



## BEST IN NATION

*Inside* Commencement 2025

*Equine and Enactus teams among top*





### Fun and Games

This year's President's Picnic Carnival was the perfect venue for students to blow off steam before exam week. Hosted by Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D., and organized by Student Activities and the Student Government Association, the event featured rides, games, food trucks, and a dunk tank.

Pictured: Cameron Rothery '25

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### ON THE COVER

Centenary University students continue to distinguish themselves on the national stage.

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When I assumed the presidency of Centenary two years ago, I had one goal: To bring national prominence to this University. To be sure, that's a lofty aspiration at a time when regional universities like ours are facing unprecedented enrollment and funding challenges. Yet, so many of you believed in Centenary and its power to transform the lives of our students, and together, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work. Since then, Centenary has created innovative new academic programs, educational opportunities for nontraditional students, and a culture that demands excellence at every level of the organization.

Today, I'm happy to report that we're crushing it. Academically, our competitive business team, Enactus, placed third in the nation and Centenary awarded degrees to our second class of graduates in the Master of Arts in Happiness Studies program—the first of its kind in the world. Athletically, Centenary is now the proud home of two individual equine national champions, as well as two equestrian teams that placed in the top four in the country. Plus, a host of our Cyclone sports teams have emerged as formidable competitors in the Atlantic East Conference.

This spring, Centenary also attracted the attention of officials here in New Jersey, who increasingly recognize the valuable contributions this University makes to our state and its residents. Two inspiring Centenary stories recently sparked personal phone calls of congratulations

from New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy: The TRAC (Therapeutic Riding At Centenary) Veterans Program run by Sgt. Corey Briggs (Ret.) '23 and the journey to medical school of first-generation valedictorian Nicolas Radovanic '25. The call with Sgt. Briggs even led to a visit by members of the governor's staff to experience TRAC for themselves at the Centenary University Equestrian Center.

Our donors also see the value in supporting Centenary's mission. This year, contributions increased for the second consecutive year and we have again added new sources of individual, foundation, and corporate support. I'm especially encouraged by the young alumni who have engaged with the University through their giving and participation in alumni events. Your gifts—of all sizes—truly make a difference in the lives of Centenary students.

As president, I am so very proud of the Centenary community and our growing national reputation for educational excellence. Together, we have set a strong foundation for the future of this University. Now, it's time to aim even higher. We are taking important steps to strengthen our scholarship fund and introduce even more new programs that create extraordinary opportunities for Centenary students.

***As president, I am so very proud of the Centenary community and our growing national reputation for educational excellence.***

You can do your part, too. Please share the good news about Centenary University to everyone, including high school students and prospective donors. Consider increasing your unrestricted contribution to The Centenary Fund—or make your first contribution. And above all, wear your Cyclone pride proudly. On behalf of our students, thanks for all you do!

Dale Caldwell, Ed.D.  
President



# Protecting Pollinators

Centenary University students marked Earth Day by planting a garden to improve biodiversity and rehabilitate the populations of monarch butterflies, honeybees, and other pollinators. The project is a collaboration between the University's Evergreen Club and Delta Xi Nu Multicultural Sorority, Inc., which has adopted the butterfly as its symbol.

Planned for a spot in front of Taylor Memorial Library, the garden was first envisioned by Amanda Lorenzo '27, a Delta Xi Nu sister, who had worked on a similar garden initiative in high school. So last summer, she reached out to her friend, Evergreen Club President Jordan Henderson '27, an animal science major with an environmental science minor and an affinity for the outdoors. "I strongly believe that this is a good way to introduce people to conservation," said Henderson, who has planted vegetables and flowers at home to support pollinators. "There's a quote that says, 'Kids won't protect something they don't know or care about.' I want people to learn about the pollinators we're protecting, so this monarch butterfly project makes a lasting impact on the future."

Together, the two students developed a proposal for the pollinator garden to present to the University, ordered seeds including native milkweed, showy goldenrod, and cardinal flower, collected plastic water bottles to use as planters, and arranged for an indoor growing space in Taylor Memorial Library. In addition to the garden area near the library, the students plan to plant the perennials in other spots around campus.

Lorenzo said, "There are so many positives to this. It's super important to me to bring people together because after COVID, a lot of people just don't go outside. Through this garden, I want to bring the community together."

Both Lorenzo and Henderson hope to have careers supporting nature. Lorenzo wants to work toward further criminalization of animal cruelty and expand therapy animal programs, while Henderson plans to earn a degree in veterinary medicine from Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine before traveling to Africa to preserve endangered species like giraffes and elephants or opening a wildlife rehabilitation center closer to home.





## Research Stars

Four Centenary University students presented their independent research at the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium sponsored by the Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey (ICUNJ), an organization representing the state's 13 nonprofit, private institutions of higher education. The event was held April 1 at Bell Works in Holmdel.

The annual symposium challenges students to explore science and technology through hands-on, inquiry-based learning. Working closely with leading faculty on their campuses, students test innovative concepts, prepare poster presentations, and defend their results to judges. Student research is funded through sponsorships and ICUNJ research-focused scholarships.

"Centenary students are provided with unique opportunities for hands-on learning beginning in their first year of college," said Robert Battistini, Ph.D., interim vice president for academic affairs. "At large universities, research is often reserved for graduate students. Here at Centenary, undergraduates gain these experiences early on, ensuring strong resumes that open doors to acceptance at competitive graduate and veterinary schools, as well as leading corporations."

Student researchers worked under the direction of Assistant Professor of Chemistry Mourad Frites, Ph.D., on projects focused on environmental issues: Michael Dampney '25, Water Quality from Lake Musconetcong and Lake Hopatcong; Nicolas Radovanic '25 and Tracy Snover '25, A study of phosphorous consumption by fresh water mussels: a solution to harmful algae blooms; and Joshua Scialom '26, Comparative Analysis of Solar Panel Performance: Solar Panel Mounted on Tracker versus Stationary Mounting System.

## The Community College Guarantee



A new scholarship program locks in discounted tuition for recent community college graduates who transfer to Centenary University to complete their bachelor's degree. Called the Centenary University Community College Guarantee, the initiative promises that community college transfers can finish a bachelor's degree at Centenary for \$25,000. To qualify, students must have earned an associate degree from any community college in the United States within the last three years. In addition, they must finish their bachelor's degree within two years of enrolling at Centenary.

In addition to the Centenary University Community College Guarantee, the University has increased scholarship support for traditional day session students and has introduced new pathways to higher education—often with discounted tuition—for working adults and vocational students.

## LEADER AMONG PRESIDENTS



Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D., has been appointed to two prestigious higher education positions, elevating the University's reputation and influence on the national level. First, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) named Dr. Caldwell to the Division III Presidents

Council—the highest governing body in DIII athletics. The council establishes and implements policies that support the interests of the NCAA, educational institutions, and student-athletes who compete in DIII athletics at colleges and universities across the nation.

Several months later, Dr. Caldwell was invited by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) to accept a spot on its Board of Directors, which includes national leaders in higher education. Centenary is a member of the CIC, an organization that supports university leadership, advances institutional excellence, and enhances public understanding of the many contributions independent higher education makes to society.

"I am proud to represent Centenary University on these two boards," said Dr. Caldwell, who this spring was also recognized with the Milestone Award from the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) for his service to the state's education community. "This recognition reinforces a broader strategic initiative to establish Centenary University as a national leader in higher education."



## Pfizer Grant Advances Science Studies



Centenary University has received a \$4,500 grant from Pfizer to introduce a new course on proteomics, the study of cellular proteins and their role in the development of organisms. Awarded through the Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey (ICUNJ), the PURE (Pfizer Undergraduate Research Endeavors) grant

provides opportunities for Centenary students to use modern technologies to work with fish proteins to develop a deep understanding of biological processes at the genetic level.

Assistant Professor of Biology Yeon Lang Cha, Ph.D., explained that the study of proteomics is particularly important because there have been many advances in technology to analyze complex protein structures: "A central focus of this course is the development of scientific inquiry skills to equip students with advanced laboratory competencies. The goal of scientists who study proteomics is to understand the

structures and functions of proteins. This information can help researchers identify organisms and study evolutionary history. The technology can also be used in development of new treatments for disease and to understand how cells maintain and modify proteins."

An accomplished medical science and pharmaceuticals researcher, Dr. Cha is the recipient of the Chew Sek Jin Award from the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, the Young Investigator Award from the Singapore National Eye Research Meeting, and a Wellcome Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship, which allowed her to advance genetic eye research at Imperial College London. A graduate of Ewha Women's University in South Korea, Dr. Cha earned a Master of Science in Immunology and Allergy from the University of Nottingham, UK, and a Doctor of Medicine and Ophthalmology from the National University of Singapore.

Vice President for Academic Affairs Robert Battistini, Ph.D., said, "This grant from Pfizer ensures that Centenary University graduates are well prepared to meet the demands of modern scientific research, fostering the next generation of innovators in biotechnology, molecular biology, and healthcare, here in New Jersey and across the nation."

## BUSINESS BOOST

Business leaders from the area gathered on campus for the first Small Business Summit hosted by the Centenary University Institute of Entrepreneurship on Feb. 3. Presented in partnership with the Hackettstown BID (Business Improvement District), the event empowered small businesses to strengthen and grow through workshop sessions by experts from Centenary University, the local business community, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. James Howard, executive director of the Black Inventors Hall of Fame Museum and STEM Learning Research Center, presented the keynote.

Founded last year, the Centenary University Institute of Entrepreneurship provides business owners and prospective entrepreneurs with coaching and guidance from Centenary faculty, credentialed consultants, and experienced business students. A key part of its mission is partnering with leading business organizations to build a growth environment for small businesses in the Skylands region, as well as the broader New Jersey business community, said Associate Professor of Business Linda Poisseroux, Ph.D., director of the institute and the University's competitive business team, Enactus.





# Tail Wagging Homecoming

A group of lucky stray dogs from Puerto Rico have found forever homes in the United States, thanks to members of the Centenary University Multicultural Club. The students traveled to San Juan over spring break to learn about Puerto Rican culture, language, and traditions. While there, they partnered with Flight Angels of Puerto Rico, which matches stray dogs and cats with travel volunteers who agree to accompany the animals on their flight to the United States. The Centenary students transported 18 dogs on their return flight to New York, meeting Flight Angels representatives at the airport for the final handoff to take the pups to their new homes. The partnership with Flight Angels aligns with the mission of the Centenary University Multicultural Club to make meaningful contributions in the communities members visit.



## FIRST-GEN FOCUS

Former Obama administration aide Alejandra Campoverde presented this spring's Gates-Ferry Distinguished Visiting Lecture on Feb. 24. In a fireside chat format, Campoverde explored navigating social mobility and the emotional challenges faced by first-generation college students. A nationally recognized women's health advocate, Campoverde is the author of *FIRST GEN: A Memoir* about the emotional challenges faced by first-generation college students who are navigating social mobility. The bestseller inspired first-generation and low-income college students, winning the CALIBA Martin Cruz Smith Award, designation as an OWL Award finalist, and selection to the 2024 COE Opportunity Matters Book Club.









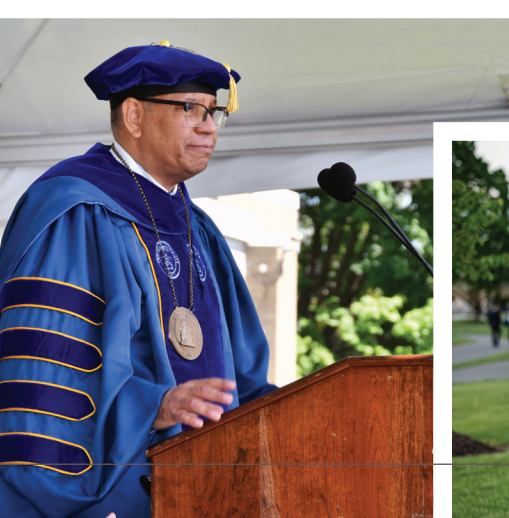
# Milestone Commencement

Centenary University celebrated the Class of 2025 at its 150th undergraduate commencement. During separate ceremonies for undergraduates and graduate students, the University awarded 431 degrees and celebrated Centenary's rich history.

At the undergraduate commencement on May 10, President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D., encouraged the Class of 2025 to value their place in the history of Centenary University: "You are joining generations of Centenary alumni—educators, entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, equestrians, and civic leaders—who have made their mark on the world. Your presence here today, in this moment, is the continuation of that powerful legacy. Let's take a moment to celebrate not just your achievement, but the enduring legacy of Centenary University, which for more than 150 years has empowered students to think deeply, live honorably, and lead boldly."

New Jersey State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick J. Callahan, LL.D. '25 HA, delivered the commencement address and was presented with a Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*. Col. Callahan echoed Dr. Caldwell's sentiments about the importance of leaving a legacy that may not be fully realized for many years. Gesturing to a nearby tree, he said, "One day, somebody planted that tree a long, long time ago, and they are not here now. So, have that long-term perspective, knowing that the acorn you plant today, and that gets watered and sun from above, will someday grow into a huge tree and cast shade...and centuries from now, that small acorn that you took the time to put just a few inches in the ground will cast shade upon those that you will have the honor of looking down upon from those heavens above and saying, 'I started that.'"

At the undergraduate ceremony, Sophia Wayner '25 delivered the valedictory address, while Nicolas Radovanic '25 was recognized as the Class of 2025 first-generation valedictorian and Ashley Carosella '25 earned the Red Knot Award. In addition, Radovanic, Carosella, and Wayner—as well as Madison Maniquis '25, Anisa Powell '25, and Amanda Stanton '25—were honored for graduating with perfect 4.0 grade point averages (GPAs). At the May 7 hooding ceremony/commencement for master's and doctoral graduates, Grant Mayes, Ed.D. '25 was recognized with the University's prestigious Alyce Hunter Dissertation Award.





# *Finding Her Superpower*

Recent Centenary University graduate Sophia Wayner '25 owns a thriving business focused on specialized equine massage therapy. But that's just one item on her impressive resume.

Wayner graduated as the valedictorian of the Centenary University Class of 2025 with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Health, earning a perfect 4.0 grade point average (GPA). She also recently gained acceptance to the inaugural class at the Schreiber School of Veterinary Medicine at Rowan University. A resident of Califon, NJ, Wayner was a member of the Centenary University Honors Program and is a competitive equestrian in the sport of dressage.

Diagnosed with autism at age 20, Wayner sometimes had difficulty as a child relating to a world that can be intense, and often, unkind: "My nervous system has always been in fight or flight mode, triggered by specific noises or different textures. Now, it's something I embrace—this is what makes me be me."

At Centenary, professionals at the equine center and Disability Services Office encouraged Wayner to explore her interests. "In high school, everybody gets caught up in the

names of schools, like big-name and Ivy League colleges," she said. "But there's nothing better than a small school, where faculty encourage you to discover your talents and flourish. At Centenary, everyone embraces your differences and helps you to find your superpower."

Working with horses, Wayner soon learned that compassion can be just as powerful as force. She thrived, becoming certified in two types of equine massage that form the basis of her business, Lyrical, LLC. Her growing client list includes TRAC (Therapeutic Riding At Centenary), where she's volunteered since freshman year.

In her commencement speech, Wayner shared, "I discovered that I could build a career upon kindness. And there, I learned that I didn't have to push harder, grow louder, or become uber competitive in order to succeed...So, I do not stand up here today to send you off to be the strongest, the smartest, or the best at anything. All I want to do is remind you that as you leave here and find your place in this grown up world, continue to be your amazing self—and please be kind!"







## Challenges Accepted

Brianna Worthy '25 doesn't shy away from new challenges. As a student at Centenary University, she enrolled in the first cohort to study exercise science, an intensive program that emphasizes both classwork and hands-on training. After earning a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science with a psychology minor, the Montclair, NJ, resident recently began classes for a Doctor of Physical Therapy at Dominican University New York.

"I've had some amazing opportunities at Centenary," said Worthy, a student-athlete on the women's basketball team and captain of the University's first women's flag football team, an NCAA emerging sport. In its debut season this spring, the Cyclones notched a 6-7 record. "It was a huge honor to be captain of Centenary's first team and to play a role in growing women's flag football and revolutionizing women's sports in general."

A student leader beyond athletics, Worthy is grateful for the many people who encouraged her to broaden her horizons: "I just love Centenary's small campus and ability to connect personally with my professors. You can't do that in a lecture hall with 500 students. I definitely think Centenary prepared me well."



## Persistence Pays Off

At 51, Jessica Raab '25 didn't have to finish the college degree she started more than three decades ago. Raab has a successful career with Corza Medical, where she travels the world as the director of medical education. Through the years, she had enrolled in several remote college programs, but none could support her work schedule. Then, she moved to Hackettstown—and discovered Centenary University.

After graduating high school in 1992, Raab earned a scholarship to attend a New Jersey college, but left for personal reasons. Soon after, she began working for Corza Medical and her career took off. Yet, she never forgot her dream of earning a college degree. That dream was realized in May, when Raab earned a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from Centenary.

"If something is important to you, it never goes away," Raab said. "It's important to always finish what you start, and every step of the way makes me a better person...It's wonderful to continue learning, especially when so many people are working for your success. Centenary is a great university and a wonderful local resource."



## First-Gen Strength

As a first-generation college student, Nicolas Radovanic '25 had no one in his family to guide him in applying to college, and later, to medical school. Yet, the Long Valley, NJ, resident has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams—the Centenary University graduate was accepted to seven medical schools and will attend the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine beginning this July.

Radovanic graduated with a perfect 4.0 grade point average (GPA) as the first-gen valedictorian, earning a Bachelor of Science in Biology: Forensic Science with a minor in criminal justice. A member of the Honors Program, he was also inducted into several honor societies and earned a grant from the Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey (ICUNJ) to conduct independent research.

Despite his demonstrated success in college and medical school admissions, Radovanic still marvels at the path that is unfolding before him: "As a first-gen student, I sometimes still suffer from imposter syndrome—like I don't belong in college or medical school. But here at Centenary, everyone empowers you to be your best. It's a place where your wings are untied and you're able to fly."





# *Powerhouse*





# Program

**Centenary University's IHSA team sets an amazing regional record—and places third at nationals.**





Centenary University's IHSA team has established an amazing track record through decades of equestrian competitions: For the past 35 years, the team has won the Regional Highpoint Hunt Seat Equestrian Championship, an honor determined by the total number of points teams accumulate throughout the season. While Centenary is a recognized powerhouse in the sport, the feat had largely gone unnoticed until equine historian Steve Maxwell contacted team coach Michael Dowling in April.

"Steve is very familiar with our team and our program," said Dowling, who co-coaches the University's IHSA (Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association, Inc.) team with Heather Clark. "He reached out to share his research showing that we had won the regional championship for 35 consecutive years, and how very impressed he is with our team and our program. Steve knows his stuff—he attends zones and nationals almost every year—and his data is very accurate."

The IHSA team competes in approximately eight horse shows per season to accrue points for the Highpoint Hunt Seat regional team score, while riders also earn points to advance individually to zones and nationals. This year Centenary was the Zone 3 champion, with Caroline Mancini '25 winning USHJA/High-Point Hunter Seat Rider. The team also took third at IHSA National Championships on May 2-4 at Tryon International in Mill Spring, NC, placing behind Purdue University and Sacred Heart University.

"What makes this special is that Purdue and Sacred Heart are both DI schools with significant resources," noted Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D. "Incredibly, small DIII Centenary beat national athletic powerhouses Stanford University and the University of Southern California (USC). This is a testament to the dedication of Centenary's riders, coaches, and equestrian faculty. Their hard work has made Centenary one of the best competitive and academic equestrian programs in the nation."

Centenary's competitive equestrian teams are intentionally structured to cultivate the skills of riders interested in advancing to the next level. In addition to the IHSA team, the University hosts an IDA (Intercollegiate Dressage Association) squad that placed fourth this year at their nationals at the National Equestrian Center in St. Louis, Mo. Centenary also just completed the inaugural season of a new National Collegiate







Equestrian Association (NCEA) team, which competes through the NCAA. The team won two meets and Mancini earned the coveted MVP honor three times throughout the season.

Two Centenary riders also emerged as individual national champions this season: Taylor Ernst '27 placed first in the Team Limit Equitation Over Fences 2025 Hunter Seat Competition at Tryon International and Morgan Chedister '25 won the First Level Individual class at IDA Nationals at the National Equestrian Center.

"At a larger university, students may have a riding lesson a couple times a week," Dowling said. "But at Centenary, our students spend most of their downtime at the Equestrian Center helping to care for and rehab the horses. Here, they become comfortable riding unfamiliar horses—which they often must do in competition—so they're very prepared. Our students also have a lot of exposure to additional riding opportunities and trainers that may not be available at other universities."

Clark pointed to the professional experience of the University's faculty and coaches as a contributing factor to the program's extraordinary long-term success: "We're all very invested in cultivating our students and helping them to reach their goals. Professionally, we're active members of the equine field. For instance, Michael and I both have our own training facilities and our resident veterinarian, Jesslyn Bryk-Lucy, D.V.M., has her own practice. Other faculty are stewards and judges. We have such deep faculty expertise and are all committed to developing Centenary riders, competitively and academically."

"Cultivating young professionals is really what Centenary is all about," agreed Kelly Munz, chair of the Equine Studies Department, noting that faculty, coaches, and students encounter many working alumni in the equine industry throughout the year. "Through our program we are proud to cultivate advanced riders, but we're also strong at developing the talents and passions of riders of all abilities. When we traveled to nationals in May, we transported between 14 and 18 of our horses to the competition. It's a major effort that provides amazing professional experience, not just for our competing riders, but also for those students who care for and school the horses. This is very much a team effort."



## The Right PATH

TRAC (Therapeutic Riding at Centenary) has been awarded a \$20,000 grant from PATH Intl., a global organization leading the advancement of professional equine-assisted services that support more than 53,000 special needs individuals. The University's adaptive riding program is one of the few collegiate training grounds in the nation for students seeking a career in equine-assisted services.

Disbursed over two years, the grant will support reducing the waitlist for TRAC, which provides equestrian opportunities for adults and children with physical and cognitive disabilities, as well as specialized populations such as military veterans, at-risk youth, and residents of assisted living facilities. TRAC participants benefit from equestrian experiences that can result in physical, social-emotional, and cognitive benefits, while enhancing goals such as balance, strength, and sensory integration.

Centenary is a higher education member of PATH Intl., with TRAC designated as a Premier Accredited Center. In recent years, PATH Intl. has recognized TRAC staff and participants for excellence: TRAC participant Vika Christian was selected PATH Intl. Youth Equestrian of the Year, while the University's resident veterinarian, Jesslyn Bryk-Lucy, D.V.M., was named PATH Intl. Veterinarian of the Year for Region II.

More recently, TRAC Director Karen Brittle earned PATH Intl. certification as a master level therapeutic riding instructor—the highest certification offered by the organization. The designation took approximately a decade to earn. Brittle collaborated with leading instructors, volunteers, and participants at multiple therapeutic riding centers, compiled a master level portfolio, and participated in evaluations from PATH Intl. representatives. Brittle said of the designation, "This has been a dream in the making for at least a decade. It involved challenging myself on every level of horsemanship, instruction, and professionalism."



# Making History

Centenary University's competitive business team, Enactus, placed third at the 2025 Enactus USA National Exposition in Kansas City, Mo—the highest finish since Centenary Enactus Director Linda Poisseroux, Ph.D., began coaching Enactus a decade ago and tying the best finish by Centenary SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise), a predecessor to Enactus. Held from May 20-22, the event brought together competitors from 15 states and showcased the work of some of the brightest young social entrepreneurs around the country pitching innovative solutions to critical global challenges.

After an impressive presentation at finals, Centenary Enactus member Alexandra Zeich '26 knew the team had made University history. "I just had a gut feeling," said Zeich, a finance major. "In our hearts we knew that we had placed well. Still, we were one of the smaller schools at the competition, so to be announced in the top three was surreal." In addition to Zeich, other members of the presentation team are Liz Asuncion '25, Julianna Falquez '25, Kayla Sampong '26, Jasmine Sampong '26, and MBA student Michael Young '21/26.

Falquez, who recently graduated from Centenary with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration: Social Media Marketing, *magna cum laude*, said, "Having Enactus on my resume is not something that I just write. I will share everything I've learned and will apply it in the workforce."

Centenary Enactus focused its presentation on the Centenary University Institute of Entrepreneurship, which was founded in spring 2024. Staffed by Centenary faculty and students, the institute hosts business development seminars and provides consulting for small businesses, veterans, women, and other constituents in northwestern New Jersey. In its first year, the institute made a direct impact on 533 people and an indirect impact on 180 people, generating a \$24,347 profit through events, sponsorships, fundraising, and grants, according to the 2024-2025 Enactus Annual Report.

The Institute of Entrepreneurship has elevated the professionalism of the team, as well as classwork produced by

students at Centenary, according to Dr. Poisseroux, who is the director of the institute. In addition, advisors like Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, E.D., Dean of the School of Business, Media, and Writing Cheryl Veronda, and business leader Drew Wintenberg, who is secretary of the Centenary Board of Trustees, now regularly drop in to help coach the Enactus team.

"The institute has provided us with a more professional learning environment," explained Dr. Poisseroux, an associate professor of business. "It sets a different tone. There's a new energy within the institute and the feedback our students receive is really enriched at a much higher level. Academically, the work I'm seeing from the Enactus team and other business students has been elevated—and there's no better proof than what we accomplished at competition."

The team also received a first-time invitation to UPitchNJ, a statewide collegiate business competition on May 2 organized by the New Jersey Collegiate Entrepreneurship Consortium to showcase innovative startups. The event provided yet another opportunity for Centenary Enactus members to refine their presentation skills, said Jenna Glinko '23/25, an Enactus alumna who is now assistant director of the institute: "Through the institute, Centenary is doing things that just weren't possible before. We even made a profit in our first year, which is remarkable. But for me, it's all about the students. I just couldn't be prouder of the team and how far they've come."

Centenary Enactus is the third team representing the University this year to distinguish itself at a national competition, said Dr. Caldwell: "This year, three Centenary University teams—Enactus and our IHSA and IDA equine teams—all placed in the top four at national competitions. That's outstanding, especially for a small university facing well-funded schools like Princeton and the University of Wisconsin. At nationals, Centenary Enactus placed among the country's best universities—a testament to their hard work and a campus environment that presents exceptional learning opportunities to every student."







# RISING STARS

When Centenary University joined the Atlantic East Conference (AEC) four years ago, expectations were high. Yet, most people acknowledged that it would take time for the Cyclones to adapt to the more competitive conference.

Now, just four years later, Centenary has emerged as a force to be reckoned with across a host of men's and women's sports. From softball and baseball to soccer and basketball, Centenary athletics is a rising star in the AEC.

This year, the men's soccer, basketball, and baseball teams qualified to their respective AEC tournaments for the first time in program history. On the women's side, the basketball team advanced to the AEC tournament quarterfinals, while flag football—in its first ever competitive season—also qualified to conference playoffs. Last year, the Cyclones women's softball team was the first University squad to qualify to the AEC playoffs.

Meanwhile, several Centenary teams that don't compete in the AEC made a splash nationally: Men's wrestling sent three wrestlers to nationals, while the University's IHSA and IDA equine teams placed third and fourth in the nation, respectively (see cover story). In addition, the University this year launched its first women's wrestling team.

When Centenary joined the AEC, Chris LaBelle '21 was a standout for the men's basketball team. Today, he is the team's head coach and also serves as the University's sports information director. He has witnessed a University-wide culture shift that cultivates a higher level of play and greater

academic achievement.

"A few years ago when I was still a student, Centenary made a really conscious effort to support athletics in areas like strength and conditioning, and classroom expectations," LaBelle observed. "Now, it's really paying off. In the AEC, we're matching the success of schools that historically have had more resources. Centenary is attracting a higher level of recruits and our coaches are doing a really good job getting student-athletes to buy into a culture with expectations for success. A big factor is the administration here; they've done a really good job supporting the coaches and student-athletes, who come to Centenary with







a passion to do well."

Centenary named LaBelle the team's interim head coach during the 2023-2024 season, and elevated him to head coach a few months later. At the time he was just 24—the youngest men's basketball coach in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Jumping in midseason, LaBelle focused solely on guiding his players through a major coaching shift, with the team ending the season 2-23 in regular season play and 0-12 in the conference.

As soon as the season ended, LaBelle began to map out a new team culture. Robust recruiting resulted in 12 new players, who joined five returning Cyclones. LaBelle's priorities were clear: High performance, first in the classroom and then on the court. He recalled, "We brought in the talent, but we had to relearn how to win. We used non-conference games to set the standard, and then once we got into conference play the expectation was that we were there to win."

The turnaround in just one year was remarkable. The Cyclones earned their first AEC tournament berth and best record in a decade (11-15 regular season and 5-7 in the conference). The feat earned LaBelle and his staff the AEC Coaching Staff of the Year Award. The staff includes LaBelle's brother, Nick LaBelle, as well as Kyle O'Brien, '23/25, Tyler Clark '24/26, Jake McMullan '25, and Michael Young '21/26. LaBelle said, "It's nice when your peers respect the work that you put in. A lot of passion and dedication went into this season, but as much as the award recognizes our coaching staff, it's really about the players. They put in the work to improve and had a great year."

Looking to next season, LaBelle sees the seeds planted by Centenary coaches continuing to bear fruit: "At Centenary, we recruit student-athletes who truly care about their sport and how they represent themselves and the University. We've always been a University built on passion and caring about the product we put onto the field. In the end, competitors with that mindset develop into great student-athletes."







# All that Glitters



Centenary University's annual scholarship event provided a golden opportunity for attendees to support the student assistance fund and honor contributions to the University and broader community. Held at David's Country Inn on June 4, the Glitter & Gold Gala raised almost \$115,000 in unrestricted support. Each year, Centenary awards more than \$21 million in scholarships and institutional aid to students demonstrating outstanding academic achievement and financial need.

"As many of you know, many Centenary students often need financial support—sometimes as little as \$5,000—to graduate," said Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D. "The goal of tonight's event is to raise funds to ensure

that no Centenary student drops out of college for financial reasons. Thanks to you, many more Centenary students will graduate on time and succeed in life after college."

At the event, Centenary recognized business and education leaders with the Gold Dome Award, its highest honor: Michael B. Lavery, an attorney at Lavery, Selvaggi & Cohen; Tal Ben-Shahar, Ed.D. '23 HA, director of the University's Master of Arts in Happiness Studies; and Erbach Communications Group, a communications consulting firm. In addition, Rochelle Makela-Goodman '97, former chair of the Centenary University Board of Trustees, was presented with the Van Winkle Achievement Award.



# Leave Your Legacy at Centenary

Members of Centenary University's George H. Whitney Society leave a powerful legacy that impacts the University and its students. Named in honor of Centenary's first president, the society enrolls benefactors who have announced their intent to include Centenary in their estate plans. Now, we're inviting you to join this prestigious group of leaders shaping the future of Centenary University.

George H. Whitney Society members share a strong belief in the principles and values that Centenary alumni and friends hold dear: Providing extraordinary educational opportunities and meaningful financial support to lift the future for current Centenary students. In addition to loyal alumni, membership includes parents of former students, current and former Centenary employees, and loyal friends of the University.

Estate gifts to Centenary through the George H. Whitney Society provide many financial advantages to donors, too. Please consult your attorney or financial planner for more information. To enroll in the George H. Whitney Society, please call the University's Office of Development and Alumni Relations to notify the University of your estate gift at (908) 852-1400, ext. 2250, or scan the QR code.



## You're The Best!

Centenary University donors are extraordinary—and we think you deserve more recognition. That's why we're introducing new giving tiers to thank you for your loyalty to Centenary:

### CYCLONE CIRCLE

**Amount:** \$25 to \$999

### PATRONS CIRCLE

**Amount:** \$1,000 to \$4,999

### BLUE AND GOLD CIRCLE

**Amount:** \$5,000 to \$9,999

### SEAY CIRCLE

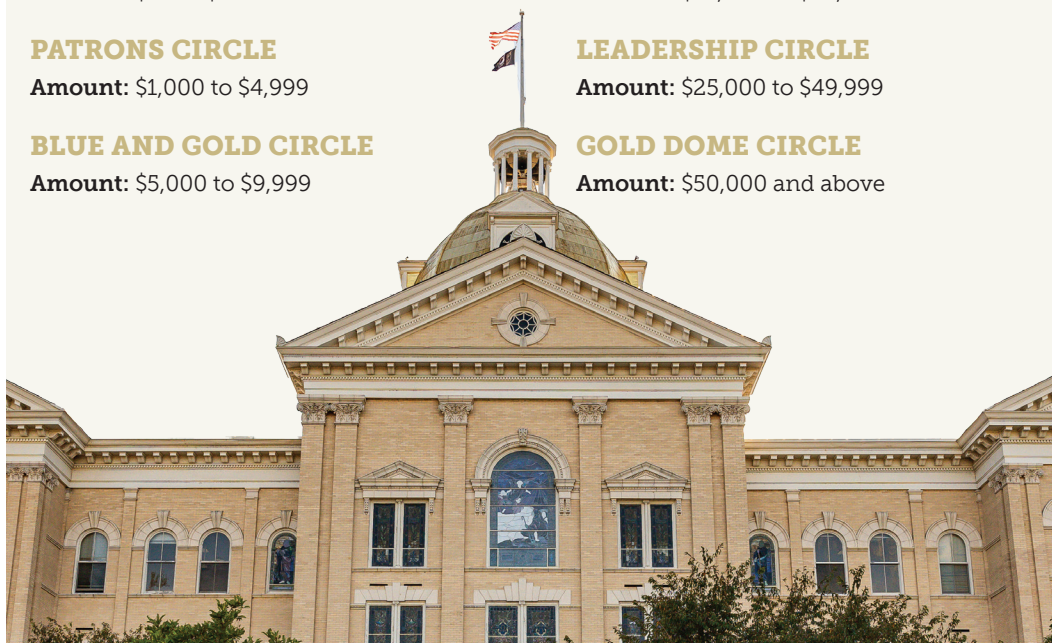
**Amount:** \$10,000 to \$24,999

### LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

**Amount:** \$25,000 to \$49,999

### GOLD DOME CIRCLE

**Amount:** \$50,000 and above



## FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Foundational support is crucial in supporting scholarships and innovative academic programs that are growing Centenary University's reputation for innovation and excellence. Recent gifts from our generous foundation partners are creating new educational opportunities for traditional college-age students, nurses, adult students, and more.

### The Reeves Foundation 2-for-1 Challenge

provided \$1 million in scholarships for Centenary's RN to BSN, which directly addresses the shortage of qualified nurses in New Jersey and around the nation. The foundation challenged Centenary to raise \$667,000 toward the endowed scholarship fund. This spring, an anonymous donor stepped up to complete that challenge, unlocking an additional \$333,000 gift from the Reeves Foundation.

**The Douglas M. Noble Family Foundation** contributed \$100,000 to support Centenary University students facing financial challenges, with a preference for first-generation college students.

**The John A. and Margaret Post Foundation** donated an additional \$100,000 to assist Centenary students with demonstrated need.





## Let us know what's new!

Send us your news and keep up to date with classmates: [alumni@centenaryuniversity.edu](mailto:alumni@centenaryuniversity.edu). Class News and Notes are edited to reflect Centenary's guidelines.

### 1949

**Florence Austermuhl Larson** writes: "I am expecting another great-grandchild in September. My two sons continue to travel between Maui and Israel, with a short visit to Mexico in April. I was in Maui for two weeks with my older son. He has a beautiful vacation home there for the family to use. My sister from New Jersey was here for 10 days. We went out to eat, played a lot of games, and walked the Ocean Beach Pier in California. My new great-grandson will be born in September."

**Betty Poppele Barrett** writes: "I recently fell at home, but was very fortunate that I did not break anything. My daughter stayed with me while I recuperated. After going to physical therapy to gain back my muscle strength, I am on my own now and feeling much better. My good news is that my granddaughter had a baby girl, so I am enjoying holding a newborn once again. I now have three great-grandsons and three great-granddaughters."

### 1953

**Marjorie Holmes Brown** writes: "I am keeping busy volunteering at food share, card making at church, and running a bridge marathon of 20 couples in Simsbury, Conn. I stay in touch with **Beverly Oetgen Imgrund**, who lives in New Jersey. My classmates have all reached their '90s and I would like to hear from you!"

### 1954

**Claire Couch Bosee** writes: "After graduating from Centenary, which

was a two-year college at the time, I transferred to Boston University. I graduated, and after a short marriage went back to school nights and Saturdays while teaching sixth grade in my hometown, Watertown, Conn. After 20 years of teaching, I met the love of my life. We lived in New York City together until my husband died in 1995. I'm still living in New York."

### 1961

**Joyce Fierro Velzy** writes: "My roommate, **Debbie Sisbower Lingwood**, and her husband, Elden, are spending the summer at their home in Maine. Recently Deb had a health issue, but is following her doctor's orders."

**Janice Auer Scrabis** writes: "I am still living in Avon-by-the-Sea, having had some health issues—but I 'keep on keepin' on.' I talk with **June Adams Salaun**, my roomie, quite often and we discuss the great memories we had together. **Sally Swan** just reached out to me and I am anxious to catch up with her; we were roommates at Penn State University. We laughed, danced, and had a great time...wonderful memories! My husband, Bob, passed away in August 2023; he was very ill, but had a great life. I am very much involved with my grandchildren in town. They live in my house and I am in an apartment Bob and I shared after Superstorm Sandy."

**Jan Mittell Kinasewish** recently spoke with **Mary McDonough Mauerer**. Jan writes: "Mary now lives outside Chicago in a retirement community. She is doing really well and has met some nice people there. Mary is still a killer bridge player and her humor continues. Her daughters live nearby, so

she sees them quite a bit. I am living in Cambridge in my little condo and loving it. I take occasional classes, visit with friends, and have a good life, for which I am grateful. My kids are all doing well. Centenary was a great experience; I'll always be glad for my time there."

**Molly Power Balzer** writes: "I was lucky to spend a month on Anna Maria Island, Fla., recently with my daughters, three granddaughters, and 2-year-old great-granddaughter. They weren't all there the entire time. I miss getting together with **Lee Fobes** when she lived in Sarasota."

**Judy Wisdom Quinn** writes: "My husband and I are still living in Stuart, Fla., and just celebrated 62 years of marriage. Both grandsons are in college. My sister, **Jean Wisdom Weaver**, and her husband, Ross, are here, too. We do go back to the Philadelphia area each summer and I remain a rabid Phillies fan. I'm in touch with **Patty Lynch Kase** at Christmas. She and Paul live in Lewis, Del. My free time is spent playing competitive bridge, knitting, and doing jigsaw puzzles. Sadly, my golfing days are over, but I do walk each day."

### 1966

**Marilou Howe** writes: "After graduating from Centenary, I got a degree from The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. I then worked for Janzen. Later, I earned a degree in interior design from New York School of Interior Design and worked for several years as a designer. I also have worked counseling people who were getting restraining orders from the Somerset County court. After marrying, I lived in the Netherlands for three years. I am very proud of my son, Willem, who has worked in politics since college. My granddaughter, Isabelle, will graduate from college in June and then continue her education for a degree as a physician assistant. I now am a member of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church Session."

### 1967

**Barbara Leighton Faulkner** writes: "We purchased a place on Lake Finesterra in Mission Viejo, Calif., to be near our grandkids, who live in Newport Beach. We have been spending most of our winters there for years now. If anyone lives in the area please give me a call!"

### 1994

**Judy Mastriano Medina** has been working in education for more than 30 years, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Education with certifications in English and elementary education, as well as a master of arts. After almost 20 years of research and development, she recently launched her Curriculum Connections Program, which includes several series of books and individual titles for young children and elementary school students. She also hosts elementary school assemblies.

### 1998

**Christopher Perry** is proud to report that his youngest daughter will be graduating high school this spring and starting college. Christopher has officially started his own consulting firm, CMP Finance & Revenue Solutions LLC. He was also named to Marquis Who's Who for excellence in finance. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Centenary, as well as a leadership certificate from the Wharton Leadership Program at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Christopher says, "So much of the foundation was gained from my experiences at Centenary. I look back on my time there fondly."



Christopher Perry



## Getting Social in the Sunshine State

Cyclones based in Florida gathered in Sarasota and Naples earlier this year at two cocktail receptions hosted by Centenary University Trustee Tim Smith. Alumni and friends had the opportunity to reconnect, network, and hear about exciting plans for the University's future from President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D. From left, Denise Furtevic P'22/22/28, Dr. Caldwell, Smith, and William Furtevic P'22/22/28.



## 2007

**Tim Hartpence** was recently named national head of sales at TheQwikFix, a rapidly growing PropTech company focused on simplifying the residential repair process during real estate transactions. He is proud to be part of a company that helps buyers, sellers, and agents close deals faster and with fewer headaches.

## 2012

**Jennifer Dexter** was recently inducted into the Roxbury High School Athletic Hall of Fame. One of eight inductees, she played girls soccer in high school, emerging as a key player who helped her team win a remarkable eight championships. On the college level, Jennifer played for Rutgers University before transferring to Centenary.

## 2014

**Paul Virtell** was recently named president of the Supplemental Health business at Cigna Healthcare. He is responsible for the overall strategy, daily operations, and growth of the company's supplemental health business, which is focused on helping customers pay for out-of-pocket expenses when a serious illness or accident occurs. Paul earned a degree in business administration from Centenary.



Paul Virtell

## 2017

**Carolyn Brouard Conover** earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Centenary University, which set a strong foundation for her career in mental health. After graduation, she earned a nursing degree from New York University in 2020, and since then, has worked as an emergency room nurse. Last year, Carolyn completed a Master of Science in Nursing from Pace University and now specializes as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP). Carolyn says, "I'm really excited to be returning to my roots in psychology, now from the clinical perspective of a nurse practitioner."

## 2018

**Dustin Pierce** was recently installed as a councilman in Phillipsburg, NJ, and is currently vice president of the town's governing body. He works as an office manager at Family Support of Warren, Hunterdon, and Somerset Counties. Dustin earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and Bachelor of Arts in Political and Governmental Affairs from Centenary.



Edward Saultz, left, and Dustin Pierce

## 2019

**Chase Koffel** was sworn in as a police officer with the Upper Gwynedd Police Department in Pennsylvania earlier this year. Last December, he graduated from the Allentown Police Academy with the highest academic achievement award for his class. Chase earned bachelor's degrees in history and secondary education from Centenary.

## 2023

Accomplished filmmaker **Isaiah Anderson** spoke at Centenary University as part of Black History Month in February, discussing his creative process, the importance of documenting local Black history, and his continuing impact as a storyteller. His documentaries, *Before It Was a Park*, *It Was a Neighborhood* and *The Black Professional Zone*—which earned the Director's Choice Award at the 2021 New Jersey Young Filmmakers Festival—were featured in a pop-up museum to preserve and share important stories of African American history in his hometown, Westfield, NJ.

**Emily Dunlap** graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from Centenary University and earned a Master of Social Work from Rutgers University last December. She is a case manager and Adult Protective Services worker at the Warren County Division of Aging and Disability Services, where she interned as a Centenary undergraduate.

## 2024

**Ariana Schiantarelli** is a full-time employee in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at Centenary University, where she is also pursuing a Master of Business Administration: Finance. Ariana recently competed as a state finalist in the Miss New Jersey USA pageant, representing her hometown, Hackettstown. Balancing academics, career, and pageant preparation, she continues to exemplify Centenary's core values of excellence, service, and determination.



Ariana Schiantarelli

**Victoria Schirripa** has been accepted to the inaugural class at the Schreiber School of Veterinary Medicine at Rowan University. The program is the first veterinary school in New Jersey. The yearlong application process earned Victoria acceptance to a total of five veterinary schools. Victoria appreciates the support she received at Centenary from Vice President for Campus Life and Dean of Students Kerry Mullins: "I will be forever grateful to both you and Centenary for giving me so many opportunities to get to this point. I am so lucky to have had such a great experience in undergrad and can only hope for a similar experience at Rowan."

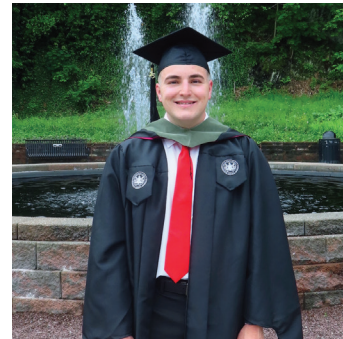
**Liam Sherne** was sworn in as a police officer with the Jefferson Township Police Department in January.



Liam Sherne

**Michael Tichy** recently graduated from Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania with a Master of Science in Sport and Performance

Psychology. The valedictorian of the Class of 2024, Michael is currently a member of the University Advancement team at Centenary.



Michael Tichy

**Denice Torres** was recently elected to the Board of Directors at Celldex Therapeutics. A seasoned leader in the pharmaceutical and consumer healthcare sector, she serves as chief executive officer of The Ignited Company, a consulting firm she founded in 2017. At Centenary University, Denice was a member of the world's first class to earn a Master of Arts in Happiness Studies.

## 2025

**Ella Barnett** attended the American Horse Publications (AHP) Return to Horse Country Conference as an AHP Student Media Travel Award Winner. She was one of two college students selected to attend the conference, which was held May 15-17 in Dallas, Texas. Ella recently graduated from Centenary with a Bachelor of Science in Equine Studies: Equestrian Media and Public Relations. She plans a career in marketing and writing roles for the equine industry.



Ella Barnett



## Back in the Saddle



TRAC (Therapeutic Riding At Centenary) Veterans Program Coordinator **Sgt. Corey Briggs (Ret.) '23** understands the power of equine-assisted services in helping veterans reacclimate to civilian life after discharge. The Marine Corp veteran was attending Raritan Valley Community College when he first saw a flyer about Project Horses for Forces, another equine-assisted services program for veterans. Frustrated with traditional therapy offered through the Veterans Administration, he visited the program—and soon found himself connecting with horses in a way he hadn't with his therapist.

At first, he hesitated to go near the animals, but soon found himself spending more time with the horses and fellow

veterans who were also participating in the local program. He spent a year bonding with a horse, Kody, through grooming, leading, and general groundwork. Sgt. Briggs was hooked: "I had tried everything the VA offered for treatment and nothing was helping. A lot of the structure in my life had been lost when I was discharged. I wasn't sure where my life was going—but then I found that working with the horses was a good way to reintegrate myself, without relying on talk therapy or medications. I was able to spend time bonding with a horse and never had to say a word. On a bad day, I could just groom the horse if that's what I wanted to do."

Soon, Sgt. Briggs envisioned a new career path. With a renewed sense of purpose, he devoted his time learning how to give fellow veterans the same experience he had while working with horses. He decided to enroll at Centenary University, and while attending he learned about TRAC and everything it has to offer the local community, including veterans. Sgt. Briggs graduated with degrees in equine assisted services and equine business management, and today, directs TRAC's program for veterans. He is certified as a therapeutic riding instructor and an equine specialist in mental health and learning through PATH Intl., a global organization leading the advancement of equine-assisted services professionals supporting more than 53,000 special needs individuals, including nearly 6,000 veterans.

Sgt. Briggs was instrumental in the development of a restructured summer equine-assisted services program for veterans offered through TRAC. The free six-week course—developed with TRAC Director Karen Brittle and Bachelor of Social Work Program Field Director and Associate Professor Candice Daly, MSW, LCSW—introduces participants to horsemanship, while enhancing skills including trust, communication, and partnership.

Sgt. Briggs said, "Centenary is a really welcoming space where people from all backgrounds find common ground. I could have gone on to find a more 'typical' job. Instead, I wanted to do something that I think is more impactful, for my life and for other people."

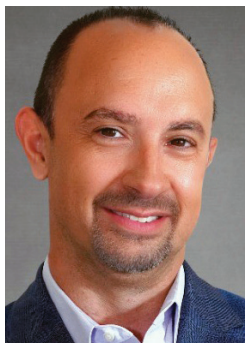
## In Memoriam

Gwendolyn Kennedy Butz '54 ..... 12/9/2024  
 Gary Caal ..... 7/15/2024  
 Mary Stecko Fellows '52 ..... 2/18/2025  
 Elizabeth "Lee" K. Fobes Murphy '61 ..... 12/13/2019  
 Deborah Hendricks '72 ..... 3/26/2024

Dorothy J. MacKeown Jeroloman '50 ..... 10/1/2023  
 Diane Everest Pendleton '54 ..... 11/6/2024  
 Joan Eagleson Swan '50 ..... 9/15/2024  
 Mary Ann Crowley Williams '66 ..... 2/7/2025



## FIFA World Cup 2026: Mangione Tapped by Host Committee



Centenary University alumnus **Fred Mangione '93/15 HA** will be at the center of next summer's most prestigious sporting event: FIFA World Cup 2026. A well-respected professional in sports management, Mangione recently signed on as chief business officer for the soccer tournament's New York New Jersey Host Committee. The region is

slated to host the heralded FIFA World Cup 2026 final on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ, as well as seven preliminary rounds in June and July at sites around the area.

"Nothing will be bigger than the final in this market," said Mangione. "The FIFA World Cup 2026 is an opportunity for brands to connect with a global audience through the lens of the most dynamic, diverse, and influential region in the world. We're inviting forward-thinking brands to be part of this—and make history with us."

A current member of the Centenary University Board of

Trustees, Mangione has leveraged his considerable experience in ticketing, operations, and revenue generation in live sports and entertainment to mentor Centenary students and alumni starting careers in the field. Before his most recent role—running MM Sports Consulting, an agency providing commercial and marketing services to leading sports organizations—he served in leadership roles with the New York Jets and Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment, the parent company of the Barclays Center and Nassau Coliseum, as well as the Brooklyn Nets and New York Islanders.

For FIFA World Cup 2026, Mangione will focus on revenue generation, with an emphasis on partnering within the business community and ensuring that the economic benefits of the event are shared across communities across the region. Host Committee CEO Alex Lasry said, "Fred brings an unparalleled track record of driving revenue growth, building world-class commercial partnerships, and engaging our region's sports fans in innovative ways. We are confident that Fred's vision and skillset will elevate our efforts as we prepare to host the biggest sporting event in history."



## SAVE THE DATE **Alumni & Family Day** Oct. 11, 2025 • 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Join us on campus for a fun-filled day celebrating Centenary.

Tour our beautiful campus and equestrian center, reconnect with old friends, and tailgate before cheering on your favorite Cyclone teams.

Plus, enjoy presentations by Centenary faculty and the Enactus team, afternoon tea in the Seay front parlours, wine and chocolate at the President's House, and much more!



## Trustees in Action

Members of the Centenary University Board of Trustees have significantly stepped up their support of the University, both professionally and financially. Board members regularly lend their expertise and leverage their community contacts to make positive contributions in advancement, academics, student mentoring, and more.

For instance, Board Chair David Dallas and Trustee **Carol Valentine Allen '72/74** spearheaded several fundraising initiatives. In addition, Trustee Tim Smith hosted two cocktail receptions in Florida last winter for alumni and friends of the University (see photo on page 20) as part of a broader initiative to increase alumni engagement and support for scholarships and new academic programs.

## Career Ready



Board Secretary Drew Wintemberg recently collaborated with Career Development Director **Nancy Podesta '17** to present two seminars on how to create and build a successful LinkedIn

account. More than 70 students attended the two sessions, which also featured an opportunity to take professional photos with Centenary Assistant Marketing Director **Jenna O'Connor '16**. A business owner and former Mars executive, Wintemberg has also provided leadership support this year to several Centenary fundraising campaigns.

## Well-Deserved Honor



Former Board Chair **Rochelle Makela-Goodman '97** was the recipient of the Van Winkle Achievement Award at the Glitter & Gold Gala—the University's annual scholarship event—on June 4. Presented by **Audrey Hines Bonaparte-Watts '78** on behalf of the Alumni Association

Executive Board, the award recognized Makela-Goodman's remarkable career in fundraising and philanthropy, as well as her contributions as a Centenary University trustee for more than 16 years.

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Nancy Johns Paffendorf '79/80/06

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Maria Novotna Maier '06  
Roberta Fiske Mildnerberger '67  
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Joanne Risko '97  
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Isaiah Anderson '23  
Audrey Hines Bonaparte-Watts '78  
Justin Dalcourt '19  
Cara Gibson-Gallup '10/12  
Margarita Snead Gravesande '85/14  
Lauren Hope Kreeger-Windrow '10  
Jacqueline McRae Jones-Banks '04/06  
Melissa Mandas '95  
Sandile C. Manzini '11  
Edward Medow '14  
Onoshope N. Itunoya Musa '24  
Tamiko Scian '96

### STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Jenna Glinko '23/25  
Alexandra Zeich '26





## **Najee Evans, Ph.D. '19:** **Moving Forward with Courage** **and Conviction**

In spring 2017, the Centenarian featured **Najee Evans '19** as part of a broader story highlighting Centenary University's connection with St. Benedict's Preparatory School. Born and raised in Newark, NJ, he earned a Bachelor of Social Work from Centenary, where he became involved with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and Student Life.

Later, he received a Master of Social Work from Ramapo College and a Doctor in Leadership Studies from the University of the Cumberlands. Today, Dr. Evans is associate dean of students and assistant director of the Counseling Department at St. Timothy's School, an all-girls boarding school in Maryland. Below, he reflects on his educational journey and career.

### **Please take us along your career path.**

Through my early roles in Student Life at Centenary, I discovered a deep love for supporting students beyond the classroom. After graduation, I served at both Ramapo and Hamilton colleges, where I saw firsthand how vital mental health is to student success. That provided a good foundation for my

current position at St. Timothy's School. Every role along the way has reaffirmed my commitment to bridging mental health, education, and leadership.

### **How did Centenary shape your career?**

Centenary was where my purpose first took root. Serving as a resident assistant and transfer counselor allowed me to connect with students from all walks of life. These moments showed me the emotional weight many students carry and the impact a caring presence can have.

Interestingly, I entered Centenary with the intention of becoming a hospice social worker. But as I poured into campus life, I realized my passion was broader, nurturing the whole student: Mind, body, and spirit. Centenary didn't just prepare me academically; it shaped my calling.

### **What inspired you to work in mental health and school counseling?**

Witnessing the unseen battles students fight every day inspired me. I realized that mental health is the foundation upon which all learning and success is built. I wanted to be part of that foundation—a steady hand, a compassionate guide, and an advocate for students finding their way through both triumphs and trials.

### **What's the best part of your career?**

What fills my heart is the opportunity to create lasting impact. I love meeting people where they are, helping them uncover the strength they didn't know they had, and finding creative ways to support their healing and growth.

There's nothing more powerful than watching someone step into their own potential and knowing you had the privilege to walk beside them.

### **Any words of wisdom to share?**

The greatest enemy you may ever face isn't your critic, your competitor, or your circumstance. It's the inner me that whispers you're not enough. Acknowledge that voice, but don't let it control your narrative. Trust your preparation. Trust your growth. And remember: Sometimes the only thing standing between you and your destiny is your willingness to believe in yourself, even when doubt creeps in. Move forward with courage and conviction.





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# Your Gift—on Autopilot

**Now, it's easier than ever to work a gift to Centenary University into your budget.** With a recurring gift, you schedule monthly gifts to Centenary—and then sit back and relax. Your gift will make a big impact for the price of a daily cup of coffee.

Spread your annual gift of \$100, \$500, \$1,000 or more over 12 equal payments to make the biggest impact. We'll charge your credit card for the amount you designate each month until you change or cancel your pledge. It's that easy!

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