

WALDEN

SUMMER/FALL 2019

MAGAZINE



PUTTING SCHOLARSHIP TO WORK

Paving an alternative path
to a doctoral degree
page 24

Dear Walden Community,

It is an honor to greet you in this issue of *Walden* magazine as the 10th president of this great institution. I am humbled to be able to serve my alma mater. Our continuing success depends on many things, but one that is foundational is ensuring we have an equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture. That’s why I’m so pleased we are welcoming our first vice president of diversity, inclusion, and equity to the university community. Actually, we are welcoming her back because she is a Walden graduate.

Dr. Denise Boston earned her **PhD in Psychology** here in 2000. She was attracted by our mission of effecting positive social change, and she’s been paying that mission forward since. Most recently, she was dean of diversity and inclusion at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Before that, she held academic and student services leadership roles for the District of Columbia College Access Program and Sojourner-Douglass College.

“I am thrilled to be coming home to my alma mater and a community committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. I believe they are currencies for trust, and they allow all voices to be heard and respected.”

— Dr. Denise Boston

This issue contains several stories of doctoral success. On page 24, you’ll read about the consulting capstone option for several of our professional doctorates. It’s a win-win opportunity you’ll want to be a part of. On page 12, you’ll meet three Doctor of Education graduates from the Mariana Islands who are leaders in their school district and in typhoon recovery efforts. Dr. Dahlia Connors’ inspiring story is on page 48. Lung cancer couldn’t stop her from earning a PhD or celebrating at commencement.

All of them, and you, make me proud to call Walden “*my* university.”



Sincerely,

Dr. Ward Ulmer ’04
President
PhD in Applied Management and Decision Sciences



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Cover illustration by Daniel Hertzberg



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Why I Refer

Sharing School Spirit

Andrew Parker III's change journey hits home

By Kevin C. Thornton

BEFORE HE BECAME A RESPECTED TEACHER IN ATLANTIC CITY AND GROUNDBREAKING POLITICIAN in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, **Andrew Parker III '12**, an **MS in Education (MSEd)** graduate, had a dream: He wanted to lift others to help contribute to the greater good.

Parker has done that—and more. Along with being named one of the top 50 math and science teachers in the U.S. and being the first African American elected to the Egg Harbor Township Committee, one of his proudest change achievements came closer to home. It was there he convinced his wife, **Neysha Parker '14**, to pursue her **MSEd** at Walden, furthering the family's focus on positively impacting the world around them.

Greg Dohler Photography

ANDREW, HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY TO A HIGHER DEGREE BEGIN? I had my bachelor's degree in business and was working in my father's heating and air conditioning company, Parker Aire. I was supplementing my income by working as a substitute teacher and then an instructional aide in the Atlantic City School District. The principal of the school eventually offered me a full-time job, saying, "You're here every day anyway, and the students like you." I accepted it, of course, and that triggered my desire for a master's degree. Of all the universities available, I chose Walden because of its passion and commitment to encouraging positive social change.

NEYSHA, HOW DID YOU DECIDE ON WALDEN? I was looking at different schools, and Andrew reminded me that since he'd already graduated from Walden, we knew how they worked, we had a relationship with them, and we knew the quality of the program. It was an easy decision. Before Walden, I was teaching special education and then was an elementary school teacher, but neither really felt right for me. Getting my MSEd allowed me to change my career path and get a position teaching English as a second language instead, and that's my strength. I love what I do now.

ANDREW, HAVE YOU REFERRED OTHERS TO WALDEN IN ADDITION TO NEYSHA?

There have been quite a few of our colleagues who have gotten their PhDs through Walden.

We're surrounded by a network of Walden graduates. I enjoyed every minute of my experience, and I would absolutely choose Walden again. There are so many good, hardworking alumni out there making positive changes in our community. I'm honored to be part of that community.

NEYSHA, WOULD YOU CHOOSE WALDEN AGAIN? Absolutely. Walden gave me the freedom, organizational skills, and self-discipline to own each task and conquer them. I'm so glad Andrew led the way and referred me. I wouldn't change it for a minute.



“ I chose Walden because of its passion and commitment to encouraging positive social change. ”

— Andrew Parker III

Meet the Faculty

A Winding Road Through Walden

With a focus on writing excellence, Dr. Laurel Walsh leaves her mark

By Kristin Hanson



DR. LAUREL WALSH ADMITS SHE’S FOLLOWED A NON-TRADITIONAL CAREER PATH over the past quarter-century—from high school teacher in the Czech Republic to doctoral candidate mentor in the American Midwest. But the core faculty member in **The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership** wouldn’t have it any other way. In 2008, she answered an ad for an academic editor at Walden University, and over the past decade, she’s moved into leadership roles in the Writing Center, Center for Academic Excellence (formerly the Center for Student Success), and Center for Faculty Excellence. Currently serving as a faculty mentor for **Doctor of Education** candidates, Walsh says that as her titles have changed, her deep-rooted love for teaching has remained constant.

HOW DID WORKING WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TRANSLATE TO LATER WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS?

When I returned to the United States, I really wanted to continue teaching the same demographic, so I taught at a community college. If I could instill comfort in new undergraduate students in writing down their thoughts and sharing them with a small group of peers, it could be a powerful opportunity to influence their academic journeys. When I came to Walden, I was a little worried that it would take me away from students who really

needed a baseline comfort with academic writing. But I started to realize that my graduate students and doctoral candidates had the same struggles with more advanced composition. We might have subject-level mastery, but very few of us feel comfortable sharing our writing with others.

“We might have subject-level mastery, but very few of us feel comfortable sharing our writing with others.”

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT WORKING FOR WALDEN?

The diversity of experiences that I’ve had at Walden is unparalleled. I can’t imagine another professional backdrop where I’d have such a rich and diverse opportunity to do so many things. Before Walden, I taught for almost 2.5 years in a Master of Business Administration program in the College at St. Scholastica’s accelerated degree program. I knew even if I lived to be 1 million years old that I’d never be able to go beyond teaching management theory and American Psychological Association (APA) style and being a capstone advisor.

OF ALL YOUR WORK AT WALDEN, WHAT DO YOU FEEL HAS BEEN MOST IMPACTFUL?

In 2008 or 2009, we did an investigation of capstone quality. We looked at the final editorial suggestions that students received

on their dissertations and looked side by side, page by page, at how those edits informed students’ choices in their final documents. We learned that students made very few fixes based on boilerplate cut-and-paste APA-rule edits and did a lot based on what we came to see as more of a conversation with the student. There was a faculty editor at the time who had 97% of his edits incorporated, so we wanted to know how he was doing that. We merged that into a set of best practices. That investigation all those years ago has informed the way I give feedback. When I’m mentoring other faculty and working in the classroom, I’m still using those insights.



From Advisor to Friend

A decade of support between advisor and student

By Rebecca Kirkman

“SOMEONE IS LOOKING FOR YOU.”

That’s what a colleague said to Walden University senior enrollment advisor **Aaron Thomas** this January while he was volunteering with the disability services team at commencement in Tampa, Florida. Shortly after, a spunky 5-foot-tall woman walked toward him, saying, “Do you know who I am?”

“If I didn’t have Aaron, if he didn’t check in at certain times, I would have probably given up.” — Dr. Sharon Alston

For **Dr. Sharon Alston ’19**, the moment was unforgettable. She was celebrating the completion of her **PhD in Psychology**, but she was also finally meeting the man she credits with helping her get there. “Dr. Alston gave me a big hug and said, ‘So this is the man behind the voice that I’ve been talking to for 10 years!’” Thomas says.

Their story began in 2009 when Alston requested information about Walden and Thomas reached out to her. During their first phone conversation, the two realized their homes in New Jersey had been just 30 minutes apart. Always trying to get to know his potential students to serve them better, Thomas asked Alston what her passion was, and he told her how Walden could help her achieve her goals. “We hit it off right away,” Alston says.

Even after Alston enrolled and was assigned an academic advisor for the next stage of her journey, Thomas didn’t stop calling to check in. “It was unusual to me—I thought he would provide the enrollment information and move on,” Alston says. “But when I was in my first class, he called to see if everything was going well. He was just kind and concerned.”

Thomas says he likes to stay in touch with students after they’ve enrolled because it helps him learn more about the Walden experience from the student perspective. “I’m invested in you as you become invested in this program,” he says. “I’m going to be your coach, your advisor. Sometimes I have to help you overcome challenges and negative thoughts that might be holding you back. But

I’m not going to give up on you, and I’m not going to let you give up on yourself.”

Alston says the timing of Thomas’ calls sometimes seemed like divine intervention. “I really, truly believe he was God-given to me,” Alston says. “If I didn’t have Aaron, if he didn’t check in at certain times, I would have probably given up and said, ‘I can’t, I won’t, and I’m not going to do this.’”

Thomas recalls one conversation on his way home from work that meant a lot to both of them: “I picked up the phone and she said, ‘Aaron, you can call me “doctor” now!’”

Thomas, who has worked in enrollment at Walden since 2007, was thrilled to attend his first commencement in January. But it meant even more to be there to support Alston. “It was wonderful to see her walk across the stage,” he says. “I was inspired that I played a small part in helping my friend on her journey.”



Lifelong Learners

Driven to Success

The final lap of an educational tour de force

By Kevin C. Thornton

THE DRIVE TO CONTINUE PURSUING DEGREES can be traced to two significant events that changed **Dr. Nickole Cottrill**’s life and perspective on learning. One was a failed job interview. The other was Jayden Mykel.

Cottrill was trying to help her family when she landed an interview for a telemarketing job. “I didn’t get the job because I had dropped out of school in 11th grade when I was pregnant with my first child, Krysta,” she says. “Before that interview, I hadn’t considered going back to school. Afterward, I knew I had to.”

The second, and perhaps most profound, event was the birth of her son Jayden. Jayden was born with severe autism, cerebral palsy, and epilepsy. She knew from the start that no one would be able to care for Jayden like she could, and she wanted to know as much as possible to best support him.

After finishing her high school education, Cottrill took her first psychology class and

fell in love with it. “I knew that was what I wanted to pursue,” she says.

Cottrill chose Walden after researching several universities and psychology programs. “What initially convinced me was the flexibility and wonderful people I communicated with at Walden,” she says. “From the minute I enrolled, I knew it was right for me.”

She graduated with a **BS in Psychology** in 2013 and earned her **MS in Psychology** in 2015 and a **PhD in Psychology** in 2018. As the final lap to her educational tour de force, she’s completing what she says is her final degree—an **MS in Criminal Justice**.

Cottrill’s educational journey has led her down numerous paths. She currently serves as a PhD mentor and editor, working with nearly 40 Walden doctoral candidates at any one time, and works as an online tutor in a range of subjects.

She’s also deeply involved with Judge Free Moms, an online group of more than 4,000

women worldwide focused on growing and learning without fear of judgment. She uses her psychology background to regularly blog on the group’s website as well as her own, which is dedicated to sharing insights on raising a child with autism.

At home, she’s using her degrees to support her own children, providing constant care for Jayden, now 10, and homeschooling both Jayden and his sister Krysta, 17.

Cottrill has come a long way from the person who couldn’t get a job for lack of a high school diploma, and she gives much of the credit for that journey to Walden and Jayden.

“I want to help people—starting with my own family and then others—dealing with the same issues I am,” she says. “Having the education and knowledge to back me up has made such a difference. I tell everybody to go to Walden because it’s helped me help others.”

“Having the education and knowledge to back me up has made such a difference. I tell everybody to go to Walden because it’s helped me help others.”



Corey Ann Photography



My Mission Possible

Rethinking the Needs of Homeless Women

A simple fundraiser to provide feminine sanitary products fuels a movement

By Susan Walker



TWO CANADIAN THANKSGIVINGS AGO, Chisomo F. N. Msoffe '15, a BS in Political Science and Public Administration graduate, started thinking about products that most women take for granted—sanitary pads and tampons. As she walked to and from her job in downtown Ottawa, she always crossed paths with a large number of homeless women. Because feminine sanitary products are expensive, she wondered how they handled their menstrual periods when they didn't even have enough money for a cup of coffee.

"It's always been important for me to advocate for women in any way possible," Msoffe says. "I started a simple fundraiser through GoFundMe to raise enough money to buy a one-month supply of sanitary products for a few local shelters. That was my original goal."

The project started small, helping between 30 and 40 women that first month. But she wasn't ready to stop there. "I was stunned by the response I got," she says. "People hadn't thought about women's homelessness in those terms, and the idea took flight." People gave Msoffe extra toiletry bags and products they had on hand, donated money, and helped her put together the kits she would deliver to the shelters.

"I started thinking: 'What next? What are these women going to do next month?'" she remembers. That was the birth of her nonprofit, Ottawa's Homeless Period. She wanted to expand the contents of her kits to include not only sanitary products but also painkillers for cramps, sanitary wipes,

Jessica Deeks Photography



"Every time I went to the shelters, I realized how much I had and how other women lacked the most basic necessities."

and snacks to ease period food cravings. And, most of all, she wanted to reach more women.

She joined a microgrant program called Soup Ottawa, where people pay \$10 for a bowl of soup and have the chance to pitch the project they're seeking funding for. The winner receives the evening's proceeds. Msoffe won that night, receiving enough money to fund Ottawa's Homeless Period for three months.

"This became a full-time passion for me," she says. "Every time I went to the shelters, I realized how much I had and how other women lacked the most basic necessities. I needed to figure out how to keep this project going."

To ensure she could continue what she started, Msoffe partnered with a local college and holds a monthly product drive at her workplace, where she runs a fellowship grant program for gynecological

oncologists. She supplies products to 30 to 40 women every month through one of the area's major shelters and hopes to advocate for women's health by offering free Pap tests this year to shelter residents through a social advocacy program that is offered by national medical programs during Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. She's also working to find partners to help fund her nonprofit and is in talks with a local cosmetics company. In addition, Msoffe plans to return to Walden to earn an **MS in Communication** so she can be an even stronger voice for the women she serves.

"Advocating for social change has always been a big part of my life," Msoffe says. "My Walden undergraduate coursework pushed me even further in that direction. I specialized in global change and social justice, and the articles and papers I read inspired me and led me where I am today. I want to continue to be a voice for people who can't speak up for themselves."

From the Field

Resilience in the Face of Catastrophe



Pictured, left to right: Dr. Bobby Cruz '18, Dr. Yvonne Pangelinan '18, and Dr. Rizalina Liwag '18 are Doctor of Education graduates and school administrators from the Northern Mariana Islands.

In February, Dr. Liwag moved her 900 middle school students and 68 teachers and staff to a temporary campus built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through FEMA.

Dr. Cruz and I were especially committed to building resiliency in our students and families by promoting self-care techniques and mindfulness. It is our charge as Walden alumni to promote social change to build one another up in the face of such a catastrophe.



The three of us sacrificed repairing our homes to come to commencement in January, bringing our flag with us so that the rest of our colleagues could see the Marianas' strength and resilience in us."

— As told by Dr. Yvonne Pangelinan '18



“THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS EXPERIENCED THE WORST STORM in its history in October 2018. Super Typhoon Yutu ripped through Saipan and Tinain with wind speeds of over 200 miles per hour. Dr. Bobby Cruz, Dr. Rizalina Liwag, and I are all school administrators and district officials who were completing our Doctor of Education degrees and preparing for commencement.

We spent many days managing shelters and helping with the recovery efforts in our school system and private organizations. It took 50 days for schools to begin reopening, and most of the islands were still without electricity and water well into December.

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Providing Comfort Away From Home

Walden community's pajama drive and hygiene kits make a global impact

Photos by Michael Fleming/Steven Miller Photography

GOING TO PUERTO RICO FOR PROFESSIONAL OR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT might seem like a perfect way to blend work and pleasure. But in December 2018, Walden hosted three events that gave a wide community an opportunity to give back and make an impact.

San Juan, Puerto Rico, was our host for an academic residency, the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) Academy in partnership with AMN Healthcare, and a community reception for local Walden alumni, students, and faculty.

This wider community joined forces with Clean the World to organize a pajama drive and pack 1,200 comfort kits that were donated to San Jorge Children and Women's Hospital. The project made a truly global impact as kits were distributed to families in need at the hospital, a home for abused girls, a homeless shelter, the homeless living on the streets, the Mexico-California border, and the relief efforts in Venezuela.

Walden's partnership with Clean the World continued in April when students, alumni, faculty, and staff packed 3,000 kits at the Washington, D.C., residency.





Aggie Brooks Photography

Broadening My Horizons

Putting IT to Work for the Community

A career shift led Alexander Boamah to serve students and parents in Dallas

By Susan Walker

IT MAY SEEM LIKE A PURELY TECHNICAL ENDEAVOR to many people, but implementing business processing and automation software and data and business intelligence tools is something **Alexander Boamah '15, '12** views very broadly.

“I don’t look at it in a vacuum,” says Boamah, a business intelligence analyst for the Dallas Independent School District. “I look at how what I contribute can help ensure that a

child is able to enroll in a school in his or her community and get an education.”

That wider perspective comes naturally to Boamah, whose first Walden degree was a **Master of Public Administration (MPA)**. After a career in law enforcement in his native Ghana, he wanted to continue working in the public sector when he moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 2004. Boamah earned an undergraduate degree in business administration and economics and then spent several years working in banking as a business technical analyst, where he spent most of his time on administrative tasks. He was also active in his community, volunteering as an algebra tutor for adults working to earn their GED through Read Chattanooga, now known as Re:Start - The Center for Adult Education.

Boamah hoped his MPA would allow him to use his work in the public sector to help the community, but he found most employers wanted him to be a management analyst and focus more on numbers-driven tasks. When his wife lost her job, they moved to Dallas, and Boamah decided he wanted to take his career down a different path.

“I wanted to evolve,” he says. “I returned to Walden to earn my **MS in Information Technology (MSIT)** and start a new page in my career.”

Boamah took a contracting position with the Dallas Independent School District and immediately started applying his new coursework. “I like to bring what I learn to work, and I was able to do that with my MSIT,” he says. After completing

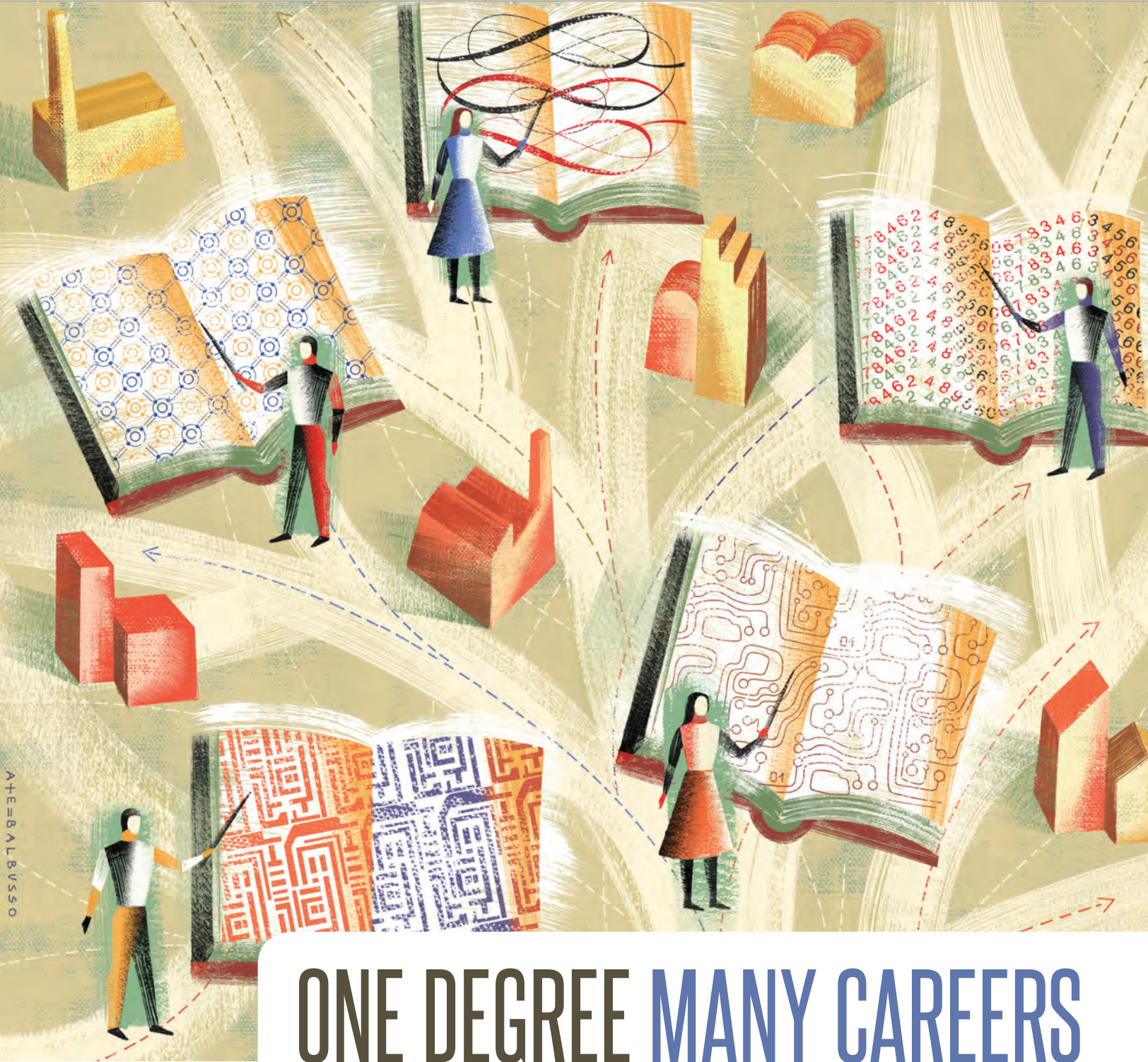
his second master’s degree, he was hired full time as a business intelligence analyst, a position where he uses the skills and knowledge he gained from both of his Walden degrees.

“I am an advocate for the public and work to keep bureaucracy and budgets on track,” he says. “I like being able to make small changes and provide the information that decision-makers need.”

It’s because he made a change that he’s able to do that. “My second degree kept me from being stuck in a box, dealing only with data and the compliance aspect of change,” Boamah says. “Now, I can be an agent of change and serve the taxpayers in my community.”



“I returned to Walden to earn my MS in Information Technology and start a new page in my career.”



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For more, please go to WaldenU.edu/magazine.

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How It Paid Off

Clinical Mentor to Physician Education Director

Forging a new path for medical
resident educational outcomes

NAME: Dr. Janeane Walker '18

DEGREE: PhD in Nursing

TITLE BEFORE MY DEGREE:

Clinical Practice Specialist,
Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton

TITLE AFTER MY DEGREE:

Director of GME Educational Outcomes,
Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville

SEEKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

In my previous role at the Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Braselton, my primary job was to provide education and mentoring for the nursing staff for conducting, evaluating, and applying research to patient care. After I completed my degree from Walden, as fate would have it, the center opened a doctoral-educated director-level position to oversee planning for a new Graduate Medical Education (GME) program at the Gainesville location. I was offered the position because of my combination of clinical education experience and doctorate-level expertise, and I began my new role just six months after graduating from Walden.

APPLYING LEADERSHIP AND

RESEARCH SKILLS: Without my PhD, I wouldn't be able to do the work that I'm doing now. My job is unique because I will be looking at data, evaluations, educational research, and educational outcomes for our newly formed GME program. My PhD in Nursing focused on utilizing leadership skills and employing research-based practice, so I can provide expert guidance for the professional development of resident physicians in their residency programs at our hospital.

IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY: There was a concerted effort to expand GME programs throughout the state of Georgia at hospitals without established programs. This



Lyndsey Petzel Photography

was due to the impending physician shortage based on the state's population growth. We aim to attract and retain as many physicians as possible by offering an unparalleled curriculum.

A NEW OUTLOOK: The biggest benefit of earning a Walden degree is the global perspective I've gained. I did my residencies in Hawaii and Barcelona, so I learned about new cultures within the context of public health policy and leadership. There was lots of interaction with other disciplines that gave me a larger view of the world around me. I would never have traveled as far or learned nearly as much as I did if I didn't go to Walden.

— *As told to Kyra Molinaro*

Insights

Improving Workplace Processes

Clinical educator Jason Lee gives advice for identifying opportunities to increase efficiency

By Kyra Molinaro

EFFICIENCY IS KEY IN ANY WORKPLACE, especially in a bustling hospital setting. **Jason Lee '17**, a **Bachelor of Science in Nursing** graduate and **Master of Science in Nursing** student, has made huge strides in bolstering his department's effectiveness in his role as a clinical educator at CHRISTUS Trinity Mother Frances Health System in Tyler, Texas.

He recently launched an innovative new nurse orientation model that integrates the hospital's new nurse orientation with its electronic health record training. Previously, these trainings were conducted independently, but Lee's model allows new nurse associates to perform related skills and simultaneously document them electronically, simulating the real nursing workflow.

"We have received positive feedback from participants," Lee says. "The training helped decrease their anxiety about starting their new jobs because they were able to troubleshoot issues before entering their units."

Here, Lee gives tips on how employees in any industry can identify opportunities for improvement in work processes and support a smooth implementation.

1. ASSESS YOUR AUDIENCE'S NEEDS

"Instead of assuming what people want, take the time to identify your target audience and speak to them personally about what they hope to achieve in their roles. Get to know them, ask what works and what doesn't, and don't assume that what you've always done at your organization will continue to have the same results. It's also important to keep up with current trends in the workplace so that you can offer helpful suggestions. Things change all the time, and in order to keep people productive and engaged, you have to stay informed."

2. UTILIZE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

"When I began my role in 2016, one of my first goals was revamping our education department's Facebook page to support better internal communication with our nurses. We have since increased our following from 600 people to nearly 1,500. Social media can be a great tool for engaging with your associates while at the same time communicating important education items, especially with younger generations who are accustomed to communicating on these platforms. I also improved the monthly nursing news publication to keep everyone informed about current happenings in our health system."

3. EMPLOY EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

"At CHRISTUS Trinity Mother Frances Health System, we use the term 'evidence-based practice' to describe how we conduct our business. You can't successfully implement change if you don't support your findings with solid research and predicted outcomes. Before beginning the new nurse orientation model, we studied multiple professional nursing journals and analyzed how other hospitals conduct their onboarding processes to determine what would work best for us. This research will also come in handy when you present your ideas to leadership. They will be more willing to approve your ideas if they know you are adequately prepared for an efficient implementation with improved outcomes."

Aggie Brooks Photography



Putting Scholarship to Work

Consulting capstone helps students gain hands-on experience before graduation

By Rebecca Kirkman, Kevin C. Thornton, and Susan Walker

WRAPPING LEARNING AROUND DOING



Dr. Janice Garfield

THE LATE 1980S WERE A TOUGH TIME FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS. The rise and expanding reach of Asian and European manufacturers, especially the Japanese auto and electronics industries, left American businesses scrambling to manufacture products of the same quality at a competitive price. “Made in America” was no longer seen as a mark of quality, and U.S. companies lost their edge when faced with global competition.

Then President Ronald Reagan asked Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige to develop a solution. Baldrige helped craft the National Quality Improvement Act of 1987, which led to the creation of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. The program provides a range of tools and educational opportunities to help American businesses and organizations improve their performance and recognizes the leaders in this field with an annual presidential award for performance excellence.

That tool is the foundation for Walden’s **Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)** consulting capstone, which enrolled its first cohort of students in 2016. **Dr. Janice Garfield**, director of professional doctorate capstone innovation and assessment, played a key role in creating the program. Garfield taught in The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership for eight years before she left Walden to become a

Baldrige consultant and coach, but she remained connected to her colleagues. A conversation with DBA program director **Dr. Freda Turner** sparked a new idea.

“The DBA program was developing a work-based alternative capstone,” Garfield says. “Dr. Turner asked for my input, and I knew that if we put Baldrige’s comprehensive, systems-based framework in the hands of doctoral business students, the result could be dynamic for both the students and the organizations they served.”

Garfield developed the curriculum for the consulting capstone and returned to Walden as a core DBA faculty member to help launch the program in which students are paired with a nonprofit or small business. Students use the Baldrige framework to help their clients think about their processes and performance outcomes and conduct in-depth research about the organization. They then draft evidence-based action steps for improvement and share their recommendations with their client leaders.

“Most DBA programs front-load skills and theories. In the consulting capstone, we teach our students how to use a powerful tool and have them put it to work in the community,” Garfield says. “Our students embark on a learning journey with the leader of their client organization, doing real work with real people in real time. It’s a unique approach that allows students to make a difference



“Our students embark on a learning journey with the leader of their client organization, doing real work with real people in real time.”

for their partner organizations. We wrap learning around doing.”

The DBA consulting capstone students originally all worked with nonprofit organizations. Recently, the program has expanded to include small-business clients. But the social change mission of the university is still at the forefront of the engagement.

“All capstones are mission-centered,” adds Garfield. “Students and their client organizations are working to make improvements that will allow them to be stronger contributors to the U.S. and global economies, bringing jobs, investment, and opportunity to the communities where they’re located.”

Over the past three years, the program has graduated 14 scholar-consultants and grown to more than 40 current students. The university has already expanded the consulting capstone option to the **PsyD in Behavioral Health Leadership** program and is planning on adding it to other programs soon.

“The consulting capstone provides scholar-consultants with a full arsenal of tools to become productive, engaged leaders who are ready to drive improvement now and in the future in a variety of industries,” Garfield says. — S. W.

ANCHORED IN AMBITION

DR. TAMMY JAMESON WAS A SINGLE MOTHER OF TWO with a bachelor’s degree and a Master of Business Administration already under her belt when she enrolled at Walden University. At the time, she was unsure of the next step in her career in homeland security and disaster response. But thanks to the DBA consulting capstone program, she soon founded her own Washington, D.C., consulting firm.

Jameson’s experience as the first graduate of the consulting capstone program in 2017 inspired her to make a career out of helping organizations tackle obstacles and find success. “Having my DBA and participating in the capstone lit a fire in me,” Jameson says. “The whole experience really changed my life for the better.”

Her first client success story begins with Jacie Knight, artistic director and founder of Minneapolis nonprofit Youth Performance Company (YPC). After being invited to participate in the consulting capstone pilot program,



Jameson was intrigued by the chance to work with YPC. “I thought it was an awesome opportunity to be able to serve as a scholar-consultant versus the traditional doctoral study capstone,” Jameson recalls. Using the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework as a guide, she worked remotely with Knight and YPC for a year, resulting in a 360-degree review of the organization.

“It’s always great to be reflective about what you’re doing, but you don’t often do that because you’re so busy just trying to survive,” Knight says. “When we signed on as a client for Walden’s consulting capstone, we were going through an especially difficult time as an organization.” Because of that, she says working with Jameson came at the perfect time.

“We needed to take a look at how we did business and how we needed to change for the future if we wanted to survive,” Knight says. “Tammy asking questions about our business—like what worked and how many people took our classes—was helpful for me to assess who and where we were as an organization.”

Two years later, YPC is still feeling the impact of Jameson’s consulting services. “We’re redefining YPC,” Knight says. “There’s still a lot of change to come, but I feel very anchored and focused thanks to the work we did with Tammy.”

But Jameson remembers struggling to feel like the work she was doing was meaningful during the process. Luckily, Dr. Janice Garfield, director of professional doctorate capstone



A NEW REASON TO CELEBRATE

As a Walden alumnus, you now get exclusive discounts at over 300,000 retailers.

The Walden University Alumni Advantage Program helps you shop for less both in store and online in categories like:

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- Restaurants | Retail | Travel | And Many More

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WALDEN UNIVERSITY

Questions? Contact Alumni Relations: 1-877-235-3561 or alumni@mail.waldenu.edu.

“Walden taught me the importance of being a social change maker and how to use leadership to make a positive impact on the world.”

A LOOK AT THE **BALDRIGE**
PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE CRITERIA

Baldrige examiners use their knowledge of the Baldrige framework to evaluate organizations all over the country that have applied for the annual Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. That framework is used to build an organizational profile focused on several criteria:

- How senior leaders' personal actions and the organization's governance systems guide and sustain the organization.
- How the organization develops strategic objectives and action plans, implements them, changes them if needed, and measures progress.
- How the organization engages customers for long-term marketplace success.
- How the organization measures, analyzes, and manages knowledge to drive improvement, innovation, and competitiveness.
- How workforce practices create and maintain a high-performance environment.
- How the organization focuses its work, product design and delivery, innovation, and operational effectiveness to achieve success.
- The results the organization achieves. — S.W.



Greg Dohler Photography

innovation and assessment, helped her keep things in perspective.

“When you’re conducting interviews and collecting data, you don’t feel like you’re doing anything great, but Dr. Garfield helped me realize that my research was impactful,” Jameson recalls. “Talking to Jacie and hearing how much I helped YPC made me realize that was what I wanted to do. I’ve always been passionate about helping others because I want everyone to win.”

Just seven months after completing her DBA, Jameson founded Capital Business Solutions LLC. She offers services ranging from business development and consulting to emergency management, planning, and preparedness for

nonprofits, government agencies, and local businesses.

“Although I loved my job with the Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region, I liked helping people and giving back more,” Jameson says. “Walden taught me the importance of being a social change maker and how to use leadership to make a positive impact on the world, which inspired me to want to have my own firm and help organizations solve business problems.

“I’m proud of having my own firm,” she says. “But I’m most proud of the ability to use my platform as a vehicle to impact the lives of others.” — R.K.

A CONTINUING COMMITMENT

THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU JUST AREN’T READY TO LET GO OF. For **Dr. Alan Gunnerson ’19**, his experience in the DBA consulting capstone program was one of those things. “It was meaningful,” he says. “It became personal.” **Dr. Sanja Hudson ’18** feels the same way. She says her own experience not only helped her grow professionally but also provided an unexpected opportunity to make a difference.

What has kept both Gunnerson and Hudson engaged is a unique and enduring experience that allows doctoral candidates to work with organizations to research and recommend real-life solutions to real-world business challenges.

Listening to recent DBA consulting capstone graduates, you get the impression it’s more than an academic exercise; it’s an enlightening experience that can take doctoral candidates out of their comfort zones and into places they ultimately want to stay.

Gunnerson, a retired major in the U.S. Army with a background in military intelligence, worked with the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF). A worldwide nonprofit that provides training and support to first responders, ICISF works with professionals who have been involved in critical incidents that have left them emotionally or physically affected. Gunnerson developed a final report that provided the nonprofit with strategies to diversify its funding sources, but he also connected with the cause on a personal and professional level.

“I have many co-workers and friends who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and suffered with PTSD,” he says. “I attended some of the ICISF trainings and worked with first responders. The impact of what they’re doing and what I could contribute really hit home.”



“My goal was to enhance my consulting skills and knowledge for my business, and I achieved both.”

— Dr. Sanja Hudson



Hudson’s experience was equally meaningful. The owner of a successful consulting business, Hudson has had a long career in healthcare operations management, including previously serving as executive director of the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. She was matched with Phoenix Allies for Community Health (PACH), a nonprofit volunteer-run free clinic in Arizona. The clinic’s mission is to provide healthcare to low-income communities with no access to primary care.

During her partnership with PACH, Hudson was moved by the 500 patients the clinic routinely serves and that everyone in the organization—from physicians to front desk personnel—are unpaid volunteers. Her final report to the group recommended strategies to improve volunteer engagement.

By choice, neither Gunnerson nor Hudson is finished with their client organizations just yet. As part of Gunnerson’s consulting capstone work, he was asked to address the ICISF board of directors several times as he worked through his research and recommendations. In the future, he may join the board himself. Hudson continues to stay in contact with the PACH clinic, volunteering consulting advice. She recently learned that thanks in part to her recommendations, the clinic has recruited additional providers and increased engagement among volunteers and board members.

“Though I’ve been a consultant for more than 10 years, I learned a lot,” Hudson says. “My goal was to enhance my consulting skills and knowledge for my business, and I achieved both. Now that I’m done, I actually miss it.” — *K.T.*

FROM STUDENTS TO EXAMINERS AND COMMUNITY CONSULTANTS

Dr. Andria Coleman ’18 and **Dr. Allen Turner ’18** got more than their degrees when they completed the DBA consulting capstone.



Coleman, a leader at New York Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital, became a national Baldrige examiner and a nursing home examiner for the Baldrige-based American Health Care Association. “Being an examiner allows me to look through a holistic lens and help organizations and their leaders be successful,” says Coleman. “Because of the DBA consulting capstone, I have an opportunity to be an advocate for an organization and see the immediate effect of applying the Baldrige criteria. I am part of the solution.”

Turner, a special agent and emergency manager for NASA, is Walden’s second student to be awarded the Dr. Curt Reimann Baldrige Scholarship, which will cover the cost of his training to become an examiner. He has also found new opportunities at work and in his community. “I was nominated for a service selection board evaluating medical research organizations for NASA,” he says. “The capstone gave me the confidence to take on projects like this and opened the door for more volunteer involvement in my community. I’m using my business and subject matter expertise to help nonprofits in my community find new ways to use their volunteers, raise needed funds, and adapt as the community’s needs change.” — *S.W.*



STRENGTH in Numbers

Forging a Unique Educational
Experience With Colleagues

By Kristin Hanson



“ARE YOU IN OR ARE YOU OUT?” Tracy Clark '07 remembers the ultimatum from her co-worker **Gina Boring '07** very well. Boring and Clark were office mates at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio. While flipping through a magazine in the hospital library, Boring saw an advertisement offering tuition discounts for Walden University's first **Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)** cohort—and she was recruiting friends to take on the challenge with her.

“I started looking at my friends who had their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees and I said, ‘I’m not doing this alone. If we’re gonna do it, we’re gonna do it together,’” Boring says.

“Some of us probably wouldn’t have stayed in the program without Gina.”

—Tracy Clark (right)

Boring successfully drafted Clark and four other colleagues to enroll at Walden. Together, the group forged a unique experience that blended the best of what online and in-person education have to offer. The group would meet each Saturday at a local Panera Bread to discuss readings and assignments and offer different perspectives based on their diverse clinical backgrounds. Perhaps most importantly, they encouraged one another—and Boring was the head cheerleader.

“Each one of us had highs and lows in the program,” Clark says of the group, which juggled jobs and family obligations in addition to their studies. She recalls that Walden offered students an opportunity to take an eight-week break in the MSN program, “but Gina said, ‘No, let’s go. We just need to power through.’ Some of us probably wouldn’t have stayed in the program without her.”

Each of Boring’s colleagues who joined her in the program finished their degree and followed different paths in their nursing careers. Midway through the program, Boring decided she would sit for the American Nursing



“I started looking at my friends who had their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees and I said, ‘I’m not doing this alone. If we’re gonna do it, we’re gonna do it together.’ ”

– Gina Boring

Credentialing Center nurse executive board certification exam after graduating. She says the Walden MSN curriculum prepared her well for that test.

“Topics would come up that I didn’t just know but totally understood,” she says. “We studied, wrote papers, and discussed them. It was really the proving ground in my career.”

Today, Boring serves as executive vice president of nursing excellence for HealthLinx, a position she says would

have been out of reach without her master’s degree and board certification. She and her team work with hospitals that are in pursuit of transforming their nursing culture.

“We engage with them and watch nurse leaders really let go and become risk-takers in the name of patient care, supporting autonomous nursing practice,” Boring says. “I’ve had the luxury of stepping back a bit and to be proud of what I’ve seen happen in the profession in the past 30 years.”

Other members of the Aultman group of Walden graduates have enjoyed similar successes. Clark now works as a clinical specialist for GOJO Industries, the inventor of PURELL® Hand Sanitizer. Another joined Boring as a consultant at HealthLinx. Although Boring has nothing but praise for the Walden educators she encountered, she gives equal credit for her educational success to the strong bond of their small group. ■

Expand Your Walden Network at your next conference

We know you’re always looking to advance your career by attending conferences and trade shows in your field. Even after graduation, Walden is still here to enhance your professional development. Stop by the exhibitor booth to expand your Walden network at one of these conferences or trade shows.

For a full listing, go to WaldenU.edu/connect/events-and-webinars.



Healthcare & Nursing

National League of Nursing Education Summit
September 26–28
Washington, D.C.

ANCC Magnet Conference
October 10–12
Orlando, Florida

American Academy of Nursing
October 24–26
Washington, D.C.

American Public Health Association
November 2–6
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Social & Behavioral Sciences

National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
August 9–14
New Orleans, Louisiana

National Fraternal Order of Police
August 11–13
New Orleans, Louisiana

NASW State Conference – Texas
October 2–5
Galveston, Texas

NASW State Conference – Georgia
October 16–20
Marietta, Georgia

National Organization of Human Services
October 23–25
Orange County, California

Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting
October 24–27
Denver, Colorado

International Association of Chiefs of Police
October 26–29
Chicago, Illinois

National League of Cities Summit
November 20–23
San Antonio, Texas



Education

NAEYC Fall Conference
November 20–23
Nashville, Tennessee

Management & Technology

National Black MBA Association
September 24–28
Houston, Texas



Announcing Our 2019 Outstanding Alumni Award Winner

Congratulations to this year's Outstanding Alumni Award winner, LaRonda Howard '12!



LaRonda Howard is a Master of Public Health graduate and CEO and founder of H.E.R.

Story Productions LLC, an affiliate of HOPE Empowerment Resources (H.E.R.) LLC. Howard is a certified professional life coach, author, trainer, and motivational speaker. After publishing her book *Finding Freedom in Forgiveness*, H.E.R. Story Productions was born as a storytelling platform to help others share their stories and heal from their past wounds.

In addition to hosting speaking events, Howard is very active in her church, serving on global missions trips, leading fundraising efforts, and serving as a small-group leader for singles in the church. On a missions trip to Peru, she helped coordinate anger management activities for a men's rehabilitation center, and she was the lead event coordinator for the inaugural "One City, One Vision" event in Jacksonville, Florida.

From the judges: "LaRonda has committed herself to making a positive difference in the lives of others. In the process of taking back herself, she was able to encourage others to do the same. She is showing others how to turn stumbling blocks into steppingstones."



This year we received 90 nominations, representing 15 class years and 28 degree programs. We also congratulate the following four finalists for their commitment to effecting positive social change in their communities:

- Dr. Willie Johnson '13, Doctor of Education
- Dr. Vincentia Paul-Constantin '12, PhD in Education
- Vahan Setyan '07, MS in Psychology and PhD in Psychology student
- Dr. Patricia Spearman '15, Doctor of Business Administration

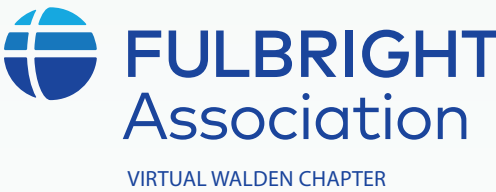
The Outstanding Alumni Award is granted each year to a graduate who exemplifies our mission to effect positive social change by making an impact on his or her profession, discipline, or community. Nominations for next year's award will open in early 2020.

New Fulbright Association Chapter

Walden has become the first online university to charter a Fulbright Association chapter. The Fulbright Association has 50 chapters across the United States that provide Fulbright alumni—including 44 Fulbright scholars and consultants in our academic community—with diverse opportunities for networking, professional development, mentoring, cultural enrichment, and community service.

The mission of our chapter is to raise cultural exchange awareness by providing opportunities for the entire Walden community—students, alumni, staff, and faculty—to access mentoring, professional development, service, and networking opportunities through the Fulbright community and to increase the number of Fulbright scholars and positive social change impact through research/teaching, fellowships, and cultural exchanges.

For more information, go to AcademicGuides.WaldenU.edu/student-organizations/digital-fulbright.



Walden Named ANCC Premier Award Accredited Provider

Walden University is pleased to announce it has received the 2019 American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Accreditation Premier Program Award, which recognizes accredited organizations that excel as providers of nursing continuing professional development (NCPD) and education.



"ANCC is proud to recognize the exemplary work of Walden University ... in providing NCPD activities that are innovative and creative," says Jennifer Graebe, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, ANCC director of accreditation in NCPD and joint accreditation. "Walden shows a continued commitment to demonstrating the value of NCPD within the profession of nursing and healthcare while exhibiting the impact of strong leadership coupled with strategic design thinking on the development of NCPD activities."

Award applications are accepted annually, and organizations that apply are evaluated with rigor through a peer-review process by ANCC Primary Accreditation Appraisers and a member of the Commission on Accreditation. Accredited organizations that hold Premier Program status are expected to assist ANCC in advancing high-quality continuing nursing education activities; mentor other continuing nursing education organizations; and provide, disseminate, and publish best practices.

Third Class of Social Change Fellows Announced

Walden University has named 10 Social Change Fellows and funded seven research and applied projects, the largest number since the founding of the program. The Research and Applications for Social Change Grant was established in 2017 to assist members of the Walden community who want to make a significant and meaningful change in academic and social communities, both locally and globally.

This year's recipients include alumni, students, faculty, and staff who will be conducting research on critical topics in the fields of education, health sciences, and public policy:

- **Dr. Bettina J. Casad, faculty member in The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership**
Racial Discrimination and Education Inequalities: The Role of Daily Stressors From Social Media
- **Dr. Bessie DiDomenica '15, PhD in Public Policy and Administration alumna**
Dr. Cynthia J. Hickman '16, '09, PhD in Health Services and Master of Science in Nursing alumna
Julie A. Smith Hinders, PhD in Health Services student
Older Adults and Caregivers: Food Policy and Healthcare in Rural America
- **Dr. Linda Marc, faculty member in the College of Health Sciences**
Early Childhood Chess Intervention for Children From Immigrant Families of African Descent
- **Beth Nastachowski, Walden Writing Center**
Dr. Sarah Prince, Walden Writing Center
Walden Writing Center Internship: Altering Recruitment Strategies to Increase Diversity in the Writing Center Field

- **Dr. Holly Pedersen '13, Doctor of Education alumna**
3D Connections Empowering Fathers of Children Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- **Olivia Pollard, PhD in Management student**
A Delphi Study Analysis of Best Practices for Data Quality and Management in Healthcare Information Systems
- **Shannon Stanley, PhD in Public Policy and Administration student**
States With Hyper-Aging Populations: The Importance of Understanding Functionality in Home and Community-Based Care and the Impact on Costs as America Ages

Congratulations to all our 2019 Social Change Fellows!



Bachelor of Social Work Program Receives Accreditation

Walden University's online Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program has received accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the national association representing social work education in the United States. CSWE's Commission on Accreditation



is responsible for developing accreditation standards that define competent preparation for professional social workers and ensuring that social work programs meet these standards.



"The CSWE accreditation for the BSW program is a testament to the quality of education we provide aspiring social workers, a clear sign that our faculty are appropriately

trained and the coursework, assessments, and criteria for graduation meet the high standards set for success in the field," says Dr. Savitri Dixon-Saxon, vice provost of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. "This significant accreditation provides students with the confidence that they are receiving the necessary support and resources throughout their program and a quality education in a convenient format that fits their busy lives."

To learn more about Walden's BSW program, visit WaldenU.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bachelor-of-social-work.

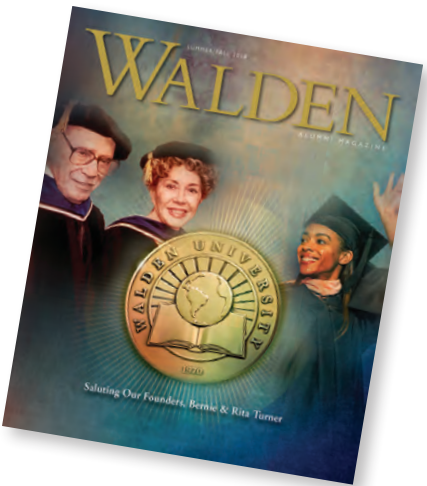
To learn more about CSWE accreditation, go to CSWE.org.

Walden Magazine Wins 3 Gold Awards

The Summer/Fall 2018 issue of *Walden* magazine received Gold Honors from the Collegiate Advertising Awards and the Educational Advertising Awards. The commemorative 25th issue of the magazine highlighted the university's history and founding, as well as its founders, Bernie and Rita Turner.

The Collegiate Advertising Awards awarded Gold Honors in the category of "Publication Internal – Single" and the Educational Advertising Awards awarded Gold Honors in the categories of "Publication Internal" and "Publication External."

In the "Publication External" category, *Walden* received honors alongside magazines from universities such as Bucknell University, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, Clemson University, University of Baltimore, Auburn University, Drexel University Kline School of Law, and Rice University.



Keeping You Connected

The Walden University Alumni Association is excited to find new ways to connect with you! We've recently hosted chapter meetups, special alumni events at commencement weekend, a social change panel discussion at an academic residency, and more. Be on the lookout for celebratory events connecting alumni with students, faculty, staff, leadership, and each other for Walden's 50th anniversary!



Accolades

Alumni have a significant impact on their organizations, communities, and disciplines. Here are some recent highlights.

Congratulations to all on your accomplishments!

The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership



LaQueshia Jeffries '17 | MS in Education (MSEd) | **Presented** at Rutgers University's Urban Education Conference, Prince William County Schools' Classified Staff Conference,

Temple University's 2019 Scholars of Color Conference, and The Educator's Room's Summer 2019 National Teacher Self-Care Conference. She is a special educator and workshop leader for Prince William County Schools in Virginia.

Dr. Katheryn Kennedy '17 | PhD in Education | **Co-authored** *Engineering in the Life Sciences*, which was published by the National Science Teachers Association Press. The book supports secondary biology teachers in integrating engineering into their classrooms.

Dr. Paula Stanton '17 | PhD in Education | Named Harford County, Maryland's, 2018–2019 **Teacher of the Year**.

Ruqia Abdi '16 | BS in Child Development | **Published** *Better Parenting: A Guide for Somali Parents in the Diaspora*. Abdi is an associate librarian in Hennepin County, Minnesota.



Jill Telford '16 | MSEd | **Named to the board** of Free Spirit Publishing and has **authored** several children's books. She has also been **invited to present** at the World Forum Foundation. She is a teacher at Takoma Children's School in Maryland.



Dr. Jacqueline Cavalier '14 | Doctor of Education | Received the **Pennsylvania Labor History Society's Mother Jones Award** in recognition of her lifetime

commitment to advancing the interests of the working class. Cavalier is vice president of the American Federation of Teachers Local 267 and professor of history at Community College of Allegheny County's Allegheny Campus.

Andrew Parker III '12 | MSEd | **First African American elected** to the Egg Harbor (New Jersey) Township Committee. Parker is a teacher in the Atlantic City School District.

Dr. Dianne DeMille '00 | PhD in Education | **Published** *Path of the Devil: Camino del Diablo—Based on True Events of a DEA Agent and Two Private Investigators*.

Dr. Megersa Basha Kumbi '95 | PhD in Education | **Published** *People Decide*.

College of Health Sciences

Dr. John Abenojar '17 | PhD in Health Services | Received the **Distinguished Alumni Award from the School of Social Work at University of Michigan**. He is director of social services for Sunrise Senior Living and was honored for his distinguished career in senior care throughout North America and the United Kingdom.



Shannon Whittington '17 | Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) | Recipient of the **Home Care Association of New York State's award for quality and innovation** in 2018. She

was **invited to speak** at WPATH Mount Sinai's surgical conference as the only nurse on the panel. Whittington is the gender affirmation program director for VNSNY.

Dr. Jonanna Bryant '16, '11 | Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and MSN | Received the **Mary McLeod Bethune Award** and the **Black Nurses Rock Outstanding Service Award** in 2018.



Dr. Cynthia J. Hickman '16, '09 | PhD in Health Services and MSN | **Presented** the keynote address at the reception honoring 2018 patient care assistant summer externship graduates at CHI St. Luke's Health, St. Luke's Foundation, Texas Medical Center in Houston.

Dr. James LaFeir '14 | DNP | Included in **"Profiles in Cardiology"** by *South Florida Hospital News*. He was the only nurse included in the article. LaFeir is a clinical specialist at Broward Health Imperial Point in Florida.



Joshua Reed '14 | MSN | **Opened his business**, Advanced Practice Professionals LLC, which provides nurse practitioner emergency department coverage for small hospitals.

He has also created the **nonprofit Nurses Global Outreach**, which focuses on care for the homeless and marginalized in the U.S. and abroad.

Mercy Chikhosi Nyirongo '14 | Master of Public Health | Founder of Wandikweza, was recently chosen as a **2019 African Visionary by the Segal Family Foundation**, which supports individuals working on sustainable solutions to local challenges. In partnership with the Segal Family Foundation, Wandikweza has 150 community health workers serving more than 9,000 people by providing preventive and promotive healthcare. Wandikweza is also working with World Connect to construct a youth health information center to promote youth productivity and reduce incidences of HIV/AIDS among youth.

College of Management and Technology

Dr. Nadya Yassa-Lopez '18 | PhD in Management | **Promoted to sergeant major** in the United States Marine Corps.

Dr. Leo Sedlmeyer '17 | Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) | **Co-published** "Fire Officer Leadership Strategies for Cost Management" in *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* with **Dr. Rocky J. Dwyer**, a faculty member in the School of Management.

Dr. Iris Cooper '16 | DBA | **Featured in The HistoryMakers**, the nation's largest African American video oral history collection. Cooper co-founded and served as vice president of marketing for Glory Foods Inc., the first

minority-owned food product line in the U.S. Currently, her business JustAskIris! specializes in marketing, strategic planning, and financial management. She is also an author and teaches business courses at Columbus State Community College and Franklin University.

Dr. Bridget Dewees '16 | PhD in Management | **Published** her second book, *ICU God*, about her husband's 65-day wait in the ICU for a heart transplant. Dewees is the assistant vice president of institutional effectiveness at Claflin University in South Carolina.

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Letitia Browne-James '18 | PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision | Accepted a **full-time faculty** position at Adler Graduate School.

Tiffanie McNeill '18 | MSW | **Promoted to senior service coordinator** at So Others Might Eat.



Dr. Geraldine (Jerri) Rouse '18 | Master of Social Work (MSW) | Accepted a position as **PACT social worker** with the Alaska Veterans Health Administration.

Dr. Charles Archer '17 | PhD in Public Policy and Administration | **Named CEO at One Hope United**, a 124-year-old nonprofit based in Chicago.



Lonnie McDonald '17 | MSW | **Promoted to center manager** for LIFE Mercer County. In this role, he oversees an interdisciplinary team that works to help older adults manage their healthcare and stay in their own homes.

Dr. Isaac Perry Jr. '16 | PhD in Public Policy and Administration | **Published** his first book, *The Political Economy of Liberia and Public Policy*.

Alexander Boamah '15, '12 | MS in Information Technology and Master of Public Administration | Selected as a speaker for the **2018 Power BI World Tour** in Dallas.



Dr. Demarcus Marshall '14 | PhD in Public Policy and Administration | **Re-elected county commissioner** for Super District 4 in Lowndes County, Georgia.

Michelle Shreeve '12 | BS in Psychology | **Published** *Parental Death: The Ultimate Teen Guide*, book No. 56 in the teen help series from academic publisher Rowman & Littlefield. The book is a guide to help children, teens, young adults, and grieving families navigate life after the death of a parent.



Dr. Linda Talley '12 | PhD in Psychology | **Published** "Silent Hands: A Leader's Ability to Create Nonverbal Immediacy" in the *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences*.

Dr. Jack Monell '05 | PhD in Human Services | Recipient of the **2019 Willie Burke Master Teacher Award** from Winston-Salem State University. Monell is an associate professor of history, politics, and social justice.

Want to see your name here? Submit your accomplishment to Waldenu.edu/ShareMyStory.



Greg Dohler Photography

SPOTLIGHT

Push to Persist

One grad’s personal commitment to education informs student retention strategies

By Lindsay Sherman

DR. MARILYN HAMILTON ’15 NEVER INTENDED TO STAY IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

But 15 years after taking a job as an instructor at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), she’s now firmly seated in the ranks of well-respected higher education leaders, thanks, in part, to a colleague who encouraged

her to pursue her **PhD in Education** at Walden.

Hamilton’s background was in early childhood education. She was an assistant teacher, lead teacher, center director, and consultant in that chapter of her career. She joined UDC in 1999 to set up the child development center and to teach courses in early childhood education. She returned to the

university in 2004 to support the education department’s accreditation efforts. Once the program became accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, she was hired full time. But the Howard University bachelor’s and master’s graduate had no plan to pursue a PhD—until her colleague, the late Dr. Rosemary Bolig, told her about Walden University, where Bolig served as a dissertation coach and mentor.

“Rosemary just kept saying to me, ‘Marilyn, if you’re going to stay in higher ed, you need to get your doctorate,’” Hamilton recalls. “She thought Walden would be the best place for me.”

Bolig was correct. Hamilton had begun her doctorate at a traditional brick-and-mortar institution. “My parents were declining in health, and my children were young, so I couldn’t spend the time going to a face-to-face institution,” Hamilton says. “I began talking to Rosemary more about Walden and its philosophy of social change and social justice, and I decided to enroll.”

Hamilton took a year or two off to care for her parents, but she returned to her doctorate program after her mother passed away. “It was never my intention to not return, but my dissertation chair,

as dean of academic affairs at UDC Community College. “We’re focused on making education more relevant and fitting to the needs of our students,” Hamilton says. “I’ve worked on initiatives



Dr. Deborah Bauder, provided guidance and support that was extremely helpful during my leave of absence,” she says. “She understood what I was going through and kept my feet to the fire. I finished my PhD in Education in 2015.”

Having persisted through challenges as a student herself, Hamilton has made student retention a priority in her oversight of 25 associate degree and two certificate programs

such as Achieving the Dream, Complete College America, and Commit to Complete, which all help students with persistence, retention, and completion, encouraging them to go from their associate degrees to bachelor’s and beyond.”

Although her work now is at the community college level, she sees plenty of parallels for student retention at all levels of higher education. When asked what advice she would

“There comes a point in time when you’ve done all your research and you’ve engaged everyone you needed to engage. You just have to decide to do it.”

give other higher education administrators about student retention, Hamilton says: “There are many, many programs and initiatives out there. Pick the one that best suits your institution and modify it.”

Her most important tip is something she learned from experience when researching whether to pursue her doctorate. She talked to Bolig for months on end, but eventually, she just took the leap.

“Just go ahead and do it,” Hamilton says. “There comes a point in time when you’ve done all your research and you’ve engaged everyone you needed to engage. You just have to decide to do it.”



How I Did It

Dr. Dahlia Connors '18, '12

How a two-time Walden graduate achieved her dreams while battling aggressive cancer

NOT MANY PEOPLE WOULD SAY THAT THEIR DISSERTATION KEPT THEM ALIVE. But if it weren't for Walden, **Dr. Dahlia Connors '18, '12**, a **PhD in Public Health** and **Master of Public Health** graduate, says she might not be here today.

In the summer of 2017, Connors began struggling to breathe, but it wasn't until the fall—after she felt extreme pain in her neck—

that she realized how serious her condition could be. A CT scan revealed that she had a 12-inch tumor in her right lung, and she was diagnosed with stage 4 B1 thymoma, a cancer that begins in the thymus (a small organ under the breastbone that is part of the body's immune system). But this shocking revelation wouldn't stop Connors from achieving her PhD. She shares her story with us about completing her doctorate in the face of death.

“Never allow anything—not even threat of death—to stop you from fighting for your dreams.”

AN UNSHAKEABLE GOAL: As devastating as the news of my cancer was, I was more troubled by the fact that it may have impeded me from completing my doctoral studies. I was in the dissertation phase, and I was determined to achieve my goals despite my diagnosis. My committee chair strongly advised me to file for a leave of absence, but I refused. I continued to write my dissertation despite the growing challenges of my condition. I told my chair that I didn't know if I would live to see graduation, but I would work on my research until I couldn't any longer.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: In March 2018, I underwent major surgery to remove the tumor. Afterward, I was diagnosed with a long-term neuromuscular disease called myasthenia gravis and was put on a ventilator. Throughout visits to the emergency room and lengthy stays in the intensive care unit, I continued to submit my work for review. My chair had concerns, but my doctoral studies were keeping me alive—my PhD was the very reason I continued to fight. Although my condition

wasn't improving and concerns for my health were high, I managed to finish my work and successfully defended my dissertation in September. A month later, I officially became a doctor.

CONTINUING TO FIGHT: Unfortunately, cancer has recently appeared in my paratracheal lymph nodes, and I had to undergo another surgery. My illness has made me unable to work and caused financial difficulties, but I am lucky to have a devoted partner who has helped ease my burdens. He booked us auto train tickets from New Jersey to Florida so that I could attend my commencement and hooding ceremony without having to fly, which would have made me too susceptible to infection. I have realized that despite adversity, determination is key. Never allow anything—not even threat of death—to stop you from fighting for your dreams.

— As told to Kyra Molinaro

Who or what was your inspiration for completing your degree? Tell us at WaldenU.edu/ShareMyStory.

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WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

WaldenU.edu/ShareMyStory

Alexander Boamah '15, '12

MS in Information Technology and
Master of Public Administration

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