Join us throughout this issue as we celebrate the impact women have on Xavier University.

Celebrating 50 Years of Women at Xavier

1969-2019

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This spring, TriHealth sponsored the Xavier University Dementia Care Summit 2019, where families, clients and professionals came together for dementia care. Learn more: xavier.edu/dementia-summit
GREETINGS AND THANK YOU…

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Xavier becoming fully co-educational. Although women attended the University during the evenings and summers as far back as 1914, it was not until 1968 that women were admitted as full-time traditional undergraduates. What a difference 50 years makes. Today approximately 75 percent of the 3,200 students pursuing their degree in the College of Professional Sciences are women. In this issue we celebrate this anniversary by highlighting some of the amazing work of our women students, faculty, and alumni particularly in the area of behavioral health.

Just as 1969 was a time of great transition for Xavier University, 2019 is a time of transition for the College of Professional Sciences. In the Fall we will open the Health United Building – a 160,000 square-foot, multi-use building that will serve as home base for almost 1,500 students pursuing their degrees in five health-related, academic departments: sport studies, radiological technology, occupational therapy, health services administration and nursing.

The future of the College is truly bright, which makes some personal news for me bittersweet. After very careful reflection, I have accepted a new position as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky. The last four years as Dean of the College of Professional Sciences have been some of the most rewarding of my career. I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve Xavier and for the students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends I’ve met through the College. The good work we’ve done together will not miss a beat. My colleague, Professor Linda Schoenstedt, will step in to serve as interim dean while a search for a permanent replacement is underway. I will work side-by-side with Linda until my last day on June 30.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who calls themselves a friend of the College of Professional Sciences. Our success is not possible without your support.

Thank you,

Paul Gore, PhD
Dean, College of Professional Sciences

ON THE COVER: Fifty years ago, women were admitted as full-time undergrads to Xavier’s traditional day school.
MAKING AN IMPACT: As part of the Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services, Nikki Bisig has dedicated her life to empowering mentally ill adults in the area.
Since 1914, women have attended Xavier in the evenings, on weekends and in the summer. But 50 years ago, when women were admitted as full-time undergrads to the traditional day school, their impact as leaders in the fields of professional sciences exploded. From social work and nursing, to education and psychology, there is a cadre of women in the area and around the world who call themselves Xavier alumni. In turn, these women, and others, are helping to develop the next generation of leaders — both male and female — in these fields.

Throughout 2019, Xavier will mark the milestone 50th anniversary of going fully co-ed, by celebrating the contributions, achievements and sustaining impact that all Xavier women, including those in the College of Professional Sciences, have made and continue to make on the world.

Take Nikki Bisig, for example. An alumna, as well as an adjunct faculty member and the Vice President of Mental Health Care Management at Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services, Bisig has dedicated her life to empowering people with mental health issues in the area.

“It’s about engagement, and helping people reach their potential,” says the 45-year-old Circleville, Ohio, native. “I love the challenge and am inspired by the clients we serve. I love trying to figure out how to connect with them.”

Bisig provides direction to about 200 employees and oversees support services for 6,000 adults with severe mental illness in the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area.

After completing an undergraduate degree in music therapy, Bisig knew she wanted to continue her education in counseling. “I had experience in bringing out emotion in people, and I wanted to be more equipped in handling that,” she says. “I liked the Catholic education at Xavier. I liked the comfortable campus. It felt like a good fit.”
While in school, Bisig says she enjoyed the accessibility to professors and fellow students, and felt her education was top notch.

But while the vast majority of her peers were women, she took note that only two or three of her professors were female.

“The faculty were always encouraging, and I enjoyed them and learned so much,” she says. “But it’s true there weren’t a lot of women.”

It played a part in her decision to teach in the program.

“It really comes down to the connection I had with Dr. (Brent) Richardson,” she says. “I would come back to his class and speak on occasion, and I also loved staying connected with the Xavier students.”

Now more than ever, she says it is important to raise awareness about behavioral health. As the stigma of having a mental health issue has waned, and the opportunities for everyone on the mental health spectrum to get the help they need have increased, the time is right to educate students and the overall population to be aware of these conditions. From an administrative standpoint, Xavier is doing its part.

“It’s really embedded in our Mission,” says Jean Griffin, Xavier’s Dean of Students. “For us, we talk about ‘wellbeing’ and what that means at Xavier — not just wellbeing for students, but also for staff and faculty as well.”

With the new $54 million Health United Building coming online by the end of the year, and countless other mentoring and coaching opportunities, Xavier wants to have numerous outlets in place for their students, faculty and staff.

“Although there have been disciplines focused on maintaining wellbeing for decades, it does seem especially important now,” Bisig says. She noted that the top two prescribed medications in America for adults from the ages of 20-59 are for anti-depressants and pain.

“With the stressors we have in our communities and our lives, this knowledge is extremely important,” she says.

“Nikki is just another example of a strong female leader from CPS who is going out and changing the world,” says her former professor, Brent Richardson, chair of the Department of Counseling. “I knew she was going to be something great.”

“I’m happy to carry on that tradition,” she says, laughing.
We Were Pioneers …

Fifty years ago, in the fall of 1969, all-male Xavier University admitted women as full-time undergraduate, day students. Today, more than 54 percent of undergraduate students are women.

Psychology Professor Christine Dacey was here to see it all. She was one of the first women enrolled at Xavier when she enrolled for her freshman year in 1970. She worked at Kroger to put herself through school, and with scholarship monies and the transfer of high school credit for two calculus courses, was able to afford the $50 per credit hour tuition.

“I remember it was pretty exhausting at times,” she says. “I would go to school, then to work, then I would stay up at night studying and doing homework.”

Dacey, who had come from a smaller all girls’ high school, says she remembers how important it was to bond with other women on campus. They could cope with their problems, like a lack of women’s bathrooms and the young men who did not feel women belonged at Xavier.

For one of her courses, the professor assigned the class seats alphabetically — but he placed the two women of the class in the back, by themselves.

“I'm sure he didn't mean anything malicious by it; he may have even done it to try and protect us,” she says. “But it was still uncomfortable.”

Originally a math major, Dacey decided she wanted to work with people and make a difference in the world, so she switched to psychology.

She graduated and became one of the few women to re-enroll at Xavier for graduate classes in the master’s program in psychology. She then went on to complete her doctoral work in clinical psychology at the University of Ottawa. The subject of her thesis? How men deal with a fear of failure … while women deal with a fear of success.

She came back to Xavier in the 1980s and became a professor, which provided new challenges.

Her co-workers, mostly men, spent their time talking hoops on their breaks, so she had to learn to discuss the sport quickly to fit in. And she was amazed at the number of young women who confided things to her, everything from body image issues to eating disorders — all because they felt like, as a woman, she might understand.

Now, after 35 years in the classroom, Dacey will retire from Xavier at the end of the semester.

“It’s incredible how Xavier has changed over the years,” she says. “Little did I know when I first stepped onto Xavier’s campus as one of a very few female students, that this experience would have such a profound impact on my life. I never thought about it at the time, but we were pioneers.”
MUTUAL ADMIRATION: Meet Jennifer Bradley, an assistant professor in the School of Nursing, (standing) and Kathleen Hart, chair of the School of Psychology. The pair were high school classmates long before they re-connected at Xavier.
Once high school classmates, these Xavier colleagues are helping spread awareness about mental health

BY RYAN CLARK

Years ago, when they were both students at McAuley High School in Cincinnati, two young girls had no idea what their futures held or the coincidences that would continue to connect their paths.

They would both go on to earn doctorates in psychology. They would both end up teaching in the College of Professional Sciences at Xavier.

And both—while teaching in separate departments—would join other peers as advocates for what we now call behavioral health, or as one professor put it, being healthy “across the board, both mind and body.”

Meet Kathleen Hart and Jennifer Bradley. Hart, chair of the School of Psychology, and Bradley, an assistant professor in the School of Nursing, were high school classmates long before they re-connected at Xavier. And while they may not have socialized in the same circles, they definitely knew of one another.

“I admired her and looked up to her,” Bradley says. “She always seemed so driven, like she had it all figured out.”

At this, Hart laughs.

“I’m not sure that was me,” she says. “I guess by the time I was a senior in high school I knew that my education was important. But I didn’t really know where I was going.”

She was on her way to Xavier, where she’d earn undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology. She’d then go on to Virginia Tech for her doctorate, and return home to teach at her alma mater. Bradley would take a different route, earning a bachelor’s in nursing from Mount St. Joseph, then a master’s from the University of Cincinnati and a doctorate in clinical psychology from The Union Institute and University.

She spent years working as a nurse, as a leader in the corporate world, as a psychologist and a professor.

These are just two of our faculty who are leading the charge as advocates for behavioral health. From a psychological standpoint, behavioral health can mean the way we mentally deal with stress, pain and other problems, like addiction. From a nursing viewpoint, it can be more tied to physical wellness, and the prevention of physical ailments.

But one thing is for sure: it all falls under the same umbrella, and CPS is leading the way when it comes to the advocacy of wellness in our students, as well as our Cincinnati community.

Some would say it’s more important now than ever before.

People still find it difficult to cope, and in a world where our stressors keep multiplying (money, family, technology, world affairs, health concerns, drug abuse, etc.) staying mentally fit is a must.

“It’s about resilience,” Bradley says. “How do we deal with all these stresses?”

Hart says the idea isn’t new. “Psychologists have been preaching this for years,” she says. “The CDC has been telling people to practice good behavioral habits. Like sleep, for instance. How long have we been hearing that we must get good sleep?” And yet, inadequate sleep is a pervasive problem across the country.

With those same pressures bearing down on America’s students, colleges and universities are seeing the importance
of creating awareness, too. At Xavier, students have several resources when they feel overwhelmed, including counseling and wellness services, some in partnership with TriHealth. And in the latter part of this year, the new $54 million Health United Building will open, bringing many students in various disciplines together, in the new Student Wellbeing Center.

Faculty and staff from the college say that focusing on the topic of behavioral health mirrors the Mission of the University in teaching the whole person.

“For the last five years, the College has done a wonderful job of preparing students for inter-professional practice through inter-professional education,” says Dennis Long, associate dean of the College of Professional Sciences. “Student learning across professions and disciplines aligns with the education of the whole person. But what separates our College of Professional Sciences is the ability for the students to learn about the integration of health and behavioral health both inside and outside the classroom. Students receive experiential learning in their professional placements with preparation for practice with a variety of professionals focusing on the client as a total person.

In the future, Hart says that someday, when we go in for a checkup, we will probably see a doctor specializing in physical health, as well as someone who is an expert in mental health. They will ask us different questions. They will try to make us feel better in different ways.

And students in the College of Professional Sciences will be taught how to do just that.

Most will be going to complete clinicals in hospitals, along with community mental health clinics. Some go in pairs to AA meetings to experience what it’s like. And of course, they must also keep learning to care for themselves.

“How can they take care of patients when they don’t take care of themselves?” Bradley asks. “We are mind, body, spirit and emotional beings.”

As it turns out, both Bradley and Hart explain things in similar ways.

It makes sense. They’ve known each other since high-school.
MISSION-DRIVEN: The idea of educating the whole person — mind and body — fits right in with the Mission of the University, officials say.

STAYING WELL Learn more about resources available to Xavier students at xavier.edu/psychology-school
“Service learning really aligns with our Jesuit values, and nursing really lends itself to giving back. I wanted my students to experience that. We live in an area, unfortunately, that has among the highest infant mortality rates in the nation. So we worked with Healthy Moms and Babes, a nonprofit that travels by bus to underserved communities and provides free health services for mothers. This provides an opportunity for the students to increase infant survival by fostering the health of women, children and families, and by helping to establish and ingrain healthy behaviors. Our students travel on the bus and provide care, and in giving back, they also get something out of the experience.”
EMILY FORTIN, ‘18
Montessori/Special Education
Teacher, St. Ursula Villa

“I am a head Montessori teacher in a 3-6-year-old classroom. I am using my degrees to support my students and their diverse needs. I am using lesson planning techniques, behavioral management strategies and visual tools that I learned through classes and field placements at Xavier to help my students access the curriculum and communicate effectively with peers. My senior year internship at Xavier allowed me to utilize both Montessori and Special Education philosophies in my teaching. This experience taught me how multiple teaching philosophies can be integrated and benefit students. My current experience in Xavier’s Graduate Reading Program has challenged me to continue learning and trying new strategies in the classroom.”

xavier.edu/specialed
xavier.edu/montessori
COACHING UP Learn more about Xavier’s Coaching Education and Athlete Development program at xavier.edu/coaching
Laura Campbell believes in three mantras when it comes to coaching.

“I know firsthand how coaches have the most significant influence over athletes at every stage of their development,” says the 43-year-old coach and business owner from San Antonio. “Furthermore, I wholeheartedly believe that developing the athlete as a whole person is the true purpose of coaching. Finally, I passionately consider the primary purpose of sports should be to promote participation in sport and/or physical activity throughout an athlete’s lifespan.”

It was those three beliefs that led her to pursue her graduate degree at Xavier. “The Coaching Education and Athlete Development (CEAD) program supported my three primary truths about coaching and sports,” she says. “As such, I felt the CEAD program would be the best fit to further my knowledge and expertise to serve my current and future athletes better.”

In 2016, Campbell founded Truth Evolution, LLC, as a holistic coaching practice in Texas designed to provide strength and conditioning training while addressing the primary challenges people face while trying to maintain a lifestyle of health and wellness. But she needed more, she says. “My knowledge and competencies of coaching were restricted to experience and unstructured learning opportunities,” she says. In other words, she needed Xavier’s online graduate CEAD program.

“Xavier gave me the formal education that I was missing to be a well-rounded, truly knowledgeable coach,” she says. “More importantly, perhaps, is that by participating in the Xavier CEAD program, my career has been placed on an unexpected trajectory. Initially, I wanted to become the best sports coach possible. After the program, in part due to my research, I have a newfound desire to become an educator of both coaches and parents. I firmly believe that the fate of a positive youth sports experience lies in the hands of well-equipped stakeholders.”

Campbell’s research dealt with exactly that, as she investigated youth sport coach and parent understanding of the role of the youth sport coach, with regard to athlete development. Campbell said systematic issues and controversies about the purpose of youth sports have been around since the 1920s. “While there have been decades of research aimed at improving youth sport programs and advances in coach and parent education, research in sport psychology and sociology domains have primarily focused on the coach-athlete relationship, the parent-child relationship, or the roles of coach and parent independent of one another,” she says. “Unfortunately, a lack of research exists aiming to understand the effect of the social interaction between coaches and parents, and how differences in beliefs between these key stakeholders impact the quality of the youth sport experience.”

So, she created a study to understand the coach-parent relationship, and how that affects the young athlete. She graduated in 2018. But she isn’t finished. “My goal is to obtain a PhD in Philosophy/Public Policy to become better equipped to develop curriculum, training, and policy — both department and government,” she says, “to ensure athlete success through a healthy and positive sport experience.”
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER SERVES AS FAMILY LIAISON WITH THE CINCINNATI POLICE DEPARTMENT

When the call came in, Sela Brazier knew she’d be going out.

Sela, a 22-year-old social work and gender/diversity studies major at Xavier, was in the process of completing her fieldwork before graduating this May. She’d chosen to serve in the Cincinnati Police Department Victims Assistance Liaison Unit to counsel families related to homicide victims.

Normally, she would council victims’ families on the phone — she’d never had to go out to a live crime scene before. That is, until she got the call. She remembers that night because afterward, everything changed.

On the way to the scene all she could think about was what it would be like to see someone shot, or suffering. What she didn’t think about was how difficult it would be to interact with the victim’s family — which was her job.

“That’s what I should have been thinking about,” Sela says. “I should have been thinking about what I was going to do to help those families.”

But it was a learning experience, she says. She was able to observe, and she realized this is exactly what she wants to do with her life.

Sela, a native of Portland, Oregon, came to Xavier because her sister also went to a Jesuit school (Gonzaga) and her father was from the Cincinnati area. She loved the idea that the Jesuit schools have a mission that involve giving back to communities and people. It fit with her own personal goals. She was also awarded a Presidential Scholarship, which made her decision even easier.

“I don’t think I would have been able to come if it weren’t for that,” she says.

Sela serves as a Victim/Witness Advocate, a liaison between the department and victims’ families. Sometimes they don’t know they need a lawyer, or have never seen the inside of a courtroom, and Sela helps them through these trying situations.

As a student already dealing with her own share of stress, Sela says her mentors, as well as her manager from the police department, take time to make sure she is doing well, too.

“It can be a lot to take, definitely,” she says of her position with the department. “People tell me to come home after a shift and not expect to do anything productive. Like, I can’t do homework or expect to get anything done. So I exercise or do something like that.”

She knows she has to focus on her own wellness if she is going to make this into a career — and by the way, she’s one step closer to that, too. She recently learned she’d been accepted into the University of Michigan, the No. 1 social work school in the country.

“If you’d have told me my freshman year that I’d end up working for the Cincinnati Police, I’d have laughed at you,” she says. “People ask me why, and they wonder why I would do something so dark and heavy. I feel compelled to help these people through restoration and healing. I love it, and I’ve seen a lot of my natural gifts come out to tell me I’m perfect for this. Plus, it’s important to do the job that we do. These families need to know they haven’t been forgotten about.”
Where Else Can Students Do Fieldwork?

Xavier’s BSW students in any given year, provide over 5,000 hours of supervised social work to agencies in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

- Behavior Healthcare
- Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Service-Adoption
- Women’s Crisis Center
- Hamilton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
- Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio
- The Children’s Home of Cincinnati
- Cincinnati Area Senior Services
- Over the Rhine Community Housing
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Hospice of Cincinnati
- Freestore Foodbank
- Lighthouse Youth Services-New Beginnings

Learn more about student fieldwork at xavier.edu/social-work

GIVE TO CPS Interested in donating to the programs in the College of Professional Sciences? Visit xavier.edu/cpsgiving
‘NOT JUST MEN ANYMORE’
How one student became the first female daytime Xavier grad

It was the Dean of the Evening College who first realized Patty could be the first woman at Xavier to graduate from the undergraduate day division classes. He had to sit her down and explain the situation.

“It would mean I’d have to take an extra class, but we were pretty excited,” says Patty Burke (’70, ’73).

Back then she was Patty LaGrange, and she’d been taking classes through the Evening College at Xavier since 1966 because her father, Glen, was a professor in psychology. It had been done that way for years, professors’ daughters taking day classes through the Evening College — they called themselves “faculty brats” — but in the fall of 1969, the university allowed women to register for classes as part of the undergraduate day division. Based on her previous credit hours, Patty was in line to be the first to graduate with the men in the daytime section.

There was an evolution, not only at Xavier, but throughout the world, as political unease, demonstrations, Civil Rights, the Vietnam War and the Hippie Movement signaled a time of change for American youth. When Patty, who had been taking classes at Xavier for three years, heard they were going to allow women to join the men in the day school, she jumped at the chance.

“We would meet in the ladies’ room on the first floor of Alter Hall,” she remembers. “There were six of us. And we really bonded. As the years went by, more women would come, and we’d all go to The Grill for lunch together. We stayed away from the cafeteria because there may be some men there who were rude and didn’t think we belonged.”

Some professors didn’t like the idea either, she says, and she recalled one who wanted to throw her out of class for wearing pants instead of a dress on a very cold winter day. But others would go out of their way to make sure she was comfortable in the environment. The students at the school newspaper reached out to her to include her voice on the staff. The student government did the same.

And with change going on in the world, Patty says Xavier changed, too. She graduated in 1970 with a degree in psychology, then went on to earn a master’s in the same subject three years later. She married Tim Burke, who had served as student body president her senior year. They had three children, and she worked as a teacher for five years before leaving to work for the city of Cincinnati for 28 more.

Now, at 71, she’s retired, enjoys playing with her grandchildren and loves giving back to Xavier — whether it’s financially, or through her own talents. She spent three years on the Alumni Board of Governors from 1971-74, and is a member of the Founders’ Club and Deans’ Club. She and her husband have been donating to Xavier since the mid-1990s, giving to, among other things, a project near and dear to her heart: The Glen A. LaGrange Memorial Scholarship, named after her father.

“The university was so good to us,” she says. “And because of my father I was a part of Xavier before I ever went there. We’d come to picnics, and all the faculty and staff kids would play. It was always where I saw myself.”

Later, in 1970, she stood as the only woman in the rows of daytime graduates.

“And Fr. (Paul) O’Connor, I don’t think he meant anything by it, but he kept saying during our graduation breakfast how we were becoming Men of Xavier,” she says.

One of the priests approached her. “I’m going to tell him it’s not just men anymore — isn’t that right, Patty?”

“And I told him yes,” she says, “he was exactly right.”
Since 1914, women have attended Xavier in the evenings, on weekends and in the summer. But 50 years ago, women were admitted as full-time undergrads, and their impact as leaders in the fields of professional sciences exploded. From social work and nursing to education, psychology and beyond, women around the world now call themselves CPS alumni. Your gifts to the College enable us to support the next group of female leaders. So let’s make a difference — together.

xavier.edu/cpsgiving