

NKU MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 // VOL. 3, NO. 2



ASHISH VAIDYA

**HIS PATH HAS LED HIM FAR AND WIDE.
NOW HE'LL LEAD NKU INTO A BRIGHT, NEW FUTURE.**

**EATING RIGHT
FOR CAREER
SUCCESS**

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**NAMES &
PLACES:
THE PEOPLE BEHIND
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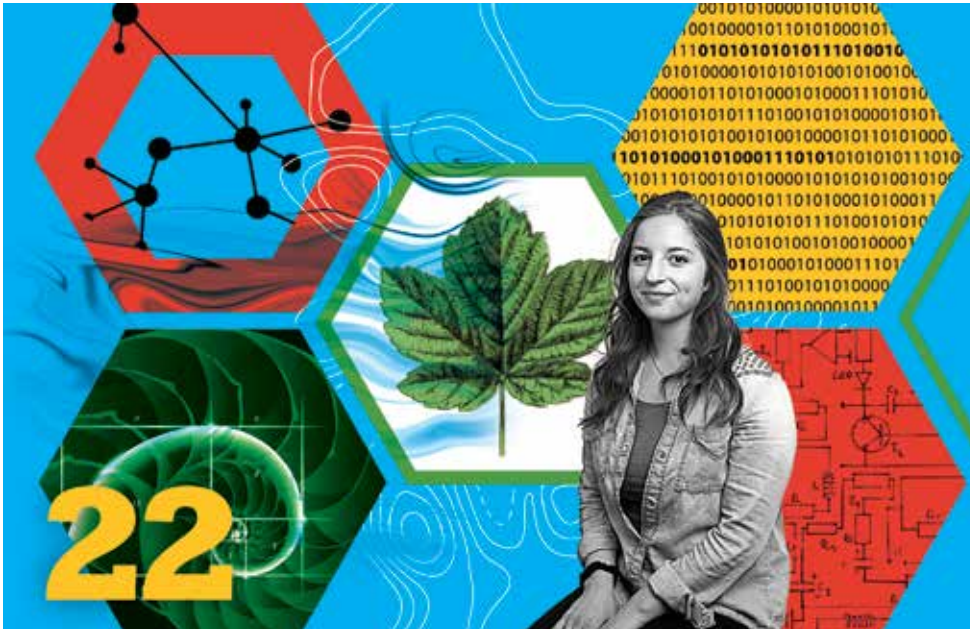
Dance student Diamond Evans shows off her moves (not to mention her gold and black) in the SOTA dance studio. In April, NKU featured dance performances—as well as readings, research presentations and more—at the annual Celebration, presented by the Institute for Student Research & Creative Activity.

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Dr. Ashish Vaidya arrives as NKU's sixth president in July. From his early days living across India to a California academic awakening to Minnesota winters, Vaidya's story is a travelogue for the ages.

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STEM #LIKEAGIRL

Historically male-dominated, STEM fields have seen huge strides from women in recent years. Learn more about female-led research by faculty members and students happening here at NKU.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Landrum. Steely. Lucas. They're building names to the campus community, but those monikers belonged to people first. The whos and whys of iconic NKU building names.

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The Norse have participated in postseason NCAA-sponsored events for two years now, and they're redefining Division I success. See how NKU men's basketball goes where no team has before. **Page 13**



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DID YOU KNOW

The average American spends 24 hours a week online. According to the Center for the Digital Future's 2017 "Surveying the Digital Future" impact study, we spend more time than ever on the internet—up 250 percent from our online engagement in 2000. Close to 18 hours of our internet time is at home, and 84 percent of us spend that time on our phones.

We may cringe at these numbers, but they're reality—and in today's world, the role of protecting us and our information is an important one. So in March, the College of Informatics unveiled Griffin Hall's donor-funded JRG Cyber Threat Intelligence Lab, a cutting-edge tool to train students for careers in cybersecurity and networking.

While you're online today, check out the redesigned *NKU Magazine* website for exclusive articles, podcasts and video stories—including an exclusive look inside the new Health Innovation Center—as well as digital back issues of the print magazine. *Head over to nku.edu/magazine today!*



Have a question? Email us at nkumagazine@nku.edu.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As you might have guessed by the cover of this issue, my time as interim president will soon come to an end. I want to take this opportunity to thank you—our amazing alumni, friends and supporters—for helping Northern Kentucky University make unimaginable progress in our first 50 years.

Our golden anniversary provides us a moment to pause, reflect on how far we've come, then roll up our sleeves and get to work building our next half-century. We wouldn't be here today without visionary community leaders who dreamed of a public university in northern Kentucky. They believed NKU could increase access to higher education, build an educated workforce and enable prosperity for our people and region. To all who fought for this university when it was just a dream, thank you!

We wouldn't be here today without our founding faculty and staff. These folks signed on when we had no campus, buildings, history or reputation. They were builders focused on the future, and they laid the foundation for what makes NKU exceptional today—our commitment to students above all else. To those founders who sacrificed to turn dreams into reality, and to the faculty and staff who followed their example, thank you!

Our university has benefitted from excellent leadership throughout the years. Beginning with W. Frank Steely, and continuing through A.D. Albright, Leon Boothe, Jim Votruba and Geoff Mearns, the NKU presidency has remained a position of great influence and esteem within our region and across

the Commonwealth. That will certainly not change when Dr. Ashish Vaidya arrives this summer. To the leaders who served our students and our institution tirelessly, bringing our campus vision, focus and a set of clear values, thank you!

Finally, to our current and former students who have broken barriers, infused our campus with Norse spirit and retained the tenacious belief that we can—and will—make a difference in the world around us, thank you!

Serving as interim president has been an honor and privilege. It is fitting that I conclude 19 years of service to NKU as I concluded my nearly 25 years of military service, leading an institution that I love and that contributes so much to the public good—NKU now and The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School then.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with so many devoted alumni and friends of our university who generously contributed time, talent and treasure to support our dedicated faculty and staff in their work to serve our students' needs. I am very proud of what we've accomplished together.

Happy 50th anniversary and Go Norse!

Thank you,

Gerard St. Amand
Interim President



[AROUND CAMPUS]

Last year, NKU announced the College of Health Professions' new Nurse Anesthesia program, designed to train students to fill the local and national shortage of certified registered nurse anesthetists. Pictured here (l-r), Alexis Richards, Stacy Watkins, Kendall Graman, Alexa Swift, Cody Porter and Paige Schirmer are each earning their Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree in the 36-month cohort program.

PHOTO CREDIT DAVE BUSHLE

(Photo shown for illustrative purposes only. Actual development may vary due to further planning and enhancements.)





AROUND THE HORNS



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[NORSE]

CORRIDOR TO CAMPUS

NKU recently announced mixed-use and medical projects for the campus entrance.

In December 2017, Northern Kentucky University announced an exciting new component to its already bustling campus: a pedestrian-scaled collection of retail shops, eateries and living space to be built at the U.S. 27 campus entrance. Planned to occupy the open field that visitors see on the left when turning from Alexandria Pike onto Nunn Drive, the new development promises to deliver a distinctive recreational experience for students and community members alike.

Developer Fairmount Properties, an industry leader in these mixed-use “campus edge” concepts, will handle the project, for which it’s leasing land from NKU. Construction will occur in phases, and first-phase groundbreaking is scheduled for mid-2018. When complete, the development will feature market-rate apartments, a hotel, structured parking and public gathering spaces in addition to new stores and restaurants.

And that’s not all coming to Nunn Drive. The north side is also set for development, and St. Elizabeth Healthcare will occupy a 70,000-square-foot medical facility in the space. The professional center aims to address unmet needs in the community with an urgent care center that will treat minor injuries and illnesses around the clock, as well as primary care doctors and specialty care physicians.

The gateway development will reflect goals outlined in the university’s 2009 master plan as well as Highland Heights’ comprehensive plan. And it’s an exciting example of NKU’s commitment to innovative public-private partnerships. 🍷

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 4-JULY 12
Young Rembrandts Summer Camps, NKU

This summer, Young Rembrandts will teach art lessons ranging from the mysterious world of Egypt to monsters and creatures. For more information, visit nku.edu/communityconnections.

JUNE 8-24
"Life Could be a Dream," Stauss Theatre

Don't miss this jukebox musical that will leave you laughing, singing and cheering for Denny and the Dreamers. For more information on tickets and show times, visit nku.edu/commonwealth.

JUNE 18-JULY 20
CINSAM Summer Camps, NKU

The Center for Integrative Natural Science and Mathematics hosts a variety of camps for students that focus on STEM-related topics. For more information, visit nku.edu/cinsam.

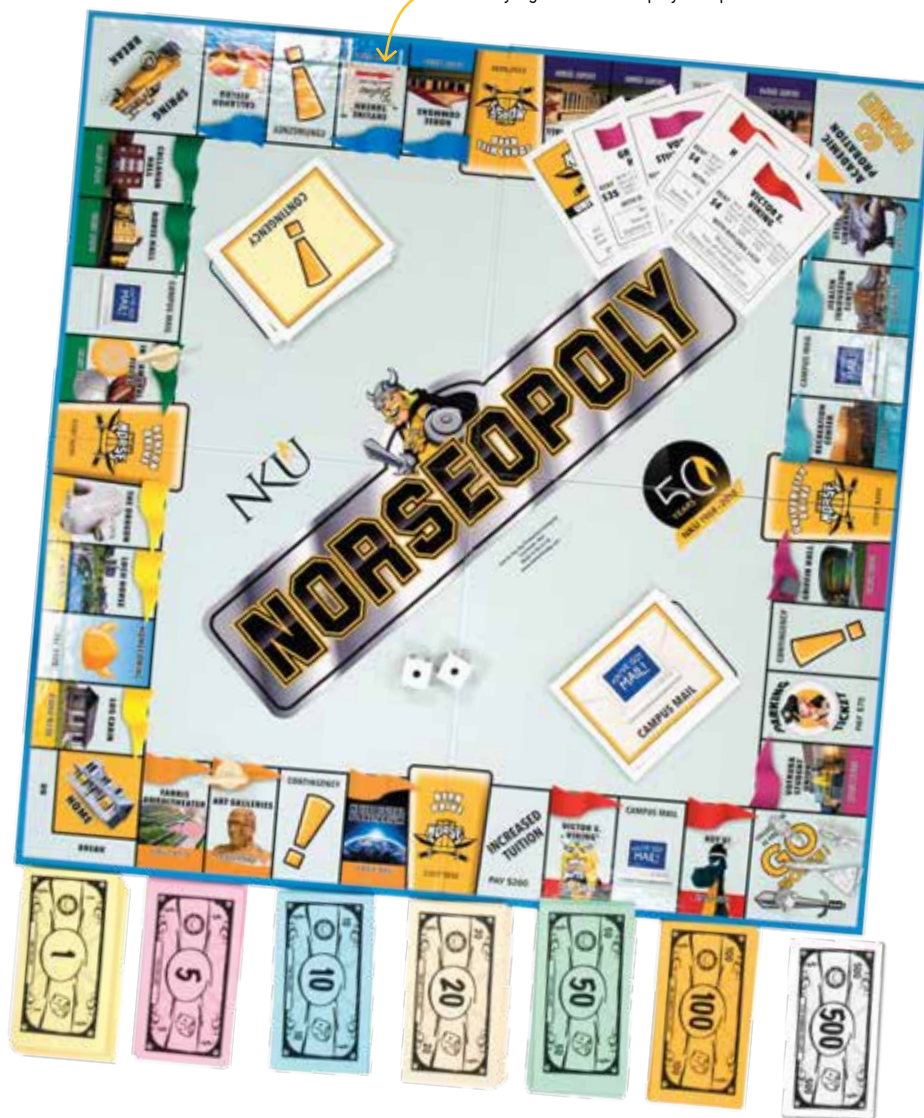
JULY 6-22
"The Odd Couple," Stauss Theatre

This classic comedy follows the lives of new roommates who are complete opposites. Will their friendship survive despite their differences? For more information on tickets and show times, visit nku.edu/commonwealth.

SEPTEMBER 8
NKU Night at the Reds, Great American Ball Park

Head to Great American Ball Park for our annual NKU Night at the Reds! Bring a friend—or the whole family—and join fellow NKU alumni as our Redlegs take on the San Diego Padres. First pitch is at 4:10 p.m. For more information, visit nku.edu/alumni.

Play a game of Norseopoly over pints at Tavern!



A DOSE OF NORSE-TALGIA

Norseopoly is a “norsified” Monopoly game in honor of NKU’s 50th anniversary that allows you to buy, sell and trade buildings or landmarks on NKU’s campus. If you’ve ever dreamt of owning Loch Norse, now is your chance! This limited-edition game is sold exclusively in the off-campus bookstore, Campus Book & Supply, for only \$19.68 plus tax.

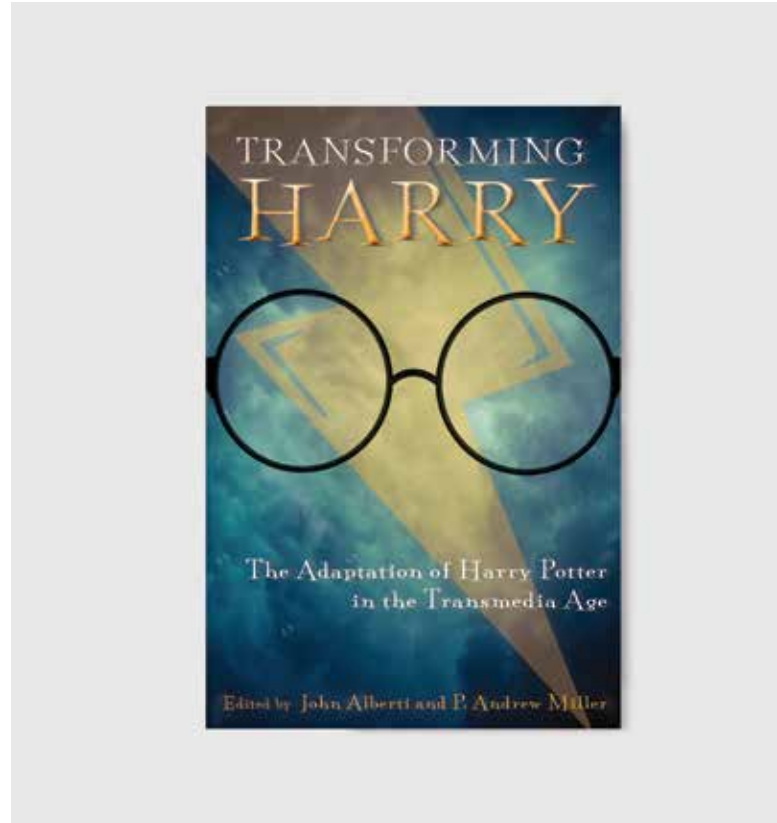


INSTITUTE FOR STUDENT RESEARCH & CREATIVE ACTIVITY

With the help of NKU's recently opened Institute for Student Research & Creative Activity (ISRCA), students can access faculty collaborations and a community of experiential learning opportunities—whether it be fellowships, creative activity, internships or research—that are pivotal to their steps beyond college. “Research assists with a student’s understanding of the subject, methods and current developments in their fields,” says Dr. Shauna Reilly, ISRCA’s director. “These experiences enrich students’ career preparedness as well as create opportunities for future graduate studies.” *For more information, visit nku.edu/isrca.*

ALUMNI BENEFITS

Don't forget! NKU's Alumni Association provides a variety of exclusive memberships, including scholarships, subscriptions and discounts at local restaurants as well as the Campus Recreation Center, Liberty Mutual, the AAA Club Alliance and Newport Aquarium. *Request your card and check out more benefits at nku.edu/alumnibenefits.*



UNTIL THE END, ANDY MILLER

P. Andrew “Andy” Miller, an English professor at Northern Kentucky University, ended his 18-year tenure this spring with the release of “Transforming Harry: The Adaptation of Harry Potter in the Transmedia Age”—a book he co-edited with Dr. John Alberti, professor and chair of NKU’s department of English. The volume of essays examines cinematic adaptations of the Harry Potter wizarding world and how attitudes toward both the films and books have changed over time. Miller’s book of collected short fiction, “In Love, In Water, and Other Stories,” was released through Post Mortem Press in 2015, and his prose and poetry have appeared in a variety of publications.

CYBERSECURITY LAB

There’s only one learning space in the region where students can get hands-on cybersecurity experience, and it sits in the heart of Griffin Hall. The JRG Cyber Threat Intelligence Lab, which opened its doors earlier this year, serves as both a threat intelligence center and network cybersecurity laboratory. NKU, a designated National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education, worked with top corporate security professionals to create a real-world environment for the highest-enrolled major on campus—computer information technology. “Our students will now have a beautiful state-of-the-art space to practice in and will grow into skilled, ethical professionals who we can rely on in this dangerous digital world,” says Kevin Kirby, dean of the College of Informatics and former chair of the Computer Science department.



[STUDENT ENGAGEMENT]

DINING RIGHT

An NKU tradition makes a comeback. // **By Rodney Wilson ('00)**

ON APRIL 12, 2018, the offices of Student Engagement and Alumni Programs worked together to bring back a Northern Kentucky University tradition: the Etiquette Luncheon, begun under the administration of third president Dr. Leon Boothe. During his administration, Boothe invited local business leaders to the president’s residence (now the Honors House) to discuss what their newly employed NKU graduates were doing right—and what the university could do better to help them succeed.

“They would generally say, ‘Your students are well-educated, but we find they aren’t as well-versed in social etiquette,’” Boothe says. “They sometimes didn’t know, in a formal dining situation, how to make decisions.” He responded by hiring a professional to teach optional professional development classes, which incorporated topics such as social grace, to provide students advantages in their future careers. “I thought that was kind of a creative situation that helped a lot of students over the years.”

While it hasn’t been presented for the past few years, the luncheon was revived by the two departments as a way to teach important skills to students who likely haven’t yet encountered formal dining situations. Alumni volunteers were seated at tables with students, where they dined while discussing their own business experiences.

“The Etiquette Luncheon is an opportunity to prepare students for life after NKU,” says Amy Arbino Wylie, director of Alumni Programs & Councils. “It also allows us to engage our alumni in meaningful interactions with our students where they can share their professional and personal experiences to help them be successful.”

“The Etiquette Luncheon is an opportunity to prepare students for life after NKU.”

Former assistant director of Alumni Relations Carol Beirne (currently the director of Alumni Relations and Development at Beechwood Independent Schools) returned to campus to deliver the etiquette presentation, which covered such tricky dining topics as:

- The basics of formal dining
- Which fork to use during each course
- Tips for interviewing over a meal
- How to order during a business meal
- Rules about alcohol while dining

Future NKU graduates will be ready to grab their dessert forks during the final course, sweetening their career success. 🍷



[HISTORY]

A STRONG FOUNDATION

NKU celebrates 50 years with a Founders' Day luncheon and planned memorial.

On March 14, 2018, Northern Kentucky University celebrated 50 years with a Founders' Day luncheon. The event gathered faculty and staff members, graduates and community stakeholders from NKU's early days for camaraderie, a message from Gov. Matt Bevin and speeches by interim president Gerard St. Amand and incoming president Ashish Vaidya.

"We had a wonderful response and a great mix of guests," says Kathy Stewart, NKU's director of Donor Relations. "I saw retired faculty that I haven't seen on campus in years, along with longtime donors and supporters."

Four students adopted personas of founding NKU stakeholders to tell the story of the university's earliest days. "Each student presented from various points of view: a founding faculty member, administrator, community member and student from the first class at NKSC," says Stewart. The event also allowed many members of the original NKU community to reconnect with the university. "I think we rekindled some relationships with retirees and supporters," says Stewart, "creating a renewed pride in association with the history and future of NKU."

NKU is also constructing a ceremonial walk between the Health Innovation Center (HIC) and Nunn Hall to commemorate the university's founding days by connecting the original campus plaza with the newer center of campus, as defined by recent additions: the HIC, Dorothy Westerman Herrmann Natural Science Center, Griffin Hall, Votruba Student Union and Campus Recreation Center.

Signage bearing NKU's 50th anniversary logo will mark the walk. "The signage will visually link with the current monument in front of Founders Hall dedicated to the mission of the founding faculty," says Stewart.



[PHILANTHROPY]

GIRL POWER

Lee Cordray helps women achieve educational success.

Lee Cordray ('73) has been many things: sociology major, Kentucky state government worker, avid gardener, travel agent—and philanthropist.

"I worked 40 years with the Office of Employment and Training, Unemployment Insurance," she said. "I loved every bit of it."

After retiring, the Fort Thomas resident decided to start a company, LeeAloha Travel Services, when her cousin's Staples purchase netted gratis business cards. "I made up a name, got some free business cards and started a business." She hadn't traveled much previously but found she enjoyed taking excursions, especially on cruises.

Cordray made the move into philanthropy in 2013 with the establishment of NKU's Lee Cordray Endowed Scholarship, which gives women facing heightened odds a chance at college success. "The first one I started is the one for single mothers, which I had been at one time," she says.

In 2016, Cordray established a second scholarship, the Lee Cordray Endowed STEM Scholarship, after noticing a dearth of females in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. "One day the president of the university gave a talk to the retired teachers of northern Kentucky," she says. "He was talking about the Informatics college, and it looked to me like I couldn't see any girls in the picture. I thought, my goodness, they ought to have some females in that program—maybe I should start a scholarship for them."

She knew that women often need encouragement when entering traditionally male-dominated fields and remembers asking her own daughter, upon enrolling in college, why she wasn't majoring in math. The answer? She didn't want to compete with her husband. "I thought, that's crazy," she says. "I know my own family were all teachers. You had to be a secretary, go into office work, be a teacher or be a nurse. I thought, let's try to get more girls into mathematics and science."

Cordray retired from LeeAloha Travel Services in December and now spends her time doing church work, serving on the Campbell County Cooperative Extension board and enjoying her favorite hobby, gardening.

"I've always liked to work in the yard," she says. "I have a little fenced-in area and try to raise a few tomatoes, snap peas, parsley and onions. But now mostly all I can raise is garlic—the deer don't eat that."



[PARTNERSHIPS]

PARTNERSHIP FOR IMPACT ANALYSIS

// By Bryan McEldowney and Chloe Smith

AS THE NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM put the finishing touches on its 2017 Horizon League Tournament championship, questions arose across campus: What kind of exposure does this bring the university? Will it generate revenue? What about enrollment?

During an Athletics Council meeting shortly after the team's NCAA tournament appearance, Ken Bothof, director of Athletics, mentioned that universities in similar situations often conduct impact studies. Jenny Gardner, director of NKU's Sports Business program, offered the program's assistance on such a study.

"This was an easy decision," says Bryan McEldowney, assistant athletic director for Communications and Media Services, who oversees the resulting impact study. "Partnering with NKU's extraordinary Sports Business program made sense on many different levels. Not only were we able to engage with a department on campus that specializes in this realm, we were able to provide valuable experience for one of our students and maintain fiscal responsibility by keeping the analysis in-house."

McEldowney, Gardner and Associate Professor Joe Cobbs, who specializes in the economics of college sports, decided early on to also integrate one of the program's students.

"We knew this partnership would provide not only collaborative engagement across campus departments, but also an opportunity for our students to get involved with a real-world

project," says Gardner.

Enter Macy Wright, a sports business and event management junior on the women's golf team.

"I am extremely fortunate and thankful to have been included in this study," says Wright. "Participating firsthand in this sports research only makes me more excited about my future career in the profession."

Since last summer, the quartet has worked to determine the impact of the Norse men's basketball's success. The ongoing comprehensive study focuses on televised brand exposure, print and online mentions, social media trends, internet search and website trends, ticket sales, fundraising, merchandise, student admissions and brand awareness.

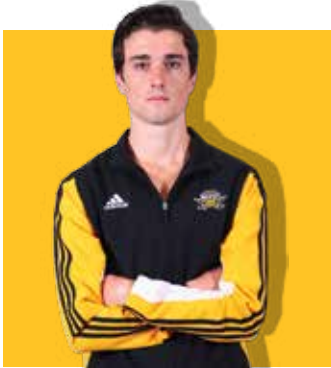
The Sports Business and Event Management program at NKU is unique in that it exists within the Haile/US Bank College of Business. This distinction is important for NKU and this project, which is based on measuring business-related returns to participation in March Madness.

"Competitive success at the highest level of intercollegiate sports involves a considerable investment," explains Cobbs. "Consequently, universities should be evaluating and attempting to measure the returns to such investments. While all returns are not easily quantified, these challenges can still be tackled to provide some benchmarks for ongoing assessment."



MAKING AN IMPACT

The NKU volleyball program partnered with Team IMPACT to “sign” Taylor and Leah Conrad, two sisters from Florence, Kentucky, diagnosed with a variety of chronic illnesses. Head coach Liz Hart is pictured here with Taylor (left) and Leah (right).



RACING TO VICTORY

Andrew Schille is having a sensational senior year. He started by winning the Horizon League Cross Country Championship in the fall. He then won both the 5000m and mile runs at the league’s indoor championship.

MACY'S MERITS

Macy Hamblin, the most decorated women’s soccer player in school history, recently added Cincinnati USA Women’s Sports Association’s College Soccer Sportswoman of the Year to her list of accolades, which also includes three Horizon League Player of the Year and three Offensive Player of the Year honors.



FC CINCINNATI FRIENDSHIP

Stu Riddle and his staff are entering their second season at the helm of the NKU men’s soccer program. Just across the Ohio River, FC Cincinnati is playing its third season as a member of the United Soccer League (USL) and recently secured a move to Major League Soccer (MLS). As the two programs chase success at their respective levels, a friendly connection is budding. FC Cincinnati brought its reserves to Highland Heights for a mid-season friendly last August, which served as a preseason exhibition for the Norse. In late February, the teams took to the pitch again, as FC Cincinnati prepared for its impending USL campaign and the Norse were in the midst of spring workouts.



TAKE NOTICE: UNRIVALED SUCCESS



While NKU has been Division I for six years already, the Norse had to navigate a four-year transition period that prohibited postseason participation in NCAA-sponsored events. But NKU was granted active status prior to the start of the 2016-17 season. Since then, the Norse men’s basketball program has had two years of success never before seen at the Division I level. No other program in its first two years of active status has won a league regular-season title and league tournament championship, and participated in the NCAA tournament and NIT.

REAL CHOICES

Every day, NKU’s student-athletes are faced with making decisions that affect their performance in the classroom and in their sport. Calvin Murphy (men’s soccer), Macy Wright (women’s golf), Dantez Walton (men’s basketball), Molly Glick (women’s basketball), Cameron Ross (baseball) and BriAuna Keys (women’s track & field) answered the call to be on-campus ambassadors for the REAL Choices campaign, promoting educated decisions concerning alcohol and drug use by identifying the risks and effects of those choices.





LEADING INDICATORS

BY RODNEY WILSON ('00)



HOW THE ECONOMICS PROFESSOR SON OF AN INDIAN GOVERNMENT ENGINEER BECAME NKU'S SIXTH PRESIDENT.

WHAT DOES MINNESOTA MEAN TO YOU?

Ten thousand lakes, sure (there are actually 11,842, but who's counting?), and Prince and Bob Dylan hail from there, so the state has some musical prominence. You've probably watched the Twins, Vikings and/or Timberwolves play your home teams now and again. And we all know from "Fargo" that Minnesotans keep backyard wood chippers, don'tcha know?

And then there are Minnesota winters, which everyone understands are deeply, painfully and bone-chillingly cold, and, in general, nothing we'd like to experience annually. Now imagine moving there after spending 30 years in California. That's exactly how Northern Kentucky University's incoming sixth president, Dr. Ashish Vaidya (ah-SHEESH vie-DEE-yuh), was introduced to the North Star State, after relocating there in 2015 for the job of provost at St. Cloud State University.

"I think a lot of people, including myself, thought I was totally crazy," says Vaidya. "But I was being very analytical and practical."

A self-described pragmatist, Vaidya evaluated the state through an economist's lens, noting the large amount of Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Minnesota and the state's low unemployment rate and quality educational system. Then, looking at St. Cloud State, he was impressed with the school's strong reputation for regional stewardship and internationalization.

"I did a lot of homework, and I found all the fundamentals really strong," he says. "So the big drawback was that winter. It's freaking cold. I was like, I don't know how I'm going to do this." The sage advice of a friend with Minnesota experience provided a survival framework that tipped the scale for Vaidya. "He said, firstly, you've got to embrace the winter. Secondly, you've got to be totally prepared. Get all the good stuff: the parkas, the layers—all that. Forget about vanity. I know you're all about your hair, but put that to the side."

And it worked—for a while. With the aid of an underground heated garage and the demands of his new job, Vaidya managed to avoid much of his first Minnesota winter. "Everyone kept saying that was one of the mildest winters they've had. Not by my standards. I said, look, you guys don't understand. If it falls below 40, that's cold for me," he laughs. "But in some ways, it didn't matter whether it was 30 or -10, because I was prepared. I knew I had that massive 40-pound parka. I had multiple caps. I had those things you can put in your pocket."

At the time of this writing, Vaidya has just emerged from his third Minnesota winter, and he's feeling ready for the move to a more southern climate. "This last one I think was getting to me, for sure," he says. Though last November's announcement of his new role as president of NKU preceded the depths of winter, he concedes

he might have made a break for warmer winds regardless. “NKU had happened before the winter really hit, so it wasn’t like that prompted me to start thinking about it,” he says. “But the timing was right.”

Which is all to say that, even in challenging circumstances, Vaidya remains ready to pursue opportunities that align with his core values. From a childhood in India shaped by diverse surroundings, to his move to California and American citizenship, to St. Cloud State and now northern Kentucky, one of the only constants in his life is an eagerness to learn the next thing.

“Sometimes life throws you a curveball,” he says, “and you have to seize the opportunity that presents itself.”

LAND OF DIVERSITY

Ashish Vaidya was born in 1962 in New Delhi, India, the second child of a government engineer father and homemaker mother. “I like to joke that I was an afterthought,” he says, referring to the fact that he’s younger than his sister by quite a few years. “I was sort of late into the picture.”

His father’s role with the Post & Telecommunications division of the government meant middle-class stability for his family, but it also made for a somewhat nomadic lifestyle, as the job would re-station him to various parts of the country every couple of years. Consequently, Vaidya says he was raised across the whole country of India, exposed to a variety of cultures and economic realities as he moved from city to city.

“Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore, a few places in the East,” he says, remembering cities he lived in as a child. “Moving from place to place, you actually did experience different places, and India is so different. You would just go from the north to the south, east to the west, and it’s almost like different countries. Languages are different, some of the cultural norms are different, the food is certainly different—which is wonderful. I like food from all over India now.”

Though he made friends easily in each new place, the wear of starting again every few years did take a toll. Vaidya’s parents opted to send him to a boarding school in Indore, Daly College, for high school so he could have some consistency while preparing for college.

“It was much better to be there than living with relatives and attending a regular school,” he says. “I preferred the independence, and actually that was a great experience. I really enjoyed it. I made some friends that I still have.”

Upon finishing high school, Vaidya enrolled at St. Xavier’s College in Bombay (now Mumbai), then, informed by his exposure to economic



disparities across his home country at an early age, chose to study the issue and explore potential solutions.

"I had begun, in late high school, thinking more about this notion of why there is so much economic inequality," he says. "So I really became persuaded that I wanted to study economics. It was an economic problem that India was facing." The decision made perfect sense to Vaidya, but some family members were shocked at the news. "Since my father was an engineer, the standard was, you know, you have to become an engineer. My uncles and aunts were like, 'What is this? How is he not doing engineering? Economics? What the hell is that?' It was a big deal, but both my mom and dad said, 'It's fine. That's what he wants to do.' They were very supportive."

Fueled by a growing passion for the study of economics—a career in finance didn't appeal to him at all—Vaidya pursued graduate work with the goal of earning a Ph.D. in economics in the U.S. But as a baccalaureate in India involved only three years of study and he'd need four years to attend graduate school in the States, he decided to go ahead and earn a master's degree from the University of Mumbai. It was there that he met, and began dating, a fellow economics graduate student named Nita. The two enjoyed lively conversations, most notably about their focus

areas of study, which they discovered overlapped in intriguing ways (Nita studied demography). But when Vaidya was accepted to the University of California, Davis's Ph.D. program with an offer of full funding, he knew it was time to leave India.

"Davis was a really great option in northern California. My sister was already married and living in the Bay area, so it was a natural thing for me to go there," he says. "I said to Nita, 'This is a long program. The only way it's going to work out is if you decide to join me as a grad student. I know it's possible for two grad students to manage to hang out together.' That wasn't part of her psyche, but she decided, hey, if that's what it takes."

Nita applied and was accepted to UC Davis' sociology Ph.D. program, at which point Vaidya, having finished his first academic year in California, returned to Bombay—where the two were promptly married. The couple then traveled back to California as husband and wife, and settled into an academic California life, eventually conceiving their first child while pursuing higher-level degrees.

Though he'd initially planned to work for the World Bank, upon graduating with his Ph.D. Vaidya heeded the advice of friends who knew he'd enjoyed working as a teaching assistant, and applied for academic jobs. When he was offered a tenure-track position teaching economics at the California State University, Los Angeles, he, Nita and their one-month-old daughter packed up and headed for LA. He didn't know it at the time, but this was the beginning of a long, successful academic career that would eventually lead him to Highland Heights, Kentucky.

A WINDING PATH TO PRESIDENCY

So how does a West Coast college professor, driven by an intellectual need to understand economic disparities, end up in the university president's office? Much of Vaidya's career trajectory has been determined by his unique ability to connect people, from students to staff to faculty members on different sides of the campus, and encourage them to work together. But his story also contains some unexpected (and in one case, tragic) twists of fate.

By his own admission, Vaidya misses teaching economics, a feeling born of a love for instruction fostered in LA classrooms. But his interest in administrative work can also be traced to these times, as his community involvement, as well as his relationship to the U.S., deepened.

"We lived in a town called Claremont when I was working in LA," he says. "And there was a call for the traffic and transportation commission. So I said, 'I want to put my application in and see what happens.'" Vaidya was appointed to the position, and he was struck by how much impact moves made at a city level



had on his family—now four strong with the addition of a son—and neighbors. “We were making decisions and recommending to the city council to change some things that affect the day-to-day quality of life for people. I really like this model of being engaged. You can sit there and complain that things are not going well, but you do have an opportunity to make change.”

The more involved he became, the more Vaidya saw one glaring omission in his capabilities to influence change: As a green-card resident, he couldn't vote. “I bought property, and my kids were obviously citizens because they were born here,” he says. “I was doing everything that a citizen does. I'm paying taxes and engaged in city governance, so I probably should become a citizen. And I think it was also kind of an identity question—I felt okay about it.”

At work, Vaidya grew more involved in decision-making, too, with his appointment as director of the MBA program, a role that leveraged his interpersonal skills. When the opportunity arose to be a founding member of Cal State's 23rd campus at Channel Islands, he went as a faculty member highly versed in the administrative work that starting a campus from scratch would require. So when he finally made the move to become dean of the Channel Islands campus, his transition to academic administration seemed a natural shift. Vaidya's career path



***“BUT NKU WAS REALLY AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY—
THE SENSE OF INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
AN INDEPENDENT BOARD, GREAT PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.”***

DR. ASHISH VAIDYA

followed suit, with a return to Cal State, LA, first as the provost, then as a special adviser to the president for regional economic development.

Then came Minnesota. Although it had once been the best-funded public university system in the nation, budget cuts had in recent years reduced state money to below the national average, and the almost 150-year-old St. Cloud State was trying to adapt to changing times. The president of the school, Earl Potter, was widely respected and looking for a provost whom he could consider a partner in running the university. The challenge was a big one, even without subarctic temperatures, but Vaidya was up to the task, so in 2015 he bought that 40-pound parka and headed east.

But in June of the following year, the unthinkable happened—Potter, 69, was killed in a rollover crash on the highway. As second in command, Vaidya was quickly appointed interim president of St. Cloud

State, accepting the dual responsibilities of helping a shocked campus through its grief and continuing the important work of his predecessor.

Meanwhile, here in northern Kentucky, NKU's fifth president, Geoffrey Mearns, was ending his contract and preparing for his new job as president of Ball State University in Indiana. Gerard St. Amand, former Dean of Salmon P. Chase College of Law and Vice President for University Advancement, agreed to postpone his retirement from teaching to take the reins as interim president. When the Board of Regents put out the call for a new university president, Vaidya recognized NKU from the American Association for State Colleges and Universities' publication “Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place,” authored by a task force on public engagement chaired by NKU's fourth president, James Votruba. The university's leading work on regional stewardship—the idea that higher education should address needs in the community through educating the next generation of problem solvers—had deeply influenced Vaidya over the course of his career, and he wanted to be a part of what the school did next. But that would mean leaving St. Cloud State and the possibility of a permanent presidency.

“At the end of the day, I have to admit, it was a struggle,” he says. “I know the people, I know the place. I have a great relationship with the mayor, the legislators, the foundation. But NKU was really an exciting opportunity—the sense of innova-



tion, entrepreneurship, an independent board, great public-private partnerships.”

In the end, of course, he applied for the job, which was offered and made official with a vote and announcement in November 2017. And now, with his July start date mere weeks away, he’s ready to leave the Gopher State to become a citizen of Greater Cincinnati.

A PUP, A PALATE, A POINT GAME

To predict how Vaidya will adapt to his new home, it helps to know a few things about him. He and Nita have two grown children—Jaanhvi, a management consultant with Accenture, and Avaneesh, a recent graduate of the University of Arizona—and a tiny third in the form of a Chihuahua named Coco. The Vaidyas are both pretty serious about food, and he’s equally as serious about his hair (and concerned about who will cut it when he gets to town). And he has a deep love of tennis that’s rooted in his early days at Daly College.

First, Coco, who Vaidya is looking forward to walking in winter without constantly slipping on treacherous ice. When family friends in California took in a stray that turned out to be pregnant (she recovered to become the namesake of both the Lucy Pet Foundation and Lucy Pet Products), the Vaidyas volunteered to deliver one of the puppies to Ashish’s sister. But while caring for the dog in the interim, Nita fell in love with little Coco. Despite Ashish’s reluctance, the Chihuahua ended up joining the family’s other dog, a German shepherd mix named Frisco, in the home. And Coco quickly found a place in her new owner’s heart.

“She’s been in the house ever since,” he says. “They all make fun of me, because Coco’s a smart dog who knows she has to keep me happy. She’s like a lap dog.” Sadly, Frisco passed away in October 2015, leaving Coco the run of the house—though Vaidya suspects she may not be lonely for too much longer. “I think Nita still has a secret plan to get a second one at some point.”

[It is *NKU Magazine’s* editorial opinion that this is highly likely.]

While Vaidya has sampled Skyline chili, Cincinnati’s growing dining scene, as well as local staples, are exciting unknowns to him at this point. “I could say we are foodies,” he says. “I think food is a reflection of culture and the nuances ethnic groups in every region within countries are very proud of.” He points to LA as an excellent example of culinary diversity, where eating Mexican food meant choosing between menus from a variety of regions represented in the area. And though he’s excited to try Cincinnati’s various eateries, you probably shouldn’t expect to run into him at the Hofbrauhaus. “Maybe German not so much,” he says with a laugh.



“THE WORK THAT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ARE DOING IN THIS COUNTRY IS IMPORTANT, SIGNIFICANT AND ESSENTIAL. I’M PASSIONATE ABOUT THAT, AND THIS IS SOMETHING I ADVOCATE FOR VERY STRONGLY.”

DR. ASHISH VAIDYA



As for tennis, Vaidya smiles in excitement when asked about the Cincinnati Western & Southern Open, the annual hard court tournament in Mason, Ohio, featuring some of the sport's biggest names. "When I saw that, I was like, oh, this is going to be good," he says. "I would certainly expect to go see a match or two." As for his own game, which he's been at since teaching himself during high school, Vaidya is looking forward to a milder climate than he's experienced the past few years. "That's been one of the drawbacks in Minnesota," he says. "Summer is the only time, and I'd been used to being able to play all year round. Even if I don't play regularly, I look forward to doing more of that here, for sure."

Leaving Minnesota for northern Kentucky has some lifestyle perks, but Vaidya knows that, foremost, he's here to do the job of leading NKU forward. For him, that means helping students succeed here and, after graduating, within the region at large. "The work that public institutions are doing in this country is important, significant and essential," he says. "I'm passionate about that, and this is something I advocate for very strongly."

"The true impact of a college education—especially for first-generation, Pell-eligible and under-represented students—was something I didn't fully realize at first," he continues. "It really does change the trajectory of their lives. If it weren't for college, they would probably have very limited options in terms of economic and social mobility. We provide access and opportunity and change their lives."

NKU's reputation for changing lives is what first attracted Vaidya to the university, and a primary objective of his presidency will be strengthening the school's commitment to student success.

"We have to find new and better ways to serve students across the board," he says, "and find ways that we can live up to their hopes and aspirations." 🍷





Dr. Kristine Hopfensperger

Dr. Kirsten Schwarz

Sarah Johnson

Alyssa Farmer

Dr. Madhura Kulkarni

Kristen Goodridge

STEM

#LikeAGirl

BY JAYNA MORRIS

Females WITH CAREERS IN STEM—SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH—are vastly outnumbered by their male co-workers. That’s just a fact—according to the National Center for Education Statistics, only some 20 percent of women in the U.S. workforce are in STEM fields. STEM pervades every part of our lives, but included fields lack the perspectives of roughly half of the world’s population.

What’s going on here? Are STEM education programs inhospitable to women? Is there a dearth of encouragement? A lack of opportunities? Gender bias? There are several environmental

and social barriers to blame—many women have children in the middle of their careers, and care for ailing family members often falls to them—but STEM jobs are among America’s most rapid-growth sectors for middle- and upper-income careers. Including women in what many regard as a ladder to income stability isn’t an option—it’s a responsibility.

At Northern Kentucky University, there are approximately 200 female students and faculty members working hard to break the STEM ceiling. We spoke with a few about their research and experiences as women in STEM.

Ally Frame

As a member of the NKU Cyber Defense Team, Ally Frame has to think like a hacker. During simulation competitions, she has to protect and defend against “cybercriminals” trying to access a computer network in a variety of ways. From viruses to phishing attacks to hacking incidents, she’s trained to spot whatever can compromise network security.

Ally, a computer information technology student with minors in information security, computer forensics and information systems, is a fierce competitor. She’s also the only woman on her eight-person team. She came into the field later than most of her male peers, but that won’t stop her from pursuing her career.

“Hey, I can do this, too,” she says. “I can learn, and I can keep up with these guys.”

Ally’s experience on the Cyber Defense Team gives her real-world skills, which she uses both at home, in Greater

Cincinnati for Great American Insurance Group’s security department and in St. Louis, where she’s interning with MasterCard’s computer forensics team for the third year in a row this summer. In the latter role, Ally receives security operations alerts and examines symptoms reported by the user. She pulls logs to prove there was (or wasn’t) an attack, show where it came from and explain how to contain it.

“I’m basically a crime scene investigator,” she says.

Alyssa Farmer (18)

Ever since she was in the fourth grade, Alyssa Farmer knew she wanted a career in math—somehow.

“I like to determine anything from numbers,” the math and statistics student (computer science minor) says. “And I like that math can be applied to different areas.”

The CINSAM, SOAR and UR STEM Scholar has, during



Katie Saurvell



Yidain Villalona



Dr. Hongmei Wang



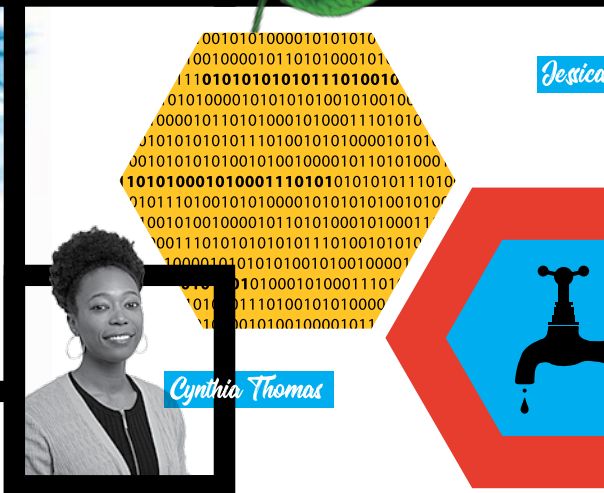
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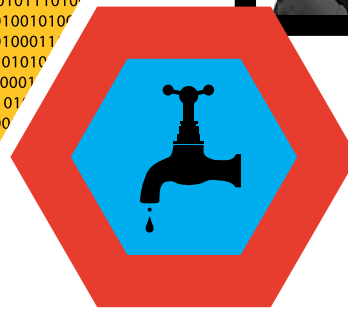
Jessica Tegge



Charlisa Daniels



Cynthia Thomas



her time as an NKU student, done everything from evaluating high-quality STEM teaching practices to building statistical models for heart-disease prediction indicators to determining the efficacy and side effects of certain drugs. And Alyssa also found her math career—biological statistics. She’s eyeing the pharmaceutical industry for postgraduation work.

“It’s something I can see that impacts people, even in this area,” she says. “It’s a real problem, and not something made up in the classroom. I feel like I’m doing something that creates a positive change in the world.”

When she’s not elbow deep in research, Alyssa spends her time as a teaching assistant, math tutor and a member of Alpha Phi Omega. She also consults with clients through the Burkardt Consulting Center on campus and passionately advocates for women to study in STEM.

“I think there’s a lot of pressure put on women to do something other than math or science,” she says. “That’s just the way it’s always been—men are good at math and science, women are told they can’t do something they’re perfectly capable of doing. But it doesn’t have to be that way.”

Charlisa Daniels

Charlisa Daniels, an assistant professor of chemistry at NKU, wants to save the world. She recently received a grant from the ACS Petroleum Research Fund to study an external stimuli polymer with potential environmental benefits.

“Polymers are made up of what we call a monomer—a single building block,” she says. “So, think if I had yellow Legos and

keep building them and make a polymer. But what if I want a red Lego or green Legos, too? I can make co-block polymers with different colors and make a big tower that has four different colors. Now I have this material that can do more than one thing. Maybe the yellow Lego responds to temperature, the blue one adds stability and so on.”

It all started when Daniels went to the Dominican Republic for an alternative spring break. Finding clean water was a challenge, so, along with her students, Daniels developed a water filtration system from charcoal, clay and silver nanoparticles. She later theorized something similar that could “sponge” unwanted substances from our oceans.

“I want to look at molecules that are environmentally relevant,” she says. “There are a lot of domestic issues that we need to focus on. Big corporations would rather pay a fine than clean up their waste. There are potential carcinogens that could cause cancer in those communities that surround where these waste products are.

“Wouldn’t it be cool if we engineered a Roomba for oil spills?”

Cynthia Thomas (12)

Hacker attacks happen every day. And Cynthia Thomas, an assistant professor of computer science at NKU, recently developed and piloted NKU’s first cybersecurity fundamentals course to teach her students basic principles to protect against them.

“Cybersecurity is a totality of so many different things,” she says. “And it’s fun. It doesn’t have to be overwhelming—it’s just data and computers. It’s the human element you have to worry

about." She points to emails, phishing scams and social media clickbait as ways people jeopardize their information.

"To think like a hacker, you have to understand what you have," she says. "You have to understand social engineering and why people are actually the vulnerability. Why would someone want my information? Because it's valuable."

Thomas doesn't want to scare anyone from enjoying the internet, but she does advocate caution. "It's not just that your personal information is being collected," she says. "That's what makes cybersecurity all-inclusive. If you do your part and the next person does their part, everyone is locking everything down and protecting each other."

Jessica Tegge (18)

Jessica Tegge dove into research during her sophomore year at NKU, and she hasn't stopped to look back. The environmental science student (and track and field student-athlete) with a minor in biology pulled soil samples after the region's annual Reforest NKY planting event to measure how mass plantings work. She diverted trash at the Flying Pig Marathon from already-full landfills. And she serves on the advisory board for NKU's Ecological Stewardship Institute.

But her fondest memory happened at Gorman Heritage Farm, where she developed an environmental education curriculum for school-aged children.

"It was the greatest job ever. I was given an opportunity to leave an impression on people of all ages and use my education to showcase the beauty of the natural world—and give them reasons to protect it," she says.

Each day was a new adventure for Jessica, but she'll never forget the day she taught a group of 7-10-year-olds about worms and soil health. Jessica staged a worm race, during which all the children yelled and cheered for their worms—except one little girl. After some coaxing (and a worm-naming ceremony), she could play with worms and was later found digging in the dirt. "She became fearless. I was reminded of how important my job truly was."

Jessica hopes to continue making a difference—particularly with young girls.

"Children are so honest in what they love but begin to shy away because of various pressures they experience while growing up. Unfortunately, young girls are hit the hardest," she says. "If we limit our girls, we limit science advancements and medical breakthroughs and technology that could save millions of lives."

Katie Sawvell

Katie Sawvell always wanted to be a pharmacist, just like her mother. But after several research projects during her freshman year at NKU, her interests changed. She's since studied neurobiology, microbiology, psychopharmacology, molecular engineering and organic chemistry.

The biology student with minors in neuroscience and chemistry is taking her curiosity to France this summer through

NKU's STEM-International Research and Scholarly Exchange Program (STEM-IRSEP). Previously, the program—maintained by Dr. Isabelle Lagadic, an assistant professor of chemistry—sent students abroad for summer internships, but Katie will be the first student to complete a semester abroad on top of the internship. Back home, the program hosts students from various countries for 8-12 weeks. Katie has worked with STEM-IRSEP her entire college career.

"I started really early since I knew I wanted to do research," she says. "It's really helped me figure out what I want to do postgraduation."

It's been a busy three years, but Katie now knows where she's headed. She's currently working on a neuroscience project that studies the effects of antipsychotics on childhood development. She has more questions than answers, but that's what Katie loves about her field.

"That's what science is all about. You have a problem, and then you dig into it and try to figure it out and solve it," she says.

Kristen Goodridge (18)

Kristen Goodridge started out as a computer science student at NKU. Then she fell for machines.

"My interests lie more in the actual hardware of systems instead of the programming," she says. An adviser helped her find sanctuary in electronics engineering technology—a program focused on both the hardware of technology and basics of circuit analysis and electricity flow. She's one of just a few women in the field on campus.

Through a co-op with the Shepherd Chemical Company, Kristen spent the last three summers working with quality assurance personnel and the Controls Engineering department. She recently designed and programmed a temperature control loop for a once-manual system.

Kristen, a SOAR and CINSAM scholar, is often one of two female students in male-dominated classrooms, studying in a program with no female faculty. And she wears it proudly.

"Women are the minority in the field, but we are just as intelligent, just as capable and sometimes even better at problem solving," she says. "If someone tells me, 'You're a girl. You can't do that,' I just turn around and say, 'Watch me.'"

Dr. Madhura Kulkarni

Dr. Madhura Kulkarni believes in the power of STEM. That's why she's doing everything she can to recruit more people—especially women and minorities—into the field. Kulkarni, the director of NKU's Center for Integrated Natural Sciences and Mathematics (CINSAM), works alongside Alyssa Farmer and several education faculty members to help prepare future STEM teachers. Their "Next Generation STEM Classroom" program studies the impact of professional development on teachers. CINSAM sends master teachers into schools with an engaging pedagogy based on proven methods for teaching STEM. The methods help teachers think, and teach students, in different ways.

"The better your practices are for the target group, the better practices become for the whole group," she says. "We're trying to change what we're offering to better include girls and minorities. We're lifting all boats."

Yislain Villalona (18)

Yislain Villalona always wanted to be a doctor until she became curious about the brain and mental disorders. Now the Hispanic premed major (with a focus on cellular molecular genetics and minors in neuroscience and chemistry) is pursuing a degree in neuroscience—and hopefully public health.

"I like the idea of the brain being anatomically the same but everyone having different personalities and different issues," she says. "And I love finding an answer to a question and getting another question."

Yislain became involved in undergraduate research after meeting Dr. Christine Curran, an assistant professor of biology at NKU. She started studying taurine, a main ingredient in energy drinks, to determine its effect on adolescent brain development. The research led her to the Society of Toxicology (SOT), where she was the first—and only—undergraduate student to win the SOT Diversity Initiatives Endowment Career Development Award, which provides funding for students to enhance their professional career development.

"It was an incredible honor and opportunity," she says. "I applied for the award in hopes of attending my first national scientific conference. It ended up being a double bonus."

Sarah Johnson

Landslide remediation costs Kentucky more than \$10 million each year for infrastructure repair. Sarah Johnson, an assistant professor of physics and geology at NKU, studies landslides and recently discovered more than 100 undocumented events in the state. She received a 2018 CINSAM grant to continue her work in northern Kentucky.

With the help of Dr. Hongmei Wang, she identifies areas where land surface has risen or sunk using high-resolution LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data, a remote-sensing technique that measures the time delay between transmitted pulses of light and their reception to determine elevation.

"By filtering out all of the reflections but the bare-ground surface," she says, "a digital elevation model (DEM) is created that allows us to effectively 'see' a high-resolution image of the ground beneath the vegetation."

Johnson will use four undergraduate students to map landslides in Kenton and Campbell counties and catalog the data for the statewide inventory. She believes research helps students fully absorb the subject matter.

"It's the best way for them to experience the process of science—the ideas that don't work, the problem solving, the surprises—that we don't always get to experience in classes, where all the kinks have already been worked out."

Dr. Hongmei Wang

Dr. Hongmei Wang, an associate professor of computer science at NKU, uses satellite images to track spatial distribution and changes of honeysuckles. The data helps park managers prioritize units, as well as determine treatment effectiveness.

In the 11 years she's been at NKU, Wang has always relied on undergraduate students to help with her research, particularly during trips to sampling plots to collect data.

"I would not be able to complete my field data collection, and in turn my research, without my students," she says. But her students also benefit. "They learn how to solve real-world problems by applying knowledge and skills that they learned from classes." Students use GPS to locate and map each sampling plot, then measure each plot's honeysuckle distribution density while working alongside Wang, who has worked multiple times with the Great Parks of Hamilton County, Ohio.

Dr. Kirsten Schwarz & Dr. Kristine Hopfensperger

Dr. Kristine Hopfensperger and Dr. Kirsten Schwarz are working to create meaningful dialogue on food and water security issues. They were both among 15 people named as 2018-19 AAAS Alan I. Leshner Leadership Institute Public Engagement Fellows by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The pair will head to Washington, D.C., this summer for training that includes public engagement, science communication and plan implementation.

Hopfensperger, an ecosystem ecologist and the director of the environmental science program at NKU, focuses on linking animal and plant communities to ecosystem processes. She's also focused on water quality—specifically wetlands, streams and rivers—and making our world cleaner.

For Hopfensperger, the fellowship is about improving partnerships with community partners.

"I've been involved in community outreach and engagement since I was a graduate student," she says. "It's always been really important for me—wanting to really feel like I'm a part of the community and not just doing my research on the side."

Schwarz is an urban ecologist, an associate professor of environmental science and the director of NKU's Ecological Stewardship Institute. Her research focuses on the spatial distribution of goods and hazards in urban areas. She also focuses on trees within cities—the benefits they provide people and their relationship to environmental justice. Her current project, the Strategic Depaving Project, identifies vacant lots in Newport, Kentucky, and involves the community in designing and implementing public green space. The Ecological Stewardship Institute received a \$40,000 grant to fund the project.

"I think the fellowship is a really good opportunity to learn more about how to engage with the community effectively," Schwarz says. "I think it's also an opportunity for us to demonstrate to other faculty at NKU that working with the community improves science. It doesn't have to be seen as a service or outreach to the community, but as a reciprocal relationship." 🍀

6

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Campus buildings bear the names of some pretty impressive individuals. Get to know the people behind the nameplates.



5

“I’M GOING TO LANDRUM.” You’ve likely said this phrase heading to a history, English or other general requirements class at Northern Kentucky University. But did you ever stop to wonder what Landrum means? We did some digging for the stories of people behind the building names—who they were and why they matter to NKU.

1 ALBRIGHT HEALTH CENTER

The Albright Health Center stands as a monument to second president Dr. A.D. Albright’s interest in health and education and was the first campus building meant to address NKU’s rapid growth—original projections predicted 5,000 student enrollments, but under Albright’s leadership enrollment approached 10,000. At the September 1984 dedication, Albright foreshadowed things to come, saying that, while once the thought was that the building would complete campus, “Now they know that

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it is a symbol of things that can be.” The building underwent a \$45.4 million 2014 renovation to become the largest recreation center on any Kentucky campus.

2 FOUNDERS HALL

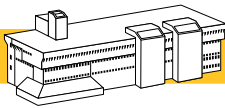
Campus’s second academic building was a welcome addition for students who’d squeezed into Nunn for two years. The five-story structure opened in 1974 as the Natural Science Center and housed programs such as natural sciences and fine arts. When the Dorothy Westerman Herrmann Science Center became home to NKU’s science departments

in 2002, the building adopted the informal title “Old Science” but was, in 2006, rechristened to honor the university’s founders—from inaugural students to first faculty and staff members to community members who championed the school. Founders recently got a renovation, as well as a new neighbor in the Health Innovation Center.

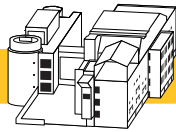
3 GRIFFIN HALL

Some campus namings honor individuals from the school’s history; others reflect community members’ investments in educational outreach. It’s the

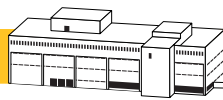
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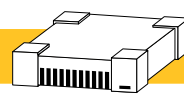
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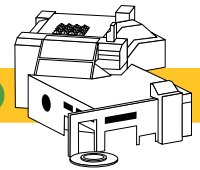
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latter case with Griffin Hall, named after Griffin Industries, which funded the \$7 million construction, and the Griffin family. Founded in 1943 by Reading, Ohio, native John L. Griffin, Griffin Industries became the eighth-largest privately held company in Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati, and specialized in rendering—recycling animal carcasses into products such as soap and animal feed. Griffin Hall opened in 2011 and houses the College of Informatics.

4 **DOROTHY WESTERMAN HERRMANN SCIENCE CENTER**

Home to both the Haile Digital Planetarium and a rooftop garden, the Dorothy Westerman Herrmann Science Center was honored by the Kentucky Society of Architects of the American Institute of Architects in 2006 with a merit award for excellence in architectural design. The building is named for Dorothy Westerman Herrmann, a friend of NKU and lifelong resident of Campbell County, to honor Herrmann, who died in 2003, and her family's ongoing support for structures, programs and scholarships. The former Herrmann Alumni Center (once known as the Pompilio Alumni House) was named for Herrmann's son, Mark R. Herrmann, who died in 1995. Herrmann gave a gift from her

son's estate to NKU, and there is an established scholarship in honor of her late husband, Robert.

5 **LANDRUM ACADEMIC CENTER**

Tucked inside Landrum is a wealth of information, ranging from history to literature to sociology, and it's a common site for general education courses. The building is named for Charles O. "Charlie" Landrum, a founding father who served as one of NKU's original Regents from 1968-1974. Born in DeMossville, Kentucky, in 1917, Landrum was a respected engineer and senior partner in airport consulting firm Landrum & Brown—he even won the Progressive Architecture Design Award for the Memphis Air Terminal. Landrum held a variety of civic positions in numerous clubs and organizations.

6 **KENNETH R. LUCAS ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER**

At eight stories, the Kenneth R. Lucas Administrative Center is NKU's tallest building. In 1994 the building was dedicated to Lucas, one of the first Regents and an early university benefactor. Son of a Grant County farmer, Lucas served in the Air Force for 12 years and retired as a major from the Air National Guard. He served Kentucky's 4th district in the U.S. House of Representatives for three terms,

retiring in December 2004, when he donated his political papers to NKU. Lucas also served as Boone County Judge-Executive and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs.

7 **NUNN HALL**

Nunn Hall was the university's cornerstone when it opened in 1972, and students, faculty and staff squeezed into the structure for almost every class and event. Nunn Hall is named to honor Louie B. Nunn, Kentucky's 52nd governor, who signed legislation creating Northern Kentucky State College on March 14, 1968. He rode a bulldozer during the groundbreaking, though he was hesitant to have it named after him—Nunn wanted it clear the college served the community and feared the naming would be seen as partisan.

8 **REGENTS HALL**

Regents Hall debuted as the second building on campus in 1972, and the 1,800-seat arena was home to all Norse basketball games for years. Decades ago, it was a destination for national bands like the Eagles and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Now it's used as a practice space for several university sports and as an event venue, and it houses offices for NKU coaches and athletic support staff.

Regents Hall is named in honor of NKU's founding Board of Regents—Joseph Kohler, Charles Landrum, Elmer Haas, Kenneth Lucas, Charles Wiley and John R.S. Brooking—who were charged with building a new university from the ground up. After the inaugural meeting in September 1968, the Board selected the campus site, chose a president and other administrators, established

a budget and laid groundwork for the very first classes to take place.

9 **W. FRANK STEELY LIBRARY**

NKU's library is named to honor its founding president, Dr. W. Frank Steely. The Hazel, Kentucky, native was dean of Virginia's Clinch Valley College when chosen to lead in 1969, and his major milestones include formation of the NKSC Research and Development Foundation, the move to the Highland Heights campus and conditional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (full accreditation came in 1978). After stepping down in 1975, Steely taught history at NKU until 2001. The W. Frank Steely Library underwent a \$10 million expansion in 1994-95, under the administration of third president, Dr. Leon Boothe.

10 **JAMES C. AND RACHEL M. VOTRUBA STUDENT UNION**

The Student Union was built to replace the University Center as NKU's social hub. The \$35 million facility opened in 2008 with three stories of open atrium areas meant to create a "Main Street" feel. Highlights include a 750-seat ballroom and a wide variety of dining options. In May 2012, the building was renamed in honor of NKU's popular fourth president, Dr. James C. Votruba, and his wife, Rachel. The Student Government Association petitioned the Board of Regents to waive its rule requiring a two-year waiting period before honoring retired administrators with a facility naming, and the Board approved an immediate special recognition. 🐾

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NORSING AROUND

This past semester we took an evening to celebrate those alumni who made our first 50 years so incredible. Titled "Blast From the Past," the 2018 Alumni Awards honored exceptional alumni and NKU supporters with food, drinks and dancing, followed by Homecoming.

2018 Outstanding Young Alumnus Awardee, Sen. Wil Shroder II, receives a pre-award boutonniere.



↑ André Ward, recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, greets current members of his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha.



↑ Greg Neal, left, shared a laugh with incoming president, Dr. Ashish Vaidya, and his wife, Nita.



← Joe McGinnis, center, chats with fellow attendees at the Alumni Awards after-party.



BB&T Arena was transformed for an elegant evening of celebration.



Alumni Association President Jessica Johnston welcomes the crowd.



Fans, alongside Victor E. Viking, cheer on the Norse men's basketball team in their game against the Green Bay Phoenix. The Norse took home the victory with an 86-80 win.



ABOVE TOP Students react to the 2018 Homecoming game.

ABOVE BOTTOM 2018 Homecoming Queen, Jenna Bilz, and King, Ethan Poweleit, pose with interim President Gerard St. Amand and his wife, Peggy.



Dr. Jacqueline Emerine, recipient of the Faculty/Strongest Influence Award, celebrates 50 years of NKU with Lauren Mohr, Chanell Karr and Tina Hoesl.



Mike Daniels and Ryan Rosado strike a pose at the Alumni Awards after-party.



Outstanding Alumnus Award winner, Bruce Lunsford (center right), poses with Alex Cantrill, interim President St. Amand and Jessica Johnston.

[ENTREPRENEUR]



A CURIOUS THIRST

One simple question led an educator into entrepreneurship.

Patrick McGinnis ('08, '13) was going to be a teacher. He earned degrees in secondary education and social studies from Northern Kentucky University first, then returned to the university for a Master of Executive Leadership & Organizational Change (ELOC) a few years later. And he was pursuing his Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

in Educational Leadership at NKU when life stepped in and showed him that the real lesson was his to learn.

And it all started with a question.

"I went to my nephews' soccer game, and they had big carts of drinks," says McGinnis. "They're chugging Capri Sun and things with a lot of sugar. I am not a food scientist by any means, but there's got

to be a better alternative."

He may not be a food scientist, but McGinnis knows a bit more about the beverage industry than most concerned uncles. Upon encountering an unhealthy educational job market after undergraduate school, he took a career detour into drink delivery.

"I would interview at places where I



had enough of a connection to get that interview, and getting even a call back was tough," he says. "I started doing some subbing, then I was very fortunate that a friend of mine who worked for Heidelberg Distributing said, 'While you're interviewing, if you're looking for a job, we're looking for sales professionals.'"

McGinnis was hired for what he calls "the worst job at Heidelberg" and began learning about the consumer packaged goods industry while stacking cans on weekends and holidays. He still hoped to one day be a teacher, and he enjoyed

coaching high school basketball, but McGinnis was moving up the ranks of the beverage industry and enjoying the work.

Then came the soccer game. McGinnis was dogged by the question of a better sports drink, and set out in search of a solution. "I started doing research," he says. "I'd go to Kroger or Whole Foods and look for different alternatives, and what I couldn't find was something that was healthy and tasted good." He realized that what he wanted was a version of popular electrolyte beverage Pedialyte that was enjoyable to drink. "There's a reason why kids are drinking it and parents recommend it," he says, "but I think it tastes like crap. So I was like, how do I take those ingredients and make it taste good?"

McGinnis knew that if he could actually realize this goal, he would have a product that he, with his beverage skill set, could take to market. So even though he was working full time and pursuing a doctorate, McGinnis decided to go for it—but what that meant, he really wasn't sure.

"It was literally like, 'how to start a beverage company,'" he says, typing on an invisible keyboard. "People laugh, but I honestly didn't know what the first step was." He decided to start with taste



formulation ("Anybody can design a package," he says. "That's just marketing 101"), so he reached out to a friend of a friend, an Atlanta-based mixologist named Dr Prem Vermoni, for help. The two taste-tested recipes for months until they found a flavor profile that met McGinnis's standards. "The fact that it actually tasted good was a check plus. That, for me, was the game changer."

After settling on a taste, McGinnis reached out to college friend and area entrepreneur Sean Herron ('09) to help brand his new product, which he dubbed THIRTY for the fact that it only

has 30 calories. He contacted Rodney D'Souza, Fifth Third Bank Endowed Professor of Entrepreneurship and director of the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, for advice. He also met with his old boss and friend, Vail Miller Jr., the CEO of Heidelberg, who offered him a distribution contract. A deal with United Dairy Farmers followed, putting THIRTY's two flavors (raspberry/cherry and tangerine/orange) into 188 tristate stores. And recently, THIRTY made it into Kroger stores, an agreement that will place the beverage line in front of grocery shoppers across the East Coast.

While the experience has been an education in multiple areas, the main lesson is that McGinnis is an entrepreneur at heart—and he learned it by jumping in head first. "Was I willing to give up a career that I've worked really hard and fought for to start from scratch again?" he says. "It truly was a leap of faith. The unknown was crazy, and I did it. I put everything I had into it." Now in business for just more than a year, McGinnis looks back on the experience in awe.

"It's pretty crazy," he says. "One thing I can say I learned over the course of time was, a lot of people that I know who are entrepreneurs kind of fall into it. Rather than just saying, 'I want to be my own boss,' they found something that there's a need for. I saw this demand, and the longer I've been part of this company, I realize I made the right decision."

THIRTY recently released three new flavors—lemon/lime, acai/blueberry and strawberry/watermelon—and McGinnis is looking to expand into school cafeterias where, because of its low sugar content, the drink is permissible under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. He's considering ways to increase THIRTY's already-impressive community involvement and growing the company's East Coast presence. McGinnis is always thinking of ways to take his product to the next level—and beyond.

"I want to be one of the biggest brands in Cincinnati," he says. "When people come to Cincinnati, I want them to think about THIRTY drink and say, 'Oh, yeah, that's where they're from.'"

—Rodney Wilson ('00)



THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Marty Boyer recently discovered a new stage in life.

What does it take to be a star of the theater? Most would say a place center stage in the main role of a play or musical or, at the very least, a part significant enough to earn a listing in a production's Playbill.

Northern Kentucky University alumnus Marty Boyer ('99) isn't trying to get his name on a theater marquee, but the work he does for local productions is very much a star turn. Which is how he likes it—he wants to craft the main story from behind the scenes.

"I love being the supporting cast member," Boyer says, "and helping others express themselves."

Boyer's role occurs long before the curtain call in his Covington, Kentucky, theatrical supply store, Theatre House. If you're someone in the theater business, you've probably visited the Theatre House—and when the store closed for six months recently, you probably freaked out.

Enter Boyer stage left: The computer

science and communications graduate purchased the family business, which closed after a more than 60-year run, and breathed new life into the Theatre House.

Boyer is the first to admit he doesn't have a theater background, but he doesn't think past experience is necessary. With a long history in the local corporate community—including a recent stint as vice president and director of marketing for Cincinnati start-up (and "Shark Tank" favorite) Tom+Chee—he knows that, when it comes to business, the most important question is "Do I have a passion for this?" And Boyer is passionate about the Theatre House.

"The passion for me is, 'How can other people tell their stories?' I think the coolest thing that I get to do is help other people craft their stories to tell to the world," Boyer says. "Sometimes that means giving them fabric, sometimes that means helping provide costumes, sometimes it's makeup. Whatever that might be, it's really their story."

He's counting on his skills in marketing and communications to keep Theatre House

operating and, in turn, keep onstage storytellers equipped with the tools they need.

"It's really served this business really well," Boyer says, "the vertical of costume, Halloween, really theatrical supplies. The way I describe it is, it's a very aged industry and I have a very modern skill set."

And while an established customer base keeps the doors open, Boyer sees growth opportunities in some untapped markets—like, for instance, drag queens.

"Drag queens have been an incredible market for us," Boyer says. "I get to meet all kinds of folks that come in, and our space is kind of their haven."

Boyer credits NKU with helping him master his skill set, and a penchant for taking on side gigs has given him room to practice and grow. In fact, it was during his time as an undergraduate that Boyer started his first business, doing support for Cincinnati Bell's DSL program.

"In terms of what my aspirations were, I didn't really ever say, 'Oh, this is my objective of what I want to achieve.' Even as a young person, I knew I should develop the skill sets that I'm really interested in doing."

Now Boyer's interested in helping others succeed, and he's served as a mentor and adviser to tech accelerator program UpTech as well as shared his knowledge as the keynote speaker at a recent Griffifest, a presentation of student projects from the departments within NKU's College of Informatics.

Whenever he meets with young people, Boyer tells them to stop asking themselves what they want to be when they grow up. "That's the wrong question," he says. "I was more interested in who I wanted to be when I grow up. If I define who I want to be, then that becomes the platform I'm interested in doing. That's a far more interesting life."

From computers to grilled cheese to tubes of stage makeup, Boyer applies his diverse background to succeeding in the task at hand. Right now, that's helping a diverse clientele tell their stories.

"I love being that role back to people," he says. "I think that's the right role for the Theatre House and for Marty Boyer personally." 🍷

—Lizzie Kibler ('16)

BANKS' ACCOUNT

Marc Banks earns PR success in Washington, D.C.

It is, to say the least, an interesting time for American politics.

No matter where you land on the political spectrum, it's hard to deny that our legislative landscape's entered unfamiliar terrain in recent years. What comes next is anybody's guess, but one thing's for sure: These days, there are unusual politics at play in politics as usual.

If you think all this is a lot to keep up with, consider what it's like for Marc Banks. The 2014 graduate of Northern Kentucky University's Public Relations program followed an internship with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand to a full-time job as public relations specialist for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. (CBCF)—which means he's up close and personal with Capitol Hill every day.

And he's having a blast.

"Specifically where I'm at right now, with the mission and goal of what I'm doing—I love it," says Banks.

Banks, who was recently named as one of the Huffington Post's "Top 25 African American PR Millennials to Watch," is referring to the core goal of the CBCF—a guiding mission that Banks shares wholeheartedly.

"We focus mainly on providing fellowships, internships and scholarships for African-American students to get on Capitol Hill," he explains. "Diversity on Capitol Hill is imperative. We live in a diverse America, and the people making our laws and legislation should represent our country, not just in race but in disability, in where they come from, in life experiences."

Banks knows about diversity of life experiences. Brought to Cincinnati by his grandmother for better educational options (he graduated from Springer School, which offers specialized education to students, like Banks, who live with learning disabilities), the Atlanta native's path to a high-energy career in Washington, D.C., was hardly preordained. But if his journey has a starting point, it's his time at NKU,

where he found the individualized attention he needed to succeed.

"NKU offered small class sizes. You're not just another number in class, and you feel as though the teachers know your name. It was the people at NKU that made it such a great place to learn and study."

Originally enrolling as a journalism major, Banks soon found himself drawn to PR, which allows him to perform a variety of tasks within a journalistic role.

"I think PR appealed to me because I can still dabble in journalism—kind of be the flip-side of that coin—but also it gives me some business and events experience," he says. "PR was more encompassing of what I wanted to do and gave me options to do a little more."

Not only did Banks learn about PR in the classroom, but working with a fellow student on a campus radio show established his career path when it led to production work at Radio One's The Wiz.

"I went on Norse Code Radio with Jeffonia Wynn [aka Cincinnati media professional and public personality, Ms. Ebony J]," says Banks. "She brought me in to pull together some of the branding and communication tactics for her show. I also helped with securing some of the people who came on to the show for her to interview. Eventually, I went on to work with her when she went to Cincinnati's WIZF"

Also during his time at NKU, Banks interned at the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement, where work advocating for minorities and underrepresented individuals fueled the passion that eventually carried him to Capitol Hill.

While his day job influencing our nation's politics is fulfilling to Banks, the young professional's zest for public relations also led him to found an entertainment PR company, Bankable PR Management & Services, of which he serves as CEO.

"I've worked with Fox, Warner Bros., BET," he says. "We've done a lot of



screenings for TV shows." Banks proceeds to rattle off a list of television programs, including "Star" and "Shots Fired," that Bankable's worked with, as well as a who's who of notable celebrities who show up at his events. But when asked if he likes entertainment or political work better, Banks doesn't see a reason to choose.

"I definitely think they scratch different itches for me," he says. "Political communications can be fast paced—it's intense. You feel the effects of it a little more and they can be a bit longer lingering. But entertainment PR's fun. I enjoy it. I think it gives me access to a different world."

"What I really enjoy is merging the two. Finding places where entertainers and people who have some celebrity to them can insert themselves into the political sphere and put that influence behind a cause that advocates for social rights and human rights."

And while this merging plays heavily into what Banks sees in his future, when you ask him directly about his plans for the days ahead, his answer is one commonly heard around Capitol Hill.

"I'm weighing some different things," he says. "I'm looking forward to 2020 to see what will happen." 🍷

—Rodney Wilson ('00)



PILOT SEASON

Maggie Murphy's Kentucky roots carried her to Hollywood success.

“**V**eronica Mars.” “The Simpsons.” “Ally McBeal.” “Malcolm in the Middle.” “The X-Files.”

Do you see the connection between these TV shows? Probably not, but Maggie Murphy certainly does—she developed and produced them. With a career in production and television development that spans more than 25 years, she has had a hand in developing and shepherding dozens of titles onto major television networks. Murphy opened the Shaftesbury U.S. offices seven years ago and is currently an executive producer there. She also serves as a consultant at Universal TV for Vin Diesel’s company, *One Race*, where they are currently shooting “*Get Christie Love*” for ABC.

“Producing has been a second love for me, and it makes me so happy creating shows from a germ of an idea to a TV series,” Murphy says. “There is such a challenge to build a show from nothing—from the selling of the idea, to the script, to shooting and, ultimately, getting it on the air. I love transporting the audience to a new world where hopefully they glean some insight, emotional catharsis, big laughs or luscious scares ... and guiltily, I love going on that ride as well.”

Murphy, a native of Covington, Kentucky, and 1980 graduate of Northern Kentucky University, remembers the first play she ever wrote—that was in second grade. She had a natural passion for visual storytelling, but the daughter of a milkman and the little sister of accountants and CPAs didn’t think it was possible to make a living as an actress. So, when the time came to choose a major, she signed up for NKU’s computer science program. But Murphy had been an avid performer in high school, and she continued performing on the side in college.

Though she enjoyed computer science, her life in IT wasn’t meant to be, and Murphy remembers the moment that forever changed her trajectory. It was 1978, and she was standing in the *The Box*, Donald Judd’s minimalist structure on campus, rehearsing

Lanford Wilson’s “*The Rimers of Eldritch*.” Michael Hankins, the director of the touring Actors Theatre of Louisville show “*The Lion in Winter*”—which would be presented the following evening—approached to listen.

“After the rehearsal, he asked if I had an audition piece or monologue,” she says. “I honestly didn’t even know what I was doing. I was only 20 and majoring in computer science. All I remember is that I had a toothache.”

Murphy searched her memory for something to recite and delivered an impromptu audition with a monologue from a high school play. And it paid off—the director was impressed, and Murphy was chosen for an apprenticeship at Actors Theatre and appeared in the American premiere of “*Whose Life Is It Anyway?*” Following the stint, she promptly switched her major, graduating with a theater B.A. in 1980. She landed a job as a resident actress at Memphis’ Playhouse on the Square and traveled to regional theaters to perform and direct shows. After touring for six years, Murphy decided she wanted to stay in one place. She packed up her entire life and headed to Los Angeles.

And she’s lived there ever since.

For the next 25 years, Murphy worked her way up the entertainment ladder—from 20th Century Fox, to David E. Kelley Productions, to Regency TV, to UPN/CW, to Kiefer Sutherland Productions, to Cookie Jar (a Canada-based production company) and now Shaftesbury and Universal.

Her career has found Murphy hunkered down with various A-list celebrities—it’s all in a day’s work—but one actor, a no-name at the time, makes her smile nostalgically. During her time at 20th Century Fox, Murphy recalls, she spent time with George Clooney (this was before his big break as Doug Ross on “*ER*”). Clooney was always happy to help with read throughs as she evaluated scripts. Back home, Murphy and Clooney had been on campus at the same time, but they didn’t cross paths until both lived thousands of miles from Kentucky.

Murphy has had a hand in creation and development for many TV shows, but when asked if she has a favorite, she’s stumped for an answer. They are all her babies, she says, but the producer does admit to particular fondness for one project.

“*Veronica Mars*’ holds a special place in my heart,” she says. “I love all of them ... but [Veronica] was my first year at a network. My fight was to get shows on the air, and Veronica was your underdog.”

Though she loves the entertainment industry, Murphy’s career hasn’t been an easy road. She remembers early days on the other side of the camera when she was trying to make her name as an actress. For three years, she held a day job in a chiropractor’s office and worked as an actress occasionally on “*Days of Our Lives*” and “*Designing Women*” before landing her first development job.

But Murphy learned resilience early, and her myriad experiences on the stage and behind the curtain at NKU carried her through the difficult times. In fact, she still draws on those lessons today, in her roles at Shaftesbury and Universal.

“The foundation NKU provided me with is immeasurable,” she says. “NKU really helped me in my critical studies about learning good writing and acting.”

And now she’s also teaching those skills to others. She says she’s always trying to “hatch a couple babies” herself, but Murphy also wants to train the next generation to tell and recognize good stories and writers. When she isn’t getting scripts for pilots green-lighted, she’s an associate professor in UCLA’s graduate TV film and digital department, and she teaches abroad in the Czech Republic, England, Germany, France and Bosnia.

For Murphy, teaching is a way to invest her years of experience.

“When I was first in charge of sets, I had no idea what I was doing,” she says. “I had a crew of 150 with an \$80,000-a-day budget to keep the trains on schedule. I love what I do and teaching how to do it.”

—Jayna Morris

NKU SCHLACHTER UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES PRESENTS...

MYSTERY PHOTO!



SOLVE THE MYSTERY FOR NKU HISTORY!

Well, this looks fun—bag-headed young people pushing classmates toward Nunn Hall in rolling office chairs (although that guy on the right looks like he's headed for a collision with a concrete bench). We're not sure what's going on here, though our best guess is it's something to do with the long-lost (and due-for-a-comeback) tradition of Rites of

Spring, where campus welcomed warm weather with various activities of mirth and merriment. Do you remember this game of bumper furniture? Did you don a grocery bag and risk impact with a concrete-heavy campus? Help us out! Email your guesses to nkumagazine@nku.edu so we can remedy this race mystery.