

# THE JOURNAL



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## WEBSTER'S LIVING LEGACY



Graphic by Ethan Meece

### It's a wrap for Stroble: Putting a bow around the chancellorship

BY LAUREN BRENECKE  
News Editor

Webster University is on the brink of a new era: A new chancellor will be appointed. While a timeline isn't confirmed, the change in leadership is imminent. In October, Chancellor Beth Stroble informed the university's board of trustees that she would step down at the end of the year. After 15 years at Webster, she's preparing to embark on a sabbatical and plans to return with a renewed focus on alumni relations and fundraising.

"Fifteen years is a long time. It's unusually long – and it's unusually long for a woman, and it's unusually long for a woman at a global institution," Stroble said. "I recognize that whoever comes into this role next will make it their own, and so it will be a new day and a new moment, but I do think that there are a whole lot of reasons this is a pivotal moment."

Stroble began at the university in 2009, when she was appointed as president. She was named chancellor in 2019. Before Stroble, the university had just one chancellor, Neil George, who retired in 2012.

As chancellor, Stroble took on what she calls a different role than her predecessor.

"He [George] took on the title and role really to do sort of special projects. We use the same title, but the roles are very different," Stroble said.

Now, Stroble says the university needs both leadership roles, splitting the responsibilities with president Julian Schuster, depending on individual strengths. Stroble says she's stayed just as busy as chancellor as she did as senior vice president, provost and chief operating officer at the University of Akron, where she

served before coming to Webster.

"I am very bound by duty and obligation and what needs to be done. I mean, I work almost constantly. From the morning when I get up, you know, 5:30 to 6 a.m., I'm reading emails and getting caught up on what's come in overnight. I typically don't end work until nine o'clock at night, but I've done that for decades," Stroble said. "But I do it out of love for the work, and really wanting everybody to succeed."

Stroble's time as chancellor has brought improvements to DEI policies, more scholarship opportunities for students, and improved enrollment rates. At present, enrollment is the highest it's been in six years.

**"Who we're becoming, what our identity is, where we are in the world and what kinds of students we're serving here, regionally, and what we're preparing them to do next – that has changed, absolutely," Stroble said. "Life keeps moving on, and the only way to be successful is to just sort of move with it and not resist it."**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the board of trustees made the decision to increase executive compensation to align more with leaders at similar universities.

"At the time those compensation commitments were made, progress appeared underway and short-term goals were being met," wrote board chair Sumit Verma in an email to students. "However, the pandemic and other challenges delayed the university's financial progress."

Pay still increased several times

in the coming years, with Stroble among several in leadership roles to benefit from this change. Stroble was reported to receive a salary of over \$785,000 in 2021, a raise of more than \$324,000 since 2019. According to the board of trustees, the change was justified by an increase in workload.

A vote of no-confidence by faculty for both Schuster and Stroble was issued on Sept. 19. Prior to the move by faculty, a student-led protest publicly brought to light concerns over executive compensation and the university's seeming lack of fiscal responsibility.

"The fact that the chancellor and the president and all these people are getting so many raises – up to almost a million dollars per year – is insane when we don't have the facilities that we need," student Max Florida said during the protest. "We don't have the things that can make students safe and comfortable and exist here at Webster."

Staff members shared a number of these frustrations, as well. In a letter to the board of trustees, the Webster Staff Alliance suggested the board conduct a comprehensive salary review, encourage transparency and consider more employee feedback.

"Learning that the administration continued to receive sizable salary increases during the same years that staff members saw little or no increase has only added to their frustration," the Webster Staff Alliance board wrote in the letter.

Nearly a month after the faculty's no-confidence vote, Stroble announced plans for a transition out of the chancellor's role. Her sabbatical, a paid leave, is set to begin in the spring of 2024. Stroble and the board say plans for her succession began before the vote of no-confidence, with conversations about restructuring roles beginning in the winter of 2022.

"I will say that, for my part, I wanted to wait and see how the fall enrollment was going to go," Stroble said.

Enrollment numbers did increase, up 27% from the previous year.

"I wanted to get back to those pre-pandemic numbers, and then I thought I'll feel comfortable saying, 'I've done my best,'" Stroble said. "But now, in this spring term, when I'll be in the sabbatical role, I'll keep helping the fundraising, because that's what I think I need to do to contribute and kind of put a bow around this chancellorship."

### Defining identity

**"What is Webster?"**

To some, the answer to this question seems obvious: It is an institution of higher education. The second-layer response to this inquiry may bring up other considerations – a global institution with campus locations spanning from Europe to Africa, boasting an enviable student-to-faculty ratio and a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Let us forget the progressive Sisters of Loretto, who founded the university in 1915 as one of the first Catholic women's colleges west of the Mississippi.

But the accolades fail to account for the university's grave issues of late. In September, the university was sued for allegedly failing to pay rent on its downtown St. Louis campus. Webster ended the 2022 fiscal year with \$30.6 million in operating losses, according to Higher Ed Dive. This, while university leaders Beth Stroble and Julian Schuster received substantial pay raises that put them among the region's highest-paid university executives.

The student and faculty body came together in a powerful show of unity. In one day, the Quad was lit up with a pulsing student-led protest urging financial transparency and responsibility from university leadership, and mere hours later, the Faculty Assembly returned a vote of no confidence in Stroble and Schuster.

When it comes to financial strife for private, nonprofit colleges, Webster is not in the minority. Private universities rely on endowments and tuition, and it has been a challenge to recover in the aftermath of a global pandemic, as well as a pre-existing decline in college enrollment nationwide. The impending dip in enrollment caused by the 2008 recession is forecasted for 2025 to 2026, and is likely to provide little relief.

Though the outlook seems grim, there is a trend of change: This fall, Webster saw its largest spike in enrollment since 2017,

a 27.1% increase from Fall 2022, according to university officials. The new year will also reveal a stark change in leadership, as Chancellor Stroble steps down on Dec. 31. A global search is underway to name her successor.

Following a period of immense turmoil and unrest at Webster in the past several months, understanding its identity is imperative to its survival. Defining the identity of an entire university system seems an impossible task. Every individual who has been, is and will be a part of the Webster University community garners their own definition through personal experience and interaction with those around them. By examining the facets that make up Webster, the hope is to better understand the university's true spirit – what it is and what it could be.

**For this special edition, the Webster Journal team sought to uncover the bits and pieces that – united – build an honest narrative of Webster's collective identity. This edition weaves from past to present, and from present to the future. It explores the century-old mission the university was founded upon and questions the task at hand for the university today.**

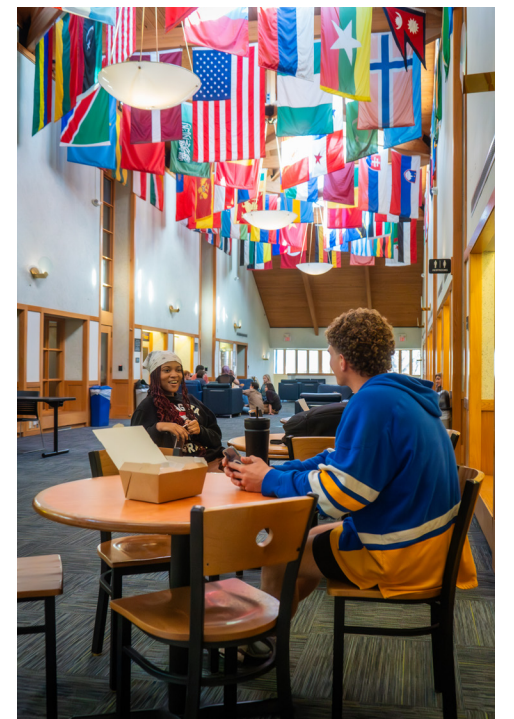
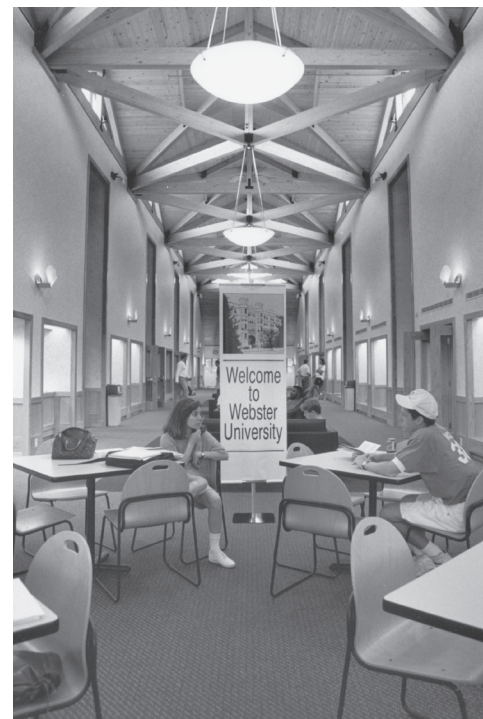
INTRODUCTION BY  
ZOE DEYOUNG  
Editor-in-Chief

**The original Gorlok made its debut in 1988 at a men's basketball game. In 2013, the current Gorlok with the W sweater was introduced.**

### Capturing then and now: University Center

Journal photojournalist Vanessa Jones encountered images in the Webster archives that she replicated with current Webster students.

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The University Center opened in 1992. The UC Commons, since its conception, has been a gathering place for students like freshmen Latavia Thompson and Sam Schark (right).



VANESSA JONES/ The Journal

Chancellor Beth Stroble sits down with Journal news editor Lauren Brennecke in the Office of the Chancellor on Oct. 4.

## Opinion: I found my identity at Webster

BY GABRIELLE LINDEMANN  
Staff Writer

I graduated high school in 2023 with a clear identity: I was a two-sport athlete, who grew up in a small town surrounded by a tight-knit group of friends.

But I no longer play those sports. My friends and I split up for college, and I moved away from small-town Washington, Missouri. I saw college as my opportunity to start fresh, to rediscover myself and who I wanted to be. I believe there is no better place to build an identity than Webster University, known for its openness, acceptance and ample opportunities for students to grow as individuals.

But, becoming a Webster student wasn't as easy as walking into my dorm room on move-in day. This sent me on the journey to find my new identity, and to figure out what makes me – and those around me – Webster students.

Scott Jensen, a professor in the School of Communications, has been at Webster for 27 years. Before coming to Webster, he taught at three different universities. Jensen notes Webster's specific ability to offer students diversity in experience, many of whom, like me, come from small towns with a minuscule minority demographic.

"We have students who come from rural areas, graduating classes of 14 and graduating classes of 4,000," Jensen said. "A lot of students that come here, it might be their first time being in the classroom with an international student, being in the classroom with a trans student. Whatever the life experiences are, our culture promotes an ethic of making that identity encouraged."

Prior to Webster University, I had very few interactions with non-binary individuals. People I talked with on a regu-

lar basis were mostly white, and the list of people in my social circle who were born outside of the U.S. was short. Immersed in the diversity Webster has to offer, I've learned everyone has their own story to tell. Our differences make us unique, and why we as a student body are so expressive. Webster gives us a safe place to be our truest selves.

When making a decision about where to attend college, Webster's small class sizes were a selling point. With the average classroom size under 25, it's easier for connections between students and professors to develop. Kelly Dopman, a senior director of alumni relations for the university, has a perfect seat to observe the impact that a faculty/staff-to-student connection can make.

"They really care about personal growth, pushing you to be your best self, helping you explore the discipline you're interested in," Dopman said.

"That's a theme I hear from people five years out, 20 years out, 50 years out, that the adults, the educators, played a key role in your journey of self-discovery and developing skills."

During my time at Webster, my professors have not only taught me academically, but have helped me learn even more about myself. Thanks to Webster's small class sizes, I have had the opportunity to connect with one professor who has helped me learn that it is important to let people into your life, even after people have hurt you in the past. Professors take time to connect with me on a personal level, and it's made my learning experience deeper.

Professors work to create unique opportunities for students that most students across the country won't ever have. They genuinely care about giving us real-world experiences, building our re-

sumes, and preparing us for the next steps in our lives, whatever that may look like.

When discussing what a Webster student is, there are few better qualified to comment than William Ratz, who has seen the university from nearly all angles. He started at Webster as an undergraduate student in 1998, acquired his masters degree from the university and eventually moved into the position of director of first-year experience where he currently resides.

**"Webster students are strongly independent. They are strong-willed, hardworking as all get out, passionate about what they want, and what they want to do with their lives. They're not afraid to be themselves. They're doers. And they're awesome," Ratz said.**

Choosing Webster University was one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. While everyone's experience is different and our stories unfold in divergent ways, Webster is a place that lets all stories be told. The people I have met here, from students to staff and faculty, have aided in showing me what a Webster student really is.

To me, being a Webster student means I am unafraid to stand up at a student protest. As a Webster student, I am learning to use they/them pronouns for the first time to respect new friends. As a Webster student, I am finding people who have similar morals and beliefs, and becoming closer with them than any friend before. Webster has helped me find my identity, but even more, my identity is being a Webster student.

## Pearson House: Surviving history



WEBSTER UNIVERSITY / Contributed Photo

Pearson House was built in 1933.

BY LAUREN BRENNECKE  
News Editor

The Pearson House, a quaint sanctuary of knowledge of new and old, was almost demolished to make room for a science building in 2012.

Efforts to save Pearson were made, but none were successful until the last, during which the Webster Journal reported on its imminent fate. In a letter to the editor dated March 20, 2012, English professor Karla Armbruster thanked reporter Alex Brandt and The Journal for their coverage.

**"The physical environment of the Pearson House provides the 'magic ingredient' – let's call it the animating spark of life, to build on the body metaphor – that allows the rest of us to interact together as a functional whole, sometimes because rather than in spite of the fact that the building was not originally designed to contain faculty offices and classrooms," Armbruster's letter stated.**

The three-story colonial revival, built in 1933, has painted white brick enclosing philosophy classrooms. The windows are fitted with brass hardware

and white shutters. A prophetic white rabbit sculpture sits at the front door.

Upon entering through a door that reads, "THIS DOOR MUST STAY CLOSED AT ALL TIMES," you'll find a stairway to the basement. This time, the interior reads, "DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE."

On the second floor is a library, in memory of former poet laureate and professor David Clewell. Handwritten messages to these books' original owners are found on the pages.

Writings from an unnamed author, pinned to a bulletin board nearby read, "I don't believe in ghosts, but I do believe in memories. When I walk around Pearson House, I feel his presence ... On weekends

and summer days, he was here, filling the house with his presence. Now the house is quieter, but his presence is still here. In the creaky old stairs where he stepped out to smoke with Murray or Kenneth, one present now in body and one in memory. He embodied Pearson House, and now Pearson House embodies him."

Today, more than a decade since its planned demise, the Pearson House still stands. Home to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, its spaces are used to teach English and philosophy. The history of the house bridges the gap between then and now, and provides students with context and connectivity.

## How has Webster shaped you?

The Journal team posed the question to current and former students and faculty.



### John Buck 2005-Present

John Buck serves as the associate vice president for Student Affairs and dean of students at Webster University. Additionally, he is an adjunct professor, instructing undergraduate and graduate students in leadership theory courses. He received his master's and doctorate degrees in management and leadership from Webster in 2005 and 2009, respectively.



**"Webster University has been very fulfilling and shaped me in key ways. First, having the opportunity to visit several international campuses has impacted my worldview,"** Buck said. **"Being part of a truly global institution means you need to see and think in a broader, more inclusive way ... not when it's convenient, but every day. I've also been shaped by the individual students I have had the pleasure of knowing and advising. Leadership education is a passion of mine, and I have loved watching student leaders grow and then enter the world where they make a difference every day. I'm humbled to have been part of that process for so many, helping them grow, promoting access and equity, and fostering a sense of purpose. Those experiences shaped me in ways that keep me motivated to work in higher education."**

By Rayna Friedman / Contributed photo from John Buck

### Kristina Richards 1999-Present

Kristina Richards graduated in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology. She had transferred to Webster from Truman State University after her freshman year, in search of a bigger community to involve herself in.

One of only two Anthropology majors from her graduating year, Richards has enjoyed working through history and art through her time at Webster and beyond. Richards has worked as an intern with the Missouri Historical Society, and performed archaeology work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Now back at her alma mater, Richards is gallery director of the Kooyumjian Gallery.

**"You need to be a citizen of the world, you're not the world's citizen,"** Richards said. **"As an alumna of the Anthropology department, Webster shaped me into a critical thinker, encouraged me to explore world cultures and fostered my desire for greater understanding."**

By Emme Goelz

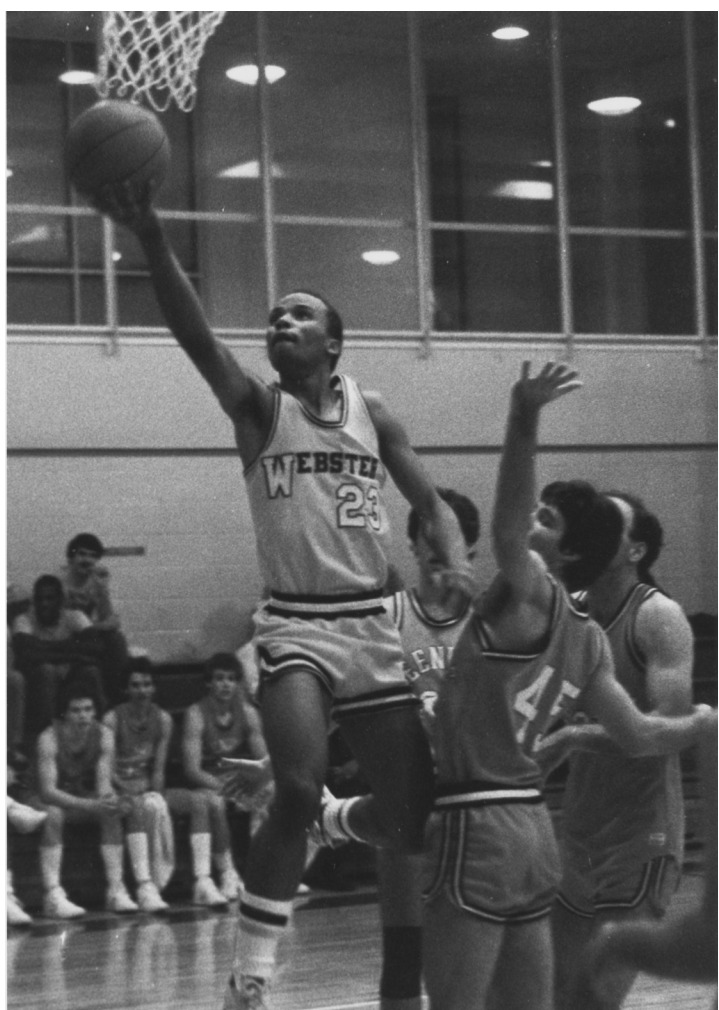
### Danielle MacCartney 2007-Present

For most of her life, interim dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Danielle MacCartney has been a citizen of the world. From spending time as a child in Iran to taking college classes in France, MacCartney is no stranger to being in a different country. However, MacCartney only thought to put her personal interests in international travel and her professional life together once she accepted a teaching position at Webster in 2007.

**"You know, it's interesting, the mission of the university is to transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence. And I feel like the global citizenship part for me has been really transformative, actually, in terms of who I am, how I see the world, the research that I do – all of that."**



By Carrson McDaniel  
Contributed photo from Danielle MacCartney



## Capturing then and now: Athletics

By VANESSA JONES  
STUDENT MEDIA  
MANAGER

Journal photojournalist Vanessa Jones encountered images in the Webster archives that she replicated with current and recent students.



1921 women's basketball team



2023 women's basketball team

No. 23 Jordan Clay (right), in 2020, appears to mirror a layout by an unidentified athlete in a photo uncovered from the Webster archives. Both games were played against Greenville.

## Amplifying LGBTQ+ voices

By GRIFFIN SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

**"I feel like everyone here is gay."**

So says senior Maxi Glamour, a philosophy major at Webster and drag performer, who considers the university a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community.

In its DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) statement, Webster recognizes that "diversity and inclusion cultivate academic excellence."

Throughout its history, Webster has spotlighted LGBTQ+ voices, such as openly gay comedian Jason Stuart for the school's "Noontime Com-

edy Break" in 1995, and celebrity drag queen Trixie Mattel as the Fall 2021 headliner. In its film series, the university has screened films like "The Brandon Teena Story," a documentary based on the murder of a transgender individual. In 1995, the school hosted Pink Triangle United, a club promoting LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Now, students can join clubs like the LGBTQ+ Alliance, which plans to bring back the Webster Drag Ball, featuring student performers. The Drag Ball began in 1997 but paused during the pandemic.

Caroline Bush, president of the LGBTQ+ Alliance, says the club is taking steps toward

growing the group.

"Basically we've been trying to include everyone that's either allies or is in the community. So we've had game nights, movie nights - we're actually doing a trans panel about what experience [is] like for the transgender community and non-binary folks," Bush said.

Lawmakers in Missouri banned transgender girls and women from participating in sports activities in early 2023. Even though metropolitan areas such as St. Louis and Kansas City continue to fight against the bill, it was signed into law by Missouri Gov. Mike Parson.

"I think that the only thing that has caused us to gain

more or less of a voice than we've had before as a community on campus; and in St. Louis, is the current battle with trans rights. And so I think it caused - as a result - queer people to really value this campus as a safe space," said junior KP Benton, a School of Communications senator for SGA (Student Government Association).

As Webster faces changes within its university leadership, Benton is not concerned that this will impact Webster's LGBTQ+ community.

"I think that we are a large community here, that no matter what happens to the university, we will still be here," Benton said.



Graphic by Max Breckwoldt



### Kate Wylie

2018-Present

Kate Wylie began teaching in the English department this semester, but her story goes back to the '80s when her father taught in the Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts. Her mother eventually also started to teach in the Communications department, and

her younger brother obtained a degree from Webster in Mathematics.

When it came time for Wylie to attend college, she only applied to Webster. Wylie met her future husband in the English department. In fact, they married on campus in the Winifred Moore Auditorium. Carolyn Brown, then the assistant director of the Communications and Journalism department, officiated the wedding attended by faculty colleagues. Wylie graduated from Webster in 2018.

"Webster helped me find my passion for learning, and the English Department, (especially) the late David Clewell, helped me realize that learning could focus specifically on my passions rather than generic studies," Wylie said. "I am very grateful for getting my job at Webster right after grad school, and I am extremely thankful for the connections I made in the English department during my undergraduate experience. Webster is everything to me, and Webster truly takes care of every alumnus."

By Alyssa White / Contributed photo from Kate Wylie

### Joshua Johnson

Class of 2020

When Joshua Johnson graduated in 2020, he left behind a basketball legacy to go down in Webster's history.

Johnson was named the SLIAC Player of the Year and First-Team All-SLIAC in 2020, leading the program to its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2014. After his time as a Webster student, Johnson coached men's basketball through the 2020-21 season.

"I'd say Webster has allowed me to grow into the man I am today," Johnson said. "Coming into my freshman year as a quiet and reserved person, I was very nervous as to what to expect over the next four years at the university. I can proudly say that I left as a more mature and confident man. Throughout my time at Webster, I can truthfully say that the most fulfilling part was the relationships that I developed over the years, both with the faculty and my peers. I met some of the most wonderful people in my life at this university who truly inspired me and challenged me to become the best person I could. These bonds I've built have lasted well beyond my time at the university, as I am still very close to many of the people I met. Following my time at Webster, I was able to pursue a master's degree, as well as play basketball overseas. This has allowed me to travel the world and experience things I could've never imagined doing. All of this stemmed from my time at Webster and I know that I would not have done any of these things if I didn't attend the university and meet the people that I did. I'm very appreciative of my experience at Webster and would strongly recommend anyone who is interested in the university to give it a shot."



By Kellen Furmaniak / Photo by Vanessa Jones

### Adam Zanzie

Class of 2014

By the time Adam Zanzie graduated from Webster in 2014, he had already written and directed at least two short films, one of which got him accepted into the David Lynch MFA program at Maharishi International University.

"Webster University has made a huge difference in my life," Zanzie said. "Before I was accepted into Webster's film program in 2011, I was an amateur filmmaker who didn't know the first thing about professional filmmaking, nor did I know what it means to lead a large cast and crew. Webster's film program provided me with the experience and the connections that I sought to gain from my education."



By Alyssa White  
Contributed photo from Adam Zanzie

### Abdulaziz Komiljonov

Class of 2024

Senior Abdulaziz Komiljonov is an international student from Uzbekistan studying economics and international relations. He has attended three of Webster's global campuses: Tashkent, Vienna and the main campus in Webster Groves.

He is involved in Webster's book club and ping-pong club, and is active in helping with other on-campus events. In the future, Komiljonov plans to pursue a career in fintech analytics.

"In my third year of school, I applied to a Study Abroad program and decided to go to Webster Vienna campus, as it was a way to learn about new cultures and new experiences," Komiljonov said. "It was truly a new experience for me as I stayed in Vienna for five months. [It] was a life-changing experience as I have learned a lot about new cultures, made new friends and connections all over the world, and learned how to look at things from different perspectives. At that point, I understood how Webster's promotion of global citizenship was making an impact on my life. I have changed my perspective on a lot of things and also saw a better and improved path for the development of both my personal and professional spheres."



By Michael Friedman / Contributed photo from Abdulaziz Komiljonov

## Webster strives to uphold global reputation amid adversity

By JOSHUA WRIGHT  
MANAGING EDITOR

Webster University has long marketed itself as a “worldwide institution.” It hosts campuses across the globe and, in Webster Groves, nearly 10% of its student body comes from outside the U.S. But to keep its worldwide reputation afloat, Webster must confront recent challenges surrounding its network of schools and competition from other universities.

In March 2023, Tawadudu Sulemana, student and SGA president at Webster University Ghana received an urgent message from the school. It pertained to an upcoming Zoom call. She joined the call – alongside other students, parents and staff – to learn that Webster Ghana would close before the new year.

Current students face their final weeks at the school after almost 10 years in operation.

**Sulemana said the news left her “in a state of disbelief,” and she sought counsel from friends afterward to make sure it was actually happening.**

Webster Ghana will be the latest closure within the Webster International Network Schools (WINS) program, a partnership of schools that pools access to Webster’s

global campus network.

In December 2021, Webster shut down its Thailand campus amid concerns about student safety and improper leadership. In September, while not closed, Webster was sued for its downtown campus under allegations that it failed to pay rent.

“The closure of campuses can have an impact with some WINS partners. It is never easy to tell partners that a campus is closing. This was especially true with the Ghana campus, as many of our partners were excited to send their students to Ghana and work with us on special programs and initiatives,” said Kelly Heath, director of the Office of Study Abroad at Webster.

According to Heath, Webster still plans to offer Study Abroad programs in Ghana, such as a month-long summer dance program at the University of Ghana.

And despite recent troubles, Webster maintains campuses around the globe and has recorded a sharp increase in international students over the past year.

Since the height of the pandemic, more American students are studying abroad, and more international students are enrolling in U.S. schools, including Webster.

To meet the increased demand, schools offer international programs, whether American schools abroad, partner campuses or exchange

programs. Alongside its own network of partner schools, Webster has nine campuses outside of the U.S. (including Webster Ghana) — although only four are receiving international students at this time.

According to Heath, Webster’s status as a “global institution” sets it apart from other schools.

Webster’s global initiatives began in 1919 when it welcomed its first overseas students. The school opened its first international campus, Webster Geneva, in 1978, making it one of the few schools with an American-style university in Europe. And in 2019, Webster Tashkent became the first American university in Uzbekistan.



1978  
Webster Geneva opens

The university embeds this identity into its mission: to “transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.”

“You hear about global citizenship everywhere at Webster, and not only in the Study Abroad and international office like at some institutions.

It is part of the DNA of our university, a point of pride and something that faculty and staff talk about with students on a regular basis,” Heath said.

You can find hints of global citizenship at the University Center, where flags adorn the roof to signify students’ countries of origin. Or in culture-centric clubs like the International Student Association, Muslim Students Association and Latin America Hispanic Student Organization. Webster even shapes its general education requirements into what it calls the “Global Citizenship Program.”

“[Global citizenship] is about trying to connect with people who are different from one another and finding ways to navigate differences while learning and growing,” Heath said.

For international student Sahar Abdellatif, Webster is going in the right direction when it comes to embodying global citizenship.

Abdellatif joined Webster in January 2022. She serves as co-president of the International Student Association (ISA).

Despite her regard for Webster, she recognized a few areas where Webster falls short of its mission at its home campus: clique-like groupings of students from similar cultures, difficulty getting non-academic help for international students and a lack of cultural festivals for minority



Webster University/ Contributed photo

### Webster Ghana

communities.

“The thing with Webster is we have a very big population of one country or a specific region, and a lot of other countries have been left out,” Abdellatif said. “There’s not that much representation of other countries, including myself, Egypt. I’ve only met one Egyptian at Webster. I’ve never seen anything about Egypt here except the flag, and same for many other countries that don’t have specific clubs to represent them.”

Abdellatif wanted to create more cultural celebrations on campus, so she gathered inspiration from a diverse background of students and faculty. With ISA, she helps international students adapt to life abroad and organizes events celebrating the food, culture and dance from around the world.

Webster Ghana student

Sulemana believes, despite her home campus’ closure, that Webster’s commitment to global citizenship sets it apart from other schools. And according to Heath, Webster will continue to stand out for its unique international programs.

Heath said Webster plans to expand into new markets with demand for U.S. education, whether enrolling international students or establishing campuses – like with its Tashkent campus, which has now reached over 4,000 students.

“We will continue to highlight Webster as a global institution and what aspects of our Study Abroad program stand out compared to others on the market. We will continue to engage with WINS partners regularly to support their study abroad needs and interests,” Heath said.

## Opinion: My DACA status means double the tuition

By KARLA VASQUEZ-MEJIA  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For most of my college years, I have had to pay double the tuition amount compared to my peers. I am not that different from most: I’m an average-grade student who has lived in Missouri most of my life and I understand obscure cultural references. But there is a difference: I am a DACA recipient.

DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, is a policy passed in 2012 under former President Obama to protect undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children. The requirements of the program include being 16 years old or younger when entering the country, living in the U.S. since July 15, 2007, and not being a convicted felon. The DACA program provides a work permit for two years that needs to be renewed six

months before it expires. The cost for the renewal is \$495 and requires a trip to the nearest immigration office, where prints are taken to ensure the recipient has not committed a felony.

How does being a DACA recipient connect with a higher tuition cost? DACA recipients and undocumented students are charged the highest tuition rate if they are attending a public university or college. In 2015, the Missouri legislature

inserted language in the preamble of the Higher Education Bill known as HB-3 charging undocumented students the highest tuition rate in public institutions.

“Missouri does not have any existing legislation that prohibits undocumented students from enrolling in public institutions. The problem is when it comes to affordability. If you cannot afford it, you really cannot access it,” said Karina Arango, director of advocacy of The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis.

Today, HB-3 still includes language that states: “No funds shall be expended at public institutions of higher education that offer a tuition rate to any student with an unlawful immigration status in the United States that is less than the tuition rate charged to international students.” The bill also addresses state scholarships: “No scholarship funds shall be expended on behalf of students with an unlawful immigration status in the United States.”

When I began applying to colleges and universities in the St. Louis area, I was not aware of the wording in the bill or of the lack of scholarship options for DACA recipients and undocumented students. I became aware when I applied for Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA). I was informed I could not apply for FAFSA as federal scholarships, grants and loans are not eligible for DACA recipients.

**It was a gut-punching feeling realizing that while I felt as American as apple pie, I was seen as an outsider.**

The biggest surprise came when I applied for St. Louis Community College. I had to go through hoops and hoops to prove I had lived in St. Louis since I was 7. But the most surprising part of all was the tuition cost. Instead of being charged \$122 per credit hour, I was charged \$243 because I was considered an international student. I had to work 40 hours a week to be able to afford my tuition.

“I would say one of the major barriers that students face is cost of attendance and tuition rates in Missouri,” said Felipe Martinez, a student adviser who specializes in advising undocumented students. Martinez lived in Missouri until 2021 and provided advice for DACA and undocumented students who live in the state.

“One of the biggest challenges for myself as a student adviser was address-

ing the schools where students can apply. It’s really finding the schools where you can get a fair tuition rate,” Martinez said. “I mean, that is the starting line, right? It is just, can we just have a fair tuition rate?”

One piece of advice Martinez provided for undocumented students who live in Missouri is to apply for private institutions that offer better scholarship options and lower tuition in comparison to universities such as University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) or University of Missouri. The downside, as Martinez explained, is if the student needs to begin in community college and the qualifications required to be accepted in these private institutions.

There are few private institutions in St. Louis that offer more financial aid to undocumented students, in comparison to public institutions. Private universities like Webster offer the same tuition and scholarships to undocumented students. It was one of the main reasons Webster appealed to me when I was searching for a university after I graduated from St. Louis Community College.

Attending Webster was a relief, as my immigration status was easily understood, and the application process was easier in comparison to UMSL. I had to make calls and emails to UMSL to explain my legal sta-

tus. I was never able to resolve anything with UMSL.

With Webster, however, my application took 15 minutes to fill out. I did not need to make additional calls or prove how long I have lived in Missouri. It was a sense of normal I had not experienced when applying to higher education institutions.

“I believe for those private colleges and universities, they have their own ways on how to support students, but, in particular, undocumented students. They do not have to abide by HB-3 because they’re a private university,” Arango said. “The recommendation is if you are going to attend school in the state of Missouri, we would recommend considering a private university or college.”

For DACA recipients and undocumented students in Missouri, the road for a higher education is bumpy and needs reform. There are young adults like me who desire a college diploma but are stumped by the copied language on HB-3, which causes many to stop their studies or to go through hoops to get an education. It is one of the many obstacles that remind those like me that we are at home but not allowed past Lady Liberty’s “golden door.”

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## Webster's DEI commitment broaches questions about Black experience on campus

BY ELISE PALMER  
CULTURE & LIFESTYLE  
EDITOR

Webster University admitted Janet Irene Thomas and Jeanette Mae Jackson, its first African American students, in 1946. Both graduated in 1950, prior to the Brown v. Board of education decision in 1954, establishing the school as a beacon of diversity and inclusion.



1946  
Janet Irene Thomas and Jeanette Mae Jackson attend Webster

Through hiring the very first associate vice president for diversity and inclusion in 2013 to hosting DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) conferences annually since 2016, Webster has continued to try and uphold its promise of a commitment to social justice and racial equity.

However, as of 2021, the Black student graduation demographic has shown a continuous drop. Black students make up the lowest demographic of students to complete their education at Webster: 40% as compared to the national average of Black students at 45%.

Students held protests ear-

lier in the semester critiquing the leadership of the school and other perceived failures of the university, such as limited funding and accessibility issues. Protesters raised concerns about the university's DEI promise to grow the school as a space for Black students to succeed.

In 2013, Nicole Roach was hired as the associate vice president for diversity and inclusion but her position shifted to chief diversity officer. While hiring Roach was another step toward making sure Black students and all students of color were supported on campus, there was still more work to be done.

Roach detailed her experiences in her role in a self-published article in 2018.

"One common idea I came across – and challenged – was the idea that having a campaign or strategy to recruit Black or brown students ended when they enrolled. You have to build relationships with these students and their communities, which includes individuals and groups both inside and outside the walls of the institution," Roach stated.

Former director of the School of Communications Internship Program, Trezette Dixon, echoed these sentiments, saying that Webster was great at emphasizing the importance of recruiting Black students to attend Webster, but that an emphasis was needed on retention.

About 11.8% of faculty overall who work for the university are Black. However, this is not unique to Webster and is reflected by other predominantly white institutions (PWI).

The national average for Black faculty is just 6%.

**"I've seen a lot of our private predominantly white institutions and yes, it can be very jarring at first for you to see the people of color in the jobs within service like your cafeteria, your maintenance ... and not seeing them in the areas of faculty and executive-level positions. But, it's not uncommon. That's just the reality of a PWI," Dixon said.**

Emerald Dubose, president of the Association for African-American Collegians (AAAC), has been very vocal, especially with students within the Black community on Webster's campus.

"There have been some issues brought up about some interactions between Black female [students] and professors ... but at the same time [with] us being the minority, who's to say that the situation even reached the people it needed to reach for it to even be handled?" Dubose said.

The combined lack of Black faculty and other issues raised brings into question – for students and faculty alike – whether Webster has been able to fulfill its DEI promise. Dixon stated that in order to fulfill its promise, Webster needs to increase the skills needed for non-Black profes-



VANESSA JONES/ The Journal

Following the civil unrest in the summer of 2020, Webster erected a sign to show its support for Black students.

sionals to engage respectfully with Black students and students of color. Making sure students feel represented in the classroom and around campus is also a key aspiration.

While Webster's competency is being questioned by students in protest, there are some present on campus who are still finding support with groups like AAAC. The group submitted its first constitution in 2011 and has since remained active on campus.

AAAC is focused on diversity, community service and unity through hosting social events and, overall, raising awareness for important social issues con-

cerning the Black community. While the organization is intended to service students within the African-American community, it also reaches out to others.

Dubose has found there is a space for her here at Webster and hopes AAAC does the same for others.

"My goal has been to make sure that everybody feels safe and feels as if they have a space where they can come be vulnerable about whatever it is that they're experiencing, good and bad," Dubose said.

Webster's journey as a hotspot for diversity starts at the beginning, and it seems there have

been changes made over the years in an attempt to properly accommodate Black students. Dixon said she sees Webster as a beacon for other universities due to programs like the Suggs scholarship for students of color, among others.

"I think that in the next five years ... if we could see investment in faculty and staff that resemble the student body, especially our African-American students, we will see the growth and retention of the university and not just the recruitment."

## Underpaid, over-worked

BY BRIAN RUBIN  
STAFF WRITER

This fall, controversy surrounding executive pay and fiscal management at Webster uncovered something even deeper: pre-existing dissatisfaction among staff, leaving some to question their place in the university.

**"If we [Webster] are a family and I'm coming in the kitchen and have two grains of rice on my plate and I look over and you are eating turkey legs, it does something psychologically," Larry Morris said.**

Morris was coordinator and then assistant director of Multicultural and International Student Affairs from 2017 to 2022.

"By the time I got [here], I didn't even know what it was like to get anything higher than a 1% raise," Morris said. "It does nothing to improve one's quality of life."



VANESSA JONES / The Journal

At the 2022 Student Leadership Awards, Larry Morris delivers the Campus Life Award to his mentee, Savanna Hulbert.

Another former staff member, who wishes to remain anonymous, claims to have left Webster partially due to the lack of pay.

"To know I could go from a role in a stressful environment where I was barely making ends meet to a role with far less responsibility and \$5,000 more a year than what I was making, it was a no-brainer," the anonymous source said.

Meanwhile, President Julian Schuster earned \$638,181 in 2020, according to the university's Form 990. Just a year

later, he made \$704,273. On top of these base salaries, Schuster made \$153,394 in additional compensation. Combined, it is a 10.4% raise.

Discord from students, faculty and staff came to a head in September, prompting Sumit Verma, chair of the board of trustees, to release a campus-wide email stating Schuster and Chancellor Beth Stroble make a "competitive salary."

Currently, there is an undergraduate academic adviser position open at Webster and a student success adviser at the St. Louis Community College (STLCC). Both job positions are full-time and have similar job descriptions, but STLCC pays \$3,538 more. If a Webster undergraduate academic adviser were to apply and get hired for the STLCC job, it would mean a 7.67% increase in pay.

"Webster just needs to value their employees enough to pay them what they're worth, or the employees will start jumping ship like the Titanic," the former staff member said.

The "ship-jumping" has already started at Webster's Career Planning and Development Center (CPDC).

who left recently mentioned how morale was bad and said that his job environment was "unbearable." Morris, too, stated there are less amenities than there used to be, contributing to the overall low morale.

"When you kill the morale of staff, it ultimately hurts the students. Regardless of if you have new campuses and new buildings, if you can't figure out a way to keep the people who work there inspired, are you really serving students? Who is Webster serving now?" Morris said.

Morris is also a two-time alum of Webster, earning a bachelor's degree in Audio Communications and a masters degree in Mass Communication and Media Studies.

"When I was a student at Webster, it was heaven. The morale was high, we did so much stuff," Morris said. "There was a budget for leadership training for students. We got to go to conferences and it helped inform the way we engaged in the university. Those budgets are cut."

Morris mentioned how much he enjoyed working with his co-workers and helping the students. Morris also said how much dedication current staff members have to the university for staying here as long as they have.

"I know a lot of my colleagues showed up and gave 100%, but they were tired," Morris said. "When you're not seeing any significant pay increase and the hours are getting longer and longer, and you are taking on more and more roles in your position, eventually, it pushes you to the point where you get maxed out and that is hard because it ultimately impacts the student."

With the recent announcement of Stroble stepping down, the university is looking for her replacement. The former staffer is calling for someone who understands the internal issues and offers a solution.

"Webster needs someone who can get them back on track, not another figurehead who makes a documentary about how wonderful they are, while their institution is literally and financially falling apart," he said.

The Journal reached out to university officials for comment but did not get a response by press time.

## Commuter Council comes to a halt

BY LAYLA HALLBASIC  
STAFF WRITER

Waking up to a blaring alarm, you jump in your car, attempting to beat traffic and make it to your 9 a.m. class. Afterward, you search for somewhere on campus to sit and do homework, before driving home and preparing to do it over again tomorrow.

This is what a day looks like for your average commuting student.

For the most part, Webster is a commuter school, with the most recent figures available to The Journal indicating a majority of undergraduate students commute to class.

**"There's some serious FOMO as a commuter. It's like I'm on the outside looking in sometimes," student Aubory Bugg said.**

"Not to the fault of my friends, but just because I do live 30 minutes away from where everything is happening."

In an effort to connect commuters, The Commuter Council was created in 2010 as a department initiative advised by director of student engagement Jennifer Stewart.

The committee worked to improve commuter-student engagement through creating an environment for those who drive to school to feel at home.

The Commuter Council connected off-campus students

to activities on campus through partnerships with other clubs.

"The idea was that they were more partnering and bringing commuter students to the things that are happening within campus life and to things that are happening on campus rather than continuing to isolate them," Stewart said.

The council advocated for the creation of the Commuter Lounge in 2010 as a way for commuting students to have a place to reside on campus.

"The commuter students absolutely had a strong response to [the Commuter Lounge] just because there hadn't really been any space for them," former Commuter Council president Chris Penberthy said. "Before then, all of the residents have their main floor lounges or you could go to your room to hang out in between classes, so it was great for the commuters to have a space for them to meet up with each other and have some of the just kind of have space to commune and even just to study with each other."

However, a lack of commuter-student engagement with the council led to its eventual end. The Division of Student Affairs recognized a pattern: Once commuters successfully connected to campus life, they no longer sought out the council for support. The information the council once shared on social media was slowly absorbed to be announced at events during orientation week and GROW days.

"Commuters didn't need a Commuter Council in the way it was structured," Stewart said. "We need something for com-

muters that is more resource/office and less organization-based."

Today, students living further from campus are able to stay connected to Webster through the relationships they build with faculty and staff. Penberthy believes that the bonds he created with his professors on campus allowed him to succeed as a commuter student.

"I would say how important it is for the students as commuters to find the connections," Penberthy said. "I think it's important for commuter students to find one, if not multiple, staff and faculty connections to really make it seem like it's a home and have the mentors in place, if you will, so that they feel like there's almost a parent when they have issues."

Full-time undergraduate students, living on or off-campus, are also strongly encouraged to participate in on-campus events. Every full-time undergraduate student pays for the student activity fee, and Stewart recommends each student take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

"Everything's open for everybody you know, all the events are open for every student," Stewart said. "Think of it as kind of like a tax – you're already paying for these things, so please take advantage of them, whether that's through SGA, through Campus Activities programs and multicultural center programs. Just because you're a commuter student doesn't mean that it's not for you."



ZOE DEYOUNG / The Journal

Commuter Maria Ellis prepares to leave campus after class.



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SUBMIT ALL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND GUEST COMMENTARIES TO [websterjournal@gmail.com](mailto:websterjournal@gmail.com).

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To consistently provide the Webster University and Webster Groves communities with the most current and contextual information using both print and multimedia, while serving as a learning platform for our staff and a forum for our readers.

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# Transitions program equalizes higher education, evokes mission of Sisters of Loretto

By CHLOE SAPP & ZOE DEYOUNG

The Sisters of Loretto opened Loretto College with the mission to “make education accessible to all.” More than 100 years later, there is no better example of this mission’s survival than Transitions, a program built to prepare conditionally admitted students for college rigor at Webster University.

“I liked that these students came in under the gun with an expectation that they might not be successful, and oftentimes, they were very, very successful,” said Erin Bullerdieck, who was hired to develop Transitions. “That’s what I like. I like the underdog. And I like that we really kind of proved some of those assumptions wrong about who can be successful at a university.”

Transitions was imagined by three visionaries within the Academic Resource Center who were fierce advocates for student success; Barbara Stewart, Pat McLeese and Kit Maxwell. The program was specifically designed to support students on conditional status, sometimes known as academic probation. A student is ‘tagged’ if they enter the university with a C average or a lower grade point average out of high school, as well as for transfer students coming in with less than 30 hours of credits.

Overall, the mission was simple: Give students who might be overlooked in the admissions process “an opportunity ... and the support that they needed to be successful,” Maxwell said. “And that is what was in line with the Sisters of Loretto.”

In 2009, Bullerdieck took on the

role of an architect, shaping Transitions into the program it is today, providing participants with resources like weekly academic counseling, support services such as peer tutoring and writing support, and more.

Christopher Whitmore was admitted under conditional status in 2014. While he earned good grades in high school, he struggled with standardized testing that left him with a low ACT score.

Despite being accepted to Webster on “academic probation,” he did well academically and adjusted quickly to college-level coursework.

“[Bullerdieck] was vital to my early success at Webster, but not because I needed someone to keep me on track with school. Erin was vital in making me feel at home in a new learning environment and in a new community,” said Whitmore, who moved to St. Louis from California to attend Webster. “Erin and the Transitions program created a powerful opportunity for me to thrive in school with the support of on-campus staff and my family from near and far.”

Whitmore’s family took notice of Bullerdieck’s extraordinary care, which seemed to go far beyond academics – a testament to what Bullerdieck described as a “student-centered” approach to support, which, in many cases, included getting to know the families of students in order to provide what was necessary for success.

“My grandmother regularly mailed cards to Erin during holidays thanking her for supporting me,” Whitmore said.

The numbers didn’t lie, either. During her time, the program contributed

to closing the first- and second-year retention gap between fully accepted and conditionally accepted students, according to Bullerdieck.

On top of the ongoing support of Transitions, an innovative two-week summer bridge program called TAP (Transition and Academic Prep) was born by Bullerdieck, and was even

2010

TAP accepts its first group of students

used as a model for other universities in the area who were interested in Webster’s new approach to student support.

Because a reduced course load was one of the supports of the Transitions program, it ran the risk of further disadvantaging students with financial strife or first-generation college students. TAP was a step toward equity in education as students could receive up to two credit hours for participating, thus preventing them from falling behind or requiring more years to complete their degree.

“Without the program, it would have been very challenging to succeed in college, without having that knowledge beforehand that I got from TAP,” said Jasmine Ball, a first-generation student who participated in TAP in 2014.

That “knowledge” provided by TAP included workshops led by people like Corey Hawkins, who started at Webster as an admissions counselor before moving into the Multicultural Center International Student Affairs Office as coordinator for minority

students. Through both of these roles, Hawkins worked with Bullerdieck directly. In 2017, he stepped into Bullerdieck’s position when she moved on from the university.

“I can’t speak enough about how Erin really visualized the program, got it off the ground, and really built it into something that really became a model for other schools,” Hawkins said. “One of the things that I most admired about the program is that I knew that it had to have a leader of the program ... who really cares about what students need in real time.”

Hawkins can be credited for the expansion of TAP from a seven-day to a two-week program. He left the role in 2020 to work for Fontbonne University as the director of student success, and has since moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, to work as a diversity coordinator. While reiterating the effectiveness of the program due to its student-centered approach, he points to the ample consideration of the student as a possible reason why the program has not expanded further.

“[Transitions] was a huge missed opportunity because it really could have developed into a monster,” Hawkins said.

“The numbers weren’t always ‘sexy.’ Maybe [a student] decided, ‘Okay, I don’t need to be at this school because maybe it’s costing me more than I’m willing to spend, or maybe it’s not the right environment for me, or maybe it’s the combination of both.’ And maybe they went to another school, where, in my opinion, we still did what we needed to do because they were successful enough to be able to transfer to another school, and they’re still enrolled. And so success in my eyes didn’t always look like that they graduated from Webster with a 4.0. And so that’s when I say that the numbers weren’t always sexy.”

Bullerdieck, Hawkins and Maxwell all emphasized how the program’s effectiveness depends on the crucial role of Transitions coordinator, a position now occupied by Lisa Haag.

“What I appreciate about my role is how it gives me the opportunity to support students as they strive to achieve their academic goals,” Haag said.



CHRISTOPHER WHITMORE / Contributed photo

Christopher Whitmore (left), shown here with Erin Bullerdieck, Shawn Bowers and Jeremy Coleman, is living proof of how a student-centered approach can transform lives.

## Webster University sustains Webster Groves’ status as the ‘City of Arts’

By EMME GOELZ  
STAFF WRITER

Traveling along West Lockwood Avenue, banners hang on light posts proudly declaring Webster Groves as the City of the Arts. The accolade, due, in part, to the city’s prominent theatre, music and art scene, also gets a boost from the liberal arts college that bears its name: Webster University.

“Creativity is a large part of how we [Webster Groves] define ourselves and Webster University is critical to our thinking about ourselves as the City of the Arts,” said Webster Groves Mayor Laura Arnold, who taught for 15 years at the university in the Political Science department.

Through its performing arts programs, Webster University helps students connect with supporting organizations.

The university-owned Loretto-Hilton Center for the Performing Arts is the first theater in the United States designed to host both a professional company, including The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis (The Rep) and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL), and Webster’s undergraduate Theatre Arts program. Students in the Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts get opportunities to perform alongside professional actors with The Rep and

OTSL.

“From student and faculty work, to the Community Music School, to the Rep and OTSL, the arts on campus enhance the arts experience throughout our community,” said Arnold.

For freshman Emma Lynn Wittenauer, the artistic nature of Webster Groves played a role in her decision to attend Webster University. She is a Voice Performance major and plays trombone in the university’s Jazz Collective. Wittenauer chose Webster University because of the art community within and beyond.

“I really wanted an environment that celebrates and cultivates music, art and drama, and that’s exactly where I am now,” Wittenauer said.

Just as the Loretto-Hilton provides a venue for students to apply their theatre skills, two on-campus art galleries present students with opportunities to view artwork and also display their own. The Kooyumjian Gallery in the School of Communications at Sverdrup Hall and the adjacent Hunt Gallery on Big Bend Boulevard are open to the public and showcase student and alumni work, as well as exhibits

from local and international artists.

Margaret Fitz, a senior at Webster University, is a Studio Art major, who uses different forms of media to create art. For Fitz, art is vital to Webster Groves.

“[Webster Groves] has the potential to continue to transform and evolve alongside the young artists within it ... I feel much more involved within a larger sphere of artists here,” Fitz said.

Community events like the Old Webster Jazz and Blues Festival take student and faculty performers beyond campus to engage in the local arts scene. According to Jennifer Starkey, the city’s public affairs and engagement director, such arts-related events not only attract audiences from all over the St. Louis area, but also bring in customers to dine at local restaurants, such as Frisco Barroom, Big Sky Cafe and Cyrano’s in the Old Orchard area, among others.

Starkey also works as the staff liaison for the city’s Arts Commission, created in 2006 by the then-mayor of Webster Groves, Gerry Welch. The Arts Commission promotes and supports the arts and participation in the arts for the benefit of the community.

Currently, the commission is working to redo the “City of the Arts” banners that hang throughout Webster’s downtown and business districts, planning to focus on specific art forms. Among those expected to be featured include Webster University’s Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts,



ZOE DEYOUNG / The Journal

the Community Music School and Webster Arts, an organization dedicated to keeping the arts alive.

“Webster University arts are also critical to our broader community,” Arnold said. “Beyond the inherent value of the artistic experiences provided by students, faculty and organizations located on campus, the arts at Webster University are an important driver of economic activity within Webster Groves. They are good for the soul and the intellect, but also good for our economic health as a community.”

All archive photos are from Webster University  
Timeline graphic by Vanessa Jones and Ethan Meece