# Connections

Spring 2026 COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE www.uwsp.edu/cols

## COLS Alum Make a Legacy Gift

### Library and Resource Center Named for Alumni

More than 1,600 visitors stepped foot inside the new Gale and Paul Kirby Library and Student Resource Center the first day it opened, following three years of construction.

The state-of-the-art new UW-Stevens Point university library has been named for Paul and Gale Kirby, an alumni couple from Plover. Paul Kirby, '78, graduated with majors in history and political science.

**UW-Stevens Point alumni Paul Kirby, left and his wife, Gale, right, attend a naming ceremony for the Student Resource Center. The grand opening is planned for September 3, 2026.**

He began classes at UW-Stevens Point during a challenging time in his life. Paul had lost his father at age 19, and relied on Social Security, veteran's benefits and several jobs to make ends meet. It was the encouragement of his professors and residence hall director that helped him gain confidence and live to his potential, he said.

After graduation, he launched a career in retail finance, working with notable firms such as Saks Incorporated, Best Buy Co., Inc., and Bloomin' Brands. Paul developed a reputation for mentoring strong teams – a skill he credits to being nurtured at UW-Stevens Point. Gale's career in financial services was built on a foundation of financial skills instilled by her parents growing up in Stevens Point, her associate degree in accounting and decades of exposure to industry business practices.

The library project replaced Albertson Hall and features 153,000 square feet of learning and resource tools. Conveniently for students, the archives and nearly all academic support and financial services will be housed inside the building.

"We want our support to reach the largest number of students possible," said Paul.

The couple's support, the largest alumni contribution in the university's history, was unrestricted, meaning funds will be used where the university sees the most need.

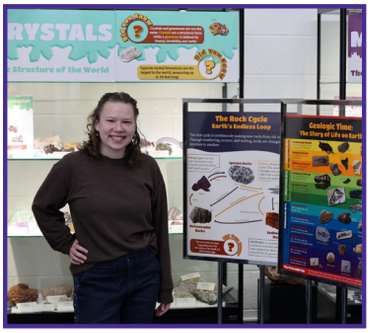
"We hope it inspires others to act locally, responsibly and generously," he added.

A grand opening of the SRC is planned for Thursday, Sept. 3, as part of Pointers Week as the university celebrates the beginning of the 2026-27 academic year.

### Exhibit Spaces Move Ahead, Summer Hours for Gift Shop

The Olson Museum of Natural History is moving toward its goals of enhanced accessibility and engagement. UWSP Facilities is working on additional exhibit spaces to house the North American Wildlife Exhibits -Woodland, Prairie, Mountain and Tundra- dioramas. That work will be completed by the fall semester. Visitors to the Rock and Fossil Room will notice bold, interpretative signage to describe the significance of the items now on display in cases. Rae Henneman, a wildlife ecology and management major, designed dozens of signs for the collection through an independent museum work study. Staff will also be ready to greet visitors in the museum gift shop, Mondays through Fridays, for the first summer season open since the museum's relocation to the Science Building. The Olson Museum welcomed more than participants in youth field trips during the spring semester and the Collection Crawl in April was a big success with over 350 visitors.

Click the QR to read more about changes coming to the museum!

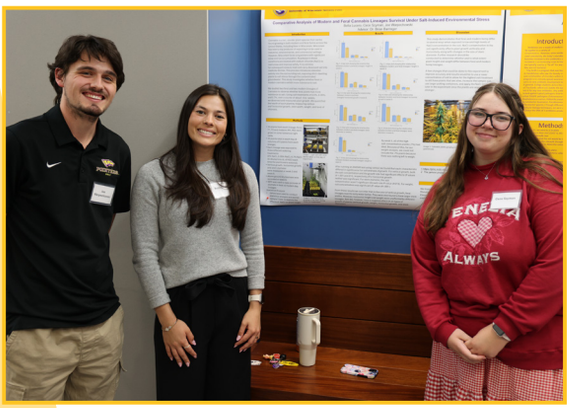


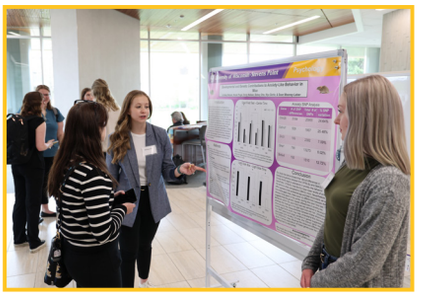

**Student Rae Henneman stands near the signage she created this spring for the museum's Rock and Fossil Room.**

## Inside

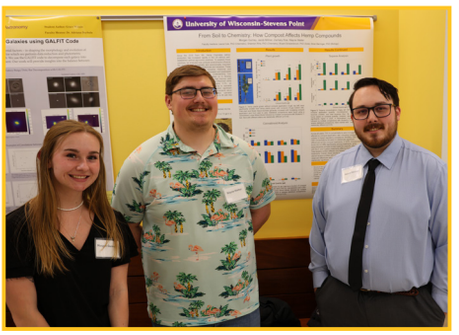

- Katz Faculty and University Awards
- Message from Dean Joshua Hagen
- NADF Celebrates 20 Years of Service


DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE





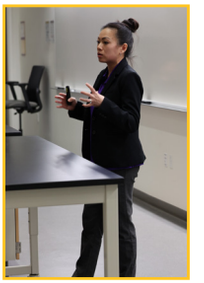
**Students presented oral and poster research projects in the 27th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium on May 1, 2026.**



## Celebrating Student Scholars

The 2026 College of Letters and Science Symposium featured 106 research projects in the Haeni Chemistry Biology Building. Students mentored with 33 faculty members in completing their research. Explore topics presented this year.

The event began with remarks from Dean Joshua Hagen followed by a featured research presentation on food insecurity. Associate professor of sociology Maggie Bohm-Jordan shared data from the ongoing the collaboration between grant partners Wisconsin Partnership Program, Marshfield Clinic, and UW-Stevens Point, designed to improve food security for children and families in rural northern Wisconsin. View video.



## Milestone 20th Anniversary

**Celebrating Two Decades of Technical Expertise in Aquaculture**

The UW-Stevens Point Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility in Bayfield is the driving force for aquaculture and aquaponic education in Wisconsin. The recirculating aquaculture systems at the NADF are one of a kind in the Midwest. At any given time, the NADF is advancing knowledge with several concurrent research studies.

Currently, NADF is working on grant-funded research projects which include: focusing on the development of walleye as a suitable aquaculture species, building a selective breeding program for walleye broodstock, identifying indices of fish health concerns, pioneering new methods for raising Kiyi and Bloater coregonine species, economic modeling of recirculating aquaculture systems, and investigating the influence of sea lamprey parasitism on lake trout physiology in the Great Lakes.

Over the past 20 years, new scientific research has involved 15 species of freshwater fish among them, Arctic char, Atlantic salmon, walleye, lake herring, and brook trout. The facility under the direction of professor and director Chris Hartleb, has been awarded more than $8 million in federal and private grant funds to advance Wisconsin aqua-business enhance public education and outreach, and lead pioneering aquaculture research.

**A former student works with an aquaculture technician taking samples of saugeye at the Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility in Bayfield.**

In addition to these programs, the NADF also plays a big role in training the next generation of fisheries, wildlife, and aquaculture professionals. Nearly every student that has gained experience at NADF has gone on to have successful careers in the field, and many of the region's top aquaculture companies preferentially source experienced staff from the facility.

Students gain in-demand work experiences for the industry in applied research. Farmers and agencies turn to the NADF for innovations and educational outreach that benefits their industry. It has established strong partnerships for teaching and research including the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant, North Central Regional Aquaculture Center, and the Red Cliff Tribal Fish Hatchery. Learn more.

# 2026 AWARDS

## Distinguished Faculty and University Awards

The UWSP University Awards recognized five COLS faculty for their contributions at the April 28, 2026 ceremony. View awards page.

**Awardees are:**

**University Excellence in Teaching, Scholarship, and Service**

- Professor James Berry (English)

**University Excellence in Teaching Award**

- Professor Ann Herda-Rapp (Sociology and Social Work)
- Assistant Professor Sarah Orlofske (Biology)

**University Scholar Award**

- Professor David Chunyu (Sociology and Social Work)
- Associate Professor Katie McGarry (Chemistry and Biochemistry)

## Eugene Katz 2026 Recipient - Brian Barringer

Professor Brian Barringer has maintained an impressive record of excellence and advocacy for students since joining the Department of Biology in 2013. He has been honored multiple times for his teaching and mentorship, including the Excellence in Teaching Award (2016) and UWSP Mentorship Award (2020, 2021 and 2024). His research lab is focused on the ecology and evolution of plants. Through field and lab work experiences, he leads students from a diverse background of majors in the skills they will need to be successful. In 2023, Barringer proposed an expanded research path, looking into the removal of PFAS, synthetic chemicals, from soils using hemp plants, along with alfalfa. The team, that includes his biology and chemistry colleagues—professors Ann Impullitti, Joe Mondloch, and Shannon Riha— and a faculty from the College of Natural Resources in soil and waste resources, was awarded a Universities of Wisconsin Innovation Grant totaling over $174,000.

**Dean Joshua Hagen, right, presents the Eugene Katz Distinguished Faculty Award to Professor of Biology Brian Barringer, left, at the COLS Spring College Meeting on May 7, 2026.**

# Dean's Message

**Dear Friends of UW-Stevens Point's College of Letters and Science,**

We just capped off a great 2025/2026 academic year, which featured the launch of a new bachelor's degree in Artificial Intelligence, a master's degree in Social Work, and a graduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems, among many other accomplishments.

Approximately 325 students graduated with a COLS major, ready to tackle additional graduate studies or begin their careers. I am incredibly proud of everything that COLS faculty, students, and staff achieved over the last year and look forward to the next one!

Joshua Hagen

## Retirements

**Spring 2026**

Andy Felt - Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences
Jim Lawrence - Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Marty Lee - Lecturer, Physics and Astronomy/ Mathematical Sciences
Jeff Leigh - Professor, Department of History and International Studies
Larry Morgan - Professor, Department of English

**Fall 2026**

Sandy LaVake - Animal Research Technician, Department of Biology

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## Spring Commencement By the Numbers

The UW-Stevens Point Spring Commencement recognized more than 1,200 students in the Class of 2026. The ceremony was held May 16, 2026 at the Skyward Fieldhouse. Graduates in the College of Letters and Science included:

- 250 Bachelor of Science Degrees
- 52 Bachelor of Arts Degrees
- 20 Associate Degrees
- 4 Master of Science Degrees

Earning Highest GPA Honors:

- Summa Cum Laude 42
- Magna Cum Laude 32
- Cum Laude 64

## COMING SOON!

### Speaker Series on Truth in the AI Age

Plans are in the works for a new speaker series hosted by the College of Letters and Science, beginning in the fall. The year-long engagement series, open to the public, will feature a mix of panels, lectures, community conversation and a workshop event.

The series will focus on artificial intelligence and strategies for identifying deep fakes and questions about misinformation and truth. Events will be coordinated by faculty in Computing and New Media Technologies and the College staff.

## Scholarship Highlights

**Doug Henderson, professor emeritus in the Department of Psychology, right, presents the Doug Henderson Award for Student Service to Sarah Bristow, left, as part of the fund he endowed. The Department of Psychology Annual Awards were held on May 2, 2026.**

## Your Gift Makes a Difference!

Create a legacy at UW-Stevens Point. Get connected to make your gift.

Amanda Gilman, COLS Major Gifts Officer
amanda.gilman@uwsp.edu | 715-346-2299

Thank you for your consideration!

## Social Media

Connect with the College of Letters and Science UWSPCOLS on social media platforms:

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution and a tobacco-free campus.

**www.uwsp.edu/cols**

DISCOVER
YOUR PURPOSE

College of Letters and Science
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