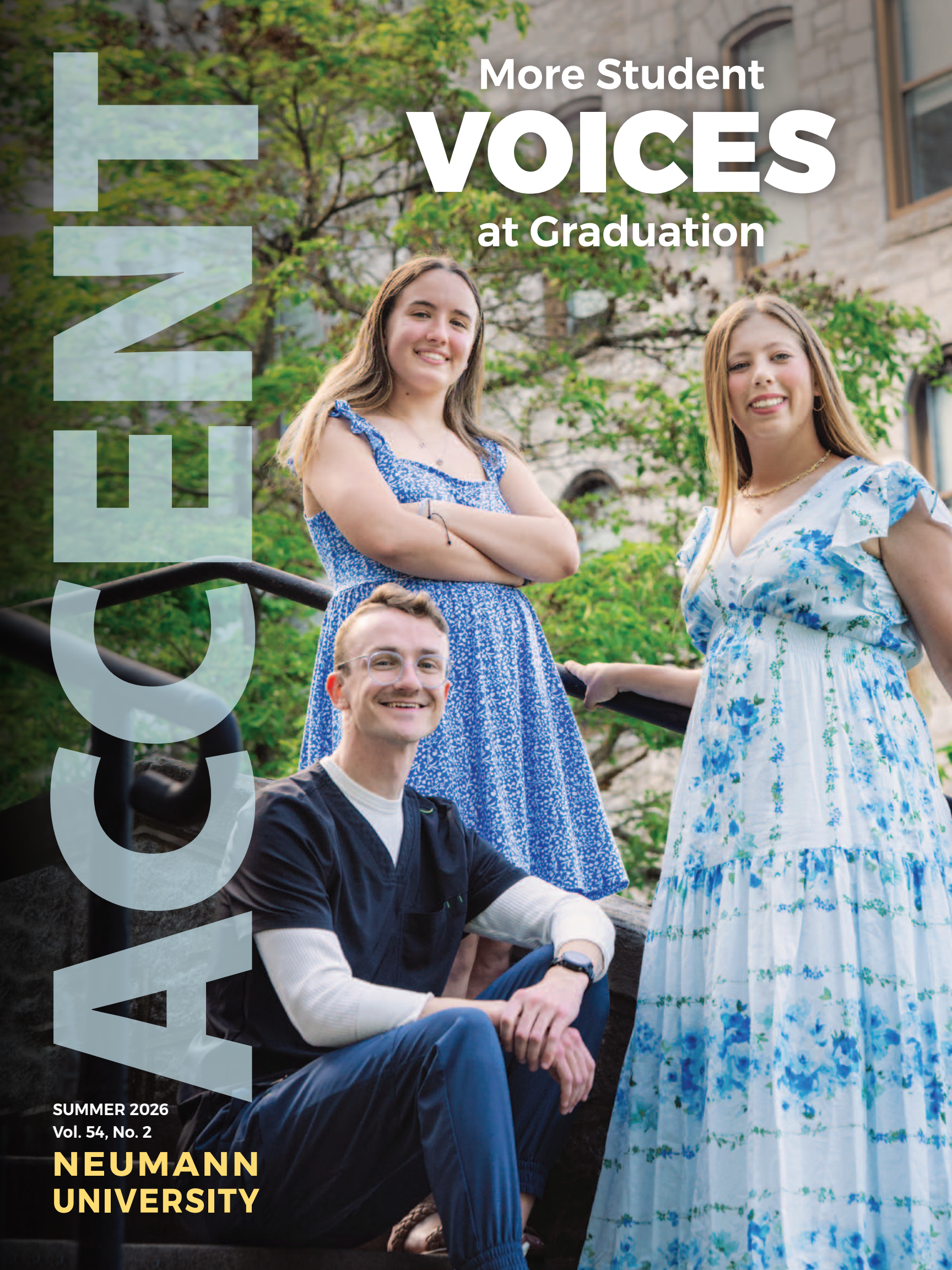


A photograph of three students in graduation attire. A young man with glasses is sitting on a dark metal railing in the foreground, wearing a dark blue V-neck shirt over a white long-sleeved shirt and blue pants. Behind him, a young woman in a blue and white patterned dress stands with her arms crossed. To the right, another young woman in a white dress with blue floral patterns stands with her hand on the railing. They are all smiling. The background shows green trees and a stone building.

More Student **VOICES** at Graduation

SUMMER 2026
Vol. 54, No. 2

**NEUMANN
UNIVERSITY**



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Homecoming Weekend

**September 25 – 27
2026**

Homecoming is your chance to reconnect, reminisce, and celebrate all that makes the Neumann community special.

Mark your calendar and plan to join us this fall.

Whether it's been one year or fifty, Homecoming is the perfect time to return to campus, reconnect with classmates, and celebrate your Neumann family.

Gather with alumni, students, families, and friends for a weekend filled with tradition, connection, and Knight spirit. We hope to see you on campus this fall!

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**Neumann University's Athletics
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**Once a Knight,
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**Return to NU —
where friendships
became family!**

A magazine for
NEUMANN UNIVERSITY
alumni, family and friends

SUMMER 2026 Vol. 54, No. 2

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just something we
talk about –
it's something we do.**

**That's the
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More than 60,000 hours
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60th anniversary proved
what happens when a
community commits to
something greater than itself.

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far beyond campus.



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continue creating graduates
who lead with integrity,
compassion, and purpose.

Give today. Shape tomorrow.





FROM THE PRESIDENT

Charting the next 60 years

In March of 2025, Neumann University reached its 60th anniversary and launched a yearlong celebration of six decades of service to the community. During that year, we looked to the past and celebrated the courageous people who contributed to our success. Today, I invite us to focus on the future and imagine the next 60 years of excellence.

I envision two critical elements of Neumann's essence remaining steadfast through the decades to come: our students and our mission. Who we serve and why we serve them are bedrock principles of our Franciscan tradition.

We will continue to educate a diverse population of first-generation students who are hungry for learning and for an environment that sustains their values. Neumann students seek an experience that sets them on a journey — not only for a rewarding professional career but also for an impactful life in their communities. They come to us not just for an education but for a framework of a purposeful life. They are eager to embrace the RISES values that allow them to be part of something bigger than themselves.

So often, excellence in higher education is defined by the inputs — the SAT scores and GPAs that a freshman class brings to a campus. I believe that excellence is more appropriately measured by the results, by the impact that our educational experience has on our students. The credentials that they bring to campus pale in comparison to the goals that they have when they graduate.

While our commitment to students and mission remains unshakable, I also see our distinctive approach to experiential learning expanding through the curriculum. From its early days as Our Lady of Angels College, Neumann has seen the value of real-world experience. We have more than half a century of history with clinical rotations and student teaching.

Blending applied experience with Franciscan values is a distinguishing characteristic of a Neumann education. We now require internships and are establishing unique community partnerships such as the digital forensics lab (with the Delaware County District Attorney's office and the Aston Police Department), the mutually beneficial physical therapy relationship with Kinetic Movement Reimagined, and the upcoming pro bono clinic in Chester (with Chariot Allaire and the Independence Blue Cross Foundation).

These partnerships make education real. There's nothing like the intensity of an in-the-field experience, and the more we can forge alignments like this with other organizations, the better. They see us as a force multiplier and even begin to view themselves as part of the educational process.

External influences like artificial intelligence will have an impact, of course. Today, we are awash in information, and universities face a new challenge — being the curators of knowledge. Fortunately, our faculty are exceptional at helping students develop critical thinking skills to determine what is true and how to apply that knowledge ethically.

That application occurs through experiential education and service learning. A university is a place where students can explore ideas, build character, and frame pathways for the future. We have a responsibility to create an authentic experience that helps them do exactly that.

That's the future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Chris Domes".

Dr. Chris Everett Domes
President

“
A university is
a place where
students
can explore
ideas, build
character,
and frame
pathways for
the future.
”

Neumann launches an online MBA with stackable certificates

To meet a growing demand for specialized business skills and credentials, Neumann has launched an online MBA with stackable certificate options.

“The program is distinctive in a competitive marketplace because of a combination of attractive features: an online format, accelerated option, affordable tuition, and stackable certificates,” explains Provost Eric Wellington.

The MBA is a series of ten 3-credit classes: six courses taught by Neumann faculty and four additional courses in a specialized track. The track options include artificial intelligence, business analytics, finance, healthcare administration, and organizational leadership.

To make the specialized tracks available, Neumann has partnered with Rize Education to offer courses taught by professors in a consortium of colleges across the country. Rize is a higher education company that provides a program-sharing platform to help small colleges and universities grow enrollment through new degree programs.

The partnership allows students enrolled at Neumann to earn an MBA in healthcare administration, for example, if only a few are interested in that track. The nationwide collaboration with Rize makes the specialized courses available online to a collection of students at several universities.

Another benefit of Neumann’s MBA is that students can take courses in the specialized tracks first and earn certificates without completing the entire degree program.

“Not everybody wants to pursue a full MBA,” says Bettsy McKlaine, the associate vice president of enrollment for graduate, adult and online programs. “Some want to upskill, and doing a certificate in one of those specialized areas allows them, in just five classes, to get that skill set that they need immediately for their job. They can start with a certificate in business analytics, for instance, because their supervisor wants them to acquire those skills for a promotion.”

In the future, these students can return for their MBA, knowing that they have already completed half of the program.

Courses last for 7.5 weeks, and the MBA can be completed in one year, McKlaine notes, at \$500 per credit. Students can also opt to take the courses at their own pace to fit the schedule of busy, working adults.

In early February, School of Business Dean Najiba Benabess announced the appointment of Dr. Aos Mulahuwaish as director of the MBA program. An associate professor of computer information systems, computer programming, and cybersecurity, Mulahuwaish joined Neumann in 2025. He earned his PhD in Computer Science from McMaster University and previously served eight years at Saginaw Valley State University.

Applications are now open for the program, which will begin in the fall of 2026. Visit www.neumann.edu/mba.



Graduate nursing: Partner in pro bono Chester clinic

The graduate nursing program at Neumann University’s Jacquelyn Wilson Fegley ’71 College of Nursing is partnering with Chariot Allaire and the Independence Blue Cross Foundation to launch a pro bono primary care clinic in Chester — made possible through foundation grant support.

This initiative features an innovative, student-led model, with nurse practitioner students providing care under faculty supervision while gaining hands-on experience. In collaboration with the Delaware County Health Department, students will also support outreach through the Wellness on Wheels mobile unit to reach residents across the community.

Program development is underway, with plans to open the clinic within the next 6-9 months.



From L-R: Arthur Klein, chief health care adviser to Chariot Allaire; Yoel Polack, CEO of Chariot Allaire; Heather Major, executive director of the Independence Blue Cross Foundation; Dr. Chris Domes, president of Neumann University; and Stacey Robertson, president of Widener University.

Campus arts celebrate America 250

From the Neumann Inspires Film Festival to a collection of programs sponsored by the Cultural Arts Forum, campus arts have embraced the celebration of America 250.



Adele Rylands portrays Betsy Ross in the new film, *In Pursuit: Philadelphia and the Making of America*. [Photo courtesy of History Making Productions.]

Above: Steven Edenbo appeared on stage as Thomas Jefferson.



The Film Festival's April lineup featured screenings of short films, all organized around familiar American themes: *Life, Liberty, The Pursuit of Happiness*, *The Home of the Brave*, and *The Melting Pot*.

Normandy, a 52-minute documentary, was an audience favorite. The film follows four young adults as they accompany World War II veterans back to the beaches and battlefields where they fought. Along the journey, the young travelers begin to grasp the true human cost of freedom.

A panel discussion on "The Influence of Film in Preserving (and Erasing) History" featured panelists Sam Katz, a former Philadelphia mayoral candidate and documentary filmmaker, and Tilottama Karlekar, a scholar whose work explores the connection between media and social movements.

After the panel, audiences were treated to screenings of Episodes 3 and 4 of Katz's new project, *In Pursuit: Philadelphia and the Making of America*. The series explores American history, democracy, and identity through the story of one city.

The Cultural Arts Forum hosted a variety of history-related events in its popular lecture series this spring. Several events featured historical impersonators: "George & Martha Washington: A Love Story," "Meet Mr. Jefferson," "Cathay Williams: Female Buffalo Soldier," and "High Tea with Abigail Adams."

Professor Andy Miller is doing his part to support the America 250 celebration. In March and April, he spoke four times at the Middletown Free Library, sharing a collection of presentations that he calls his "Revolution Series."

He will also be involved in a July 4 event at Brandywine Battlefield, participating in a debate among a rebel, a loyalist, and a neutral who argue the case for or against independence.

In addition, Miller will offer the American Revolution (Hist 210) class in the fall, right here on campus.

Students create website to boost international philanthropy

Creators of the Nafasi website are (sitting) Chloe Cosley and Sara Cieszko '26, and (standing) John Trainor '26, Brandon Stevenson '26, and Cristopher Espinal. Missing are Danielle DiNafo, Rocky Keophondeth, and Nidhin Radhesh.



A Dublin-based organization is about to launch a worldwide philanthropic matchmaking program, made possible by a digital ledger and tracking system that eight cybersecurity majors developed in their capstone course with Professor Tom Dodds.

Nafasi is a self-described “global social enterprise,” the goal of which is to match mentoring and funding resources from the global north with tech entrepreneurs in Africa to promote economic growth and employment.

Catrina Sheridan, founder of Nafasi, has been advising aspiring tech innovators in Africa since she founded the organization in 2019. The student-created digital ledger, she says, will allow Nafasi to connect willing donors with these entrepreneurs and make a significant philanthropic impact.

The website that the students created for Nafasi uses Polygon blockchain technology to provide an easily managed, transparent and secure digital record, ensuring that aid reaches local beneficiaries and that funders can track expenses incurred by the entrepreneurs.

“The students’ prototype has an integration with Flutterwave, which enables digital payments to be created and appear in a digital wallet,” Sheridan explains. “Another program tracks receipts so that the system provides accountability.”

Nafasi (the Swahili word for “opportunity”) has clients in six African countries. The Beta testing for the students’ system will occur in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, matching

entrepreneurs there with donors from the US, UK, and Ireland.

Sheridan expects the Beta test to be completed by the end of 2026, at which time she hopes to use the results to approach the Irish government and other multilateral agencies for financial support to expand her organization’s efforts.

Senior Sara Cieszko '26, an international student from Poland, led the May 8 presentation to Sheridan with classmates Chloe Cosley, Danielle DiNafo, Cristopher Espinal, Rocky Keophondeth, Nidhin Radhesh, Brandon Stevenson, and John Trainor.

Cieszko believes that the semester-long project immersed her team in a real-world business experience, including a spring break trip to Dublin to present their preliminary plans to Sheridan and members of Nafasi’s advisory board.

During that overseas business trip, the students encountered an unforeseen obstacle. They discovered that they couldn’t use Stripe, one of the technologies that Sheridan had originally recommended, because the platform uses banking accounts, not mobile wallets. Eighty percent of African communities use mobile wallets.

“We hit the wall,” Cieszko recalls.

When the class returned to the States, they had to regroup, find an alternate payment system that suited the entrepreneurs, and update their presentation in just two months. They found Flutterwave, a platform which worked for all participants in the process.

“It was really empowering to be part of a real conversation in the business world and create a solution.

Sara Cieszko

“It was really empowering to be part of a real conversation in the business world and create a solution,” Cieszko says.

Professor Dodds agrees. “I am incredibly proud of these students,” he says.

“Starting from zero on technology most of them had never heard of, they built a fully functional web platform on par with what seasoned consulting firms produce. Watching a student team pull that off was extraordinary. In fact, what they created and presented to Nafasi will literally change the lives of many African entrepreneurs.”

Sheridan called the students’ work “impressive.”

Sheridan is a prominent figure in the Irish tech community, having served as a mentor for Enterprise Ireland and as a Board Director for SOLAS, Ireland’s further education and training authority. She has also worked in senior roles for international charities.

Success on turf, court, and ice

The Knights' athletic teams achieved extraordinary success in 2025-26, notching four NCAA invitations and a host of individual honors.

Their performances were so remarkable that Dr. Chris Domes noted the accomplishments in his presidential address during commencement.

"You rallied on and off the court, the field, and the ice to bring home four conference championships this year," he said, "the most NCAA appearances in one year for the Knights."

Men's soccer

Coach Erik Temple's squad finished the year with a 13-4-3 record (7-0 in conference) and defeated arch-rival Marymount, 2-0, in the Atlantic East Conference (AEC) championship match.

Jordan Illian was named AEC Offensive Player of the Year (13 goals and five assists) and Dominic Petruzzelli '26 captured his second consecutive AEC Defensive Player of the Year award. Luke Mejia and AJ Henry '26 also made the conference First Team.

Men's basketball

The Knights earned the #4 seed in the Atlantic East tournament and then showed their mettle in the postseason, beating #1 seed Marymount, 75-68, and #2 seed Gwynedd Mercy, 66-65, in the title game.

Under Coach Jim Rullo's leadership, the Knights finished 19-10 (8-6 in conference). Donte Dupriest '26 averaged 19.8 points and 10.7 rebounds per game and took home his second consecutive Player of the Year award. DJ Earl was also named to the AEC First Team.

Women's lacrosse, Atlantic East champions.

Men's ice hockey

In the Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC), Coach Mike Hedden guided his skaters to a 17-9-2 record (14-5-2 in conference) and a 5-4 OT win over Stevenson in the conference championship game.

Lucas Culhane and Christian Green were named to the MAC First Team. A goalie, Green was also Rookie of the Year, finishing with a goals-against average of 1.65 (seventh in all of Division III) and a save percentage of .947 (third in the nation). Both marks are Neumann single-season records.

Women's lacrosse

In her second year at the helm of the program, Coach Jackie Neary led the team to a 9-9 record (5-0 in conference) and an 18-13 win over Marywood in the Atlantic East title match. Neumann won the Coaching Staff of the Year award, Neary's fourth AEC honor.

Alena Catka, Brigid Brady and Nora Brady made the Atlantic East First Team with Catka, who notched 64 goals and 35 assists, establishing herself as an offensive powerhouse.

Other noteworthy seasons, according to Athletic Director John Krimmel, belonged to the field hockey and softball teams. Field hockey increased its win total by seven in 2025 and made the conference championship game. Softball finished the regular season with a winning record, 19-18, an increase of nine wins in the regular season from last year.

“
You rallied on and
off the court, the field,
and the ice to bring
home four conference
championships this year.
”

Dr. Chris Domes



More student VOICES at commencement ceremonies

Bid farewell to the traditional valedictorian commencement speech.

This year, Neumann initiated a new approach, inviting all graduating students to apply and audition for student speaker roles at three events: the academic awards convocation, graduate commencement, and undergraduate commencement.

According to Dr. Eric Wellington, "Every year, we have a collection of very capable students who are eager to address their classmates at commencement. This new process gives three of them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences at Neumann and share those memories."

Alyssa Papasodero '26, an elementary and special education major, won the speaking role for the undergraduate ceremony on May 17.

“
Success is how
you treat people.
It's the way you show up
in someone else's life.
”

Alyssa Papasodero

"As we leave Neumann, we're stepping into a world that will measure success in a lot of different ways: jobs, salaries, titles, achievements," Papasodero told her classmates. "And those things matter. But what we've come to understand is that success goes far beyond that. Success is how you treat people. It's the way you show up in someone else's life. It's the impact you leave behind long after the moment is over."

She then challenged her peers to use success as a pathway to a higher calling.

"The most important thing we take from Neumann isn't just a degree," she continued. "It's the responsibility to live out what we've learned. If we carry these values with us, if we choose service, lead with integrity, and care for others the way this community has cared for us, then wherever we go next, we won't just be successful. We'll be the difference."

Thomas Loftus, Jr. '26 DPT captured the speaker's slot for the graduate commencement ceremony at which he received a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

Continues on page 10

**Alyssa Papasodero '26,
Thomas Loftus, Jr. '26 DPT, and Jenna Calchi '26**
spoke at graduation ceremonies.

Graduating debt-free in year three

When KatieMarie Ivins '26 walked across the graduation stage in May, she had a degree in biology, secondary education certification, and not one dime of debt. And she did it in three years.

It required a packed academic schedule ("It was a puzzle every semester," she recalls), full-time work at a private preschool in her Pittsgrove, NJ, hometown, and evening/weekend hours at her family's pizzeria.

She earned credits at an accelerated pace by maintaining a continuous heavy course load and never taking a break. "In addition to full-time semesters, I consistently enrolled in winter and summer courses through Rowan College of South Jersey."

"I sometimes even worked 13-hour days, seven days a week," explains the 21-year-old commuter, not a hint of bragging in her voice. "I've always had a good work ethic and I love learning, so the academic load wasn't hard."

Dr. Marisa Rauscher, professor of educational psychology, disagrees. "She completed a full biology degree and the sequence of classes to earn certification in biology grades 7-12 in three years. This is unheard of."

Ivins is grateful for the help she got along the way. Neumann faculty helped her build an aggressive course schedule, search for scholarships, and obtain a waiver from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which initially denied Ivins' request to student-teach in New Jersey.

Three years ago, when she was a senior at Arthur P. Schalick High School, Neumann University wasn't even on Ivins' radar screen. Now, with two credentials, no student loans, and a teaching career ahead, she is thrilled with her decision.

"Neumann's willingness to help students and the faculty's care and compassion aligns with everything I am."

KatieMarie Ivins '26



More student **VOICES** at commencement ceremonies *Continued from page 8*

He managed to weave quotes from Henry Ford, Winnie the Pooh, and Ferris Bueller into his remarks, urging his postbaccalaureate colleagues to enjoy life's journey.

"Life is not just a sequence of future achievements," he said. "It is something unfolding, continuously, in the present. So yeah, go chase the dream. Build the career. Buy the house. Fall in love. Raise the kids. Change the world. But for God's sake, stop once in a while.

"Take a breath, Watch the sunrise like it's the first one you've ever seen. Call your people and tell them you love them. Laugh until your face hurts. Cry when you need to. Feel it, all of it . . .

You did not survive grad school just to arrive at a future you're too busy to actually live in. Your life — this one, brief, unpredictable, unrepeatable life — is happening, right now."

Jenna Calchi '26, a business administration major who earned her bachelor's degree in three years, addressed the academic awards convocation on May 16.

Characterizing her classmates as diamonds formed by pressure, she reminded them that "pressure is not the enemy but rather what has helped to shape us, strengthen our integrity, and push us to grow throughout our college years."

"May we never forget the loving community, life lessons, generous amounts of support, and the growth we found here at Neumann University," she concluded.

**NEUMANN
awarded 342
credentials:**

**238 bachelor's degrees,
70 master's degrees,
and
34 doctorates.**



Tammi Keitsock '26 *battled cancer and earned a graduate degree.*



Cancer survivor earns master's degree

In 2023, Tammi Keitsock '26 was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, endured intense chemotherapy to treat the disease, and had a bone marrow transplant. She lost her hair and was twice confined to the hospital for 30 days.

In May, she graduated with a master's degree in athletic training.

"I first noticed it because I was bruising for no reason. I would wake up and have bruises," she explains. Usually very active, she was "super out of breath and winded just going up the steps."

In May of 2023, her doctor sent her to the ER at Penn Medicine, where she was diagnosed, admitted, and began her first 30-day stay. "The chemo got my white blood cell count down," she recalls, but it impaired her immune system and necessitated hospital confinement.

Keitsock continued receiving weekend chemo treatment once a month until her bone marrow transplant — and another 30-day hospital stay — in November of 2023. After avoiding crowds for 100 days, she was told she could pursue her dream of earning a master's degree in athletic training.

In May of 2024, a year after her original diagnosis, Keitsock enrolled in Neumann's program.

But in early February of 2025, she noticed four red dots on her skin. "It came back in my skin instead of my blood, a mutation. It's a rare complication but not as serious as being in the blood."

The relapse and new treatment affected her schedule with classes and clinicals, but Keitsock forged ahead, determined to stay on track to her degree.

"It wasn't terrible compared to 2023," she says, "and my teachers here were super accommodating and helpful."

Her last chemotherapy treatment was on July 22, 2025. That's when she rang the bell at the Perelman Center as a sign that she completed her cancer treatment.

Senior made her business bloom

Hundreds of students in the Philadelphia area graduated with marketing degrees this spring, but Danisha Ortega '26 has experience that few of her peers can match. She has run her own business for three years.

Ortega operates Petal Pastries, a florist that creates custom flower arrangements, out of her home in Northeast Philadelphia. The concept started years ago with a simple request from a friend to make a bouquet. Ortega gave it a try, liked what she saw, watched instructional videos on TikTok, and began posting her creations on Instagram.

Interest grew, and she launched Petal Pastries on Mother's Day in 2023. She has cultivated the business with care and watched it expand since her freshman year. Just a few months ago, on Valentine's Day, Ortega sold more than 5,000 roses to almost 100 customers.

The business has filled the whole garage, which is attached to her house. On Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, operations expand to the basement, living room, and any other part of the house that she needs.

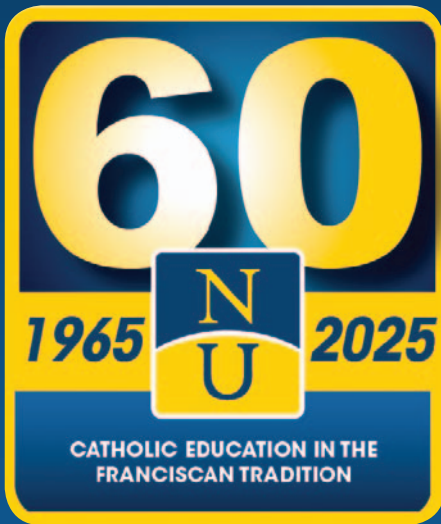
"Now, it's my full-time job, and I dream of going big with it," she says. "I reinvest in the business and save as much of the profit as I can because my goal is to open a flower shop one day, maybe purchase a house and work out of my own garage and basement."

Balancing the competing demands of business and academics can be challenging. Ortega uses her time management skills and is grateful for the support of Neumann's faculty.

"Thankfully, I had very understanding professors. At my busy times, they were flexible with assignments and take-home work."



Flowers fill
Danisha Ortega's
home during busy seasons.



Celebrating 60 years of Franciscan charism

The university brought the successful yearlong celebration of its 60th anniversary to a close in March.

Highlights included the completion of a massive, community-wide service project, a record-breaking Day of Giving, the publication of 14 Mission Monday articles about university history, and a focus on the ever-present inspiration provided by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia.

At the Charter Day event to mark its 60th anniversary in March of 2025, Neumann pledged to provide 60,000 hours of community service during the following 12 months and kicked off that commitment by packing meals for Kids Against Hunger.

On March 13, 2026, Neumann kept that promise by once again turning the floor of the Mirenda Center into a meal-packing assembly line for the same non-profit humanitarian organization that provides nutritious food to impoverished children and families in 70 countries, including the U.S.

More than 200 volunteers — students, faculty, staff, and trustees — gathered at tables on the main gymnasium floor to mix, package and seal nutritious meals. The campuswide effort propelled the university's yearlong project to a total of 66,323 hours.

During the year's commitment to support charitable organizations, members of the university community provided, on average, 181 hours of volunteer service every single day.



On March 13, students, faculty, and alumni pitched in to help Neumann University achieve 60,000 hours of community service to end its yearlong 60th anniversary celebration.

Volunteers filled the floor of the Mirenda Center to help reach the goal.





Ward Fitzgerald urged students to find their calling at the Abessinio Lecture for Management and Entrepreneurship.



Father Philip Lowe and Father Akolla Etuge celebrated the Charter Day Mass.

According to Megan Camp, Neumann's director of service-learning and community engagement, who coordinated the project, 1,379 people contributed to the 12-month effort. She noted that students led the way with 976 participants.

Faculty and staff (166) and alumni (131) also contributed significantly to the civic-engagement campaign.

The acts of kindness, delivered to friends and strangers, supported a broad variety of causes. Camp's records indicate that community service activities were dedicated primarily to food insecurity and hunger relief, youth and education support, health and wellness, elderly and senior care, and housing and basic needs.

The university's Day of Giving was also held during Charter Week. The March 11 fundraising campaign generated \$241,634 in donations from 629 donors, including alumni, friends, faculty, and staff.

All challenges offered during the Day of Giving were successful. Notably, thanks to the generosity of our community, \$25,000 was raised for scholarships, unlocking an additional \$25,000 gift for the Pathway to Graduation Fund from a generous friend of the university. The Neumann family stepped up to help students cross the finish line and secure brighter futures for the next generation of Knights.

Alumni also rallied to support their favorite athletic teams. Women's soccer (\$4,694), women's lacrosse (\$3,208), and men's ice hockey (\$2,085) led the way.

University Advancement staff researched and wrote 14 Mission Monday articles during the year on subjects that ranged from "Honoring Neumann's Visionaries" and "Alumni Success Stories" to "The History of Homecoming" and "Athletic Triumphs: Neumann's Legacy in Sports." All of the articles were published in "What's NU?" the campus newsletter for faculty and staff.

During the reflection on Neumann's six-decade history, the university also sponsored events that emphasized the importance of carrying Franciscan values into the future.

Political science students spent a late-October weekend in Washington, D.C., diving deep into government, Catholic Social Teaching, and the role of faith in public life.

Students explored iconic monuments and met with influential leaders in an experience that was organized by the Political Science program and the Center for Global Engagement in collaboration with the Ward and Kathy Fitzgerald Franciscan University Homeland Mission and the Neumann University Advancement office.

According to its website, Homeland Mission is dedicated to forming faithful

Catholic leaders to serve at the heart of American public life. "Designed as a home away from home for Franciscan students, this dynamic hub equips them — across all academic disciplines — to engage with politics, policy, and culture with clarity, conviction, and a missionary spirit."

Ward Fitzgerald, CEO and founder of ExCorde Capital, a private equity firm, also delivered Neumann's tenth annual Abessinio Lecture on Management and Entrepreneurship on November 11. With only a huge slide of the French phrase *Raison d'Être* on the screen behind him, he urged the hundreds of students in the audience to find their calling.

"Everybody's not called to be an entrepreneur," he said. "Find your calling. Find your *raison d'être*, and lean into what you're good at ... You'll find it by being self-reflective about your gifts and by spending time with the Lord."

Dr. Chris Domes looks to the future, too, in his message on page 3 of this issue of *Accent*, addressing the expansion of experiential education through the curriculum.

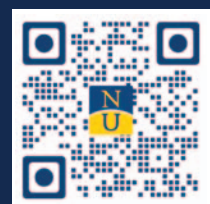
"Blending applied experience with Franciscan values is a distinguishing characteristic of a Neumann education ... A university is a place where students can explore ideas, build character, and frame pathways for the future. We have a responsibility to create an authentic experience that helps them do exactly that."

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This group of exceptional individuals was recognized because of outstanding contributions to their communities and organizations, and through living the RISES values in their everyday lives.

Hear the stories of courage, determination, and excellence that earned recognition.



An artist at the peak of his talent

Alloyius McIlwaine '04 just transformed an entire city block into a work of art.

His “Welcome to Philly” mural at 10th and Market, across from the Fashion District, measures 16 feet high by 150 feet long. Completed in early June, it features a host of iconic Philadelphia images: Ben Franklin, the Liberty Bell, the Art Museum, William Penn, a SEPTA bus, a cheesesteak, and many more.

Sponsored by a collection of respected Philadelphia institutions — including Comcast, the Flyers, the 76ers, the Streets Department, Center City District, Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment, and Mural Arts Philadelphia — the mural will act as “a welcome to the city for all the people who are coming to town for FIFA, the World Cup” says McIlwaine.

It is the latest demonstration of an artist at the peak of his talent. Since he graced the hallway of the Mullen Communication Center with his “Canticle of the Creatures” mural in 2018, he has completed projects for *Bella* magazine, the Philadelphia Eagles (including a limited edition t-shirt for the Eagles Autism Foundation), Corona, Miller Lite, Maker’s Mark, *Bel-Air* (the sequel to *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*), Peacock, NBC Universal, the NFL, Champion, Apple TV, and Netflix.

Along the way, he has painted a canvas at Wu Tang Clan’s last concert (while they were performing), caught touchdown passes

from Jalen Hurts in a flag football game, and received plugs from Jimmy Fallon and John Legend.

“I don’t have to do much marketing now,” he admits. “People contact me about projects.”

In April, Maker’s Mark even flew him to Kentucky — not to create art but to be one of their taste influencers for a Pennsylvania exclusive version of Maker’s Mark whiskey.

“We told them what Pennsylvania felt like to us,” explains McIlwaine, “and they created a flavor profile based on PA taste. When they release it, I’ll be doing some live art for the promotion.”

He has now painted more than 400 murals in 22 states and 18 countries, including France, UK, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Costa Rico, Aruba, the Bahamas, the Netherlands, and Japan. In addition to murals, canvasses, and live art, McIlwaine continues to operate Cultures Clothing, a business that dates to his undergraduate days when he painted custom images on classmates’ clothing.

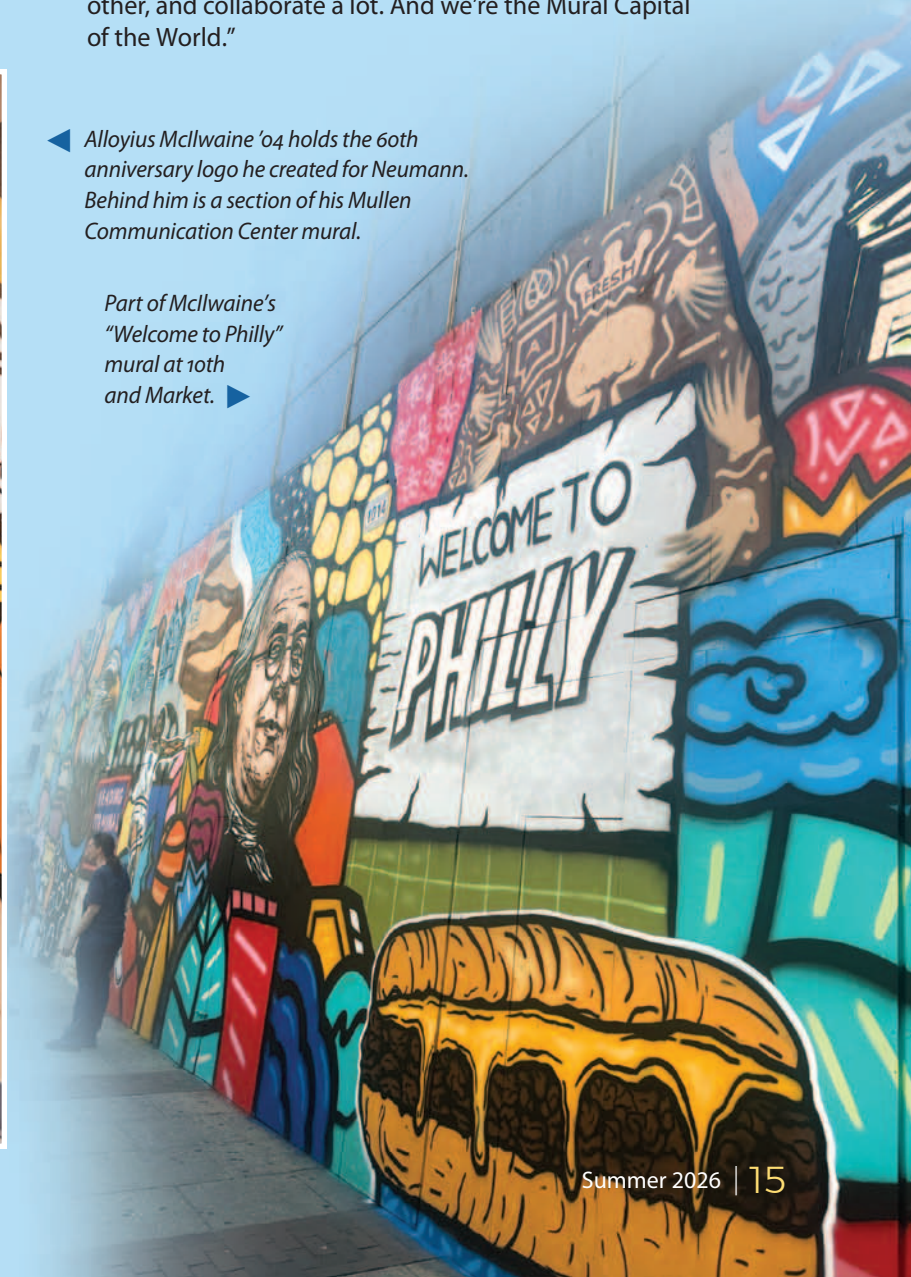
He lives in West Philly, where he has been since he graduated from Neumann with a business degree, and he has no plans to leave.

“My Germantown apartment is only 10 or 15 minutes from where I grew up,” he says, “and the arts community in Philadelphia is amazing. We’re all friends. We know each other, support each other, and collaborate a lot. And we’re the Mural Capital of the World.”



◀ Alloyius McIlwaine '04 holds the 60th anniversary logo he created for Neumann. Behind him is a section of his Mullen Communication Center mural.

Part of McIlwaine's "Welcome to Philly" mural at 10th and Market. ▶



Sr. Marguerite: The face of Neumann athletics

*Sr. Marguerite O'Beirne, OSF, '70,
with her bobblehead.*



"I don't like sports," says Sr. Marguerite O'Beirne, OSF, '70. "I was never involved in sports, and I wouldn't turn on the TV to watch the Eagles or Phillies."

Despite her disinterest in games, Sr. Marguerite is now the face of Neumann athletics. A bobblehead of her likeness — complete with the ever-present cup of "proper tea" — is on sale to raise funds for the Athletic Department and all 20 Knights teams.

Her selection as the university's sports icon was not based on her appreciation for athletic competition; rather, it stems from her legendary reputation as a spiritual advisor, academic tutor, and life coach to thousands of student athletes during her 30 years on campus.

"The opportunity for young people on this campus to be engaged with an athletic team provides them with an opportunity not just to be connected to a diverse campus but also to see and develop the potential in their own lives, to transform their lives in some way," she explains. "It gives them a greater understanding of what life means for them."

Current students agree that Sr. Marguerite's pervasive impact is the supportive relationship she builds with each of them.

"She just embodies what Neumann is," says Alyssa Papasodero '26, a senior on the women's ice hockey team. "She pours her heart and soul into what she does every day, and she's dedicated to making sure that student athletes are on the right track, supporting them academically and spiritually. I joke that she's my Irish grandmother because that's how she treats me."

Senior Donte Dupriest '26, a star on the men's basketball team, insisted that Sr. Marguerite accompany him onto the court at Senior Day. "She pushed me to care about my education," Dupriest admits. "I told my family that Sister is walking out with me no matter what. She's part of the family, and I love her to death."

Sr. Marguerite served as vice president for mission and ministry from 1996 to 2022. When she "retired," she asked Dr. Chris Domes if she could continue working with athletes. For the last four years, she has done just that, as an academic coach for student athletes with an office in the Mirenda Center.

From her earliest days on campus, however, she has known the significance of athletics for students, a lesson learned during her time as principal of McCorristin

High School in Trenton, New Jersey. At Neumann, she supported the creation of the Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development to infuse the distinctive Franciscan charism into the athletic program.

Mission-oriented experiences, in conjunction with the opportunity to reflect on them through the Mirenda Center pillars, the chaplain program and the evenings of reflection, says Sr. Marguerite, is how sports can make a difference.

Alumni, too, remember her presence and kindness long after graduation. Elizabeth Frame, a field hockey player and member of the class of 2023, recalls the Rice Krispie treats that Sr. Marguerite made for the squad before bus rides to away games and the counsel that Sister provided when Frame lost both of her grandfathers within a two-month span.

Now a 5th-grade teacher at Edgewood Elementary in the Ridley School District, Frame knows exactly where she would display a Sr. Marguerite bobblehead.

"I would put it in my classroom on my desk so I could look at it every day. It would be a reminder. This is who you had in your life. Be just like her."

Faculty Profile: Richard Sayers, Hon '26, PhD

Dr. Richard Sayers has spent his career bringing students together in concert, both musically and intellectually.

Sayers arrived at Neumann in 2001 and, in addition to his music classes, immediately began recruiting students for a Jazz Band. The group got off to a slow start. Flyers around campus generated interest from just two students: one who had not played trombone since middle school and another who wanted to learn to play the bass.

Undeterred, Sayers says he “relied on the generosity of friends” to pull together a four-song performance later that year in Sacred Heart Chapel. By 2009, the Jazz Band had grown to 24, always including alumni and friends who wanted the ensemble to succeed.

“Music speaks to us in a way that other forms of communication don’t,” says Sayers, explaining his fascination with the art. “In terms of instrumental music, the experience of playing in concert with other people and having that kind of coordination and shared aural experience allows people to connect in ways that, otherwise, they might not.”

Being part of a performance, he explains, offers “the satisfaction of contributing to something larger than yourself and being part of a collaborative project that happens in the moment.”

The professor enjoys listening to classical music, mentioning Brahms, Debussy, Bach, and Copland as favorites. Like most of us, the music of his youth has a place in his heart, too. For Sayers, that means progressive rock bands like Genesis and Steely Dan from the 1970s.

“I teach a pop music class every year. It gives me a chance to learn what the students like and gain insight into the student experience.”

On the academic front, when Professor Tom Marshall left Neumann in 2006, he asked Sayers to assume leadership of the Honors Program. Twenty years later, he still enjoys that role and his involvement in organizing the LEAD Conference, a TED-Talk-style event that Fred Mitzdarfer and Troy Miller launched as students in 2012.

“The Honors Program is also based on a collaborative spirit, like music, but in a slightly different form,” Sayers notes.

“When you bring together students who are willing to challenge themselves and who want to be in class with other students who have made the same choice, then interesting things can happen.”

Sayers, 67, composed the Neumann University Alma Mater, received a Lindback Foundation Award for distinguished teaching, and accepted Neumann’s Honorary Alumni Award in March of 2026.

He holds a BA from LaSalle University, an MM from West Chester University, and a PhD from The Catholic University of America.

He lives in Drexel Hill and speaks about his family with his signature modesty: “My wife Dorothy and I have four sons, ages 24-31. Dorothy is a psychologist, and I credit her with the way our children turned out.”

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Dr. Richard Sayers

”

Dr. Richard Sayers





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