

OnWisconsin

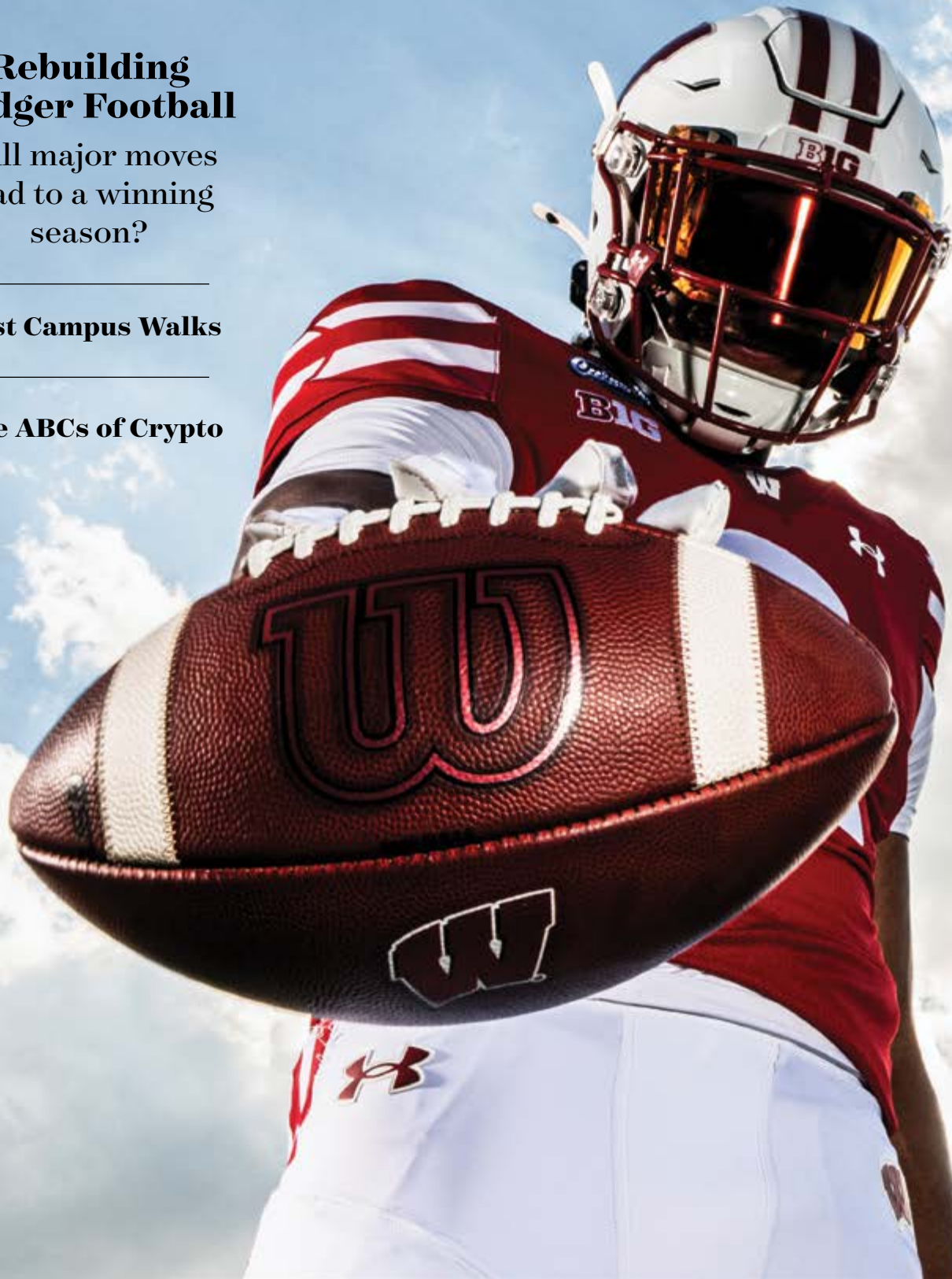
FOR UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON ALUMNI AND FRIENDS FALL 2026

Rebuilding Badger Football

Will major moves
lead to a winning
season?

Best Campus Walks

The ABCs of Crypto







Vision

All eyes on the slide: Professor Alexey Glukhov (right) and Yu Chen x'28 (left) look on while Pavan Yilayavilli x'27 examines cells in Glukhov's cardiovascular medicine lab. Glukhov received a mentoring award this year. More than a third of UW-Madison undergrads participate in research with a faculty member during their time on campus.

Photo by Taylor Wolfram '24



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A woman, a young boy, and a man are featured in the advertisement. The woman and boy are on the left, both wearing red University of Wisconsin shirts. The boy is holding a football. The man is on the right, holding a large, striped Badger mascot plush toy.

OnWisconsin

Professor Amanda Gevens fights fungal threats to potatoes and other crops. See page 32.

DEPARTMENTS

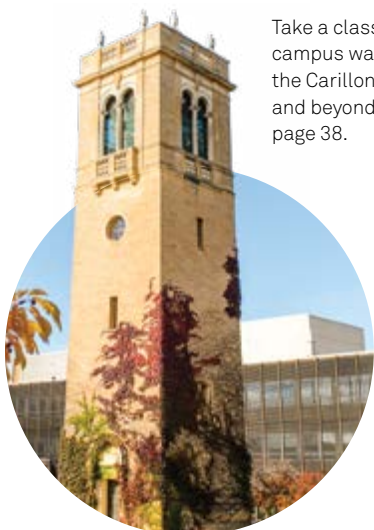
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Take a classic campus walk past the Carillon Tower and beyond. See page 38.

Let Science Determine Grant Support

"The Two Owens" [Summer 2026 *On Wisconsin*] had personal significance for me. I was a university-based radiation oncologist for 35 years and cared for many patients like Owen with diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas. As sadly pointed out by author John Allen, the outcome was uniformly dismal. Any improvement in survival would be welcomed by oncologists and patients alike.

The research described in the article offers that glimmer of hope we are looking for, and I'm gratified that this research is being conducted at the UW.

It was disheartening to read, however, that this research could be jeopardized by politically motivated interruption of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant funding. A more enlightened coda for all future patients like Owen would be to let the science direct grant support because, as Allen concluded, "turning away from that work means accepting that the universe is just too awful."

Michael Selch '73

Los Angeles

Thank you for sharing "The Two Owens" and thank you to all the researchers working tirelessly to find a treatment for DIPG. We can only hope the NIH continues to fund this important work.

Krystal Palmer MSW'16

Annandale, Minnesota

Owen Petrzelka is my grandson. [John Allen's] artistry not only highlights the deadliness of this terrible disease but also outlines the suffocating political obstacles. One would think humans could put aside their political differences to save the holy innocents. We can only hope and pray that Owen Tamplin and his lab partners procure the help they need to save the lives of these brave children.

Anthony Shaker

River Forest, Illinois

A Great Issue

I read the Summer 2026 *On Wisconsin* from cover to cover. "The Two Owens" nailed the critical role of biomedical research with a heartrending example, and it pointed out the anomalous and frustrating pullback of federal research funds to address these devastating diseases. Having conducted biomedical research and diagnostic work, I could identify with the issues surrounding research, especially as represented by Owen Tamplin's grad student, who, like many researchers, is considering leaving the United States for another country where research may be more highly valued and compensated by the government. There are so many such stories across the UW-Madison campus.

"Just Talk to Each Other" raised another timely issue, communication in an increasingly polarized society. It illustrated a good example of the great talent of the UW's teaching faculty. Equally timely was "The Upside of Online Relationships," a lighter topic but one with potential impact on students' lives. Even all the briefer newsy items were characteristically interesting. All in all, a great issue.

Peter van Tuinen '74, MS'78, PhD'85

Waukesha, Wisconsin

Fan Loyalty Pays Off

My "long-suffering" period for football covered the seasons from 1964 to 1970, when I saw 15 wins, 50 losses, and four ties.

During the 1972-73 hockey season ["We Are the Champions," Summer 2026], I was a doctoral student at NYU. Most of my family drove out from Madison to attend the hockey tournament at the Old Boston Garden with my pregnant wife, Carol, and me. We were among the "long-suffering Badger fans" who "never quieted." I was so hoarse after the games, I could not speak for a week.

Apparently, the excitement

We want to hear from you! Please email your letters to onwisconsin@uwalumni.com or mail them to WFAA, On Wisconsin, 1848 University Ave., Madison, WI 53726. You can also post comments online at onwisconsin.uwalumni.com.

and noise made a big impact on our daughter in utero. She remains a big Badger and Packer fan, which is evident from how she decorates the classroom where she teaches fifth-graders in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Ken Connor '68, MS'70
Madison

Grateful Grandparents

My wife, Christine '71, and I enjoyed "Cheers for Grandparents University" [Summer 2026]. From 2013 to 2019, we took each of our six grandchildren to GPU. We looked through telescopes, researched the conditions of Lake Mendota, built bridges out of toothpicks, were interviewed at the campus radio station, and studied the South Pole.

One grandchild has now graduated from UW-Madison, and three are current students. We like to believe that GPU was a factor in their decision to attend.

Bruce Sautebin JD'73
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

Online



JEFF MILLER

THE UW'S WINNING WAYS

After reading "Can the Badgers Bounce Back?" our cover story about UW-Madison football, visit our website to relive a glorious era for UW sports. Search for "The Best of Barry Alvarez," in which the former athletic director picks favorite moments from his legendary career. Highlights include the football team's 1994 Rose Bowl win, the 2015 NCAA title game for men's basketball, and the 2019 national championship for women's hockey.

Visit us at onwisconsin.uwalumni.com.

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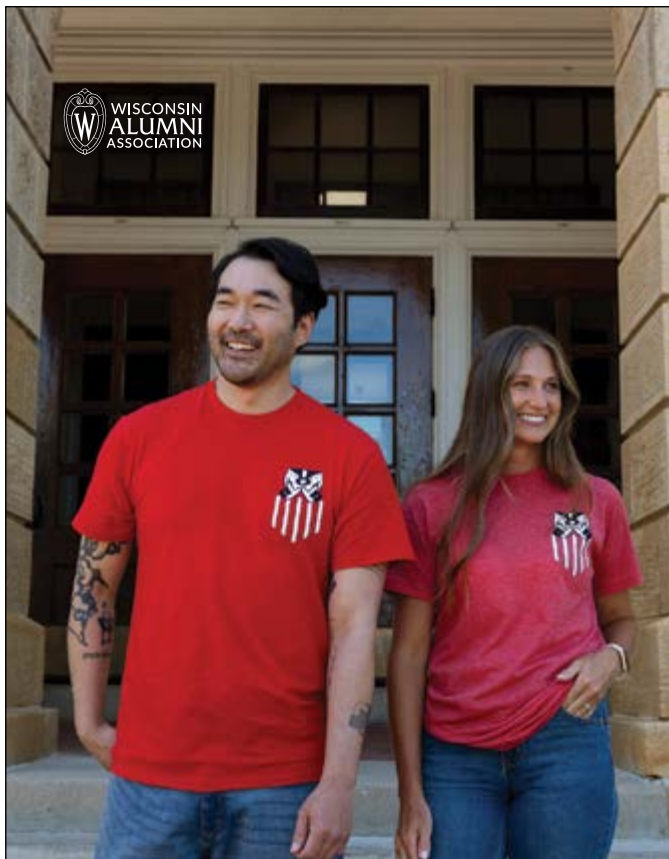
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OnWisconsin

Fall 2026

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The Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association (WFAA) is open to all alumni, students, and friends of the university. WFAA encourages diversity, inclusivity, and participation by all of these groups in its activities and does not discriminate on any basis.

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Please recycle this magazine. Please read it first.



We're All Niki's Legacy

On Wisconsin bids farewell to its longtime coeditor.

Heads up, readers: you may want to hang on to this issue. It could become a collector's item. The Fall 2026 *On Wisconsin* will be the last issue that has a feature article by Niki Denison in her role as coeditor.

This October, Niki will retire after 38 years as an editor here. Her first byline showed up in the November 1989 issue of what was then called *Wisconsin Alumni* (and was then published six times a year). During her tenure, the magazine changed its name, changed its frequency, and changed its publisher, after the Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA) merged with the UW Foundation to become WFAA.

A lot of Niki's efforts over the years have come without her byline. But then a good editor works quietly, helping others do what they do, only better. Still, you can see her influence in this magazine's long-running excellence. Under her guidance, *On Wisconsin* has won a lot of awards, including the 2022 gold award for best alumni magazine from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, our trade group, and 2024's gold award for best issue of a magazine.

Beyond her professional accomplishments with *On Wisconsin*, Niki has been a friend and supportive voice, not only to me but to generations of colleagues: she has worked with four coeditors, four heads of WAA, three heads of the UW Foundation, six chancellors, two printers, many staff writers, and I have no idea how many freelance writers, photographers, and illustrators. She had a hand in hiring every writer and editor who works on the magazine right now.

This issue also offers a full-circle coincidence. In March 1990, in her second issue, Niki wrote a feature article about the grads that the alumni association was honoring with that year's Distinguished Alumni Awards. It was her first byline in what we call the feature well, the middle of the magazine. In the middle of this issue, you'll find an awards insert with articles about all the alumni that WAA is honoring this year. Niki oversaw development and production for that insert, though she lets others have the spotlight — the bylines go to writer Wendy Hathaway '04 and WAA executive director Sarah Schutt, while Niki's name shows up fifth in the staff box. That's typical of her: getting things done, making things better, giving others a moment to shine.

Congratulations on your retirement, Niki, and thank you for the decades you spent building this magazine into an embodiment of what the UW stands for. Your byline will always be welcome!

JOHN ALLEN

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

TOGETHER, WE'RE BUILDING A STRONGER WISCONSIN.

At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, we believe
in working together to address real-world challenges,
like helping farmers cultivate healthy food.



David Anderson
Class of '74, JD'89
Trumpet

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OnCampus

News from UW-Madison



BRUCE RICHTER

Eichorst (right, with interim Chancellor Eric Wilcotts) has had a front-row seat to the major changes in college athletics.

The Next Era for Wisconsin Athletics

New Athletic Director Shawn Eichorst brings significant experience in a time of change.

In July, UW-Madison hired **Shawn Eichorst** as its new director of athletics. During a turbulent time in college sports, the university is turning to a veteran administrator with both local ties and a track record of growth at other major institutions, most recently the University of Texas.

“In this rapidly evolving, ever-changing landscape of college athletics, it was paramount that we find an individual with a tremendous amount of experience and a tremendous amount of success at the highest levels,” said interim Chancellor **Eric Wilcotts** when Eichorst was formally introduced.

The job represents a homecoming for Eichorst, a Wisconsin native who played football at UW-Whitewater and later rose in the administrative ranks at Wisconsin Athletics from 2006 to 2011 under **Barry Alvarez**. He succeeds **Chris McIntosh ’04, MS’19**, who departed UW-Madison in April to become the Big Ten Conference’s deputy commissioner for strategy.

At Texas, Eichorst served as deputy athletic director and chief operating officer for a department that earned the Learfield Directors’ Cup as the top-achieving broad-based program in five of the last six years. During his eight-year run, the Longhorns won 87 conference championships and 17 national titles. The football program regained powerhouse status by reaching the national semifinal in 2023 and 2024.

Eichorst previously served as the athletic director at the University of Miami and the University of Nebraska. He’s had a front-row seat to the major changes in college athletics, where student-athletes can now profit from their name, image, and likeness and receive direct revenue-sharing payments from universities. At his introductory event, Eichorst, a first-generation college graduate, emphasized the importance of being part of an elite academic institution that prepares student-athletes for what comes after their playing days. He added that he wants to recenter the value of education in college athletics.

“There is truly nothing like Wisconsin and the pride that comes with being a Badger,” Eichorst said. “I believe Wisconsin represents everything that is great about higher education and college athletics — the academic excellence, the competitive distinction, the integrity, the commitment to serving one another.”

PRESTON SCHMITT ’14

UW RETAINS “NEW IVY” STATUS

UW-Madison has again been named a “new Ivy” by *Forbes* magazine, honored as one of 20 public and private universities across the United States that are best “preparing and graduating the talent that employers will see in this new era.”

The UW also received the recognition in 2024, but this year, the rise of artificial intelligence and its career impact played a key role in the list. *Forbes* surveyed more than 100 C-suite and hiring executives. One respondent said that the ideal graduate entering the workforce in the age of AI will be grounded in an education that emphasizes the very human traits of “complex emotional intelligence, radical adaptability, and visionary creativity to orchestrate AI tools rather than compete with them.”

UW-Madison has made AI a priority, building on decades of investment in scholarship, research, and teaching and the university’s strengths in computer, data, library, and information sciences and statistics. Faculty and researchers across the university are approaching AI from different angles, from business and engineering to health care and public systems. The UW’s AI Hub for Business is also forging strong partnerships with Fortune 500 companies as well as smaller enterprises.

“We are looking to build a future that belongs to all of us: preparing our students, strengthening our research, serving our state, and fulfilling the Wisconsin Idea in the digital age,” says Provost **John Zumbrennen**.

UW-Madison was one of four Big Ten schools named to the “new Ivy” list.

GAYLE WORLAND

THE YEAR OF AI

UW–Madison has designated 2026 as the “Year of AI Readiness and Competency” in a coordinated, campuswide effort to ensure that students, faculty, and staff are prepared to use artificial intelligence thoughtfully, responsibly, and in service to the Wisconsin Idea.

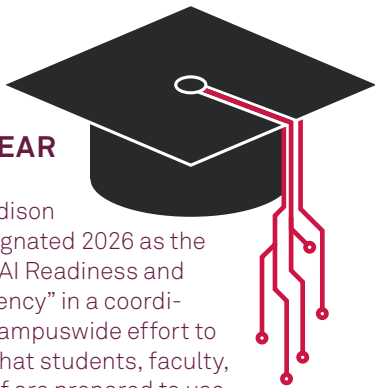
The effort builds on the investments made as part of the AI focus area of the Wisconsin Research, Innovation, and Scholarly Excellence (RISE) Initiative, which has strengthened faculty hiring, research capacity, and foundational infrastructure. And it complements the July launch of the College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence.

“Artificial intelligence is already reshaping higher education,” says Provost **John Zumbrennen**. “Our responsibility is to lead with a human-centered approach to readiness: one that views AI as a tool to amplify — not replace — the unique curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking of our Badger community.”

Rather than communicating abstract principles, the initiative’s goals include creating practical expectations for how people across the institution should engage with these tools — “wisely, ethically, and in service of the public good,” according to Zumbrennen.

The Year of AI Readiness and Competency will follow three guiding principles: AI augments human capacity, rather than replaces it; decisions should be deliberate, rather than reactive; and campuswide coordination should leave room for local implementation within schools, colleges, and divisions. The effort will culminate in clear institutional guidance and recommendations for sustained leadership in 2027 and beyond.

LAUREN BRUCE



EXERCISE IMPROVES THERAPY OUTCOMES

Working out before sitting down with your therapist may help make your therapy session more effective, according to a new study from UW–Madison researchers.

The study was part of a five-year project funded by the National Institutes of Health to support the treatment of major depressive disorder, which affects roughly eight percent of U.S. adults and 20 percent of adolescents between 12 and 17 years old. It was led by **Jacob Meyer MS’11, PhD’15**, an associate professor of kinesiology in the UW’s School of Education, with support from **Simon Goldberg PhD’17**, an associate professor in the school’s Department of Counseling Psychology and a faculty member with the Center for Healthy Minds.

“Research has consistently shown that exercise benefits overall mental health,” Meyer says. “This work aims to see how directly linking exercise and therapy could support better therapy outcomes for millions of people around the world.”

The team assessed two groups of 18- to 65-year-old adults with major depressive disorder. One group watched a 30-minute segment from a nature documentary immediately before therapy; the other group watched the same segment while completing a moderate-intensity cycling workout before therapy.

Results published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* indicated that 30 minutes of moderate exercise before a therapy session was associated with a stronger therapist-client connection and greater client initiative.

“So far, we’re seeing that exercise priming could be a low-cost way to support psychotherapy,” Meyer says. “This work reflects UW–Madison’s strength in bringing exercise science and mental health treatment together to solve real-world problems.”

LAUREL WHITE



BRYCE RICHTER

Scooper in Chief

Eric Wilcots will surely face some tough days in his role as UW–Madison’s interim chancellor. June 17 was not one of those days. Wilcots gleefully handed out free Babcock scoops in Birge Hall for the annual Ice Cream Social, a gesture of appreciation for hard-working UW employees. The longtime UW astronomy professor and dean of the College of Letters & Science assumed the interim role in May while the Universities of Wisconsin searches for the next permanent chancellor.



ALTHEA DOTZOUR

The University as Economic Powerhouse

UW-Madison generates more than \$38 billion for the state of Wisconsin.

UW-Madison's core mission has long held that the work of the university should benefit the entire state. A newly released study now quantifies that commitment, estimating that the university, its affiliated organizations, and the start-up companies it generates contribute \$38.9 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy.

With more than 287,000 jobs supported statewide, the broader UW-Madison enterprise ranks among Wisconsin's largest employers. The study, conducted by Tripp Umbach, finds that one in every 11 jobs in the state is sustained by the university, placing it alongside major industries such as dairy, food processing, and tourism as a key economic driver.

UW-Madison, together with its affiliates and business spin-offs, generates \$1.94 billion in state and local taxes collected each year, accounting for one out of every \$12.30 in the Wisconsin economy. The study also underscores the return on public investment: UW-Madison generates \$21.66 in economic activity for every dollar invested.

The university's research enterprise has long been nationally recognized, and at home that impact is even more notable. UW research generates \$3 billion in statewide economic activity and has spurred more than 400 companies that have translated ideas into real-world products. These start-up companies launched from UW-Madison research support 88,571 jobs, strengthening some of Wisconsin's fastest-growing industries, including biotechnology, health care, advanced manufacturing, and energy.

"UW-Madison doesn't just do research," says **Maggie Brickerman '08**, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council. "It generates new companies that fuel the state's innovation economy. The discoveries made on campus feed a pipeline of start-ups that create jobs, import capital, build new industries, and move Wisconsin's core sectors forward."

Beyond its economic impact, UW-Madison provides major statewide community benefits through volunteerism, philanthropy, and public service driven by faculty, staff, and students. In fiscal year 2025, these efforts generated \$156 million in impact, including \$38.9 million in donations and \$117.1 million in volunteer time.

From workforce development to community service, the findings illustrate the role of UW-Madison as a major statewide economic engine that drives private-sector growth, expands the state's tax base, and delivers measurable returns on public investment throughout Wisconsin.

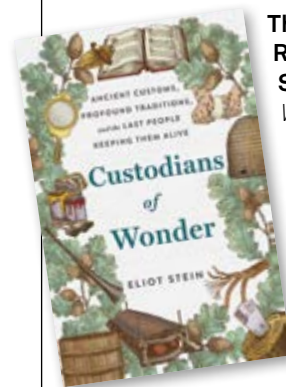
ERIN CELELLO



TAYLOR WOLFRAM

Two major UW building projects are getting a boost from John '55 and Tashia '55 Morgridge.

The couple's \$85.2 million gift will help renovate Science Hall (above), transforming it into a state-of-the-art hub for geography, environmental studies, and geospatial science while honoring its historic character. And a \$25 million gift brings the UW closer to its fundraising goal for the Phillip A. Levy Engineering Center, a new anchor for the engineering campus.



The 2026-27 Go Big Read book is Eliot Stein's *Custodians of Wonder: Ancient Customs, Profound Traditions, and the Last People Keeping Them Alive*, a look at 10 individuals who are maintaining some of the world's oldest and rarest cultural traditions. The Go

Big Read program creates shared intellectual experiences across campus and the broader community by encouraging readers to explore a single book together.

UW-Madison is ranked first on the Peace Corps' 2026 list of Top

Volunteer-Producing Colleges and Universities. "This is the Wisconsin Idea in action, fostering curiosity, empathy, and a shared commitment to contributing to the public good," says Frances Vavrus PhD'98, vice provost and dean of the UW International Division.

Feeding Badger Students

The UW community consumes a whole lot of meat, produce, and, yes, cheese.

How much food do the University Housing dining halls dish up every academic year? Below are the totals from the six major facilities that cater to the 8,987 students living in the residence halls. Between Labor Day and the last day of classes, the dining halls go through a lot of chow — and these numbers don't even include any Wisconsin Union food locations or the smaller, à la carte outlets across campus operated by University Housing. *Bon appétit*, Badgers!

NIKI DENISON

192,905 pounds

of Odyssey
Yogurt from
Monroe,
Wisconsin



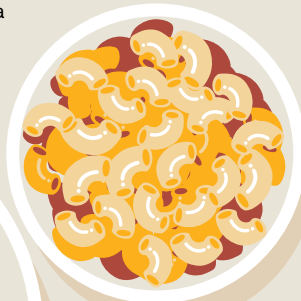
48,489 gallons

of milk, including cow's milk from the UW's dairy, as well as soy, almond, oat, and pea varieties



24,112 pounds

of mac and cheese, produced in Housing's central kitchen



89,808 pounds

of Wisconsin's favorite food group: cheese



380,489 pounds

of fresh veggies



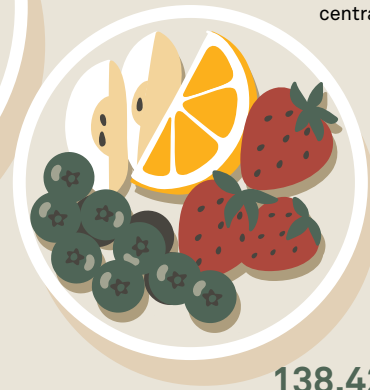
21,000 pounds

of burgers: 67,800 hamburgers and 19,295 plant-based patties



138,427 pounds

of cut fruit on the salad bar; 117,122 pieces of handheld fruit





JAIIME ESPINOZA

Journalism Meets AI

The Public Tech Media Lab helps journalists use new tech ethically.

The rise of artificial intelligence technologies is changing the way journalists report on some of the most pressing issues. But while AI remains controversial, it also has the potential to be a valuable tool for newsrooms, provided those working in the media landscape are equipped to use it responsibly and hold it accountable.

One of the biggest challenges facing newsrooms with AI is the pace at which new technologies are entering the field. By leading the new Public Tech Media Lab, **Tomás Dodds** aims to bridge the gap between AI and journalism and research the impact one may have on the other.

“Journalism studies tend to be very extractivist, which means that we usually interview journalists, then write papers that not a lot of people outside academia are going to read. Rarely does academic knowledge become actionable,” explains Dodds, a new faculty member in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. “Based on the Wisconsin Idea, I felt that we were missing a space where we could bring together practitioners, journalists, academics, and researchers to help newsrooms make responsible technological decisions.”

The Public Tech Media Lab has partnered with local newsrooms to develop AI guidelines and adopt systems that support their work while adhering to core reporting values and standards. These systems could include in-house large language models or ethical AI-assisted recording platforms that journalists can trust with sensitive or private information. That could reduce dependence on large technology platforms, such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, or Otter.ai.

While one of the lab’s goals is to support local newsrooms through discussions and the adoption of AI tools, Dodds says it also aims to expand these resources beyond Madison to benefit academia and media organizations globally. All resources and tools developed by the lab will have open access, ensuring transparency. The lab also plans to provide additional opportunities to educate journalists on open-source investigations, including how information circulates and how to employ data-collection strategies to leverage publicly available sources.

“There are very few universities doing anything with open-source intelligence, so UW–Madison has the opportunity to be a pioneer on this particular topic,” Dodds says.

MARGARET SHREINER



HANNAH SANDVOIG

PARENTS’ INTERNET USE AFFECTS TEENS

Mom and Dad’s relationship with the internet may impact their adolescents’ mental health, according to a study coauthored by UW–Madison psychiatry professor **Shiri Raphaely** and **Simon Goldberg PhD’17** (above), a Center for Healthy Minds faculty member and an associate professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology.

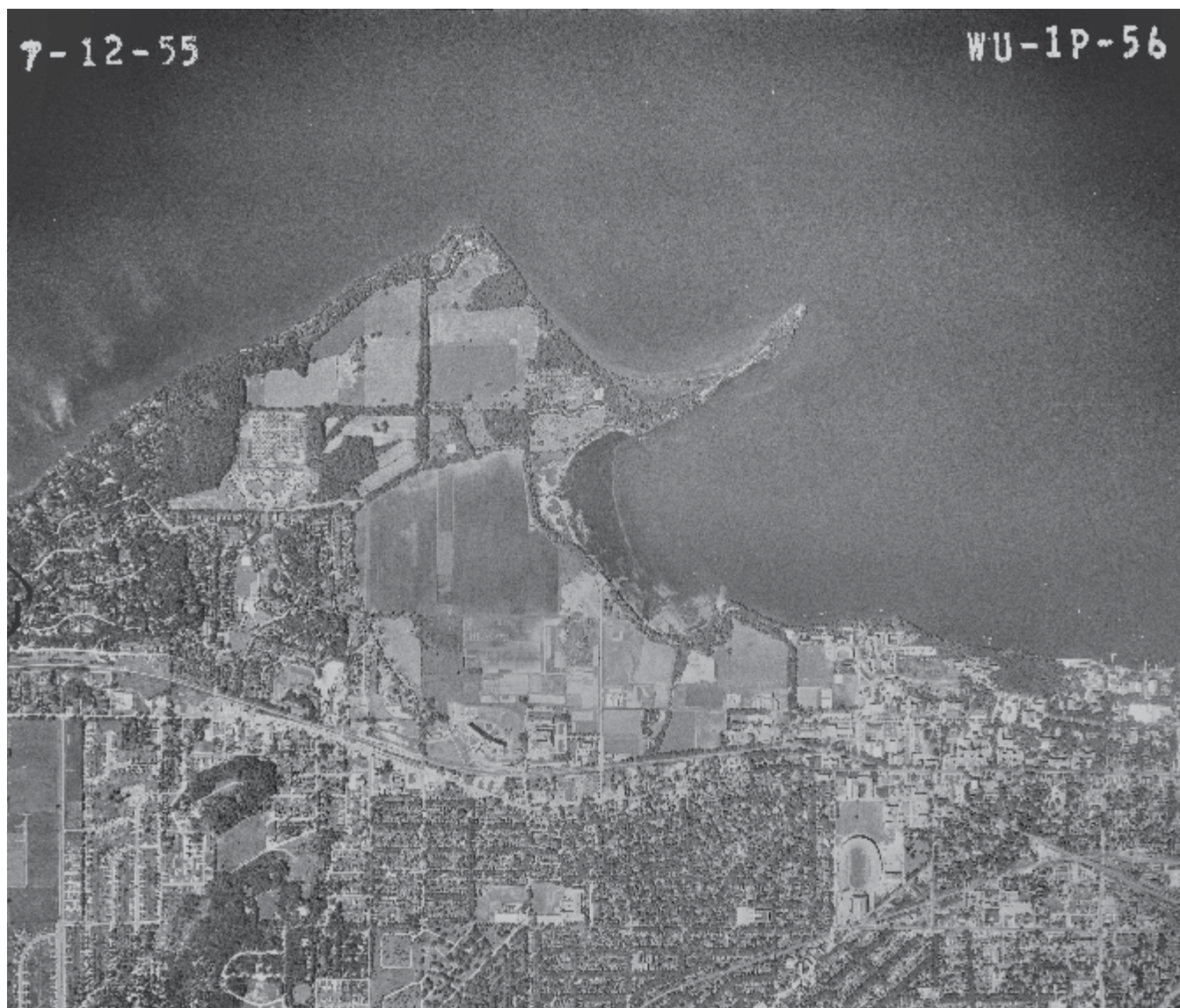
The researchers found that when parents spend a lot of time online, their teens tend to show more signs of depression, including suicidal ideation. The link between parent internet overuse and teen depression persisted even when the researchers factored out unhealthy internet usage on the part of the teens themselves.

“These results support the sobering possibility that how parents are engaging with technology impacts their children’s well-being,” says Goldberg.

The study involved some 4,500 parent-and-adolescent pairs. It also tested how household rules for internet use could help curb negative effects. When rules around time online were unclear and rules about content were loose, adolescent depression tended to increase.

Ultimately, these insights could lead to solutions to help reduce the potentially harmful effects of problematic technology use on children.

VICTORIA VLISIDES



Look Out Below!

The Robinson Map Library has digitized decades of aerial photos of Wisconsin.

If you want to see all of Wisconsin — its towns, lakes, fields, and hills — then you can either jump in the car and spend a few weeks driving backroads, or you can jump online and spend a few minutes with the Arthur H. Robinson Map Library's aerial photo collection.

The Robinson Map Library is UW-Madison's cartography collection. It holds about 300,000

maps, as well as globes, atlases, and gazetteers. And it has the largest collection of aerial photos shot in Wisconsin: 260,000 prints and more than 100,000 high-resolution digitized photos, dating back to the 1930s.

The library is named for **Arthur Robinson MA'38**, a legendary cartographer and UW geography professor. For many years, its home has been in Science Hall, but while that building is undergoing an extensive renovation, the library has moved to the Computer Sciences building on West Dayton.

That exile is expected to last about three years, so most of the

During Science Hall's renovation, much of the Robinson Map Library's collection will be in storage, but its aerial photos will be available — including this image showing a popular local peninsula.

library's maps — about 195 cabinets full of them — have gone into long-term storage.

But the aerial photos take up less space, and they're unique, according to librarian **Jaime Martindale**.

"No one else has them," she says. "They're a Wisconsin collection and they're very popular."

While at Computer Sciences, the Robinson Library's staff can continue digitizing photos to make them available to the public. To view them, patrons can visit maps.sco.wisc.edu and look at the library's Wisconsin Historic Aerial Image Finder app.

JOHN ALLEN



SHARON VANORNY

Energizing First-Time Voters

Human Ecology students reimagine that first trip to the polls.

Students in the UW School of Human Ecology are helping translate complex election processes into intuitive, approachable experiences for first-time voters.

In partnership with the Madison City Clerk's Office, students in a new course, Civic Design: Systems Thinking in Service Design, developed and implemented a first-time voter experience that encourages eager and informed participation in future elections. Their program, "Celebrate Your Vote," debuted at a new early voting site at Nancy Nicholas Hall in March.

"It provided an opportunity to feel like my work was making a difference in my community and not simply restricted to the walls of my classroom," says **Kayla Johnson '13, MS'22**, an interior architecture major.

The field of civic design seeks to create accessible, effective, and high-quality public services by considering the experiences of both the users and providers of the service and by looking at systems as a whole. The new course is the school's first civic design course offered in partnership with a government agency.

"The goal is to give them a taste of practitioner life in the public sector, unique insight into a designer's experience in civic engagement, and a safe environment for experimentation," says **Esther Kang**, assistant professor of design studies.

The student team's design for "Celebrate Your Vote" outlined key touchpoints in the navigation of the polling place, from entering the building to making sense of directions. It also considered environmental factors that shape individual voting experiences, such as weather, trip hazards, and usage of nonpartisan language, and offered information hubs and other resources to support first-time voters in making confident, informed decisions.

"They brought a fresh, human-centered lens to voting, focusing on how the process is to navigate, not just how it functions," says Bonnie Chang, senior elections expert at the Elections Group and then-interim deputy clerk with the City of Madison.

"Celebrate Your Vote" will be used at the Nancy Nicholas Hall voting site in the 2026 elections.

MIKE KLEIN



JEFF MILLER

This summer, high temperatures proved problematic around the globe, and UW–Madison was not immune. A broken chilled water line led to building closures, though affected classes were relocated and campus remained open for normal business. Hats off to the 30 temporary chillers that UW crews pressed into action.



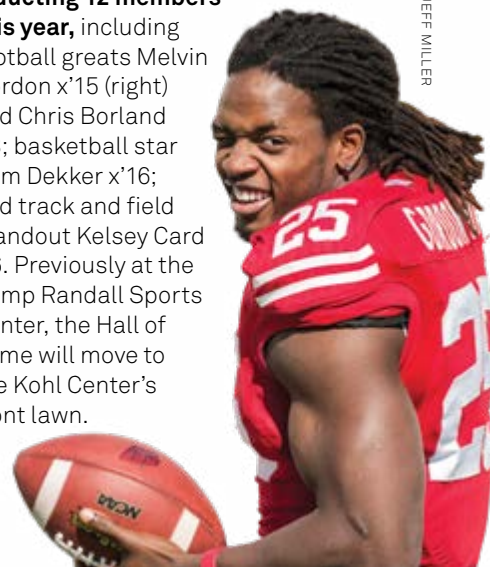
JEFF MILLER

Following Coldplay and Morgan Wallen in 2025, summer concerts at Camp Randall Stadium continued this year with AC/DC on July 19. The veteran band packed the joint — and rocked it all night long, of course.

The UW Athletic Hall of Fame is inducting 12 members this year,

including football greats Melvin Gordon x'15 (right) and Chris Borland '13; basketball star Sam Dekker x'16; and track and field standout Kelsey Card '16. Previously at the Camp Randall Sports Center, the Hall of Fame will move to the Kohl Center's front lawn.

JEFF MILLER





Arrivederci, Porta Bella!

The Italian restaurant was a romantic getaway for UW couples.

Years ago, I had a memorable first date at Porta Bella, the campus-area Italian restaurant. One reason I remember the date so well: the overripe romantic ambience.

Stepping through the archway at 425 N. Frances Street was like entering another world — one set apart from the chain restaurants on nearby State Street. Porta Bella offered an enchanted realm of stained glass, classical statues, mirrored walls and ceilings, dark wood paneling, brass chandeliers, and private booths. Each of the three dimly lit dining rooms had its own character, and an enclosed garden courtyard promised old-world charm. It was a welcome

contrast to the utilitarian parking ramp across the street.

Unfortunately, enchanted realms don't last forever. After 58 years, Porta Bella closed last February to make way for a high-rise apartment building. Well, they can take away our manicotti, but they can't take our memories.

Porta Bella opened as an upscale spinoff of Paisan's, the campus favorite that lasted almost as long — it closed in 2022. Ed Shinnick, who worked at the restaurant when it opened in 1968 and became a co-owner in 1974, lovingly preserved some of the original recipes. The Porta Salad, with a choice of seven dressings, was the stuff of UW legend. And no one ever left hungry after ordering the Garibaldi Sandwich, an original concoction featuring layers of ham, salami, pepper jack cheese, tomatoes, and peppers.

Shinnick also updated the menu based on his regular trips to Mantova, Italy. In the banquet

Before Porta Bella closed in February, Joyce '82 and Arlon '80 Spaeth enjoyed a last meal in one of its secluded booths.

What are your favorite memories of Porta Bella Italian Restaurant? Email onwisconsin@uwalumni.com; comment on this article at onwisconsin.uwalumni.com; or write to 1848 University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53726.

room, an eight-panel mural of Mantova beckoned to dreamers with its towers and turrets.

Porta Bella's customers and staff were primarily UW students. And as UW alumni, they continued flocking to their favorite tables on return trips to campus. No one ever forgot the distinctive atmosphere.

"The upholstered booths made it feel like you were in your own quiet space," says Shinnick, who felt ready to retire after nearly six decades. "It was a romantic place where you could go on your first date or your anniversary."

As for my own first date at the restaurant, there's another reason it sticks in my memory. My companion that night — who wisely ordered the fettucine alfredo — is now my wife. I doubt things would have turned out quite so well if we'd dined at a chain restaurant on State Street instead of the ever-magical Porta Bella.

DEAN ROBBINS



WILLIS WONDERLAND FOUNDATION

A Space for Dreaming

The UW's Allee Willis Creativity Commons will channel a famous alumna's artistic vision.

The late **Allee Willis '69** cowrote the megahit "September" for Earth, Wind & Fire in 1978. She went on to sell 60 million records, earn a Grammy Award, and score the Broadway production of *The Color Purple*, for which she earned a Tony Award nomination. Now, her archive is coming to the UW's Mills Music Library, including photographs, handwritten lyrics, and her 1986 Grammy.

The donation is coupled with a \$1.5 million gift to campus from the Willis Wonderland Foundation that will fund the construction of a multidisciplinary makerspace in Memorial Library called the Allee Willis Creativity Commons, as well as ongoing programming and technology upgrades in the UW Libraries' Digital Scholarship Hub. Together, the forthcoming space and endowment will be dedicated to transforming the artist's creative vision into a reality for UW-Madison students.

"As Allee's example shows us, some of the most meaningful work comes from bringing different ways of thinking together and simply seeing what happens next," says **Erla Heyns**, UW dean and vice provost of Libraries. "In other words, the Creativity Commons will be a place where the next Allee Willis might get their start."

Along with songwriting, Willis was a visionary multimedia artist, a set designer, and a digital pioneer who launched the first interconnected social network in cyberspace, called willisville, in 1993.

The Allee Willis Creativity Commons will invite UW-Madison students to test the limits of their imaginations and blaze their own trail. To be housed on the second floor of Memorial Library, the 3,245-square-foot space will channel Willis's signature aesthetic, complete with a candy-colored exterior and items from the artist's collection of atomic kitsch.

Expected to open in mid-2028, the Creativity Commons will be anchored by an expansive creativity zone that includes flexible setups for programming, community events, and independent study. A dedicated makerspace will support the creation of physical media and art. Most dramatic, though, is The Studio, which will include state-of-the-art podcasting and music production equipment, giving students, researchers, scholars, and the larger community the chance to tell their own stories.

SARAH PROBST '10



UW-Madison's graduate programs are highly ranked in the 2026 edition of U.S. News & World Report's "Best Graduate Schools." Those ranked number one or tier one in their categories include education, primary care medicine, educational psychology, rehabilitation counseling, and speech-language pathology. And nearly 20 programs ranked in their respective Top 10 lists.

"In an increasingly polarizing world, where many profit by pulling us apart, this wonderful university did everything to bring us back together."

— Student speaker **Ryan Schwartz '26** at spring commencement



RENEE MEILLER

A RALLY IN MANUFACTURING

When 700 people gathered at Lambeau Field in Green Bay in June for the Wisconsin Drives Manufacturing Summit, they set two goals: the state would lead the nation in manufacturing, and they would work together to get there.

Spearheaded by the UW–Madison College of Engineering, the summit was about bringing the state’s strengths, resources, and people into alignment so that all partners can tackle today’s challenges and respond nimbly to future opportunities.

“We’re renewing our vows today to the Wisconsin Idea,” said UW–Madison interim Chancellor **Eric Wilcots**.

Perennially ranked among the nation’s top three states for manufacturing, Wisconsin has nearly 9,000 manufacturing companies and some 470,000 manufacturing jobs. The summit featured eight standing-room-only breakout sessions, exploring topics ranging from AI to biohealth and defense.

“Communicate, collaborate, challenge,” said Craig Dickman, managing partner with TitledTownTech. “You can see the desire, feel the energy. Now turn this into action in a deep and meaningful way.”

RENEE MEILLER



UW ATHLETICS

The Winningest Coach

Mick Byrne retires after a record-breaking career in Badger cross country and track and field.

Mick Byrne, one of the most accomplished coaches in Wisconsin athletics history, has retired after 18 years with the Badgers. Byrne was the director of cross country and track and field — and, with 14 conference championships, the winningest coach in Big Ten men’s cross country history.

“Being a part of such a historic program has been a privilege of a lifetime,” he says.

Under Byrne’s leadership, Wisconsin captured the NCAA men’s cross country championship in 2011, earned 14 NCAA individual titles, and finished on the podium at the NCAA championships nine times. His men’s and women’s teams claimed 18 Big Ten team championships and 95 Big Ten individual titles, while producing 121 first-team all-American honors. He earned numerous Coach of the Year honors at the national, regional, and conference levels, reflecting the consistency and excellence of his programs.

Byrne’s impact extended to the international stage, with seven former Badgers competing in the Olympics. Most recently, five of his former athletes represented their countries at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, underscoring his role in developing talent capable of competing at the highest level in the world.

Beyond competitive success, Byrne’s legacy is defined by his commitment to the holistic development of student-athletes. His programs emphasized accountability, academic achievement, and personal growth, resulting in 19 Academic All-Americans and hundreds of student-athletes excelling both on the track and in the classroom.

“Mick has not only developed champions in sport on the course and track, but also in life,” says Deputy Athletic Director **Marcus Sedberry**. “His influence will be felt for generations through the student-athletes he mentored and the foundation he built.”

Byrne’s replacement is **Chris Solinsky '07**, a former Badger track star who won four Big Ten titles and 14 all-American honors, helping lead the UW to national titles in cross country and indoor track.

Studying Kids in the Wild

The Child Development Lab offers a rare chance to observe young students in a real-life setting.

UW-Madison founded the Child Development Lab to teach parenting skills to young mothers. Over the past century, it's become an innovative center for researching early childhood — with real-life children on hand for observation. In one capacity, the lab serves as a child-care center with high-quality programming for dozens of kids through age five. In another, it's a place where students and faculty can involve children in creative studies that advance the field of child development.

The School of Human Ecology will celebrate the Child Development Lab's centennial with a research symposium, community events, and an exhibition. Faculty Director **Heather Kirkorian**, the Laura M. Secord Chair in Early Childhood Development, has conducted influential studies at the lab with the adorable cohort she calls “the kiddos.”

What's the value of the Child Development Lab?

The first five years of childhood are foundational for all of us. So understanding kids — how to be responsive to them, how to support their learning and emotional well-being — benefits all of us. Being able to do that in real time, with direct observation of kiddos, is especially important.

How does the Child Development Lab benefit UW students?

Seeing a wide range of children in the wild and building relationships with them is just transformative for our students. That kind of deep, hands-on training is hugely impactful for those who will be working with children one day, such as pediatricians, child-care providers, and educators. It's something we wouldn't be able to do without having a resource like the Child Development Lab on campus.

What are some examples of the lab's research?

The questions we're asking have evolved to address changing times. Right now, for example, I study how videos, apps, and other kinds of technology impact child development. One of our grad students did his dissertation on kids with an autism spectrum disorder to test the impact of room design and lighting on how children do different kinds of tasks.

What's the space like?

We have a state-of-the-art facility in Nancy Nicholas Hall, with

Faculty Director Heather Kirkorian helps advance the field of child development.



To read more about the Child Development Lab, scan the QR code or visit go.wisc.edu/onwisc3.

embedded audiovisual systems so we can record the classrooms. There's also an attached research lab so kiddos can be pulled out by research groups. Most of our classrooms have observation booths with one-way mirrors and headsets so UW students can observe infants during nap time, toddlers during playtime, or structured reading time.

How do parents feel about such an environment?

Parents know this is a place where students are coming in the classroom and working directly with kids. We do this in ways that are respectful to everyone involved. A lot of the families are invested in the university's mission of research, teaching, and outreach, and they see it as a plus.

*Interview by Dean Robbins
Photo by Althea Dotzour*



Great Expectations for UW Hockey

The men's and women's teams aim to capitalize on their spectacular 2025–26 seasons.

Wisconsin is a hockey school. In case that was ever in doubt, UW–Madison now boasts 15 total NCAA hockey championship titles across its women's and men's teams — more than any other university.

It's an impressive statistic considering how much college athletics has evolved since the Badger men's team won the UW's first hockey title in 1973. And clearly, hockey at UW–Madison isn't slowing down. Both teams have featured powerhouse players over the past several decades, and last year was no exception.

Take the Badger women's team. They followed their 2025 come-from-behind championship win with a season that saw only four losses and two ties, even while some of their key players were out for several weeks in February to compete (and win gold) in the 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

Goalie **Ava McNaughton x'27**, who made the Team USA roster, calls the experience a whirlwind. "You're trying to make the Olympic team, and you're also trying to make sure you're keeping Wisconsin on track and doing everything you can while you're here. It was chaotic, but in the best way."

The Badgers went on to beat rival Ohio State in an NCAA championship game rematch, bringing their total title count to a record-extending nine. The season was a storybook ending for players **Caroline Harvey '26**, **Laila Edwards '26**, **Lacey Eden x'25**, **MS'26**, **Kirsten Simms '26**, and **Vivian Jungels '26**, who were all drafted into the Professional Women's Hockey League within the top 11 picks.

While the women's team had a deep bench of veterans last year, a relatively young lineup excelled on the Badger men's team. Their drive was evident throughout the season, whether sweeping Big Ten matchups against Penn State and Michigan State or bouncing back from a blowout loss in the conference quarterfinal that could have left them

down and out leading into the NCAA tournament. Emphasis on *could*.

"There were some peaks and valleys in our season, but if there's one thing that sticks out, it's the belief that the guys had in each other, and the resiliency they showed throughout the year," Coach **Mike Hastings** says.

It was this drive that led them to a Cinderella run during the tournament, where they took down top-seeded teams to make it to their first appearance in the NCAA final in a decade. The title game may have ended with a loss, but there's one thing the scoresheet doesn't show: the young Badger team is determined to go all the way, and this year, they just might do it.

"We've got depth in a lot of different positions. Down the middle, up front, back at our blue line," says Hastings.

Additions include goaltender **Alexis Cournoyer x'29**, a Cornell transfer who, along with standout **Daniel Hauser x'29**, will make scoring against the Badgers a much more difficult task for opponents.

But most important, Hastings adds, the fire is still there. "We've got a motivated group that's coming back understanding that they didn't quite get done what they wanted to get done a year ago."

Gavin Morrissey x'28, a junior forward and leading scorer, acknowledges

The UW boasts more NCAA hockey championship titles than any other university.



that expectations are high after last year's strong finish. "There's a big belief that we can achieve something great this year, with a lot of exciting young talent."

The women's team will also look to their younger players to fill some of the holes left by eight seniors who graduated in May. Under Coach **Mark Johnson '94**, they'll shoot for a three-peat, which hasn't been done in women's hockey in

more than 20 years.

McNaughton, who is in her final year on the team, is ready to take on some of the responsibilities that come with being a senior.

"We have a brand-new leadership group coming in this year and a pretty big incoming freshman class. It'll be important to make sure I'm on my game, and that I'm setting the right example from the start," she says. "I think it's one of the more fulfilling parts of the college experience, being able to grow into that leadership role."

So how do these teams handle all the expectations that come with being part of a legacy program? For McNaughton and Morrissey, it comes down to teamwork, consistency, and viewing any sort of pressure as an opportunity.

After last year's successes, Hastings thinks both UW teams are in an enviable position. "It's a privilege to have expectations put on your program," he says.

KRISTINA LEVAN '12
PHOTO BY TAYLOR
WOLFRAM '24



CAN *The* BADGERS BOUNCE BACK?

With a new strategy and significant investment, the football program has high hopes for the 2026 season.

**BY PRESTON SCHMITT '14
PHOTOS BY TAYLOR WOLFRAM '24**

If you need a reason to still believe in Badger football, you could start with the dedication of players like Mason Posa x'29. Despite last season's disappointments and the promises of the transfer portal, the star linebacker returned to the program for his sophomore season with hardly a second thought.



"I'm willing to die and sacrifice anything for this program to be winning again," Posa told a scrum of reporters in the spring. Hyperbole, perhaps, but you could only read sincerity and conviction on his face.

He later told me: "People who leave when times are tough, I feel like it's soft. I'm a loyal guy. I gave my word to the coaches. I want to rebuild this team."

Such fierce loyalty may be a surprise on a team coming off a 4–8 season. There is no sugarcoating the struggles of Badger football of late. The program suffered back-to-back losing campaigns for the first time since 1992 — before legendary coach Barry Alvarez set the expectations for Badger football excellence, with three Rose Bowl wins to round out the decade.

The low point of the 2025 season arrived in October, when the Badgers lost to Iowa and top-ranked Ohio State by a combined 71 points while being held scoreless. Afterward, then-Athletic Director Chris McIntosh '04, MS'19 released a statement to fans acknowledging that the season had "fallen well short of our standards," and that he and head coach Luke Fickell shared in the frustration.

McIntosh noted that the athletics department was "committed to elevating the investment into our football program to position us to compete at the highest level," mentioning infrastructure, staffing, and, chiefly, player recruiting and retention. Translation: It was time to up the ante in the financial arms race of the new era of college athletics, in which players can receive direct revenue-sharing payments and third-party NIL (name, image, and likeness) deals,

Mason Posa is willing to "sacrifice anything for this program to be winning again."

with the ability to transfer unlimited times.

For a team many outside observers left for dead, the immediate returns offered a ray of hope: wins against ranked opponents Washington and Illinois, with UW students storming the field in celebration.

But everyone knows that this season will be the defining one for the future of Badger football. That urgency was on full display in the offseason, as the program stocked the war chest and retooled the roster.

"There is a lot of pressure on this team," Posa says, "and especially on Coach Fick, because this is the year that he's got to bring it back up. But we're all ready for it."

From the financial strategy to the new roster, here's how Badger football plans to turn things around.

"GET THIS PLACE BUMPING"

Two days after the transfer portal opened on January 2, the UW's top target, quarterback Colton Joseph x'27, announced his commitment to the program. Beyond the excitement of landing an athletic dual-threat quarterback with multiple years of eligibility, it was also an early sign of increased investment in the program.

"When I went into the portal, it was a big unknown," says Joseph, who led Old Dominion University's explosive offense the last two seasons. "I wanted to find the best people and the best place to help continue my career success — and that was to come here and be a Badger."

More than 30 transfer players followed Joseph to Madison, marking a record haul for the program. They include a slew of projected starters to shore up the offensive line, defensive backfield, and skill positions, including running back Abu Sama III x'27, receiver Shamar Rigby x'28, center Austin Kawecky MSx'28, and safety Marvin Burks Jr. x'27.

A small consolation for missing last year's post-season was the program's ability to hyperfocus on the new January portal, which consolidated multiple transfer windows into one massive scramble. In the weeks leading up to it, personnel staff and coaches worked overtime to identify potential targets in the portal and players to retain, using an evaluation system that weighs projected fit and production relative to the existing roster to calculate individual value.

Focusing on realistic targets is essential, considering there are some 15,000 football players at the Division I level alone. To run such an operation requires both manpower and strategic thinking, which is why the UW has invested in additional football staff. The directory now reads like that of an NFL front office: a general manager, a director of scouting and player personnel, and a full team of recruiting and scouting staff.

The strategy resulted in 23 commitments within

a week of the transfer portal opening. On3's Team Transfer Portal Index, which measures a team's production in the portal relative to its lost talent, ranked the UW's class 15th in the nation, sandwiched between Ole Miss and Miami.

"I think we did our best job of pinpointing some of the guys we wanted to have and then stayed on top of it to get it done quickly," Fickell says. "That window goes fast. You have to do this the right way in order to execute, or else you miss out on options one through six and settle for option seven or eight."

The large number of transfers reflects a concerted effort to get more experience on the field in an increasingly competitive Big Ten Conference, from which the last three national champions have emerged. Fickell believes the team is uniquely prepared to handle the roster turnover because of its returning locker room leadership — particularly among the defense's front seven, a young but productive group that has embraced adversity.

"There's just a different leadership among the team right now," he says. "You can feel it. There's a core nucleus of leadership that has grown over the last two, three years through a lot of hard times."

It includes linebackers Posa and Cooper Catalano x'29, who as true freshmen and midseason breakouts combined for more than 100 tackles, six sacks, and two forced fumbles to lead a defense that kept the team competitive down the stretch.

"This is a different team, a lot more athletic, and we're going to get this place bumping," Posa says.

There's also been a recalibration in high school recruiting, with the program returning to its local

roots and betting that players with closer ties to the state will show more patience with playing time and development. By July, the Badgers were off to a hot start with the 2027 class, securing verbal commitments from 10 of the top in-state recruits, including at positions of traditional strength at the UW — offensive line and running back.

For competitive reasons, student-athlete compensation is not public information, so the athletics department hasn't reported how much more money it's investing in the roster, nor does it know the precise spending figures of peer schools.

Still, you can read between the hash marks. Landing coveted transfers like Joseph and retaining rising stars like Posa and Catalano — especially during a down period for the program — suggest spending that's closer to the upper echelon of the Big Ten.

"Put it this way, we couldn't do what we did in January if there wasn't a different level of investment," Fickell says. "Money doesn't solve all problems, but when you're looking for starters and you have to compete in this league, there's just a need."

"WE'RE BEING AGGRESSIVE"

Following McIntosh's statement in October, it did not take long for the athletics department to make good on its promises of elevated investment.

In late November, the UW announced a 10-year contract extension with Under Armour, which outfits all the varsity programs with uniforms and accessories. As part of the new agreement, which has a total estimated value of more than \$100

"There's just a different leadership among the team right now," Luke Fickell says. "You can feel it."





million, Under Armour committed to allocate funds to NIL contracts with UW student-athletes for brand endorsements and appearances.

The next month, the UW launched an initiative with Learfield called Badger Athlete Partners, which is designed to expand NIL opportunities. Learfield, a longtime sports marketing partner, committed to adding five positions dedicated to NIL-related deal facilitation and content creation for Badger student-athletes. That team works closely with the UW's in-house NIL staff, which has also grown in recent years. And together, they see a chance to infuse NIL opportunities into traditional corporate sponsorship agreements. These range from global brand Pepsi to local furniture store Steinhafels, which recently featured UW linemen in a "Recline with the Line" video series.

"The revenue-sharing component of the financial packages for athletes across sports, including football, is not sufficient for what is needed to field successful teams," says Brian Mason, the UW's director of NIL strategy. "That requires the ability to position third-party NIL deals to supplement it. We need to take advantage of every opportunity that exists with our full roster of corporate partners."

When the football program approaches a recruiting target or seeks to retain a current star, it must be prepared to discuss both on-field opportunities and a financial package, which often includes revenue-sharing payments directly from the athletics department as well as third-party NIL deals that Mason's team works to facilitate.

Upon the landmark *House v. NCAA* settlement in June 2025, the UW had already committed to pay up to the maximum cap for direct revenue-sharing

Colton Joseph wanted to find the best place to help continue his career success. "And that was to come here and be a Badger."

payments to student-athletes across sports — \$21.3 million this year. But the real arms race has been in third-party NIL deals, for which there is no limit. According to ESPN reporting, some football rosters alone are approaching a total figure of \$50 million.

Prior to the House settlement, there was a proliferation of donor-funded pay-for-play masquerading as NIL arrangements. Now there is a clearinghouse that reviews NIL deals for legitimate business purpose. Wisconsin Athletics believes it's positioned to thrive on this commercial-focused playing field.

The department has posted three consecutive years of record revenue in fundraising, sponsorships, and ticket sales. Newer revenue streams include alcohol sales in stadium, the return of major concerts to Camp Randall (hello, AC/DC), and brand-promotion deals, such as Culver's and UW Health jersey patches for men's teams and women's teams, respectively.

"We're being smart, but we're being aggressive in order to make sure that we're keeping up with our peers," says Mitchell Pinta '08, the UW's deputy athletic director and chief revenue officer. "We're also making sure we have the right partners that fit our brand and our priorities."

Over the spring, the success of Wisconsin Athletics emerged as a rare bipartisan political issue, with the state legislature and governor working out a bill to provide millions of dollars to UW-Madison for athletic facility debt service. The intent is to free up additional resources to expand revenue opportunities, preserve all 23 varsity sports teams, and help the Badgers stay competitive on the field.

"It is no secret that football drives 80 percent of our total athletics revenue," says Pinta, who previously worked for the NFL as director of business

development. “A healthy football program helps fuel the opportunity for all 22 other sports. The blunt fact of the matter is that we need to do everything we can to put football in a position to be successful on the field.”

Later in the spring, McIntosh departed the university to become the Big Ten’s first deputy commissioner for strategy. The listing for the UW’s new athletic director reinforced the need for financial acumen and expertise in the future business model of college athletics. In July, the university hired Shawn Eichorst for the role (see page 11). The veteran administrator rose through the leadership ranks at Wisconsin Athletics before serving as athletic director at the University of Nebraska and University of Miami. Most recently, he was the deputy athletic director and chief operating officer at the University of Texas, which reemerged as a national semifinalist in football during his tenure.

When it comes to investment, sometimes seeing is believing. That’s especially true when you’re trying to sell the program to current players and future recruits. The Kellner Family Athletic Center — the largest capital project in Wisconsin Athletics history at \$285 million, with more than \$100 million in private funding — is towering proof. The new facility adjacent to Camp Randall will include a regulation-sized indoor football field; state-of-the-art strength and conditioning, sports medicine, and dining centers; and a 305-meter track.

“While the McClain Center served us well for many years, it just didn’t have the modern amenities that a Big Ten football program requires in this day and age,” Pinta says. “And this facility is not going to just benefit our football program — it’s going to benefit the entire athletics department.”

The first phase of the project was completed over the summer, so if you notice better punting this season, you’ll know why. Unlike the former practice facility, the Kellner Family Athletic Center has that full-sized field and a high-enough roof to accommodate indoor punting practice.

But if punts don’t get you energized for the upcoming season, perhaps the new quarterback room will.

“MAKE PLAYS WHEN STUFF GOES WRONG”

For all the talk of money and strategy, the success or failure of Badger football this season may come down to one simple factor: a healthy starting quarterback.

That has been a matter of terrible luck for the UW. In Fickell’s three seasons, the starting quarterback to enter the year has only finished 11 of 37 games — and just two of the last 24. Billy Edwards Jr. MSx’27 sprained his knee in the first half of last season’s opener, leading to a carousel of four quarterbacks taking snaps. The disjointed offense sputtered near the bottom of college football in both yardage and scoring.

The Badgers are hoping that Colton Joseph can run free from the injury curse — and opposing defenders. He did plenty of the latter at Old Dominion, where he was one of only two quarterbacks in the country to eclipse 2,000 passing yards and 1,000 rushing yards last season

as a redshirt sophomore. (By comparison, Russell Wilson MSx’13 holds the record for most rushing yards in a season by a Badger quarterback — with 338.) Against eventual national champion Indiana, Joseph ran wild for 179 yards and two touchdowns.

He’s proven he can stretch the field vertically with an elite deep ball. And the belief is that he can unlock offensive coordinator Jeff Grimes’s balanced, physical pro-style system, which at BYU produced a top-two NFL draft pick at quarterback.

“I can make plays when stuff goes wrong and put more pressure on defenses,” Joseph says. “I’m going to do everything in my power to have a winning season.”

Learning from recent history, the Badgers have stacked the quarterback room with Louisville transfer Deuce Adams x’28 and freshman Ryan Hopkins x’30, both of whom turned heads in spring practice and can plug into a similar offensive style.

Compounding the quarterback injuries last season was the hardest schedule in all of college football, according to ESPN’s College Football Power Index, with seven of 12 games against ranked teams.

“The hardest thing for me to judge right now is where our ability stacks up in the league, because the Big Ten has gotten exponentially better over the last three years,” Fickell says. “But putting ourselves in a position to be in the mix for the playoffs in the last quarter of the season is what we have to be able to do.”

That’s a high bar for a team coming off a four-win season, but Fickell is aware of the expectations — and the frustration. Last year, he told reporters: “I know how everybody feels. I live it every single day, every minute.”

In his office over the summer, I asked him what that actually looks like — especially for a coach who is not accustomed to failure, having won national championships as an assistant at Ohio State and then transformed Cincinnati into a playoff team.

“It’s hard. It’s why hopefully you have a good, solid family at home, because that’s the one crew that doesn’t rise and fall on the way you perform on Saturdays,” he says. “If you don’t have some rock, some faith, I don’t know how you’d survive.”

He adds: “The challenge is to be consistent, no matter what you feel on the inside. Your players and coaches are going to look at you every single day, what your body language is, how you respond.”

How will the 2026 Badgers respond, with a coach feeling the pressure, a revamped roster, a new athletic director, a far friendlier schedule, and maybe, just maybe, healthy quarterback play? It won’t take long to find out. The Badgers open the season at Lambeau Field against ranked Notre Dame on September 6.

The lights don’t get any brighter than that. ●

Preston Schmitt ’14 is a senior staff writer for On Wisconsin.

JEOPARDY!

JEOPARDY!

WHAT IS UW-MADISON?

The university has often been featured as a clue in the TV quiz show Jeopardy!

BY DOUG ERICKSON

For fans of both *Jeopardy!* and the UW, it's a special thrill when the top-rated TV quiz show reveals a clue related to the university. But it also presents a heightened challenge for any Badger in the viewing audience: *I'd better get this one right!*

Now in its 43rd season of syndication, *Jeopardy!* has featured more than 40 clues about the UW, according to the show's research team. In *Jeopardy!* style, the clues are phrased as answers, and contestants must buzz in with the hope of providing the proper question. For many of those clues, the winning response was simply "What is UW-Madison?" However, others proved trickier.

Here are 10 clues from 10 categories that delved a little deeper into university history, with correct responses in the sidebar. Two are noted as "Triple Stumpers," meaning none of the three contestants answered correctly. See how you stack up against some of the world's smartest trivia buffs.

Don't worry, your diploma is not at stake. Just your pride.

1. College Sports Films

Shot at UW-Madison, *Back to School* features Rodney Dangerfield competing in this aquatic sport.

2. American Architects

He did some early work on buildings as a student at UW-Madison in the 1880s, assisting the construction supervisor of Science Hall.

3. Rock Your World

The UW-Madison Geology Museum has the state rock of Wisconsin; not to be confused with the state rock of New Hampshire. It's the red type of this.

4. Actresses

Famous folks who attended UW-Madison include this theater and drama student who received a 2004 Distinguished Alumni Award. (TRIPLE STUMPER)

5. State Songs

John Philip Sousa was an admirer of this college song about the "Grand Old Badger State." (TRIPLE STUMPER)

6. The Clinton Cabinet

This secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services was the first woman to head a Big Ten school, UW-Madison.

7. On, Wisconsin!

Proceeds from this woman's calendars went to the University of Wisconsin Medical Center to fight cancer.

8. They Named the Court for Me!

This TV ratings pioneer once served as a captain at the University of Wisconsin, so the school named a stadium for him.

9. College Education

Wisconsin has one of the oldest of these programs in which universities "reach out" to non-full-time students.

10. College Courses

A Wisconsin course on this in Literature and Cinema includes viewing *Nosferatu* and reading *The Historian*. ●

1. What is diving? (MAY 7, 2008)
2. Who is Frank Lloyd Wright? (DECEMBER 16, 2008)
3. What is granted? (JUNE 6, 2011)
4. Who is Jane Kaczmarek? (SEPTEMBER 24, 2008)
5. What is "On, Wisconsin"? (JUNE 17, 2024)
6. Who is Donna Shalala? (DECEMBER 11, 1996)
7. Who is Cindy Crawford? (MAY 1, 2006)
8. Who is A. C. Nielsen? (DECEMBER 3, 2014)
9. What is Extension? (MAY 11, 2007)
10. What is the vampire? (FEBRUARY 13, 2012)
- * A Madison-based freelancer who wrote this article. WHO IS DOUG ERICKSON?

MIGHTY MYCOLOGY





UW fungi researchers across many disciplines have created a world-class supergroup to improve our lives by healing depression, saving banana crops, dealing with death caps, and more.

**BY GEORGE SPENCER
PHOTOS BY TAYLOR
WOLFRAM '24**

*Casey Trickle
MS'24, PhD'28
treats a research
plot managed by
plant pathol-
ogy professor
Amanda Gevens,
who studies
fungal diseases
of potatoes and
other crops.*

It's no joke. Fungus is among us. As many as 11 million fungi species exist, although only 150,000 have been identified.

Some, like those that the antibiotic penicillin are made from, are lifesaving. Many are plant pathogens. Powdery mildew, rusts, and blight do more than irritate home gardeners. They cost billions in annual crop losses. In fact, fungi are responsible for about 70 percent of all plant diseases.

Luckily for farmers, doctors, and diners everywhere, fungal research at the UW has deep connections in academic fields spanning five schools and colleges and numerous departments. For 27 years, campus has been home to the Fungal Biology Supergroup, a loose alliance that has grown to some three dozen professors and researchers in disciplines that range from botany and pharmacy to medicine and public health.

The UW's supergroup is the world's largest and most diverse collection of fungal researchers, according to Christina Hull, a professor of biomolecular chemistry, medical microbiology, and immunology. "It's a rich community," she says. Research ranges from studies on medical applications for psychedelic mushrooms to the development of antifungal treatments for people, animals, and plants.

"The supergroup has become stronger over the years," says its founder, Nancy Keller, a professor of plant pathology as well as medical microbiology and immunology. Members, including faculty, researchers, and students, meet monthly to share progress in their fields, make connections, and create research partnerships. (One lab even has Fungus Fashion Fridays.)

Mehdi Kabbage, a professor in plant pathology, only needs one word to sum up the supergroup's impact on the UW's research prowess.

"It's massive," he says. "Massive."

Here are just a few of the projects that members of the supergroup are tackling to improve our lives.



Madeline Bondy PhDx'27 and Professor Mehdi Kabbage inoculate soybeans to learn about a stem rot fungus. Right-hand page, top: outreach specialist Stephen Jordan and Amanda Gevens review information on potato blight. Bottom: fungi researchers Nancy Keller, Anne Pringle, and Christina Hull are part of the UW's Fungal Biology Super-group, which was founded by Keller.

Stemming the Rot

Programmed cell death sounds like the name of a heavy metal band, but if Kabbage is right, this biological term holds the key to stopping the scourge of soybean farmers everywhere: Sclerotinia stem rot.

The stem rot fungus can live in soil for several years and infect more than 400 other species, including many economically important crops. By tricking the plant into flipping its own “self-destruct” switch, this fungus triggers a biological meltdown that drains more than \$1 billion from U.S. agriculture annually. Currently, farmers rely on fungicide applications and other less effective tools to stem the tide.

Kabbage wants to mitigate yield losses by genetically modifying soybean plants to improve their resistance. That way, if Sclerotinia’s cottony growths appear, the plant will defend itself.

By transferring genes into soybean plants, he has succeeded in programming the new hosts to make endangered cells shut down, stopping the disease’s progression.

Kabbage found an added benefit. These enhanced plants are more drought resistant because they are better able to manage the chemical stress caused by water deficit.

He took his first mycology course as an undergraduate in France. “For me, it was love at first sight,” he recalls. “I fell in love with fungi’s lifestyle, the structures they produce, and their plasticity across multiple environments.”

Kabbage is also seeking a cure for a new variant of Panama disease, a soil-borne fungal infection of

banana plants. “It threatens to wipe out banana production worldwide,” he says. “Banana plants have no resistance.”

Death Caps, Disease, and Drugs

When a death cap mushroom kills a luckless diner, reporters from outlets like NPR, NBC, and the *Washington Post* put botany professor Anne Pringle on speed dial.

Pringle, a past president of the Mycological Society of America, isn’t seeking a cure for the deadly effects of the world’s most toxic mushroom. Instead, her interest is invasion biology. As a graduate student in California, she began collecting the killer mushroom when she learned it had migrated there.

“The death cap became a tool to try to understand a particular aspect of the changing biodiversity of fungi and understand why it’s happening,” says the ecologist and evolutionary biologist.

The National Geographic Society has since named her as one of its Explorers, a select group of adventurers and scientists who often appear in the pages of *National Geographic* magazine. No doubt it’s because she speaks with such passion about fungi.

“If you want to make discoveries that challenge what we think about biology, fungi are the organisms to work with,” she says. “Fungi challenge our very notions of individuality and hierarchy and integration.”

Pringle hates the “myth of the lone professor.”

If she were a fungus, she might be of the mutualist variety — one that has a mutually beneficial association with other kinds of organisms — reflecting how she collaborates with grad students and researchers. “Whenever I give talks,” she says, “somewhere at the top, I always tell people that I’m using the word *I*, but the word *I* is a lie. It’s never an *I*. It’s always a *we*.”

She has teamed with Hull to understand how death caps are evolving. Most mushrooms need a partner of the opposite mating type to reproduce. But Pringle and Hull found that death caps can reproduce on their own, a fact that helps explain how their territory has spread.

Nematodes are also a subject of study for Pringle, this time in collaboration with Keller, a leader in the field of fungal chemistry. These microscopic roundworms are found around the world. Though most are harmless and benefit soil health, some cause debilitating maladies like elephantiasis, river blindness, and trichinosis.

“We’ve found that extracts from a certain mushroom appear to kill nematodes. We’re going to try to find out what that metabolite is, because there’s a great need for nematicides in the world,” says Keller.

Meanwhile, she and Pringle have allied themselves with Hull. And Keller and Hull, who both work on fungi that cause fatal diseases in people, have also paired up for many years.

“We are interested in how the spores of those fungi can get into a host and set up shop,” says Hull. “If we can stop those spores from becoming active, we could prevent disease in people.”

Hull and Keller’s research into antifungal drug development involves identifying small molecules that will either prevent germination or kill the organism once it has caused a disease.

“Everything is connected,” Hull says. “As a fungal biologist, what else am I going to say?”

Eye on the Spuds

Potatoes are complicated, especially when it comes to fungal threats. That’s the way plant pathology professor and Extension specialist Amanda Gevens sees it.

Wisconsin is the nation’s third-largest producer of the humble tuber by acreage, and fungus can attack it anywhere in its life cycle, as well as after harvesting. One particular fungus that causes early blight shows up in almost every potato field in the state starting in July.

Farmers often call Gevens the plant doctor. She also studies fungal threats to sweet corn, peas, cabbage, onions, and carrots.

“Much of the work I do is diagnostic,” she says. “They call me to their fields or send me potato plants so we can understand what’s making their plants sick and offer management strategies.”





Gevens, in collaboration with Phil Townsend, a professor of forest and wildlife ecology, is developing techniques to detect disease in potato plants before symptoms can be seen with the naked eye. They began with handheld devices in fields. Since then, they have tested the technology in drones and airplanes and hope to extend the testing to satellites. Their goal is to make the technology commercially available.

Gevens's lab has also studied using ultraviolet light as a nonchemical post-harvest means of stopping fungus. "We expose tubers to low-duration UV light that deactivates pathogens, so potatoes can be stored more healthfully," she says.

Wisconsin farmers rely on more than 40 fungicides to keep their potatoes healthy, but chemicals can only do so much.

"When we think we've got a fungal pathogen managed and outwitted, inevitably, that's not the case," Gevens says. "They find another way of persisting. Fungi have a real drive to survive, and that's the constant challenge."



Powerful Medicine

The FDA may approve psilocybin for treatment of depression later this year or in early 2027, based in part on research data submitted by the UW's Center for Psychedelic Research and Education.

"It's an enormous opportunity," says the center's director, Paul Hutson, the Thora M. Vervoren Professor for Research in Psychoactive Substances in the School of Pharmacy.

"This will be a new class of drugs. They will be as big a paradigm shift as any drug class you can think of in the treatment of cancer, mental health, and cardiovascular disease."

Psilocybin is the active ingredient in some types of hallucinogenic or "magic" mushrooms. Research suggests that the trip-inducing fungus, long used in rituals by indigenous cultures in pre-Columbian Mexico, increases neuroplasticity. In effect, it rewires the brain in ways that create opportunities for learning that can help people overcome psychological woes.

What has most surprised Hutson is how fast psilocybin's effects occur and how durable they are. "Even though the drug leaves the system within a day, something fundamentally changes in people," he says.

Trial subjects who are addicted to cocaine, methamphetamines, tobacco, and alcohol lose their desire for those substances "virtually immediately," he says. "We've seen a 90 percent drop in methamphetamine use after two doses of psilocybin."

Trials are also underway to determine the effect of psilocybin on sleeping subjects and those given the amnesia-inducing drug midazolam, which is administered during colonoscopies.





“How important is it to remember the nature, severity, or intensity of a psychedelic treatment to get a therapeutic benefit?” asks Hutson. “We’re asking fundamental questions about how this drug works.”

A Fungal Legacy

The university’s fungi expertise is not limited to the modern era. UW researchers played a key role in the development of penicillin. A fungus discovered on a moldy cantaloupe in 1943 in Peoria, Illinois, became “the great granddaddy” of all penicillin cultures now in use.

For its discovery, thank UW professor of bacteriology and botany Kenneth Raper, then a USDA researcher. He and his team played a key role in the strain’s commercialization.

Raper shipped samples to UW microbiologists Marvin Johnson and Elizabeth McCoy 1925, MS1926, PhD1929, who exposed them to ultraviolet light. This created a new strain that yielded 900 times more penicillin than the variant Scottish physician Alexander Fleming found in 1928.

Raper came to the UW in 1953 and spent the next 26 years studying fungi and doing pioneering work on slime mold, which, although not actually a fungus, has become a go-to organism for scientists who study cell communication.

Since 1849, the botany department has housed one of the world’s greatest resources for fungi researchers. The Wisconsin State Herbarium boasts a collection of nearly 1.4 million plant specimens, including more than 91,000 fungi. It’s the

third-largest public university herbarium in the U.S. — and one of the world’s biggest. In the last decade, staff discovered that 59 of the facility’s fungal pathogen specimens had been mailed to Birge Hall in 1900 by George Washington Carver, the famed botanist and peanut researcher.

“Our greatest strength is in microfungi,” says director and botany professor Ken Cameron. “These are the disease-causing mildews, molds, cankers, rusts, and smuts. Since we’re an agricultural land-grant university, these specimens have historically been very important to us.”

Cameron, who is a global expert on orchids, is very familiar with fungi because the exotic flowers have coevolved with them and need specific fungi species to ensure that their seeds germinate.

Cameron is also president of the Botanical Society of America, and he dismisses the notion that an herbarium is old-fashioned. The UW’s increasingly serves as a kind of lending library. Scientists from around the world borrow its specimens, sequence their DNA, and trace the origins of new diseases.

“We collect plants and fungi for use by the next generation, but when people look at our historical specimens today, they’re looking backward in time,” he says. “What people are now realizing is that we are sitting on a treasure trove of information.” ●

George Spencer profiled Alzheimer’s disease expert Nathaniel Chin ’06, MD’10 for On Wisconsin in 2023. Together they wrote the book When Memory Fades (St. Martin’s Press).

Ken Cameron examines a sample of microfungi in the Wisconsin State Herbarium. Left-hand page, top: a researcher handles a container of fungal pathogen inoculum used to infect a research plot. Center: associate professor of pharmacy Cody Wenthur explains his psilocybin research. Bottom: pharmacy professor Paul Hutson directs a UW center that is researching the use of fungus-derived psilocybin to treat mental illness.



UW–Madison in Four Walks

*Join us for a classic stroll around the
world's most beautiful urban campus.*

BY MELANIE CONKLIN MA'93

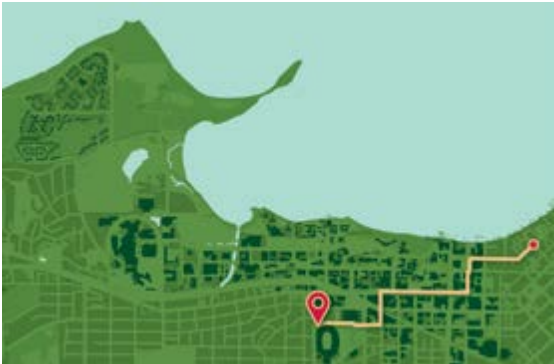
Campus life quickly wears down shoe soles as it builds up leg muscles, because for UW–Madison students it is primarily lived on foot. Cars, bikes, scooters, skateboards, and buses abound on this urban campus, but they are often experienced by students as obstacles to dodge.

Remember the walk — buzzing with wary energy — from the residence hall to your first freshman class? Then there was the route from those Regent Street tailgate parties toward a raucous Badger victory at Camp Randall Stadium. Recollections far more serene might include strolling hand-in-hand with a date along the verdant Lakeshore Path at sunset.

Here are some of the most fondly and frequently recalled UW–Madison footpaths, featuring lush landscapes, iconic architecture, centuries of local history, and meditative escapes. And of course, in America's Dairyland, Babcock Hall ice cream.

PHOTOS BY ALTHEA DOTZOUR, JEFF MILLER, BRYCE RICHTER, AND TAYLOR WOLFRAM





Camp Randall Game Day Walk

The path to a Badger football game might be a march, or even a bar crawl. But tradition strictly dictates that whether you come from parties on Langdon or Mifflin streets, tailgates on Regent Street, or Union South's Badger Bash, those ribbons of cardinal red and white must converge at the end of Dayton Street and flow beneath the imposing 1912 Camp Randall Memorial Arch.

For Civil War buffs, the grassy Camp Randall Memorial Park to the left showcases a guardhouse, two cannons, and a host of historic markers. For football-focused fans, however, it's a direct path between the engineering campus to the right and the looming stadium on the left to reach the students' Gate 5 entrance near Breese Terrace.

Once the ground has been shaken by "Jump Around" and the UW Marching Band has dazzled with its exuberant Fifth Quarter anarchy, exiting near the Field House offers a view of the new Kellner Family Athletic Center, where future Badger athletes will train.





On a football Game Day, simply follow the ribbons of cardinal and white to Camp Randall Stadium.





Lakeshore Path Walk

Student stresses can necessitate a healing respite among trees and rippling Lake Mendota. The cacophony of the Memorial Union Terrace recedes at the entrance to the Howard Temin Lakeshore Path. Although the path technically starts back at Park Street, it's farther west where one begins to find the soaring trees, small beaches, and large stones that offer spaces for quieter conversations or solitude. The birds' trills and the gliding sailboats promise an escape from the steady beat of urban campus life.

Trees dwindle along University Bay and the Triangle Marsh before the official path circles the Class of 1918 Marsh into Bill's Woods and the Big Woods. But most visitors are drawn rightward to Picnic Point, which beckons with its creeping flowers, fire circles, woodpiles, and some of the most expansive Lake Mendota views in Madison. The beloved peninsula juts nearly a mile into the lake.

Here, numerous benches, felled logs, and smaller footpaths provide wide-angle views of the capitol, campus buildings, Langdon Street, and the Edgewater Hotel piers to the right. Look left for "real" life in Madison's sprawling suburbs and lakeside homes, stretching beyond the boats that dot the water. The Picnic Point portion of the Lakeshore Path is the most visited area of the UW's 300-acre Lakeshore Nature Preserve, with thousands of people traversing it every year. A visit even on a snowy winter day will turn up students, dogs, and townspeople seeking exercise or peace.

Walk to the point and set everything else in the chaotic world aside.





The Lakeshore Nature Preserve offers the perfect escape from urban campus life.



Lake Mendota Path Walk

A walk on the wild side of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve turns up fewer humans on the narrow, sandy, root-riddled paths. In these biologically diverse arbors, birds clamor amid the rustling of trees and tall grass. If you do happen to meet another person, it likely requires stepping sideways into the brush to let them pass.

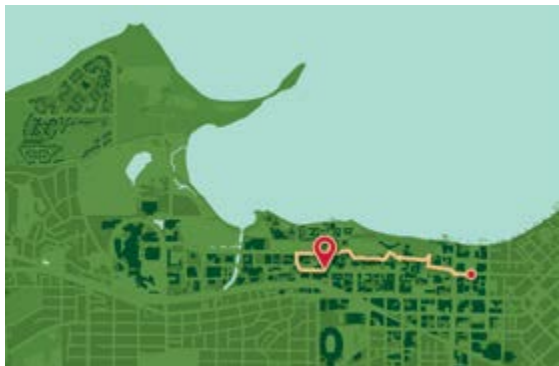
A good place to start is Frautschi Point's small parking lot, which sits across from the Eagle Heights University Apartments. A short walk down toward the lake arrives at the two small bumps that jut out into the water like an owl's ears and mark the point.

To the west lie nearly abandoned, denser woods. The Lake Mendota path passes through the Tent Colony Woods, Wally Bauman Woods, and steep Eagle Heights Woods, which hosts plants found nowhere else in the preserve. Paths to the east cross the more populated Eagle Heights Community Gardens, where walkways encourage wandering among the varieties of crops. There are plenty of opportunities here to "touch grass" or even squeeze handfuls of soil — a perfect break from scrolling and screens.

This route continues with a loop through the 11-acre restored Biocore Prairie, which consists of marshy fields and teaching landscapes tended by UW staff and students. Take in the new home for purple martins and the Bluebird Trail, dotted with bluebird boxes.

The interior footpaths, some dusted with wood chips, circle back to Eagle Heights. Those seeking more than four miles of leg-stretching can hike the lakeshore all the way back to Picnic Point where it intersects with the Howard Temin Lakeshore Path, then head to Alumni Park, the green space between the Memorial Union and the Red Gym that honors prominent alumni. An audio tour of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, available at lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu, features history, poetry, and recollections.





Observatory Hill Walk

An endurance trek from Library Mall up Bascom Hill can curve right around the university's first building, North Hall, to arrive at the walkable start to Observatory Drive. Cross the street and pause in the Storyteller's Circle to reflect on the Wisconsin Idea, then take in sparkling views of Lake Mendota from on high, visible through the trees of Muir Woods. It's seven acres of seclusion in the bustling heart of campus.

Returning to Observatory Drive, gaze skyward to the Carillon Tower with its 56 bells — an 85-foot ivy-bedecked tower out of the Rapunzel fairy tale. Originally it was surrounded by woods, which were partially removed in the '60s to build the Social Sciences Building. The carillon's quarter-hour tolling continues to provoke students to hustle, reminded that they are late for class.

Further along Observatory Drive lies its

namesake, the domed Washburn Observatory, which inspired a popular 1930s song heralding it as a great place to take a date. The paths just off the street offer better views of the observatory and also pass by the *Effigy: Bird Form* sculpture by the late UW art professor Truman Lowe MFA'73. This area in Agricultural Hall's backyard contains the earthworks that remain of the Observatory Hill Mound Group. A two-tailed water spirit and a bird integrated into the landscape are easy to miss when trotting by, although small plaques honor the area's Indigenous history.

Continuing on the left are multiple paths throughout this National Historic District, which encompasses much of the agricultural campus that grew up around the 1893 King Hall. The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has devised its own "Discovery Walk" of the area, showcasing the architecture as well as the scientific progress that took place in these historic buildings.

Further ahead, cross to the lake side of Observatory Drive and enter the oasis of Zen that is the Allen Centennial Garden. Smells shift from budding flowers, to spicy tree bark, to earthen mulch, to musty pond before you pass under an ivy-covered cedar pergola and cross a red Japanese-style bridge,

What are your favorite UW-Madison walks?
Email onwisconsin@uwalumni.com; comment on this article at onwisconsin.uwalumni.com; or write to 1848 University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53726.



both of which are excellent spots to focus all your senses on the surroundings. Many benches, each with a unique view of the thousands of plants puzzled into the sylvan space, surround the yellow-brick Victorian Gothic mansion that once housed agricultural deans.

Exit this small Eden, cross Observatory Drive, and take a path south toward Linden Drive. As the 1908 Tudor Revival-style Stock Pavilion comes into view, envision Harry Truman, Teddy Roosevelt, or Bill Clinton bellowing stump speeches inside, projected by its admirable acoustics. Or, if you prefer, listen hard to hear echoes of Sergei Rachmaninoff, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Muhammad Ali, R.E.M., or Bonnie Raitt, who have also graced this distinctive structure.

The next building to the east is arguably the most delightful spot on campus. It's the place where chemist Stephen Babcock's esteemed butterfat test of 1890 paved the way to today's delectable dairy treats, still made from the 1951 ice cream recipe developed the year Babcock Hall was built. It's the ultimate cherry on top of a meandering campus expedition. ●

Highlights of the Observatory Hill walk include North Hall and the Carillon Tower (top row, left and right); Washburn Observatory (second row); Effigy: Bird Form (third row, right); and the Stock Pavilion (fourth row). Cap your journey with a scoop of Babcock Dairy ice cream.



Melanie Conklin MA'93 is a Wisconsin journalist and political communications director.

MAKING CRYPTO LESS CRYPTIC

*Brad Chandler's
finance class teaches
students about what
some see as the future
of money.*

**BY NIKI DENISON
PHOTOS BY TAYLOR
WOLFRAM '24**

*UW-Madison be-
came one of the
first universities
to teach about
cryptocurrencies
when Chandler
created his
course in 2018.*





Cryptocurrency tends to incite strong pro and con reactions — often from the same person. Shark Tank investor Mark Cuban told Forbes in 2019 that crypto was “too difficult to use, too easy to hack, way too easy to lose, too hard to understand.” He later purchased a substantial portfolio of the digital currency with a generous allotment to Bitcoin. He has since reverted to a more skeptical position and sold much of it off. Others who have done similar 180s include BlackRock CEO Larry Fink (who reversed his stance on Bitcoin from “an index of money laundering” to “digital gold”) and President Donald Trump, who went from calling crypto a scam in 2021 to attempting to make the United States the “crypto capital of the world.”

Whether you think cryptocurrency is a racket that creates money out of nothing or a brilliant way to sidestep inflation, there’s no doubt that it has seen unprecedented institutional adoption in recent years.

Despite that, many people still don’t have a firm grasp of what it is. That isn’t the case for the students in the Wisconsin School of Business class Finance 765: Cryptocurrencies, Blockchain and Digital Access.

UW-Madison was one of the first universities to offer this type of class when Brad Chandler, who teaches finance at the school, created it in 2018. Since then, it’s evolved from a 1-credit to a 3-credit elective. Chandler says he tries to approach the material from a factual, neutral standpoint. “DeFi [decentralized finance that is not under the control of banks or governments] is an alternative to our traditional system. As finance majors, they need to understand this world.” Chandler adds that “contrasting DeFi with traditional finance teaches us important lessons about both.”

On a February Thursday in Grainger Hall, some 50 students listened to a remote presentation by a legal adviser at Yellow Card, which uses digital assets to expedite cross-border transactions in Africa. Next, each student accessed \$20 provided by the business school to set up a personal MetaMask wallet, which offers a way for users to purchase and store crypto. “I’m not giving you funds to YOLO out of class,” Chandler cautioned to appreciative laughter. Class members were then assigned sides to debate whether cryptocurrency is a viable option for unbanked populations in emerging markets.



The Alum

Chandler gives a lot of credit for the class to Chris Kaczmarczyk '16, who helped him design the curriculum. Kaczmarczyk, who is a principal at the tech-focused venture capital company Third Prime, also assists with recruiting guest speakers and serves as a speaker for the last class to help ground the students in the real world.

"Brad's course sells out instantly almost every year," Kaczmarczyk says. He adds that Chandler brings a lot of credibility because he spent several decades in the traditional finance industry, serving as a managing director in the investment banking division for global financial giant Morgan Stanley, so "he understands how the infrastructure works."

Chandler has seen the shortcomings of traditional finance firsthand, and he became intrigued with the potential for crypto and blockchain technology to help solve some of those problems. Still, Chandler maintains a certain degree of skepticism, saying that he wants to see "a sober assessment of DeFi's possibilities, not unfounded promises." But the finance instructor wants students to form their own opinions, so he doesn't try to steer anyone in one direction or the other.

Kaczmarczyk, on the other hand, is not reluctant to share his position. "At the end of the day, this technology is very useful, right? It's only going to make things cheaper, faster, and better for all consumers."

He adds that UW-Madison "definitely punches above its weight" in terms of alumni leaders in the cryptocurrency industry. (See sidebar, page 51.) "We've actually had a lot of movers and shakers in the space, despite its being such a nascent industry."

Chandler, far right with class members, has told his students that he doesn't know everything about the crypto space because it's so new and changing so rapidly, and that he can learn from them just as well as they can from him.

What Is Crypto?

The financial firm Fidelity Investments offers one of the simpler definitions of the alternative asset: "Crypto is a digital currency, meaning it runs on a virtual network and doesn't exist in physical form like paper money or coins. Cryptocurrencies are often built using blockchain technology, a shared digital ledger that provides a secure recordkeeping and processing system for all of their transactions." (See sidebar, page 49.)

Or, in the opinion of people such as my 90-year-old aunt Marian, it's "fake money."

Bitcoin was the first cryptocurrency, and it was followed by thousands of others, with assets such as Ethereum, XRP, and Solana boasting the largest usage. Bitcoin was famously created by the pseudonymous Satoshi Nakamoto in 2009. Many sources have tried to identify Nakamoto over the years, with one recently naming British crypto entrepreneur Adam Back, and another pointing to the duo of cryptographer Hal Finney and computer scientist Len Sassaman, both now deceased. Nakamoto's 1.1 million bitcoins have never been sold, and today they have an estimated value between \$70 billion and \$130 billion, depending on the current price.

Nakamoto centered his innovation on blockchain technology to eliminate the middleman role played by banks, which have traditionally processed and verified payments. Anyone can see the transactions, providing transparency, and the transactions cannot be altered or deleted. Blockchains are also used for things like tracking supply chains, maintaining health care data, and managing public records such as land titles and marriage licenses.

A message encoded in the first block on the blockchain implies that Nakamoto may have been motivated by the banking crisis of 2008, which was triggered by a mortgage crisis and led to bank failures, government bailouts, and the Great Recession. In a white paper, he outlined plans for “a purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash [that] would allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another without going through a financial institution.”

Cryptocurrency is notoriously volatile, with Bitcoin swinging from a high of \$126,198 per coin in October 2025 and then dipping back to below \$60,000 the following spring. But bitcoin billionaires who bought in when the price was in the single and double digits have now become the stuff of legend, inspiring legions of enthusiasts to search for the next big breakout coin in hope of similar windfalls.

Crypto has also famously developed a reputation as a haven for criminal elements because it bypasses traditional banking oversight, making it ideal for money-laundering as well as scamming victims who are not able to get their money back. In the United States, the much-anticipated Digital Asset Market Clarity Act, which had not yet passed at press time, aims to provide greater monitoring of the industry and reduce illicit uses.

The Cautious Investor

Learning about scams “from an objective source” was the main reason Ryan Schwartz ’26 signed up for Chandler’s class. Schwartz, who is seeking a job in corporate restructuring, sees the prevalence of bad actors as “a very big downside” with crypto. But he admits that a significant advantage is how quickly people can make transactions (minutes, compared to bank transactions such as international wire transfers, which can take days). And he also likes the fact that users can avoid the high fees associated with traditional finance.

Schwartz, who graduated with a degree in finance and real estate, was surprised that the course didn’t just cover investing — it also focused on topics such as cryptography, the construction of blockchains, stablecoins (which some say is the most important invention in all of crypto), decentralized lending, and decentralized exchanges.

Overall, Schwartz favors a prudent approach. Before taking the class, he had not personally invested in crypto. “I wanted to complete the course first,” he says. Now that he has graduated, however, he is considering putting a tiny percentage of his future retirement account (only an amount that he would feel comfortable losing) into Bitcoin.

“I like the fact that the class was very discussion-based,” Schwartz says. “We got to hear a wide range of opinions, which is really helpful.”



GLOSSARY

+ Altcoins

Any cryptocurrency other than Bitcoin. This includes thousands of other tokens and projects.

+ Blockchain

A shared digital record (like a public spreadsheet) that tracks transactions. It is stored across many computers, making it hard to change or tamper with.

+ DeFi (Decentralized Finance)

Financial services (like lending, borrowing, and trading) built on blockchain networks, without traditional banks or intermediaries.

+ Exchange

A platform where people buy and sell cryptocurrencies. Examples include Coinbase, Binance, and Uniswap.

+ Fintech

Short for financial technology, this term refers to the use of software, AI, and digital platforms to streamline financial transactions. (The payment app Venmo is one example.)

+ FUD (Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt)

Negative or alarming information — sometimes exaggerated or misleading — that can cause people to sell or avoid an investment.

+ HODL

A slang term meaning “hold” (originally a typo). It refers to keeping your crypto long-term instead of selling.

+ Mining

The process of using computers to validate transactions and add them to a blockchain. Miners are rewarded with new cryptocurrency.

+ Stablecoins

Cryptocurrencies designed to keep a stable value, usually tied to a currency like the U.S. dollar (e.g., 1 coin ≈ \$1).

+ Staking

Locking up cryptocurrency to help secure a blockchain network and earn rewards in return.

+ Wallet

A tool that lets you store and use your cryptocurrency. Hot wallets are connected to the internet (easier to use, but more vulnerable to hacking). Cold wallets are offline storage (much safer, but less convenient).

+ Whale

An individual or entity who owns a large amount of cryptocurrency and can influence market prices.

— Courtesy of Brad Chandler

The True Believer

Keenan Vanden Heuvel MBA'26, who was one of six graduate students in the class, is not so worried about crypto's criminal element. He counters that "there are bad actors on the internet, but we don't throw the internet away."

Vanden Heuvel started investing in crypto five years ago, and those investments have done as well as or better than his traditional holdings. "It's one of those things where it's like, man, I should have put all my money into it," he says. Despite the recent downturn of early 2026, he was still up more than 100 percent. "I think there's potential for a lot more growth, and it's still early."

Vanden Heuvel got into the alternative investments "because the regular markets are only five days a week, like office hours, but crypto is 24/7." Like many investors, he's learned to live with the volatility. "It is tough when you see [the value of your holdings] almost cut in half, but after a while, you get calmer about the big ups and downs."

The May graduate hopes to get a job with a blockchain or crypto company, so he was in his element in Room 1280 Grainger, which is typically filled to capacity for the class's twice-weekly meetings. He's impressed that "the university has an actual blockchain class taught by a really great finance professor," and that it enhanced his understanding of the digital system's underlying concepts. He was also active in Badger Blockchain, a student organization that Chandler advises, which advocates for emerging finance.

Chandler chats with Emma Wells and Thomas Dupont after class. In addition to crypto, the class covers a number of DeFi products such as stablecoins and decentralized lending and exchanges.

Vanden Heuvel believes that everyone should care about crypto because it's a growing part of what's happening in everyday finance. But he thinks that young people are more open to the alternative currency, "because they see that you lose like 1 percent to 2 percent per year to inflation" with conventional cash. Some of the reports that the students read in class, he says, recommended putting 1 percent of retirement portfolios in crypto as a hedge against inflation.

What about people who believe this financial innovation is eventually going to disappear? "I was hearing these arguments when the price of Bitcoin was \$2,000," Vanden Heuvel says. "With all the companies adopting blockchain technology, it's not going to go away."

The Beginner

Thomas Dupont '26 also graduated in May with a major in finance and real estate. He is grateful to Chandler for encouraging him to apply for his job as a credit research analyst and account manager in Chicago, which Dupont was scheduled to start in August. He also appreciates Chandler's breadth of knowledge. "The class has opened up a totally new world of finance that I didn't know existed," he says.

Dupont had not invested in crypto before because he didn't know enough about it, but he now feels that he has the skills to assess it, and he may include crypto in his retirement account. "I believe that risk is worth taking," he says. "I can see a world where there is rapid growth, and I wouldn't want to be left behind."





A disadvantage of crypto in Dupont's eyes, however, is that learning how to access it "tends to be very difficult." Each student in the class was given a \$15 balance to exchange between USDT (a stablecoin, which is designed to maintain a fixed value) and Ethereum on different platforms. "Even in a classroom setting, I found myself asking for help from the people around me, because I couldn't figure it out," he says. "I think people might prefer to stick with what they know rather than go through all these hoops that they may or may not understand. ... You just kind of need to work through it."

At the same time, Dupont was happy that the class provided these types of hands-on opportunities so he didn't have to teach himself. "It would take me so much time to figure all these things out, so having a class like this in college is 100 percent worth it."

The Lifelong Learner

Emma Wells '26, a real estate and finance graduate, plans to start a job in multifamily real estate development in Green Bay in September. The class exceeded her expectations. "I really like the structure of the course and the way that we learn and apply as we go." Crypto has something of a stigma, she says, "but now I'm realizing that a lot of that is just misinformation."

Another revelation for her was that it's not just about Bitcoin. "There are a lot of different systems that I think will be integrated into what we currently know as the financial system," she says. "I think it's really important to stay current and understand these new technologies as they come out."

Wells sees the currency's volatility as a downside, as is another pitfall that they discussed in class: "lack-of-education risk." Crypto is very complex, she says, and "it's easy to fall into a trap of thinking that you understand a certain protocol when in reality, you might not." Novices can lose funds in an impressive variety of ways. Just for starters, they can accidentally send crypto to the wrong address, fall victim to scams, or lose their password — all of which result in irreversible financial losses.

"But it's not necessarily anyone's job to teach people about the traditional finance system, either," Wells says. "So that risk is present in both TradFi and DeFi. It's your own responsibility to educate yourself about the protocol you're using."

Wells admits to being risk-averse and says she'd need to do more research before investing in any crypto. But she thoroughly enjoyed attending the class. "It's really refreshing to learn about something you know nothing about." ●

Niki Denison is coeditor of On Wisconsin. She's still waiting for the \$100 she invested in altcoins in 2024 to turn into generational wealth.

UW–Madison boasts an outsized number of alumni who have helped build the foundations of the cryptocurrency and related industries. Below is a partial list of Badger innovators in the sector. For a more complete listing, visit onwisconsin.uwalumni.com.

- + **Carson Cook '09, MS'11, MA'12, PhD'15:** Founder of Tokemak and Membrane Labs, focused on DeFi liquidity and digital-asset market structure
- + **Adam Everspaugh PhD'17:** Applied cryptographer and Web3 security infrastructure founder; cofounder and chief technology officer of Station70 and former Coinbase/BlockFi cryptography leader
- + **Sam Ewen x'91:** Senior vice president at CoinDesk, leading media innovation in crypto and Web3
- + **Li Fan MS'98:** Chief technology and AI officer at Circle, a leading stablecoin and digital currency infrastructure company
- + **Max Fantle '15:** Stablecoin payments executive at Tempo (a software company) and former corporate development leader at Paxos, a blockchain platform
- + **Gary Gallagher '85, MBA'90:** President of iCapital, a fintech platform, and former Fidelity Institutional executive connected to the broader institutional alternatives and digital-assets ecosystem
- + **Aaron Kaplan '26:** Founder and co-CEO of Prometheum, a regulated digital-asset securities platform
- + **David Kemmerer '17:** Cofounder and CEO of Coin-Ledger, a crypto tax and portfolio reporting software company
- + **Sid Ramesh x'19:** Crypto product operator, investor, and adviser; former Coinbase product leader and early blockchain entrepreneur
- + **Matt Sorg '07:** Vice president of technology at the Solana Foundation, which supports the Solana blockchain network
- + **Jeffrey Sprecher '78:** Founder, chair, and CEO of Intercontinental Exchange (ICE), parent of the New York Stock Exchange. ICE has pursued digital-asset initiatives such as Bakkt, a fintech platform, as well as regulated crypto futures and tokenized securities infrastructure
- + **Michael Steinberg '94:** Founder and managing partner of Reciprocal Ventures, an early-stage crypto and blockchain venture firm

*Benjamin hired
UW scientists to
help with
research for
Under Story.*





THE ASTONISHING UNKNOWNABLE UNIVERSE

With a mind-bending new novel, best-selling author Chloe Benjamin MFA'12 makes her first foray into full-blown science fiction.

BY MAGGIE GINSBERG '97
PHOTOS BY ALLISON BUSCH

This is a love story, all of it: California native Chloe Benjamin MFA'12 finding herself smitten with the University of Wisconsin–Madison from the moment she stepped onto campus in 2010; meeting her future husband, Nathan Jandl MA'10, PhD'16, during the two-year creative writing program and staying for 15 years; and, the latest chapter, the fated relationship between two research scientists at the heart of her newly released third novel, *Under Story*.

“Wisconsin was the third-highest-ranked creative writing program in the country when I got in, and I was so excited I canceled tickets to visit another program,” says Benjamin, who finally moved back to her hometown of San Francisco in 2025. “I’d planned to just stay for the program, but I fell in love with Madison, like so many people have before me.”

During their 15 years in Wisconsin, Jandl became the associate director of UW–Madison’s Office of Sustainability while Benjamin launched a literary career. Her debut novel, 2014’s *The Anatomy of Dreams*, won the Edna Ferber Fiction Book Award and was longlisted for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. But it was 2018’s *The Immortalists*, an instant *New York Times* bestseller, that catapulted her career. Translated into more than 30 languages, *The Immortalists* topped a slew of best-of lists and even landed her on *The Tonight Show*. As for 2026’s *Under Story*, Warner Bros. Pictures teamed with the producers behind *Harry Potter* and *Barbie* to scoop up the movie rights nearly a year before the book was even published.

“It’s totally thrilling,” says Benjamin, who was so overwhelmed when she got the news that she forgot to heat the kettle before pouring cold water into her coffee grounds. (“I was like, why does this taste so bad?”)

Although Benjamin’s first two novels flirted with speculative elements (lucid dreaming, clairvoyance), *Under Story* is her first full foray into science fiction — and it took six years to write. Benjamin credits the success of *The Immortalists* for affording her the luxury of time, increasingly rare in today’s publishing industry.

“I don’t have very many ideas, which is one reason why I’m a novelist and not a short-story writer,” Benjamin says. “But when the right idea comes, I know it.”

Escaping Through Fiction

Under Story is a wildly ambitious and poetic brain-bender set in Antarctica and Madison, in both the world as we know it and the inverse as Benjamin imagines it. The idea came during COVID lockdown after she read a 2020 article with the headline “Why Some Physicists Really Think There’s a ‘Mirror Universe’ Hiding in Space-Time.” It detailed a neutrino experiment in Antarctica that was producing strange results and a speculative concept: the CPT-symmetric universe (in which time moves both forward and backward) proposed by Latham Boyle, Kieran Finn, and Neil Turok. A fourth scientist brainstormed a link between the results and the

concept, which was later disproved — but the seed was planted.

“I think physicists were probably rolling their eyes,” Benjamin says. “But for a fiction writer, it was catnip.”

Benjamin began about six months of the prewriting she’s come to recognize when she’s seized by a story: deep-diving into rabbit holes, scribbling and sketching in her notebooks, collecting bits of dialogue and scenes — even interviewing a physicist early on.

“It’s a very intense initial process of receiving inspiration, as pretentious as I know that might sound,” Benjamin says. “What I mean is I’m flooded with ideas. I’m taking notes at all hours of the day. When I have this kind of overwhelming transmission, that’s how I know: This is a novel.”

The time also felt ripe for both escape and reflection. In addition to the challenges of the pandemic, Benjamin’s stepmother was living through the final years of advanced Alzheimer’s. Benjamin herself was working through debilitating chronic pain and related issues aggravated by an 18-month book tour for *The Immortalists* and years of putting her own mental and physical health on hold. These weighty themes play out clearly on the pages of *Under Story*: self-care versus caretaking within a relationship; expanded consciousness during grief; and the striking parallels between the beginning and end of life.

“I think my anxiety about mortality is simply a driving force for me as a writer,” Benjamin says. “That’s in *The Immortalists*, and it’s very much in this book as well. A discomfort with uncertainty and a fear of loss — those are things that haunt me and which I’m drawn to exploring again and again.”

The Scientist as Literary Assistant

There’s also so much beauty on display in *Under Story*, with rich prose celebrating the astonishing unknowable universe. While detailed descriptions of Antarctica’s real-life McMurdo Station afford a rare glimpse of a place most people will never see, the sections set in Madison offer a more recognizable treat. Many scenes unfold in places like the UW’s Arboretum and Science Hall. There’s also a family-owned apple orchard based on Door Creek Orchard in nearby Cottage Grove, one of Benjamin’s favorite haunts.

Writing what you know is the easy part — but there was so much Benjamin didn’t know about the realities of this new fictional world, so she shadowed scientists in caves, attended conferences on psychedelics and mushroom growers, and visited a sheepshearing at the apple orchard. One of the biggest game changers, owed to the success of *The Immortalists*, was her ability to hire a research assistant for *Under Story*. The role required a trained scientist with a unique blend of traits: a willingness to imagine bending the rules for some

fantastical what-ifs and also to practice discretion with Benjamin’s intellectual property.

To find just the right person, she advertised through related UW–Madison graduate programs, specifically physics and botany. Her first hire was Lena Vincent PhD’22, who held the job for nearly two years before getting hired elsewhere. Her second was Alyssa Adams, who’s been in the role since 2022. Adams has done two postdocs at the UW, one in computation and informatics in biology and medicine, and the other at the Morgridge Institute for Research.

“This is the most fun job I’ve ever had in my entire life,” says Adams, who “felt like a stalker,” learning everything there was to know about Antarctica’s McMurdo Station. What are the oceans like? What time does it get dark in September? What exactly do researchers wear?

“Chloe would ask some really specific questions, like how far is it from this building to that building — would it be a five-minute walk? Ten? And I’m on Google Earth doing these measurements. Going on YouTube, trying to understand what people are saying, what they’re dressed like, what weird stories have happened. She wants to make sure that she has a complete picture of the world, even if she’s not going to share it entirely in the book.”

Best of all, Adams says, Benjamin only shared what was needed to solve each particular story puzzle. In other words, she gave away no spoilers.

“When I finally read the book from end to end, it was like reading it fresh. I respect her so much for that, and I loved seeing how it unfolded,” Adams says. “I was actually crying at a couple points, and I don’t usually cry. I legitimately was like, ‘Am I biased? No, this is an incredible book.’”

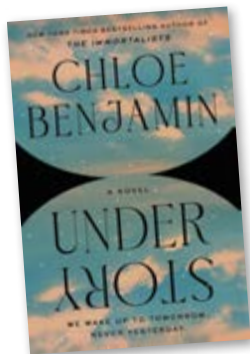
A UW Writing Community

UW–Madison’s unique, competitive, fully funded graduate program in creative writing is located inside the Helen C. White building on the shores of Lake Mendota. It only accepts six students each cohort, alternating between poetry and fiction each year. Benjamin prizes her MFA experience for its intimate access to incredible mentors — heavyweights like Judith Claire Mitchell, Amy Quan Barry, Lorrie Moore, Jesse Lee Kercheval — and also for giving her a writing community.

“I felt like I had found my people, and that was very profound,” Benjamin says. “And a lot of these relationships have carried into the future.”

One of those is with *New York Times* best-selling author Brittany Cavallaro MFA’11, who was in the poetry program but took some fiction workshops with Benjamin and remains her closest friend from those days. The two would meet up to write at Ground Zero coffee shop or the Chocolaterian and critique each other’s work.

“Chloe has terrific instincts for what makes a



Many of the novel’s scenes unfold in places like the UW Arboretum and Science Hall.



story emotional and compelling,” Cavallaro says. “She was so smart and poised at such a young age. Even then, her fiction was so emotionally textured, mature, and smart.”

Cavallaro is also responsible for one of the most profound relationships of all — she’s the one who introduced Benjamin to Jandl, who was then pursuing his PhD in 20th-century American literature with an environmental component.

“We probably would not have crossed paths socially if not for her, because those programs are pretty distinct,” Benjamin says, smiling. “There are the sixth floor MFA-ers and the seventh floor PhDs.”

New Beginning

Under Story is dedicated to Jandl, and theirs is more than just a love story — he is an early and exceptionally qualified reader of her work. His writing and educational background, a career in sustainability, and even his rural upbringing have given Benjamin access to another sort of research assistant, this one in-house. One of *Under Story*’s strongest threads is the climate crisis, and Benjamin even stopped eating meat during the making of this book.

“He has truly earned that dedication, both professionally and personally,” she says, adding that it’s very difficult to support a partner through chronic illness. “That sort of sustained caretaking requires so much grit and commitment. For years, things were very tough. And Nathan hung in there.”

It was actually Jandl’s career that triggered the recent move back to San Francisco, after he was offered a position of director of sustainability at the University of California–Berkeley.

“It’s the only job that would have taken us away,” says Benjamin, with more than a hint of wistfulness in her voice.

Still, beginnings are exciting for any author. She may be living closer to family in the city where she was raised, but she’s seeing her old universe through new eyes, much like her characters in *Under Story*. She’s found effective treatments for her health issues, and she’s more determined than ever to enjoy her one brilliant chance at this life — so much of which she worked through with this novel.

“I’m more accepting of the unknown, more okay with uncertainty, more positive, as opposed to catastrophic, worry-based thinking,” she says.

Benjamin does miss Madison and maybe always will.

“I’m as happy to be here as I am grieving what we left,” she says. “I’m such a San Francisco soul, but Wisconsin really shaped me. Fifteen years is a long time, and I very proudly consider myself an honorary Wisconsinite. I will always feel that it is one of my homes.” ●

Maggie Ginsberg ’97 is the author of novels Still True and the forthcoming Daisy Chain. She works as the writer for UW–Madison’s Division of the Arts.

Benjamin met husband Nathan Jandl at the UW. He serves as an early and exceptionally qualified reader of her work.

*As part of her research for *Under Story*, Chloe Benjamin shadowed the lab of UW botany professor Anne Pringle, who’s profiled on page 32.*



XIAOMENG SHEN

Let's Boogie

The UW's dance department — the oldest in America — turns 100.

UW–Madison holds a special place in the history of American dance: in 1926, under the direction of **Margaret H'Doubler 1910, MA1924**, the UW created the nation's first university-based program for the study of dance as an academic discipline. From that beginning, generations of dancers, choreographers, and instructors have carried the Madison influence to stages and studios around the nation. This year, UW–Madison is honoring a century of dance with a yearlong celebration.

H'Doubler was a coach and physical education instructor, and she revolutionized dance studies by mixing creativity with physiology. She founded Orchesis, the UW's modern dance troupe, and wrote a seminal textbook, *Dance: A Creative Art Experience* — and she also famously kept a human skeleton in her classroom to teach her students to appreciate anatomy as much as artistry. A century later, the UW's dance program is still closely connected with kinesiology.

According to Professor **Li Chiao-Ping**, the incoming department chair and director of the celebration, the birthday party began in April 2026 and continues through May 2027. It

UW dance students and members of the group Hitterz Collective perform at Lathrop Hall during Moonshine 2026, a spring semester event sponsored by the department. For 100 years, the UW has been a leader in dance studies.

involves a faculty concert, alumni appearances, and visiting artists, including choreographer **Tiffany Merritt-Brown '16**. But the program is also receiving something of a birthday gift: a new master of fine arts degree program begins this fall with a cohort of four graduate students. The UW hasn't had a dance MFA in decades — “not during the career of any of us on the faculty now,” according to Li. The new degree will help the UW reassert its place as the springboard of American dance thinking.

“We can probably trace everyone [involved in dance and dance education today] back to someone who was influenced by the ideas that were innovated here,” Li says.

JOHN ALLEN

One Piece of

Your Past



One Piece of

Your Legacy



YOUR LIFE IS A RICH, COMPLEX STORY.

The thrill of Badger athletics is an important part of who you are today – but it's just one of your passions. There are so many things you'll want to care for as you plan your legacy: your loved ones, your values, your hopes for future generations. With the right team on your side, you can do it all.

When you're ready to make your estate plan, our Office of Gift Planning is here to talk with you about your goals and options – so you can honor every part of your story, including the UW.



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On Alumni

News from Home and Abroad

Little College in the Big Woods

Alumni gather “up north” every year to enjoy nature, make connections, and learn from UW experts.

For a dozen years, alumni and friends have traveled to Wisconsin’s Red Crown Lodge in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin, for Alumni College, where they learn about the most important topics of the day from UW experts.

For this year’s event in June, some 50 participants gathered for a long weekend on the shores of Trout Lake at the scenic resort owned by **Bob Dunn ’89** and his wife, **Julie Dunn ’91**.

“It’s a treat for Badgers to spend time with such accomplished UW faculty and learn about the breadth and impact of their work,” says **Sarah Schutt**, chief alumni officer and executive director of the Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA). **Melissa Zehner ’12**, who directs the program along with **McKenzie Zdrale ’00, MA’23**, adds that “there is a lot of ongoing connection with people who see each other year after year, but there are always some newcomers, too.” Some attendees come from as far as Texas and Alaska.

Zehner says that the immersive experience connects attendees with faculty members for meals and leisure activities such as canoeing, pontoon boat rides, and pickleball, “so it really gives them a good opportunity to learn more about what their academic departments are doing.”

This year’s presentations covered a range of topics. **Gregory Nemet**, a professor at the La Follette School of Public Affairs, spoke about renewable energy. Journalism professor **Michael Wagner** explored how news and



COURTESY OF RED CROWN LODGE

social media affect democracy, and **Laura Albert**, a professor of industrial and systems engineering, explained how engineering is optimizing public safety. **Nasia Safdar MS’02, PhD’09**, associate dean for clinical trials at the School of Medicine and Public Health, spoke about antibiotic resistance.

“I would love to be able to add five stars to all the [satisfaction survey] ratings,” says Milwaukee attendee **Heidi Cooper ’70**. “The venue and professors are fantastic. I come away feeling a part of the greater UW community and so proud of my university.”

Donald Olson ’74 of Fort Mill, South Carolina, adds, “Great weather, amazing food, terrific speakers, and old and new friends made for a perfect long weekend.”

In addition to the annual summer event in the Northwoods, in February 2027, WAA will host its first Alumni College in Tucson, Arizona, due to popular demand from Badger chapters and other alumni in the state.

NIKI DENISON

In June, Alumni College attendees met at a lodge in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin. This February, the popular program will expand its offerings to include a session in Tucson, Arizona.

RECENT-GRAD WEEKEND

Recent-Grad Weekend in June drew young alumni to campus for activities such as a trivia contest, an escape room, karaoke, and a cheese-curd crawl, which involved sampling the Wisconsin treat at six restaurants and voting on a favorite. (Merchant was victorious.) Starting next year, the annual event will rotate to various cities, beginning with Milwaukee in 2027.

HOUSE FELLOWS CENTENNIAL

It’s been 100 years since the first UW house fellows began supporting students in the residence halls. Some 250 UW–Madison alumni gathered on campus in July to mark the occasion with tours, a celebratory dinner, and interviews with the UW’s Oral History Program. The university is believed to have created the nation’s first house fellow program when it began in 1926.

12

Number of years Alumni College has been providing enrichment programs for UW–Madison graduates.

50s-60s

Congratulations to **Genevieve Stone Schauer '51** of Milwaukee, who marked her 75th year of alumnihood in the spring and celebrated her 97th birthday in July. Schauer comes from a long line of UW-Madison graduates, and her husband, **Wilbert Schauer '49, MBA'50, LLB'50**, was a proud Badger. Four of the couple's five children attended the UW, and seven of their 10 grandchildren earned degrees from the university. She hopes that her 10 great-grandchildren will be Badgers someday, too. Genevieve's very happy birthday was spent watching a Milwaukee Brewers baseball game while accompanied by four generations of family members. Thank you for sharing these extra-special milestones with us, Genevieve.

Kay Kuester Doran '57 of Antigo, Wisconsin, was named *Alumnus Honoris* by the Clintonville Public School District. She graduated from Clintonville High School in 1953 and went on to attend the UW before spending 27 years as an educator. She also owned and operated the Olk Drug Store and Clinic Pharmacy for many years with her husband, **Roger Doran '58**. Kay received the Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to study dance in Mexico, and she headed an effort to place Clintonville High School on the National Register of Historic Places. She is very involved in her community as a bridge player and an active member of Delta Kappa Gamma, the international society for women educators. Kay also enjoys outdoor activities and was an avid skier until she was 90 years old. In May, she addressed the Clintonville High School graduating class of 2026. Our caps are off to you, Kay!

Here's a toast to **David Heitzman '65, JD'69**, who celebrated 50 years of marriage to his other half, Sharon. The Heitzmans marked their golden

anniversary in style, hosting friends and family for a party to commemorate a half-century of love. Cheers to 50 years!

"Whether you're five or you're 95, it seems like baseball is a universal language that everybody understands."

— **Dustin Morse '01**

Madisonian and renowned jazz pianist, composer, and producer **Ben Sidran '67** appeared in the PBS series *Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History*. Sidran sat down for a conversation with Henry Louis Gates Jr. to discuss jazz and the historical influence of Black and Jewish musicians and managers in the U.S. Sidran earned national recognition on the National Public Radio show *Jazz Alive!*, which won a Peabody Award, and went on to host the VH1 series *New Visions*. His career has spanned more than five decades, 30-plus solo albums, and musical collaborations with Van Morrison, Diana Ross, and **Steve Miller x'67**. Sidran has worked on Grammy-nominated projects and has published multiple books.

70s-80s

After a nearly five-decade career, University of Pittsburgh's Chancellor Emeritus **Mark Nordenberg JD'73** has retired. Nordenberg served as chancellor for 19 years and led the law school for eight years. He most recently served as chair of the Institute of Politics and director of the Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law and Public Policy at the University of Pittsburgh. Before saying good-bye, Nordenberg shared some words of wisdom with the 2026 graduating class. "If you move through life believing in the basic goodness of other people and extending to them the respect that would imply, you may be disappointed

from time to time, but most often those other people will prove you to be right. And that mindset not only will make your journey through life more productive, but it will make you feel better about yourself and your life."



Congratulations to angler **Bill Schultz '73** of New Berlin, Wisconsin, who caught and released his 35,000th smallmouth bass. Schultz is a passionate fisher as well as a meticulous record keeper — which is a skill he traces back to his time on the UW men's swim team and his years as a competitive racquetball player. Since the 1990s, Schultz has logged all of his "smallie" catches from across Wisconsin. As a retiree, he gets to take his love for fishing to the next level. His goal is to catch and release 1,000 smallmouth bass each season.

Attorney **Marilee Miller Clarke JD'77** of Scottsdale, Arizona, was elected president of the United Methodist Church Conference Chancellors Association. Clarke has served as chancellor of the Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church since 2004. She is the founder and owner of Clarke Law Firm and the editor in chief of *Arizona Civil Remedies*, which is published by the State Bar of Arizona. Clarke was the first woman vice president and general counsel of Wells Fargo Credit Corporation, and she previously clerked with the chief justice of the Idaho Supreme Court and served as president of the Scottsdale Bar Association.

WELCOME, ALL!

The Wisconsin Alumni Association encourages diversity, inclusivity, nondiscrimination, and participation by all alumni, students, and friends of UW-Madison in its activities.

X-PLANATION

An x preceding a degree year indicates that the person did not complete, or has not yet completed, that degree at UW-Madison.

Crime Scene Chemist

Bruce McCord PhD'86 helped identify some of the 9/11 victims.

Bruce McCord PhD'86 was already at work on a new method of recovering information from badly degraded DNA when terrorist planes hit the World Trade Center towers in New York City in September 2001.

McCord, who earned his UW doctorate in analytical chemistry, was then an associate professor at Ohio University. He had a federal grant and was working with former student John Butler of the National Institute of Standards and Technology on the new tests. They shared their progress with the New York City medical examiner.

"My understanding," McCord says, "is that the procedure was used to help identify about 20 percent of the victims. We were very honored to play a part in the identification of the victims of this tragedy."

McCord had previously spent a decade as a research chemist with the FBI, which took him to the scene of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. In 2004, he left Ohio for Florida International University, where he is currently a professor of chemistry.

McCord is also one of the nation's most decorated chemists in the fields of forensic DNA analysis, explosives residue detection, and trace analysis of controlled substances. In 2008, he earned the Paul Kirk Award, which is one of the top honors awarded by the American Academy of Forensic Scientists.

It wasn't crime that lured McCord to UW-Madison; it was a stroll on a frozen Lake Mendota.

McCord did his undergraduate studies at William & Mary in Virginia, and a professor there suggested Madison for graduate school. On his visit, McCord walked out on the lake, turned, and was dazzled by the Capitol and campus skyline.

"I was completely amazed at how beautiful it was," he says.

McCord was also taken with analytical chemistry professor **James Taylor**.

"He was a wonderful adviser. He fostered a sense of community that I try to emulate with my research group."

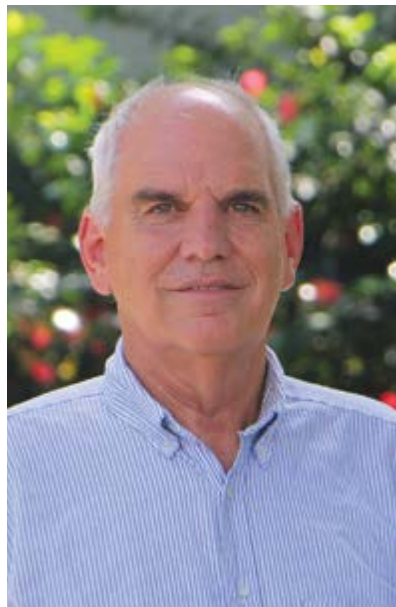
In McCord's lab, where he's mentored more than 35 doctoral students, they've worked on cutting-edge projects like detecting drugs used to incapacitate victims of sexual assault, who often retain little of the drug in their system. They're also working on improving detection methods for dangerous synthetic drugs.

"Our current project," McCord says, "is to detect fentanyl at very low levels and also detect fentanyl analogs."

McCord has managed to balance a rewarding career with family — he and his wife, **Margery Phipps MS'86**, have three daughters — and a passion for Florida sports like kayaking and sailboarding.

He loves the water even when it doesn't freeze.

DOUG MOE '79



LILA ARYAN

Former professor at Western University **Peter Lemon PhD'79** was presented the prestigious Honour Award by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. Lemon's contributions to the study and science of exercise helped advance exercise physiology, and his research investigates the health effects of diet, exercise, and nutrition.

Coeditor **Deborah Buffton PhD'87** was presented with the Peace History Society Edited Book Prize for *The Oxford Handbook of Peace History*, an anthology of peacemaking. Buffton is a professor emerita at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where she completed a fruitful tenure teaching history.

Congratulations to **Kirk Gramoll '89**, whose Germantown, Wisconsin, business was named franchisee of the year by TeamLogic IT. Gramoll, alongside his wife, Lisa, and business partner, John Halama, supports workplaces through technology services. The group was honored for their exceptional performance and community involvement, as Gramoll and his team give back to their community through the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and IT workforce training for locally underserved youth. "I think success is too often defined by straight revenue," says Gramoll. "The size of the business does matter, but the other big part is being a community partner." Outside of work, Gramoll enjoys planning new adventures. He hopes to learn Italian and to someday hike the trails of Machu Picchu.

90s

The Wisconsin Supreme Court added **Chris Taylor JD'95** to the bench. Taylor was elected after serving in the Wisconsin State Assembly for almost a decade. Before transitioning into elected office, she served as an attorney and policy director

for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin. Taylor lives in Madison with her husband and two sons.

00s

Stacy Leeds ML'00 was named president of the University of Tulsa. She previously served as dean of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. Prior to her time in the Grand Canyon State, she made history as the first Indigenous woman to lead a law school in the U.S. when she was named dean of the University of Arkansas School of Law in 2011. There, she later served as the university's vice chancellor for economic development. She is a former Cherokee Nation Supreme Court justice and was a member of the board of directors for the National American Indian Court Judges Association.

Congratulations to environmental lawyer **Ankur Tohan MS'00**, who has joined Stoel Rives as a partner in Seattle. Tohan's work is focused on energy infrastructure and natural resource development, including carbon management and renewable energy, and his career has spanned private practice and government service.

Science policy leader **Katherine Himes MBA'01** was named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and attended a recognition ceremony in Washington, DC. Himes is the director of the McClure Center for Public Policy Research at the University of Idaho, and she founded the Idaho Science and Technology Policy Fellowship, which brings experts into state government to serve in executive and legislative offices. The McClure Center staff works with students and shares non-partisan research with governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and communities across Idaho to help organizations make informed policy



GEORGIA TECH

Elevating Women's Sci-Fi

Lisa Yaszek MA'92, PhD'99 shines a light on nontraditional writers in a male-dominated genre.

Lisa Yaszek MA'92, PhD'99 can thank Lt. Uhura for her career. At age three, this future professor of science fiction studies at Georgia Tech saw *Star*

Trek's communications officer on TV. "That's my first memory. She looked so cool," Yaszek remembers. "She was the only smart one. She never volunteered to go down to a planet and get killed."

Today Yaszek teaches classes like Women in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror and Futurism, Fashion, and Science Fiction to engineering and design majors at the Atlanta university. "They understand that science fiction can operate as a reflecting mirror to science and society as well as a fun-house mirror that lets us rethink the most wicked but also exciting scientific and social problems of our day," she says.

Recovering women's science fiction has long been the central focus of Yaszek's research. Contrary to popular belief, women have always been part of the sci-fi community. From the late 19th century on, women made up about 15 percent of science fiction authors, editors, and writers who often worked under pen names such as Andre Norton. More than 200 women published sci-fi stories between 1920 and 1970, Yaszek says.

"They wrote on many of the same topics as men but also introduced new character types — the domestic engineer, the alien queen, the lady scientist, the housewife heroines — and expanded the field's imaginative scope. They reminded us that most people encounter the future not in laboratories and launchpads but in laundry rooms and libraries, and they explored how science and technology might reshape our understanding of gender." She adds that the central figure in many of their stories was the housewife heroine. "She wasn't merely a supporting character but a technologically literate citizen who brought scientific thinking into the home while showing how domestic knowledge and emotional intelligence could shape better futures."

Yaszek has done much to recover other lost voices. She's a leader in Black science-fiction studies, especially Afrofuturism, which explores alternate realities through a Black lens. She and her students will soon publish a book about the first Black-authored space opera, which was written in 1930. (*Space opera* refers to fiction rather than a musical production.)

Her office is awash with video game imagery, neon, and a poster of the movie *Blade Runner*. Yaszek grew up in Detroit, which she says was "very much a *Robocop* experience in some ways," referring to the sci-fi movie set in a dystopian future Detroit. Yaszek also enjoyed reading cyberpunk novels by one of her favorite authors, William Gibson. She and her husband are such admirers of his novel *Neuromancer* that they named their son Case after its highly skilled hacker protagonist.

"It's hard not to be enthusiastic about science fiction in a moment where it's very easy to be pessimistic and scared of the world," she says. "It's exciting that this genre gives us ways we can reach out and connect with each other."

GEORGE SPENCER

decisions. But Himes doesn't just go the distance professionally; in her free time, she enjoys long-distance running and cross-country skiing.

Senior vice president of communications and public affairs with the Minnesota Twins **Dustin Morse '01** is celebrating 25 seasons working in baseball and 20 seasons with the Twins. Morse shares baseball and business news with fans to help craft the team's story. "It's my job to connect with our fans," he says. "Baseball is America's pastime, and it's a sport that connects generations through its rich history. Whether you're five or you're 95, it seems like baseball is a universal language that everybody understands." Congrats, Dustin. You hit it out of the park.

Shout-out to **Jennifer Peterson JD'01**, who has been named the executive vice president, chief legal and people officer, and secretary at the Manitowoc Company, Inc., in Milwaukee. In her new role, Peterson will lead global human resources, legal, and risk management functions across the company. She joined the organization in 2018 and has almost 25 years of experience in law.

Amanda (Mandi) Wolfman '02, MS'03 was named partner at Neal Gerber Eisenberg in Chicago. With more than a decade of litigation experience, Wolfman has taken on the role with the firm's litigation and disputes practice group. She previously served as general counsel for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and she's held positions with the Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, Unsilence, and Equality Illinois. Wolfman's trusty sidekick in this new endeavor is her bernedoodle, Ruthie, who loves snowbanks and stealing socks.

10s-20s

Ben Jones '08, JD'12 will be Dane County Circuit Court's Branch 1 judge for a six-year term. Prior to his election, Jones was working in the role as an appointee of Wisconsin governor **Tony Evers '73, MS'76, PhD'86**. He also spent nearly a decade as an attorney with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, serving under three state superintendents. Jones lives in Monona, Wisconsin, with his wife and two sons.

Attorney **Ian Glick '10** has been promoted to special counsel for the Marshall Dennehey Casualty Department in Long Island, New York. Before joining the firm, he worked in insurance defense and represented clients throughout the New York Metropolitan area. In his new role, Glick handles cases from beginning to end involving New York State Labor Law, construction accidents, and more.

Founder of Huzzard Data Systems **Gary Jahnke EMBA'11** has sold his Appleton, Wisconsin-based company. Huzzard Data Systems was started while Jahnke was a student at UW-Madison, and he credits much of his early success to his professors and peers at the Wisconsin School of Business. Jahnke has spent more than three decades as an entrepreneur, innovating in the field of labeling systems and barcode technologies. Well done, Gary!

Game designer **Eric Meunier '11, MS'13** will keep you entertained — in exchange for a few quarters, that is. Arcade enthusiasts may recognize Meunier's creative flair from his work as a designer with Jersey Jack Pinball. A few of his notable pinball projects include Pirates of the Caribbean, Guns N' Roses, The Godfather, and Avatar. One of his latest creations is Harry Potter Pinball, which debuted

BOOK NEWS?
See page 64.

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OBITUARIES
Brief death notices for Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA) members and friends appear in *Badger Insider*, WAA's magazine for its members. You may submit full-length obituaries for online posting at uwalumni.com/alumni-notes/submit.

globally in collaboration with Warner Bros. Discovery Global Consumer Products last year. Meunier is based in Oak Park, Illinois, where he lives with his wife, **Ashley Meunier '10**. He attributes his success in the specialized field of pinball to his time at the UW.



TIFFANY THOMPSON

Lawyer and indigenous community leader **Samuel Crowfoot '12** is chief of the Siksika Nation in Alberta, Canada. Crowfoot is also known as Siipiinaomahka (Night Runner) — which is a name given to him by his father, former chief Strater Crowfoot. Prior to his election, he served as a councilor for the Siksika Nation Chief and Council. He also worked as a judicial clerk, prosecutor, and tribal judge, including chief judge for the Pueblo of Zuni Tribal Court in New Mexico.

A big Badger high-five is in store for **Carlos Bustamante '14**, a senior athletic trainer with the Washington Wizards. "When I go to work, it doesn't feel like I'm at work. It truly feels like I'm there for these athletes — for my colleagues," he says. Bustamante joined the organization in 2017 and became an assistant trainer for the Wizards in 2020. He previously served as the head athletic trainer for the Capital City Go-Go and assisted the Badger football, basketball, and cross-country teams as a student athletic trainer.

Madison's new public market features several creative installations, including work

from local artist **Mira Kim '14**, who displayed her playful and uplifting style on the market's water tanks. Kim is a graphic design instructor whose Madison-centered work features many of the UW's iconic symbols, including the Memorial Union Terrace chairs and Lady Liberty on a frozen Lake Mendota. In 2020, Kim started an illustration brand called Hello, Madison to celebrate the community and share joy. "It feels especially meaningful to contribute to a public art project in Madison as a UW-Madison alum," she says. If you head to the Madison Public Market, keep your eyes peeled for Kim's noteworthy water work.

Way to go, **Kaitlynnne Rolling '20**, who is a professional Ultimate Frisbee player for the Seattle Tempest. She helped her team win the 2026 Western Ultimate League championship, marking Seattle's third title. "Frisbee isn't my hobby; it's my life," she says. In addition, Rolling played Beach Ultimate Frisbee for Team USA and works for the League of Conservation Voters. She also coaches a high school Ultimate Frisbee team and enjoys CrossFit and yoga.

Madison "twinjas" **Nathan '21** and **Marquez '21 Green** competed on the NBC television program *American Ninja Warrior* for a fifth time. The brothers first appeared on the show in 2019 while attending the UW. Since then, they've returned to climb and jump their way to greatness on the show. The Greens also earned bronze medals at the Obstacle Course Racing World Championship in 2025 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

After five years as editor of *Class Notes*, **Megan Provost '20** has handed the role over to **Blake McCoy MA'23**. Megan will continue celebrating great Badger work as editor of *Diversions*. Thanks for sharing so many milestones with the UW alumni community, Megan!



MICHAEL LEMBERGER

Giving Families Strength

The Children's Hospital Child Life program relieves anxiety for kids and parents in their darkest moments.

When **Brittany '08** and **Tyler Tomjanovich** entered the emergency department at the UW's American Family Children's Hospital, the feeling of terror eclipsed everything else. Mason, their five-month-old son, had a seizure while Brittany was holding him. UW Health clinicians moved quickly as a gentle presence stepped forward: a child life specialist, offering a meal and a reminder for the young parents: *you must care for yourselves so you can stay strong for him*.

Now seven years old, Mason endured six surgeries, 20 emergency visits, more than 100 appointments, and innumerable blood draws. Diagnosed with a complex chromosomal disorder, Mason has faced more medical challenges than many adults do in a lifetime. He was also diagnosed with a primary immune regulatory disorder, affecting his body's ability to fight infections. Yet through every frightening procedure and unexpected setback, the Child Life program was there.

For Mason (shown above with child life specialist **Janice Ferguson**), that often begins with something as simple as a toy truck or a familiar, friendly face. "Because of Child Life, Mason isn't afraid," Brittany says. "He looks forward to going to the hospital. He asks, 'Will the person with the toys be there?'" With a child life specialist by his side, Mason approached a blood draw with newfound courage. Through age-appropriate explanations, play-based preparation, and distraction, Mason's child life specialist helped turn a moment of fear into one of triumph.

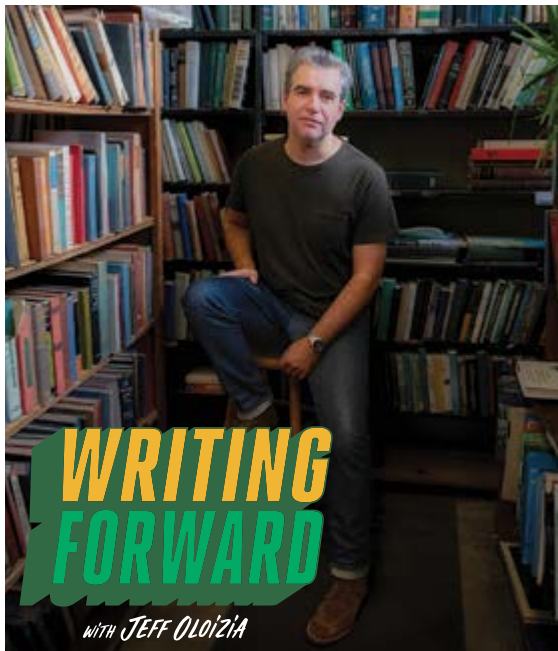
Child Life's support extends beyond the patient. Mason's sister, Hailey, who has witnessed far too many ambulance visits, has also found comfort through the program. With play, conversation, and compassion, child life specialists helped her understand her brother's medical journey.

"[The program] really helps with Hailey, too," Brittany explains. "They made her feel like she was part of the bigger picture."

Funded solely by philanthropy, Child Life delivers play, preparation, music therapy, facility dog interventions, appearance-boosting resources, special events, and more. In 2024, one music therapist, 17 child life specialists, and three child life assistants provided 25,540 moments of comfort, 1,890 music therapy sessions, and 1,395 animal-assisted interventions from Canine Health and Medical Pals facility dogs.

These services help families stay grounded through the unimaginable, ensuring that children have the support they need — not just to cope, but to find moments of joy, healing, and hope.

NICOLE HEIMAN



GOPAL SHAH

UW alumni and faculty are well represented among the guests on this new podcast that celebrates Wisconsin writers.

Write On, Wisconsin

Jeff Oloizia '07 talks story, form, and fish fry on his podcast, *Writing Forward*.

Wisconsin is renowned for many homegrown industries — dairy, cranberries, brats, beer — but rarely as fertile ground for writers. **Jeff Oloizia '07** is trying to change that with his new podcast, *Writing Forward*, on which he sits down with authors, poets, journalists, and essayists whose work is rooted in the Badger state.

Each episode of *Writing Forward* opens with an invitation for the guest to share a piece of writing that, to them, “evokes Wisconsin in some memorable way.” Oloizia then facilitates a discussion about his guest’s work, their connection to Wisconsin, and what it means to be a writer in or of this place.

Featured UW writers have included UW-Whitewater literature professor and essayist **Barrett Swanson MFA'10**, *Still True* author and UW Division of the Arts writer **Maggie Ginsberg '97**, *Hemlock* author and essayist **Melissa Faliveno '06**, *Under Story* author **Chloe Benjamin MFA'12** (see page 52), UW creative writing professor and *Milk Blood Heat* author **Daniel Moniz MFA'18** (see “Writer on the Rise,” Spring 2026), and UW creative writing professor and *Finna* poet **Nate Marshall**.

In drawing attention to the depth and nuance of Wisconsin’s literary tradition, Oloizia dispels the notion that aspiring writers must leave the state in order to have a promising career.

“I followed the path many writers imagine, toward the places where literary life is supposed to happen,” he says in the show’s introductory episode, “and yet when it came time to start a new chapter, I found myself drawn back to Wisconsin.”

Oloizia is an award-winning writer and editor whose work has been featured in *Interview* magazine, the *Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, and *Madison Magazine*. He worked in publishing and taught at the University of North Carolina–Wilmington before returning to Madison, where he is a writer and communications professional.



Away to Me

PATRICIA MCCONNELL '81, MS'84, PHD'88

In the aftermath of a tumultuous marriage, all Maddie wants is a quiet life in the Wisconsin countryside, where she runs her successful dog-training practice. But Maddie’s peace is quickly shattered when her friend and mentor is killed in a suspicious accident and she becomes the caretaker of an aggressive German shepherd abandoned on a highway. *Away to Me* is the first mystery novel from McConnell, an award-winning animal behaviorist, author, and former professor in the UW Department of Integrative Biology.



We the Voters: The Constitutional Voices That Shape America's Elections

LORI RINGHAND JD'97

Recent elections have shaken trust in the electoral process for many Americans, raising questions about how that process is supposed to work and who it exists to serve. In this book, Ringhand attempts to answer some of these questions and demonstrates how others are up to interpretation by the voters. Ringhand is the J. Alton Hosch Professor of Law and the Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Georgia School of Law.



Prohairesis

REBECCA ARENDS '04

In Ancient Greek philosophy, *prohairesis* describes the choice exercised in response to sensory stimuli. In her short film of the same name, Arends and her fellow artists in the RAREdancework collective interpret *prohairesis* through choreography performed around the world and set to a string quartet. Arends is the founder of RAREdancework and served as coproducer, choreographer, and director of the project.



Submit your book news at uwalumni.com/go/bookshelf and visit goodreads.com/wisalumni to find more works by Badger alumni and faculty.

Pig latin infuses Sanders's poignant storytelling with familial flair on her record Pearls 2.

Made of Music

On *Pearls 2*, rapper Zhalarina Sanders '15, MS'18 tells family stories in her grandmother's tongue.

Zhalarina Sanders '15, MS'18 knows how to make people listen.

"*Ouyay ooday* [you do] hear 'em singing?" she asks in her first line on her record *Pearls 2*. Sanders wastes no time in capturing her audience's attention, leading with pig latin before launching into verses laden with biblical imagery, extended metaphors, and ancestor veneration.

"It's heaven in your house and grandma down for Easter weekend," she continues. "*Eshay aysay, Ifay eway ouldcay otnay* [She say, 'If we could not] speak, rolled chitlin in our jaw, and talked that pork into the breeze.'"

Sanders, who records under the mononym Zhalarina, is a skilled rapper and master storyteller from Tampa, Florida. Her first two albums, *Again* (2021) and *Perfect* (2022), are odes to her hometown, her parents, and mental health. Her most recent records, *Pearls* and *Pearls 2*, draw upon her family's history — and their penchant for pig latin — to process generational adversity.

"[Speaking pig latin] has always been a family thing, and it predates me by at least 60 or 70 years," Sanders told the Wisconsin Alumni Association. Her grandmother, the daughter of sharecroppers in Adel, Georgia, learned pig latin from a popular Froot Loops commercial and spoke it with friends while working in the fields. Learning the language became a rite of passage in Sanders's family, and it functions in *Pearls 2* as an homage to her strong-willed lineage.

"[It's] a love letter to the people who created me," she says.

Sanders is a graduate of First Wave, the UW's hip-hop and urban arts scholarship program, where she specialized in writing and theater arts while earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in counseling psychology. In 2020, she released her music-video series *The Light* in partnership with PBS Wisconsin. Sanders portrays both herself and her mother in the series, which tells her queer coming-of-age story and won a regional Emmy award for outstanding achievement in arts and entertainment programming.

"I want to do something that shows my heart," Sanders says. "If I'm made of anything that's not skin and bones, it's probably music."



Songs of No Provenance

LYDI CONKLIN MFA'12

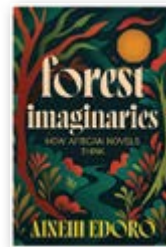
When a shocking onstage incident spells the end of her career, indie folk singer Joan Vole flees New York City to teach songwriting to teenagers in rural Virginia. As she mentors her students through their creative endeavors, Joan begins to interrogate her own relationship to artmaking. As part of the book's release, Conklin invited real musicians to interpret the fictional songs referenced in the story. *Songs of No Provenance* is Conklin's first novel.



The Unveiling

QUAN BARRY

When Black film scout Striker is sent to Antarctica to photograph locations for an upcoming movie, she finds herself on a cruise ship surrounded by wealthy, mostly white tourists. A kayaking excursion strands Striker and some shipmates on a hostile, remote island on the Antarctic Peninsula, and the dire circumstances bring out the worst in the survivors. Barry was the 1999–2000 Diane Middlebrook Poetry Fellow in the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. She is the Lorraine Hansberry Professor of English at the UW.



Forest Imaginaries: How African Novels Think

AINEHI EDORO

Forests have long served as iconic settings across fiction. In her latest book, Edoro argues that African fiction imbues the forest with even greater purpose: that of a dynamic entity in which real-life world orders can be dismantled and reimagined. She draws upon the African literary canon to examine how authors use the forest to expand their novels' horizons. Edoro is a Mellon-Morgridge Assistant Professor of English and African Cultural Studies at the UW.

MEGAN PROVOST '20



BRUCE DEMONTE

Ever-Green Morgridge Hall

The new home of the College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence is alive with people, plants, and plenty of sunlight.

In an essay titled “Time to Dig,” **Remzi Arpac-Dusseau**, the founding dean of the College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence (CAI), likens the dawning of the age of artificial intelligence to the 20th-century advent of agricultural machinery: sure to shape the future, and dependent on humans in order to do so.

“Not much is certain in this shifting landscape before us,” he writes. “But, as with any meaningful endeavor, there is only one thing we can do next: start digging and plant the seeds for our human-driven future.”

The uncanny parallels between the natural world and the technological one are evident not

only in the dean’s vision for the college, but also in its new home. Opened in 2025 and built to last for 100 years, Morgridge Hall is designed to nurture the seeds of this human-driven future — even one created with silicon and code.

Morgridge Hall is the most sustainable academic building on the UW campus. Its high-performance exterior, high-efficiency lighting, rooftop solar panels, and stormwater capture system contribute to a 61 percent reduction in energy consumption and 30 percent reduction in indoor water use compared to common benchmarks. In May, the building received LEED Platinum certification, the highest level of achievement for green building design.

It gets even greener: biophilia, or the human tendency to connect with nature, was a tenet of Morgridge Hall’s design and is evident in the indoor gardens, living green walls, and planted outdoor terraces that make up 25 percent of the building’s site area. Of the plants that populate these spaces, 82 percent are native Wisconsin flora, with savanna and prairie

The WARF Centennial Terrace at Morgridge Hall is home to prairie flora, solar panels, and scenic views.

vegetation represented on the third- and seventh-floor terraces, respectively.

The seventh-floor terrace — the WARF Centennial Terrace — features several of Morgridge Hall’s sustainable design elements, including the stormwater capture system, which irrigates the building’s plant life, and the 359 solar panels that generate enough energy to power the equivalent of 182 Wisconsin households a year. Furnished with ample seating and surrounded by sweeping views of Madison, the terrace is also a restorative space for students, faculty, staff, and visitors to work, rest, and recharge.

“Morgridge Hall not only honors Wisconsin’s cultural and natural heritage but also sets a new standard for environmental stewardship and human-centered design,” says Mark Tumiski, principal at LMN Architects, who designed the building.

Human-centered design for a human-driven future — it’s time to dig, and Morgridge Hall is fertile ground for it.

MEGAN PROVOST ’20

More Wisconsin Than A 5th Quarter Singalong.

Over 90 years, we've seen a lot of Madison traditions—from swaying and singing to cheering and jumping. But our favorite? Helping. That's why we're here for every Badger™, for every stage of life, with scholarships and endowments, Rewards Checking with no monthly fees, and home loans with great rates. And that's a tradition we'll always carry on.

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