Pricci the nod of approval from students in Abington Heights High School, where he has taught Geometry, Algebra II, and Basic Math since graduating from the University in 2000.

He's also earned local and statewide recognition. In his first year out of the gate, the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics selected Mr. Pricci to receive the Lee Boyer Award for the most outstanding first year math teacher in Pennsylvania. In 2003, Mr. Pricci was honored by the senior class by being selected as the commencement speaker at Abington Heights High School. And, in May, when Mr. Pricci received his master's degree in School Administration from the University of Scranton, he was honored with the Outstanding Graduate Award in Education.

Those who know Mr. Pricci will tell you that he's not in it for the awards. He's most at home in his classroom, where geometric shapes, created by students as a freshman Geometry project, hang from the ceiling, and where posters provide interesting facts about math and Geometry. They aren't just adornments or props. It's all part of creating an environment that's conducive to learning.

"You have to foster a comfortable classroom environment where kids aren't afraid to make mistakes," says Mr. Pricci. "You want them to learn – but you want them to have fun in the process."

Students in Mr. Pricci's classes have a collegial approach to learning. "They take care of one another, and they help each other."

Mr. Pricci says the reward of teaching comes from watching students work and learn together – and in helping a student who might be struggling with a concept to finally "get it." The challenge is in keeping up with the demands of teaching, grading papers and creating lesson plans. But that, says Mr. Pricci, is the way it should be – for teachers and students.

"If it's easy it gets boring."
William V. Rakauskas, Ed.D.
Professor of English
The University of Scranton

Teaching Means “Learning Twice”

Not everyone can say, “I love my job.”

But William V. Rakauskas, Ed.D., Professor of English at The University of Scranton, can—and does, emphatically.

“I love teaching,” he says. “Teaching means ‘learning twice.’ For me, it means never to stop learning.”

Dr. Rakauskas joined the University’s faculty in 1969 after seven years as a high school teacher in the Scranton public school system.

During his career at the University, he worked with English education students as their Director of Student Teaching.

There have been many changes during those years, and most of them have been positive.

“Students come to the University better prepared than ever before,” he says. “I find most of them very motivated, and I find all of them serious about completing their degrees. The students seem very willing to work to achieve their goals.”

One such student is Dawn Mizwinski ’86 G’04, an adjunct professor of English at Lackawanna College.

(See story on pg. 15.)

“Dawn is perhaps one of the best all-around students I have had the pleasure of teaching,” says Dr. Rakauskas. “In several undergraduate courses, Dawn did exceptional work, and as a graduate student she impressed me with her creativity, personal motivation, command of the language and her willingness to work hard to shape her career. She also wrote one of the best master’s theses that I have directed.”

Most of all, Dr. Rakauskas says that he enjoys following his students from their work in class to their tenure as student teachers.

“I found it very rewarding to see my students apply what they learned in my classroom to what they are now doing in their own classrooms,” he said. “I wish I could continue teaching for 40 more years. No other profession offers so much satisfaction.”

Dr. Rakauskas says that Dawn Mizwinski ’86, G’04 is one of the best all-around students he’d had the pleasure of teaching in his 35 years at the University.

Thomas Flanagan says he hopes to influence his students in the same way his University teachers influence him.

High School in Washington, D.C., he’s been teaching at Gonzaga Prep in Washington since 1998, and teaches philosophy occasionally as an Adjunct Professor at Gonzaga University.

When Mr. Flanagan came to the University from Connecticut, he found a ready-made family in his professors and classmates.

“It was not just a university but a loving faith community,” he says.

Mr. Flanagan names as his favorite teachers Joseph T. Evans, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Biology, Martin Appleton, Ph.D., of the Chemistry Department, the late Rev. Edward Gannon, S.J., University Professor, and Rev. Donald Pantle, S.J., Instructor of Spanish and German, Spiritual Director for Women Faculty, Staff and Students, Counselor of St. Ignatius Retreat Movement for Students and Alumni, and Counselor at Spanish House. What he learned from them went beyond the classroom.

“They showed me that true happiness comes from serving God by not hiding your gifts and feeling free to be who God has called you to be,” he says.

Mr. Flanagan hopes to influence his students in the same way his University teachers influenced him. He has already seen some positive effects.

“Many students have told me that they are going into fields of science because I helped them not only realize how exciting it is but also to know that they could do it!” he says.

“I have helped them to see their own potential. And that makes my life worthwhile.”

Thomas V. Flanagan ’82, G’95
Chemistry Teacher
Gonzaga Preparatory School, Spokane, Wash.

Helping Students to See Their Own Potential

Just about every day, you can read negative stories in the press about today’s youth.

But chemistry teacher Thomas V. Flanagan ’82, G’95 describes his students at Gonzaga Preparatory School in Spokane, Wash., as talented and thoughtful, with much good to contribute society.

And it’s his mission to help them stay that way.

“My main motivation in teaching is that I may help them see themselves as a good and loving person before God, and if I can do that, then I might change the world for the good,” says Mr. Flanagan, a Spokane resident.

When it comes to Jesuit ideals, Mr. Flanagan speaks from the heart. He earned his bachelor’s degree in biology and master’s degree in biochemistry at The University of Scranton before heading to law school and then to the seminary. He spent two of his eight years with the Jesuits teaching chemistry and biology at Gonzaga College Preparatory School.

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Dr. Rakauskas says that Dawn Mizwinski ’86, G’04 is one of the best all-around students he’d had the pleasure of teaching in his 35 years at the University.
Dawn Mizwinski '86, G'04
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
Lackawanna College, Scranton

Sharing her Love of Literature

For Dawn Mizwinski '86, G'04, teaching seemed to be the natural choice for a career. “I decided to become a teacher in high school,” she says. “I realized how much I loved literature and grammar. It seemed that by becoming a teacher, I could easily share my love of the subject matter.”

A professor of English at Scranton’s Lackawanna College, the West Scranton native majored in secondary English education at The University of Scranton. “The English program was structured so well, and the faculty and staff were so friendly and caring,” Ms. Mizwinski says of her experience. “As an undergraduate, it was exciting to be at a school with professors who shared their professional research and expertise.”

One such professor is William Rakauskas, Ed.D., Professor of English.

In fact, she claims “Dr. Rakauskas is the reason I am the teacher that I am today. He molded me into the teacher I am today by showing me the importance of organization and planning, teaching me to have fun with lessons, and allowing me the freedom to experiment.”

“He is not afraid to experiment, and he is always open to new ideas,” says Ms. Mizwinski of Dr. Rakauskas. “I always try to enter my classroom with the same open-mindedness that Dr. Rakauskas has. He has been teaching for many years, but his approach is always fresh.”

Ms. Mizwinski returned to the University’s classrooms as a graduate student in 1999. She found attending the Graduate School to be as pleasant an experience as her undergrad classes. Earning her master’s degree in English in May, she received the award for Outstanding Graduate Student for the Humanities.

“Having had such a positive experience as an undergraduate at The University of Scranton, I never even considered going to another school,” she says. “As a graduate student, I’m constantly challenged and stimulated. Many of the professors that were teaching at the school when I attended in the mid-1980s were still teaching when I returned in 1999, and I loved that comfort level.”

Dawn Mizwinski credits William Rakauskas, Ed.D., Professor of English, with making her the teacher that she is today.

Ronald McKinney, S.J., Ph.D.
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
AND DIRECTOR OF THE SJLA PROGRAM

“In my 20 years as Director of the Special Jesuit Liberal Arts Program, I’ve had the opportunity to see freshmen transform into profoundly different people. Through SJLA, students come to see that it’s not just about getting the grades. Helping students to see things differently… challenging their status quo way of looking at life… these are the great privileges of teaching.”
A Scranton Tradition of Teaching

Some teachers will tell you that their career choice was influenced by another teacher. Others will tell you that the influence came from a parent. Chris Benestad will tell you that the career inspiration came from both teacher and parent—and that they are one and the same.

“I still remember what my father said to me once: ‘I would do this even if I didn’t get paid.’ Those words have stuck with me ever since,” says Mr. Benestad, who teaches math and economics at Saint John’s High School in Shrewsbury, Mass.

The father who spoke these words to his son is J. Brian Benestad, Ph.D., Professor of Theology at The University of Scranton. For his own part, Dr. Benestad says he was inspired to become a teacher by two of his professors at Assumption College.

“They showed me the joy of learning,” says Dr. Benestad. “They also persuaded me that good teaching makes a significant contribution to the common good.”

Dr. Benestad, who has been teaching at the University for 28 years, says that in order to be a good teacher “you must know your subject, keep learning and love introducing students to the world of knowledge and of service to the common good.”

Dr. Benestad and his wife, Janet, who taught history and philosophy as a part-time professor at the University for 15 years and is now Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Scranton, instilled in their children that education is opportunity. To this end, Chris recalls another piece of advice from his father. “With a good education, I would create my own opportunities and doors would open.”

His wife, Kelly Myers Benestad, also a 1999 graduate of the University, also made the transition to teaching from another academic major—in Kelly’s case, political science. “I knew that I wanted to work in a profession where I would play a part in shaping the minds of the students of the future,” says Mrs. Benestad. “Secondly, I wanted to work in a profession where I would be able to continue my interest and love for history.”

She found both when she accepted a position to teach 11th and 12th grade history at West Boylston High School, in West Boylston, Mass.

Chris and Kelly have carried with them into their classrooms the teaching methods and influences of several Scranton professors. Chris cites the influences of Susan Mathews, Ph.D., Professor of Theology, and Steven Dougherty, Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics. “I use their teaching methodologies almost daily in my classroom,” he says.

Kelly points to Michael DeMichele, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of History, Robert Hueston, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, and Roy Domenico, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, “just to name a few.”

“Whether I had them as professors once or a handful of times, I often reflect upon what I learned in my history courses at Scranton while I am preparing for my own classes,” she says.

Both Chris and Kelly agree that while teaching may look like “the ultimate schedule,” it is often a difficult one. When the teaching day ends, they need to tend to class preparation, department agendas, student activities and, in Chris’s case, coaching responsibilities. Still, the rewards outweigh the challenge.

“Witnessing a student learn something that she had difficulty with, watching a student grow over the years, and connecting with the students are the reasons why I get into my car at the end of the day with a smile on my face,” says Kelly.

The Benestad family is one where teaching has become a tradition. From left: Chris Benestad ’99, Kelly Myers Benestad ’99 and J. Brian Benestad, Ph.D.
Taking Students Where They Want to Be

"Had I not served as a Jesuit Volunteer in Kathmandu, my life would be very different."

Robert Murphy says that living in Nepal where he was not fluent in the native language taught him a great deal about teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). It also allowed him the opportunity to see Mt. Everest.

"I know how my students feel at times. I lived it," says the ESL teacher, who earned his bachelor's degree from the University in 1990.

Mr. Murphy says that teaching English in Nepal was such an "amazingly rewarding experience" that it prompted him to dedicate his professional career to working with non-native English-speaking students.

After completing a master's degree in linguistics and bilingual education at Georgetown University, he decided to continue working internationally, first in Istanbul, Turkey, and then on the island of Kwajalein in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In 2000, he returned to the United States to accept a job with the Maryland State Department of Education. But he quickly realized that office work wasn't where he excelled.

"I missed teaching. I missed spending time with students. I missed how they enriched my life."

He returned to the classroom, teaching English as a Second Language at Francis C. Hammond Middle School in Alexandria, Va., Public Schools, where he was recently awarded the Agnes Meyer Award for Excellence in Education by the Washington Post. Nearly 40 percent of Hammond's population speaks another language at home, and there are over 50 languages spoken at the school including commonly known languages such as Spanish and Arabic, but lesser known languages such as Amharic, Twi and Pashto.

"ESL instruction is critical in large urban areas with such a diverse population," says Mr. Murphy. "Bilingual programs cannot meet the needs of these students."

Translation: Teaching ESL involves far more than language instruction.

"ESL students enrich schools and students by sharing their backgrounds and beliefs," says Mr. Murphy. "Although they may look and speak differently, they share common goals, desires, fears and hopes."

In his work as an ESL teacher with students from many diverse parts of the world, Mr. Murphy says he has learned to see beyond his academic discipline to take in the "whole child."

"I've worked with students whose parents were murdered by guerrilla rebels and students who were present when buildings in their neighborhood were bombed."

In these situations, the role of a teacher extends to include one of a healer, says Mr. Murphy. At the same time, teachers can't be everything to everyone.

"I always tell my kids that a smart person doesn't know all the answers, but she knows how to find them. That's true on the other side of the desk, too. It's important to know where and when to get the best help."

"Teachers need to know where to meet each child in order to take them to where they want to be."

With the right help, each student will reach his own Mt. Everest.

Loreen Wolfer, Ph.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
SOCIOLOGY/CRIMINAL JUSTICE

"I enjoy showing students that they can do skills, whether it's writing, research or statistics, which they previously thought were beyond them. When I see students really working at tackling a problem and then reaching the answer mostly on their own, it makes teaching one of the most rewarding jobs available."

Robert Murphy '90
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER
Francis C. Hammond Middle School, Alexandria, Va.
Michael D. DeMichele, Ph.D., ’63
CHAIR AND PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
The University of Scranton

A Passion for Teaching

Michael D. DeMichele, Ph.D., has seen a lot of changes during his 37 years teaching on The University of Scranton campus. Before that, however, he was a commuter student from 1959 to 1963. Back then, there were no campus athletic facilities, Alumni Memorial Library was being constructed, and more than half his professors were Jesuits.

Today, he says, in addition to the physical and personnel changes on campus, teaching is different as well.

“Technology has changed the teaching process at every level,” says Dr. DeMichele. “There are telecourses, online courses, PowerPoint presentations and lots of media. I still depend on lectures and discussions in my classes, but I use media when I can to help supplement what I do in the classroom.”

As his students have learned from him, he also learns from his students.

“I think if you challenge them, they’ll respond. I’ve also learned dealing with young people is a big responsibility. You often have a big influence on them in their future careers.”

One student whose career he influenced is Christopher Heaton ’90, G’93, G’94, history teacher and cross country coach at Xaverian Brothers High School, Westwood, Mass. (See story on pg. 19.)

Mr. Heaton served as Dr. DeMichele’s research assistant and studied under his tutelage while pursuing his degrees at The University of Scranton.

“Chris Heaton was an excellent student – intelligent, hardworking, and dependable,” says Dr. DeMichele. “He had a real passion for learning. He is also an outstanding individual who is dedicated to the service of others.”

In addition to new technology, Dr. DeMichele lists juggling his administrative duties as history department chair and as a teacher with a regular course load among his challenges.

“I try to keep up my research interests, and stay current in my discipline, especially in my world politics and modern world history courses,” he says.

Looking back over his career at the University, he says what he is most proud of is his students’ successes, as well as his teaching and his service to the University.

“I’ve seen many of my students over the years become very successful. I like to think in some small way I might have had something to do with it.”

Joseph R. Zandarski, Ph.D., ’51
PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ACCOUNTING

“I guess everything great about my experience at The University of Scranton can be summed up in one word: growth.

The growth of our faculty. When I started to work at The University of Scranton, there were four or five Ph.D.’s on our faculty. Today, most of our faculty possess that credential.

The growth of our physical plant. We used to have to travel to or from Monroe Avenue to “Old Main” on Wyoming Avenue in the 10 minutes between classes. Our original facilities were, for the most part, three army surplus barracks.

In my more than half a century as an employee of The University of Scranton, I have enjoyed the friendship of many wonderful people. It is nice to know that we, along with our generous alumni, were vital in bringing the University to being the highly recognized institution we know today.”

In June, the 1540 Room of The Estate was named the Zandarski Room in honor of Dr. Zandarski’s 53 years of service to the University. It is estimated that he taught 15,000 students over the years.

Dr. DeMichele is one of the Scranton professors whom Christopher Heaton ’90, G’93, G’94 (photo at right) cites as influencing his life’s work.
Christopher Heaton '90, G'93, G'94  
**HISTORY TEACHER**  
Xaverian Brothers High School, Westwood, Mass.

## A Passion for Learning

For Christopher Heaton '90, G'93, G'94, the road to Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, Mass., where he teaches history and coaches cross country and track, began at The University of Scranton.

As a member of the cross country team (for which he was named to the Wall of Fame) and a history undergraduate, he made lasting friendships and met the teachers who would influence his life’s work.

After graduating with a bachelor of arts degree, he decided to stay on at the University and pursue a master’s in history.

“I was awarded a research assistantship in the history department under the mentorship of Dr. DeMichele,” he says. “I enjoyed the graduate classes conducted by Dr. DeMichele, Dr. Conover, Dr. Champagne and Dr. Hueston. They are excellent professors, but beyond that they are great men. They were passionate about their subject, they had a gentlemanly rapport with their students, and I wanted to emulate them.”

After receiving his master’s degree, Mr. Heaton considered teaching in a private school, but, he says, “I realized to be the teacher I wanted to be, I had to learn more teaching strategies.”

He stayed at the University and earned a second master’s in secondary education/social studies while working for John S. Hopkins, Assistant Professor of Exercise Science/Sport, and Gary N. Wodder, Ph.D., Athletic Director. That, and a positive student teaching experience at Valley View High School convinced him that he could become both a teacher and a coach.

When he completed his second master's, Mr. Heaton applied to the Jesuit International Volunteers, and was assigned to a teaching position in Nepal.

“Living in Nepal was an amazing experience,” he recalls. “And teaching in Nepal certainly sharpened my skills, as I had six classes each with 45 seventh or eighth graders.”

After returning to the United States in 1998, Mr. Heaton moved to Boston, where he had a community of friends and a network of University alumni including Marilyn Bogusch Pryle ’91, who also taught in Nepal and Boston. There, he found a home teaching at Xaverian Brothers High School.

“Two challenges I face daily are bringing the students the world outside their doors and trying to emulate the coaches and teachers I had at the University,” he says. “The challenges are offset by the rewards of teaching. Seeing students graduating and being able to wish them well as they head to college is powerful.”

Christopher Heaton served as a research assistant to Dr. Michael DeMichele and studied under his tutelage while pursuing his degrees at the University.

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**Cynthia Cann, Ph.D.**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
MANAGEMENT/MARKETING

“My favorite part about teaching is the contact with the students. I enjoy watching them morph over time into knowledgeable, self-confident individuals. The students keep me thinking young and fresh, and constantly striving to teach better. Going into a classroom and facing students on a regular basis also keeps me current in my field and the business world.”

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**William G. Wallick, Ph.D.**  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,  
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

“One of the more important aspects of my job as a teacher at The University of Scranton is to help my students develop a lifelong commitment to justice, social responsibility, and citizenship. I use course content-focused service learning to provide students with opportunities to enhance their sense of civic engagement at a professional level. My students are then able to put into practice the knowledge they gain and the skills they develop to be successful HR professionals. Many groups benefit from active and reflective service learning...students, employers, the HR profession, and The University of Scranton.”