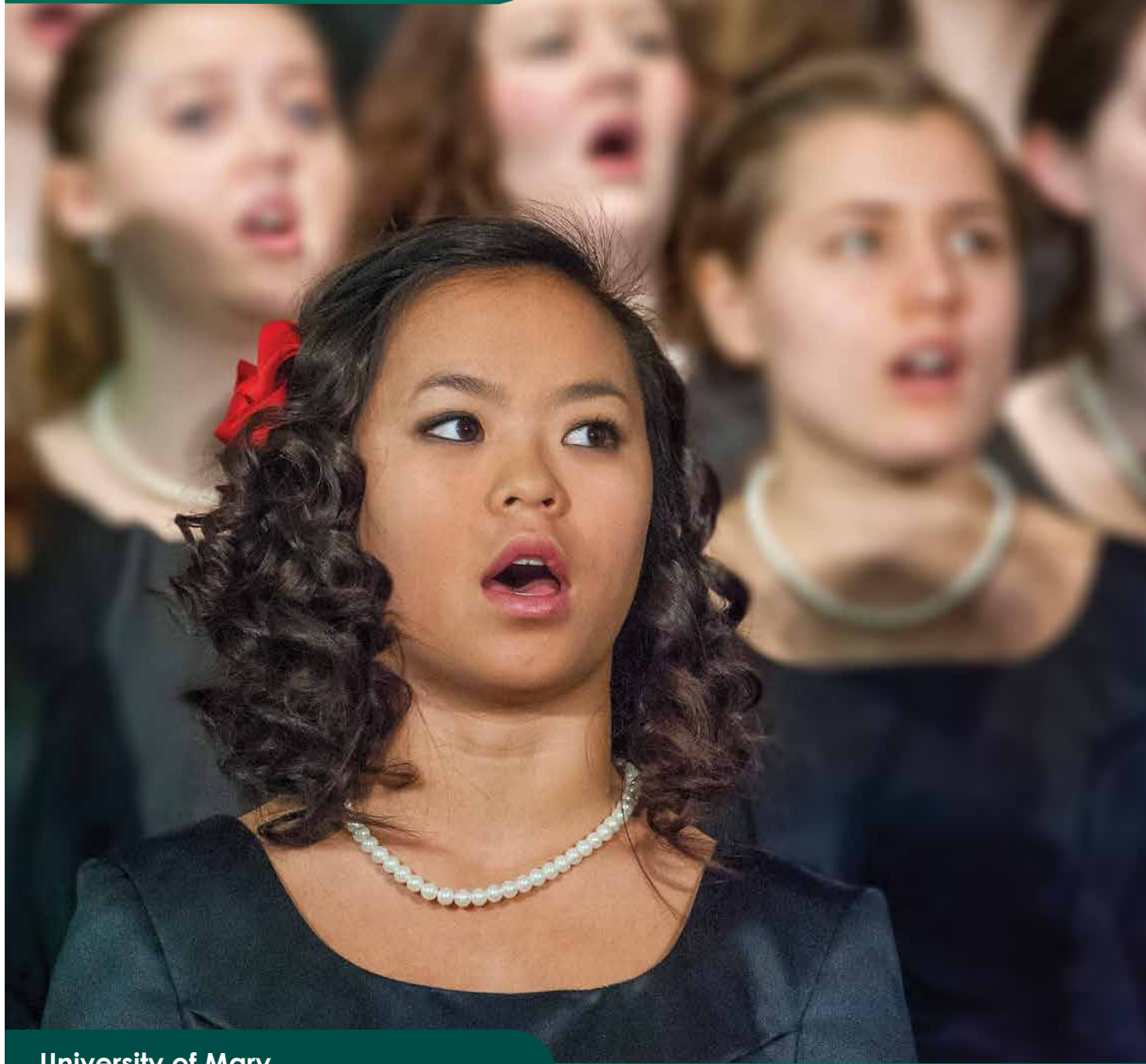


# School of Arts & Sciences

## Alumni Newsletter


Connecting Alumni with the University  
of Mary and the Greater Community

November 2014



### University of Mary

Christian, Catholic and Benedictine, the University of Mary exists to serve the religious, academic and cultural needs of people in this region and beyond.

 (701) 355-8030



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# Dr. David Fleischacker

## The Dean's Message



### About Dr. Fleischacker

Four years ago, Dr. David Fleischacker was appointed Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. He earned an MA and a PhD in theology from the Catholic University of America in 2004. He completed an MA in philosophy at Boston College, and a BA in biology and theology from the University of St. Thomas. Since 1997, he has served as the Director of the Lonergan Institute and, since 2003, as a principal consultant for the National Dialogue of Catholics and Evangelicals. Fleischacker was a Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy at Mount Marty College and then Chair of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Saint Francis. He lives in Bismarck with his wife Christine, who also teaches at Mary, and their five children.

**THE SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES** (SOAS), which was formed from academic divisions many alumni would recall, has begun its fifth year. I am humbled and proud to work with the most talented and dedicated faculty in the country. They give our students an excitingly enriched entryway into our culture and history, into nature and the universe's expanse, as well as into eternity.

As Advent starts, I am reminded that our young people are the greatest hope in this troubled world. Christ was born to free us into authentic joy, creativity and commitment to what matters most, and the Catholic university is His instrument in creating a civilization of love, fruitful work and hope in each generation.

As alumni, you once took a great risk in coming to a university, as Blessed John Henry Newman wrote. You joined this community hoping your lives would be changed positively. When you earned a degree, this hope began to be realized as a sign of your new place in the world.

In Latin, the word "alumna/us" means "a foster son or daughter," and the verb form means "to nourish." Ergo, "alma mater" is where we pass from youth to adulthood as a family going out to live and act in the world. Just as we always belong to our natural families, we belong to this alma mater, which was named after the Mother of Christ. We are sons and daughters of the University of Mary for the rest of our lives.

We invite you to return to visit your friends, family and teachers. We welcome you wholeheartedly to share in the expansion of our graduate programs; attend public lectures, workshops and performances; and reconnect in other ways that allow knowledge, creativity and truth serving the common good to shine. As alumni you remain central to this mission. Through its graduates, a university illuminates and guides history.

May God bless you with bounteous gifts this Christmas season. We look forward to introducing you to our current students, new faculty and the ongoing realization of the university's new strategic growth plan, "Vision 2030: Education for Life."

Marauders forever!

**On the cover:** The University's Concert Choir performed the annual Christmas at Mary Concert, December 6 and 7.



*The mission of a school of arts and sciences at a Catholic university is to enable the dialogue between faith and reason to become a lived integration for students and faculty.*

# Italian Ambassador Makes Historic Visit

**THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR** to the United States, the Honorable Claudio Bisogniero, visited the University of Mary on December 3. He spoke to students and faculty about relations between the US and Italy and with Europe, the Year of Italian Culture (2013) in the US. He also discussed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for which he served as Deputy Secretary General for the five years previous to being appointed ambassador in 2012.

This was the first visit by an active ambassador in the university's history.

Ambassador Bisogniero noted that, compared to other American universities, Mary has the highest percentage of students who have studied in Rome.

The ambassador recommended that students consider studying Italian to further their careers, not only in design and fashion, but other industries such as aerospace. Italian factories, for example, are involved in building the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner and the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter.

Ambassador Bisogniero was conducting a four-day, four-state tour of the Midwest and chose to visit the University of Mary because of the Rome campus.

After the ambassador's speech, lunch was served with Bishop David Kagan, Sr. Nancy Miller (prioress at



Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero spoke to students and faculty in Butler Hall.

Annunciation Monastery), Monsignor James Shea, faculty members and administrators, as well as with students who studied at the Rome campus.

The visit allowed Ambassador Bisogniero to learn more about our Rome initiative and the entire university, which strengthened our ties with Italy.

## Arts & Sciences Faculty Teach at Rome Campus



Dr. Krystyna Gorzelska (chemistry), Dr. James Maskey (wildlife biology), Dr. Margaret Nordlie (genetics), and Dr. Christine Fleischacker (immunology and microbiology) taught at the Rome campus last fall.

**SINCE 2012**, University of Mary students have enjoyed the option of studying at our Rome campus for a semester or five weeks in the summer. The experience provides a firsthand encounter with the history and faith at the cradle of Benedictine life.

During the fall semester 2013, four science professors each taught a month-long section of a program titled "Natural history and Environment of Italy."

Currently Clay Jenkinson, acclaimed author and national humanities scholar, is teaching an intensive three-week capstone course on Roman history.

In February 2015, Dr. Don J. Briel, who holds the Blessed John Henry Newman Chair of Liberal Arts at the University of Mary, will teach the Catholic Studies-Theology course, "Benedict: Yesterday and Today," at the Rome campus.



# New Faculty 2014



**RUSSELL BALLENGER, MM** is the Director of Jazz Studies and Low Brass at the University of Mary. As an orchestral trombonist, he has performed with the Mississippi Symphony, Tuscaloosa Symphony, New Mexico Philharmonic and currently holds the position of Principal Trombone with the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra. Ballenger earned a BA in Music Performance from Indiana University, an MM in Music Performance from the University of New Mexico and is currently a doctoral candidate in Musical Arts in Music Performance through the University of Alabama. Ballenger has played for Broadway shows including "Doin' it For Love" and "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical" (national tour, 2011).



**MAREK R. DOJS, MFA** is an Assistant Professor of Communications. Dojs earned a BA in History and Communications from the University of St. Thomas (Houston) and an MFA in Radio, Television and Film (focusing on Documentary Production) from the University of North Texas. He is a documentary filmmaker whose work has been screened at national and international venues. In 2008, Dojs won a grant from the Southwest Alternative Media Project's Emerging Filmmaker Fellowship Program and completed a documentary, titled "Return to Stolowicze," which was screened at Encuentro Bicultural De Cine Migracion in Mexico City and broadcasted on PBS.



**DAVID ECHELBARGER, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and serves as a mentor for the University of Mary's Aquinas Scholars Seminars. He earned a BA in Philosophy from St. Norbert College and an MA and PhD in Philosophy from Baylor University. Echelbarger's main research interests include ethical theory (especially the moral philosophy of St. Thomas and moral particularism), moral education, philosophy of religion, and the role emotions play in practical reasoning and moral transformation.



**MICHAEL HICKMAN, PHD JD** is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and the Interim Chair of the Philosophy Department. He earned a BS in Psychology from the College of Charleston, a BS in Geology from Radford University, an MP (Master of Politics) from the University of Dallas, a JD from Ave Maria School of Law and a PhD in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. From 2007 to 2010, Hickman served as a prosecuting attorney in the 16th Judicial Court in York County, SC.



**JOSHUA HREN, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of English and Catholic Studies. He earned a PhD in English (focusing on theology and fiction, political philosophy and fiction, and classical rhetoric) from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Hren also serves as the managing editor of *Dappled Things: A Quarterly of Ideas, Art and Faith*, and the editor-in-chief of Wiseblood Books. He has published poems, short fiction, a serialized novel, a translation, several academic articles and a book chapter. Hren co-leads the Aquinas Scholars Seminars at the University of Mary for students who have demonstrated academic excellence.



**NATHAN KILPATRICK, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of English. He earned a BA in English and Theology from Azusa Pacific University and a PhD in Literature and Religion from Baylor University, focusing on the intersection of religion and literature in contemporary American literature and pop culture, English pedagogy, and critical theory. His current research focuses on issues of faith challenged by life in the modern world. Kilpatrick's articles have been published in such academic journals as *Religion and Literature*, *Literature and Belief*, *Logos*, and *Christianity and Literature*.



**MICHELLE LETT, DVM** is an Assistant Professor of Biology. She earned an MS in Biology from Kansas State University, studying the effects of woody plant encroachment in tallgrass prairie. Lett earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Kansas State University. She practiced private veterinary medicine for three years and then taught in a veterinary technician program for three years before joining the faculty of the University of Mary. She will be teaching parasitology, microbiology, and anatomy and physiology labs, as well as general biology for biology and non-biology majors.



**MICHON MATHIESEN, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of Theology and a mentor for the Aquinas Scholars Seminars. She earned an MA in English Literature from the University of Notre Dame, an MA in Religion and Literature from the University of Chicago Divinity School, a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley (Santa Clara University) and a PhD in Systematic Theology from Boston College. Mathiesen's areas of expertise include Eucharistic Theology and St. Thomas Aquinas, and various areas of Christian spirituality, theology and literature. Her book, *Sacrifice as Gift: Sacrifice, Grace and Contemplation in Maurice de la Taille*, was published by Catholic University of America Press in 2012.



**JESSE RUSSELL, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of English and co-chairs the campus URead program, the yearly campus-wide book discussion at the University of Mary. He earned a BA in English and Philosophy at Franciscan University, an MA in Philosophy also at Franciscan, an MA in English in Renaissance Literature from the Catholic University of America and a PhD in Comparative Literature, writing his dissertation on the Roman poet Virgil, from Louisiana State University. His current interests include the history of the epic poem and Catholic political theory.



**R. JARED STAUDT, PHD** is an Assistant Professor of Theology and Catholic Studies. He earned a BA and MA in Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, and a PhD in Systematic Theology from Ave Maria University. Staudt served as Director of Religious Education in two parishes and taught at the Augustine Institute in Denver for five years. Currently he serves as co-editor of the theological journal, *Nova et Vetera*. Staudt's main interests include the relation of faith and culture, and the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.

# Faculty & Program Accomplishments 2014

## ■ Publications

**DR. JOSHUA HREN**, "The Sound and the Fury, Symbolizing Something: Maritain and Percy on the Paradoxical Miracle at the Limits of Language." *Redeeming Philosophy: From Metaphysics to Aesthetics*. Ed. John J. Conley, SJ, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014. 235-50. Print.

**DR. JOSHUA HREN**, "The Genealogy of Ressentiment and the Achilles' Heel of Humanitarianism: Thinking with Dostoevsky, Scheler and Manent on 'Love of Mankind,'" *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 17.4 (2014): 17-43. Print.

**DR. DAVID RONDEROS** and colleagues, "Farnesol-Detecting Neurons in Drosophila," *Journal of Neuroscience*, 34(11): 3959-68, 2014.

## ■ Performances & Art Shows

The **ENGLISH DEPARTMENT** put on the annual "Read and Art Show" in November in Heskett Hall.

**SR. NANCY GUNDERSON** was the honorary artist at the Artist's Celebrating Christ spring art show at the Benedictine Center. She demonstrated fiber art and completed a piece on-site, which was auctioned for her charity of choice, Ministry on the Margins.

**DR. SCOTT SANDBERG** performed at the National Biennial Conference of the North American Saxophone Alliance at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in March.

The **THEATER DEPARTMENT** produced Shakespeare's "As You Like It" in November at Arno Gustin Hall.

The **VOCAL ARTS ENSEMBLE** performed "Doc McKurdy's Medicine Show" at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in November. The ensemble transformed into a late 19th-century traveling troupe bringing entertainment and "healing" remedies to rural America.

## ■ Presentations

**DR. BECKI CHALMERS** gave three presentations for the North Dakota Humanities Council in Powers Lake, ND on three different texts: Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* and Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* in April, and Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* in May. The presentations and ensuing discussions focused on the topic of "How 'place' transforms families."

**DR. MATTHEW GERLACH** gave a lecture for University of Mary-Tempe at the ASU Newman Center in April, titled "The Ontology of Beauty in the (Disturbing) Sacramental Aesthetics of Flannery O'Connor." Two days later, he gave the keynote address at the Arizona Catholic Home School Conference, titled "Parents as Primary Educators in Light of the Fourfold Mission of the Christian Family." In August, Dr. Gerlach presented a paper titled "The Core of Catholic Studies: Some Clues from Benedictine Monasticism" for the University of Mary's Catholic Studies conference.

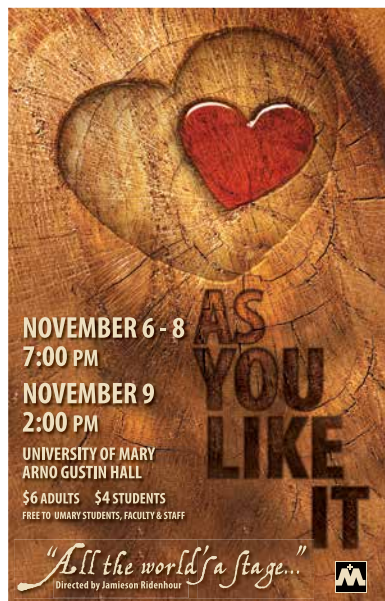
**DR. JOSHUA HREN** presented a weeklong series of short lectures titled "The Decline and Fall of the Decline and Fall: A Catholic Literary Renaissance?" at the Catholic Writers' Conference in March 2014. Dr. Hren also presented a paper titled "Between the Beatific Vision and Man and Rebellion" at the Catholic Studies Conference at Mary in August.

**DR. PETER HUFF** gave a presentation titled "'I Have Rather Fallen in Love': C. S. Lewis and Simone Weil," at the 34th Annual Colloquy of the American Weil Society at the University of Ottawa in April.

**DR. MICHAEL LARES** and **DR. JAMES MASKEY** presented training for novice frog watch volunteers in February at the Dakota Zoo.

**DR. MICHAEL LARES** gave a presentation for the Visiting Scientist Series titled "Behavioral and Enrichment Studies at the Dakota Zoo" at the zoo in April.

**DR. JAMES MASKEY** gave a talk titled "Current Status of Moose in North Dakota" at the North American Moose Conference in Girdwood, AK in May.





**DR. JESSE RUSSELL** will present a paper titled "Virgil, Dido, and the Colonial Gaze" at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in Seattle in March 2015.

**DR. MARK SPRINGER** and **DR. CHAD LITTON** presented a project titled "Making DAVE Work: Development of a Core Textbook for Responsible Citizenship" at the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference in Philadelphia in February.

**SR. NANCY GUNDERSON** presented at the meeting of the Prairie Textile Arts Guild at Veterans Memorial Library in March. She spoke and showed slides and samples of her artwork relevant to the topic of art and spirituality. In August, she gave the same talk at the Eagles Club in Bismarck.

**DR. SLAVISA TASIC** was the keynote speaker at the Hot Topic Breakfast, organized by the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce, in April. The talk was titled "The State of the American Economy."

## ■ Media Appearances

**DR. MATTHEW GERLACH** was interviewed for a *lectio* on Luke 18:1-14, titled "Parables of the Unjust Judge and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector," for The Good Book Club readings segment, Spirit Catholic Radio Omaha, NE in January.



Sr. Nancy Gunderson works on a fiber arts project in her workroom at the Annunciation Monastery.

**DR. MARK SPRINGER** made several appearances in the fall on local television regarding the November 2014 election, including a series on KFJR about political advertising.

**DR. SLAVISA TASIC** was interviewed on KX News in November about why North Dakota now ranks highest in the nation in personal spending.

## Alumni Connections

### Give Back to University of Mary

Providing the best education for current and future students requires continual investments at an increasing cost. Please consider becoming a University of Mary donor. To do so, please go to [www.umary.edu/giving](http://www.umary.edu/giving) to contribute by debit card or to pledge a gift by check.

### In the News? Changes?

If you or your business has been in the news recently, please let us know. Also if you have changed your address, telephone number or career, please inform us via the "Keep in Touch" form, available at [www.umary/forms/alumni](http://www.umary/forms/alumni).

### Career Advancement

The only thing better than being an alum of the University of Mary is doing it again. The School of Arts and Sciences offers many graduate degree programs that might suit your career aspirations at an affordable price. Programs are offered in online, blended and traditional formats.

### Contact Info

For all alumni-related issues or for more information, please contact Paul Keeney, Director of Alumni by email ([alumni@umary.edu](mailto:alumni@umary.edu)) or by phone: **(800) 408-6279 x8370** or **(701) 355-8370**.

# Focus on Alumni



Jordan Vetter in his St. Mary's Central High School classroom.

**JORDAN VETTER** graduated from the University of Mary with a BA in English and Education in May 2011 and started teaching at St. Mary's Central Catholic High School in Bismarck that fall. He now teaches freshman English and Advanced Placement (AP) English Language and Composition. Last year, 65 percent of Vetter's AP students passed the rigorous exam, significantly bettering the 55-percent national average.

Accordingly, he won the school's Judy Wodarz Teacher of the Year award last year.

Vetter serves as the newspaper co-advisor, yearbook advisor and drama director. Last October, he

directed a production of "The Ash Girl," a dramatic retelling of the Cinderella story with the seven deadly sins as villains, which was performed at the University of Mary's Arno Gustin Hall.

In 1878, St. Mary's Academy and Boarding School was founded by the Benedictine Sisters. The first high school classes were offered in 1916 and today, St. Mary's Central High School educates 341 students in grades 9 through 12. The seniors score much higher than state and national averages on the ACT college readiness assessment.

St. Mary's graduates maintain 99-percent college-acceptance and college-bound rates, and

most students are accepted by their first college choice.

Vetter said he got into teaching because of the autonomy he is afforded in the classroom in covering curriculum and standards. "I enjoy having a positive impact on students through teaching," he said. "The professors I had at the University of Mary were very knowledgeable and helpful. I am often complimented on how well I know my content areas."

Currently, Vetter's sister Emilee, a history major, is student-teaching at St. Mary's and hopes to join her brother as a full-time teacher.

*313% Increase in Catholic Studies Minors in Last Five Years*



**Catholic Studies Minors**

*120% Increase in Catholic Studies Majors in Last Three Years*



**Catholic Studies Majors**