

LA VIE COLLEGIENNE

LEBANON VALLEY COLLEGE'S STUDENT RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1924

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Congratulations, Class of 2021 A letter from President MacLaren

Congratulations Class of 2021! On behalf of the faculty and staff at Lebanon Valley College I want to also offer you my best wishes for the future. What a year this has been, the pandemic, mask wearing, social distancing, and hybrid classes to name just a few of the unexpected facets of your senior year. Not something any of us would have thought about when you started in the fall of 2017! Yet despite these most challenging circumstances you have demonstrated great resilience, perseverance, and tenacity. We are thrilled to celebrate your successes with you and have an immense pride in all of your accomplishments.

While your time at the college has been short, please know that you have had a lasting impact. Your contributions in the classroom, in research projects, in student orga-

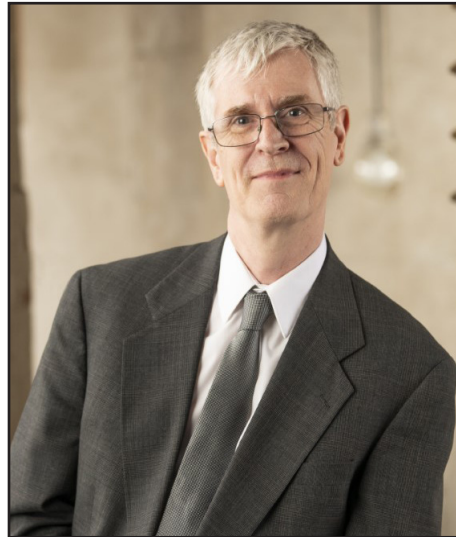


Photo by: LVC Marketing and Communications

nizations, in service to others, and in athletics have been many and meaningful. You have made life-long friendships. You have grown so much.

I hope that you feel ready to take on the challenges of the next stage of your lives, and the world is facing many challenges. It is my hope that your education at one of the finest colleges in America has helped prepare you to be the leaders we need to find much needed solutions.

I hope that you will remember your time at Lebanon Valley College fondly, that you will continue the friendships you have made these last four years, and as soon to be alumni that you will come back often to visit. You will always be welcome. I wish you every future success and happiness. Go Valley!

Best Wishes,

J. M. MacLaren

President James MacLaren

Class of 2021 PROFILE

401
GRADUATES



11%
ALANA
African/African American, Latinos,
Asian, and Native American



13%
CAME TO LVC AS
TRANSFER STUDENTS

16%
HAVE TWO MAJORS

14 STATES &
6 COUNTRIES
OUTSIDE OF US
REPRESENTED



Khalil Brim: Published author, multi-club leader, college student

ALEXANDRA GONZALEZ '23
STAFF WRITER

Khalil Brim, a senior English and creative writing major, is a writer who believes that true artists should be interested in many things — especially the things around them — in order to be the best artist that they can be. His philosophy has driven him to try new things and get involved, and he has learned from the very people that he leads.

During his time at LVC, Brim has been involved in many extracurriculars. He has served as president of the Black Student Union (BSU) for three years.

"With the help of so many wonderfully intelligent and passionate students, we were able to turn BSU into one of the largest and most

impactful clubs on campus, striving every day to celebrate, appreciate and spread understanding of black culture and issues facing minorities in general," Brim said.

Brim has served as a Mosaic Mentor, which mentors first-year intercultural ALANA- and LGBTQ- identifying students, for three years. He also student advises Latin Excellence (LatinX) and Asian Culture Club. Brim was a Valley Blue Coat for two years. He has served as president of LVC's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, an international English honor society. Brim also founded LVC's book club.

Speaking of books, Brim's first novel, "The Flower of the Valencia," was published in 2017, during his first year at the College. After the release of his first novel, Brim started writing the sequel.

"I finished it but after going through an independent study with Holly M. Wendt, associate professor of English, I realized that it would be best if I combined books one and two," Brim said. "So, the book that is currently scheduled to be released in mid- to late summer isn't truly my second book, but an expanded republication."

Brim has continued to work on this project throughout his time as a student at LVC.

"So, from the beginning of writing to now, it has taken me around four solid years of writing, editing, researching, allowing people to read and review it, writing some more, editing, editing and more editing, until I got to where I am now," Brim said. "It has been an extremely long process, but I have learned so much

about myself, the world around me, and just my ability to create truly memorable prose."

Brim's talent as a writer, scholar and leader opens up endless professional possibilities for him for the future.

"I will be a celebrated author, feverishly working on novels, poems and other offerings to the world so others can be inspired to create," Brim said. "I love working with minorities, so I know my path will lead me to either being a teacher or professor, teaching creative writing to minorities, while still having the freedom to travel and talk about my publications."

For Brim, college graduation only marks the beginning of these dreams.

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International student secures a job in his junior year

MADONNA BORDE '21

STAFF WRITER

An international student from Zimbabwe who changed his major three times while at LVC managed to do what a lot of college students struggle with: find a job.

Shingirai Guchu, a senior actuarial science major, originally started off as an accounting major. He was also the first recipient of The Almond Tree Annual Scholarship Fund and led the way for two other sub-Saharan international students to also attend LVC with this scholarship. Before settling into actuarial science, he was a computer science major as well.



Photo provided by: Keith D. Evan Photography

However, he said that he doesn't regret not being an actuarial science major from the start, even though he found his niche. He said that his experience with his other majors felt like they made sense and now they're applicable in his current major.

"I actually think I appreciate actuarial science more because I know what these fields do," Guchu said. "I know what computer science is about, I know what finance is about, I know what math is

about. Seeing how all these tools come together is just like the beauty of my life, so I'm glad I did."

When he was still a finance major, Guchu attended a job fair primarily for actuarial science majors. The following year, he came back to the same job fair, now in the appropriate major and reconnected with some people.

From there, he was scheduled to have an internship with Willis Towers Watson, in Philadelphia, during the summer of 2020. Once the COVID-19 pandemic started, he was concerned that his internship would be cancelled, like so many others were. Fortunately, it wasn't, and he was able to work completely remotely.

Of course, he missed out on some of the fun staying in Philadelphia over the summer, but he said that didn't bother him either.

"I think [the pandemic] just really changed that I couldn't be in the physical office, seeing my supervisors, my directors and just you know grabbing coffee with them and really talking to them in person," Guchu said. "But I think I still made connections; I still have people who email me and ask me how my senior year is going."

Like every other international student, Guchu had to be approved for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) in order to complete his internship. He is now waiting for his Optional Practical Training (OPT) application to be approved so that he can work for the company. Guchu is not the first, nor last international student to undergo this process.

Fellow international student and actuarial science major, Carlos "David" Campbell '20, underwent almost the exact same process and now works for Willis Towers Watson's New York office. Many international students apply for OPT in their senior year.

When asked if he had any advice for any other international students, especially seniors, Guchu said, "I think being yourself helps in attracting the people who have the same interests as you, genuine people in your life. And be patient with yourself, you will make mistakes."

Senior English major starts new chapter

ALEXANDRA GONZALEZ '23

STAFF WRITER

Claire Benesch, a senior English major, is looking forward to graduating and starting a new chapter. However, the unknown that comes with turning a page can be intimidating, especially amid a global pandemic.

Benesch has enjoyed her time at LVC from the English courses to the interdisciplinary studies.

She helped man booths for Freedom Rings. According to Freedom Rings' Facebook page, it is "a club at LVC that provides a safe and educational environment for LGBTQ+ and allied students."

Benesch also assisted with painting sets for Wig and Buckle, the student-run theater company on the campus of LVC. Wig and Buckle is the oldest LVC student organization.

When asked what she will miss the most about being a student at LVC, Benesch said, "I will miss the sense of community. I am going to miss lively



Photo provided by: Claire Benesch

class discussions, and I am going to miss the English department Christmas parties and all the extra things that made my years at LVC spectacular."

Senior English major continued on page 3

A senior reflects upon their time at LVC

BRANDEN MATASSA '22

STAFF WRITER

As the spring semester comes to an end, seniors are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Lisa Orlando, a physical therapy major, is one of those seniors. One of the reasons why Orlando chose LVC was to get a fresh start. Originally from Long Island, she knew that LVC would be a place to give her that, and more.

"Coming here where nobody knows me really allowed me to come out of my shell and branch out," Orlando said. "Not only that, but I've met some amazing people and have made what will be lifelong friends."

When it comes to taking advantage of LVC's opportunities, Orlando went above and beyond. Throughout her four years at LVC, she's been a teacher's assistant (TA), resident assistant (RA), 5050 peer helper, peer tutor, mosaic mentor, writing mentor and held leadership positions in LatinX. Orlando also participated in intramural sports like volleyball, where she was the captain of her team.

As a physical therapy major, Orlando talked about how rigorous the journey has been.

"From the beginning you're being tested through the weed-out classes of biology and chemistry to see if we can handle it," Orlando said. "However, you can't just get to grad school by passing level one."

For the 2021 academic year, Orlando took a big leap by making her transition to the first semester of graduate school, which included an anatomy course and a cadaver lab. However, she wasn't alone in this process.

"Fortunately, I had a great support system throughout the anatomy course and cadaver lab despite it being online," Orlando said. "The TAs were very helpful and were able to guide me through the transition to grad school and teach me how to study for the course."

Her friends had a similar impact.

"I found my core group of friends to be extremely supportive," Orlando said. "We push each other to not only be better students but better people and a lot of my success is contributed from them."

Aside from classes required for a physical therapy major, Orlando learned to enjoy many Constellation courses that focused on her interests.

"I am a huge movie buff, so taking a horror film focused FYE and integrative course was an amazing opportunity," Orlando said.

She found these classes so appealing because the professors encouraged openness to ideas and created a judgement-free atmosphere. Being surrounded by classmates with similar interests also improved the environment.

After graduation, Orlando will be returning to LVC for two more years to earn her doctorate degree.

Nearing the finish line

MERIDYTH SANDERS '21
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

As any collegiate athlete knows, balancing practices, tournaments and competitions with a rigorous academic schedule is no easy task, and it takes someone with a strong work ethic and high level of dedication to remain successful in both.

Physical therapy graduate student Keri Jones is one such athlete. She was recently honored for her efforts both on and off the track by the Middle Atlantic Conference Committee as the 2021 MAC Women's Cross Country Senior Scholar-Athlete of the year.

"Although participating in college athletics takes time from your sched-

ule, I think that running cross country and track has actually improved my performance in academics," Jones said. "Running in college has helped me better manage my time and served as a great outlet from the stress of PT school."

Jones was inspired by her five siblings, who have each ran or are currently running cross country and track, to take up the sport, and she has now been running for ten years. She made the decision to attend LVC based on the physical therapy program, the campus community and, of course, the opportunity to participate in both cross country and track throughout her schooling.

Throughout her athletic career at

LVC, Jones has been recognized as the MAC Women's Cross Country Runner of the Year, named LVC's second-ever individual runner to win their championship at MAC's and placed fifth among nearly 350 runners at NCAA Division III Mideast Regional Meet, securing a spot in the national tournament.

"One of my favorite memories was cross country MAC's in 2019 when both the women's and men's teams ran really well," Jones said. "Another special memory was when my teammates surprised Lauren Wick and I by driving to Kentucky to support us at Nationals."

Jones has one more year of eligibility left as a student athlete, and she

will continue to compete with the cross country and track teams next year as she finishes her doctorate in physical therapy.

"My best advice for balancing academics and athletics is to stay organized with both your daily and weekly schedules," Jones said. "As athletes we have extra time commitments with practices and competitions, so keeping an organized schedule can help you plan accordingly for athletic events and exams."

After completing school, Jones intends to work in an outpatient orthopedic therapy setting.

Sanders to become digital content writer

MARJ O'NEILL '21
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Senior English major Meridyth Sanders will enter the workforce post-graduation as a digital content writer.

Sanders applied to several jobs early on and either never heard anything back or was rejected. Then, when she wasn't even looking, someone from the digital marketing agency WebFX reached out to her on LinkedIn with the perfect role—a content writing position.

"I will mostly be responsible for writing content for WebFX's clients, which could include blog posts, long form research papers and website content," Sanders said. "This job will be a great way for me to gain lots of experience in my field and develop even stronger writing and marketing skills."

Despite the application and interview process for the role being remote, it was still an easy and straightforward experience for Sanders.

"Someone from the team first reached out to me on LinkedIn encouraging me to apply, and after that, I just had to submit my resumé to the right person," Sanders said. "The next step was a phone interview

before an extensive writing test and then one final meeting on Zoom."

The remote aspect of this position is the most attractive aspect to Sanders.

"I'm really excited to be working remotely so I can control when I end my day as well as work from across the country, as I am planning on moving to Colorado after graduation," Sanders said.

Sanders attributes a major part of her readiness to enter the workforce to the LVC Breen Center for Graduate Success and her role with them as a career peer.

"I know my resumé and cover letter writing skills have gotten so much better because of the time I've spent working for the Breen Center," Sanders said. "I can't thank the team members there enough for all of their encouragement and advice throughout the years."

Sanders' advice to fellow LVC students is to reach out to the Breen Center for help early on in their collegiate career.

Students may schedule appointments with the Breen Center for Graduate Success online via Handshake or contact them at breencenter@lvc.edu with any questions.

Senior feature: Rebekah Nickel

CHLOE KLINE '21
STAFF WRITER

Rebekah Nickel, an art and visual culture major, has been heavily involved with the arts during her time at LVC.

Working mostly with acrylic and oil paint, Nickel created multiple large scale paintings for varying classes. They have included all kinds of subjects including theatrical characters, personal themes and symbolism and cityscapes and landscapes.

Nickel was recognized for academic achievement in 2020 with a departmental award in art. She won the Michael P. Manubay '11 Award in Art, an endowed award given to a student to create large-scale experimental artworks.

Since fall of 2020, Nickel has also been an intern at the Suzanne H. Arnold Art Gallery. Her current work has involved cataloging recent acquisitions for future exhibitions, including silkscreen prints and screens by the late artist Mary Lou Bongiovi, the former Sister Mary Lou Rose.

"Most of my work has been cataloging the work of Mary Lou Bongiovi," Nickel said. "I'll occasionally help out with other things like setting up the recent [photography] exhibition in Mund."

In the future, Nickel wants to pursue theatrical set design as a career. She has been involved with multiple productions with the Wig and Buckle Theater Company, helping out with tech, box office and other theater-related endeavors.

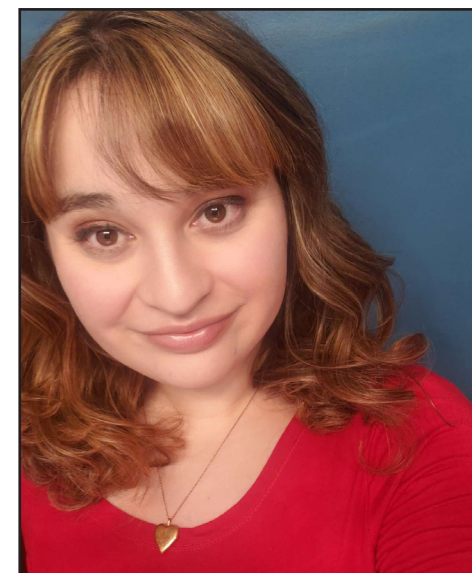


Photo provided by: Rebekah Nickel

"Set design just kind of made sense as a career because it was a way to incorporate artwork and my love of theater," Nickel said. "I love bringing the stories I enjoy to life, and creating large paintings as backdrops."

Nickel will graduate with a degree in art and visual culture.

Senior English major (continued from page 2)

COVID-19 has marked the end of Benesch's college career. Benesch has been attending classes remotely for her senior year. While Benesch is missing out on a typical senior year and the classroom experience, she feels the health and safety of her family and community during an extended public health crisis was well

worth the sacrifice.

"As for job searching, the pandemic has changed the way I think about my future career," Benesch said. "What jobs can provide during an extreme crisis? What jobs are not only recession-proof but also pandemic and natural disaster-proof? Unfortunately, these questions are no longer

extra precautions but completely necessary considerations."

Benesch plans to take a gap year after graduation. During this time, she will work and study for the GREs in preparation for a master's program.

"I am incredibly appreciative of the time I spent at LVC," Benesch

said. "Having a liberal arts education allowed me to pursue my interests and learn many different academic disciplines that will only continue to serve me in life. At the very least, I will be able to hold my own in most conversations."

Dream chasing



Photo provided by: LVC Athletic Communications

KEEGAN CORWELL '21
STAFF WRITER

During the 2019 MAC football season, LVC running back Hunter Wilson posted historic numbers, establishing himself as an all-conference player and earning him various awards across the NCAA Division III organization.

These accomplishments did not go unnoticed by multiple coaches and recruiting coordinators from various professional leagues and teams. However, as Wilson headed into the end of his senior year, his life changed drastically.

"I can still remember how excited I was leaving the coach's office after I received my first combine invite," Wilson said. "I could hardly sleep that night just imagining my dream of playing professional football coming true."

Wilson had landed himself three professional pro days where he would be able to showcase his talents in front of coaches across the country for the opportunity to play for a professional team. Unfortunately, one month before Wilson was supposed to debut his first combine, COVID-19 struck and the event was cancelled; Wilson's opportunity to leap to the professional side of football vanished.

"I was absolutely devastated," Wilson said. "I had been training so hard every day trying to make sure that I did everything possible to make my

dreams come true, and to have them taken away like that was heartbreaking."

Wilson graduated last spring and started working; however, he did not give up his dream of playing in the pros. Wilson hired an experienced agent and acquired a sports-specific trainer who helped others like Hunter reach their peak athletic ability before tryouts and combines. After months of tedious hard work, Wilson finally got a call from his agent.

"I remember feeling the same excitement that I had felt that day leaving the sports center," Wilson said. "My agent had submitted my physical testing numbers to a few coaches and organizations, and I got another invite to a professional combine."

In March of this year, Wilson traveled to Houston, Texas, to attend his professional combine and compete against current and former NFL, CFL, and NCAA athletes.

"It was one of the most exciting and unforgettable moments of my life to be surrounded by these guys and knew that I had made it this far was a humbling and surreal feeling," Wilson said.

Wilson is awaiting his official testing numbers and a phone call from a professional organization. Regardless, Wilson continues to be resilient and embodies the lesson that no matter what life throws at him, he's continue to pursue what he loves – football.

Congrat CLASS

"In 10 years

Nina Ward | *Biology/Pre-Med*

... working as a physician to serve those in need while enjoying memorable moments with my family (and a dog of course).

Kodee Bair | *Physical Therapy*

... married for 8 years with 2 kids, have a dog and a cat, own a house, work at an outpatient physical therapy clinic, and spend a lot of time outside in nature going on many camping trips.

Megan Finlan | *English*

... relaxing with my two dogs with a glass of wine in one hand and a book in the other.

Samantha Nye | *Environmental Science*

... working as a veterinarian and coming home to my family and my house of animals.

Jayna Class | *Early Childhood & Special Education*

... shaping the minds of the future.

Hannah Heagerty | *Sociology*

... be making a difference in someone's life as a college counselor while also being an adjunct professor at a small college.

Rebecca Clouser | *Physical Therapy*

... be a pelvic floor physical therapist or a geriatric physical therapist and a proud alum of the College.

Alyssa Liounis | *Speech-Language Pathology*

... be married with 2 kids and an Australian Shepherd, working as an SLP paying back my student debt.

Marj O'Neill | *English*

... on a beach somewhere with a margarita, playing cornhole with my husband and kids.

Kevin Van Bokkelen | *Digital Communication*

... I will be a graphic designer for the Washington Capitals.

Chloe Kline | *Art & Visual Culture and English*

... I will be established in a creative field and have my own place to call home.

Claire Benesch | *English*

... I will not be attempting to predict the future. I mean, come on. Who could've seen any of this coming?

Shingirai Guchu | *Actuarial Science*

... I would be on a family vacation somewhere in the world, reading news about my actuarial consulting firm.

Madonna Borde | *Spanish and English*

... I hopefully would've figured out my life because I have no idea what I'm doing right now.

Jacob Beard | *Business Administration*

... I hope to see myself making a positive difference in my local community.

Tina Messner | *Communication Sci. & Disorders*

... I would like to pursue my SLP dreams in a school setting and settle with a growing family.

Ann Abramczuk | *English and Creative Writing*

... In ten years, I will look back on my first weeks of college, think about how intimidated I felt then, and be filled with awe at how far I've come.

Tyler Nell | *English*

... I will be a teacher, published author and poet, thanking the Lord for being good to me.

Jennifer Lopez | *SLP and Spanish*

... I hope to be a successful bilingual SLP helping multicultural individuals, have a family, travelling and living my best life.

Rebekah Nickel | *Art & Visual Culture*

... I will be working in a job in an art-related field that I'm passionate about.

La Vie Collegienne Staff:

MADONNA BORDE
staff writer

MADISON DONAHUE
staff writer

ALEXANDRA GONZALEZ
staff writer

JUSTIN HALL
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staff writer

HANNAH SHIREY
staff writer

MEGAN FINLAN
co-editor in chief

MARJORIE O'NEILL
assistant editor

MERIDYTH SANDERS
co-editor in chief

ulations, OF 2020! I will ...”

Olivia Haug | *Creative Writing*

... I will be able to have disposable income so I can surprise my friends with presents.

Valerie Kosson | *Music*

... I will be using the arts to help people with special needs.

Zach Balodis | *Biochemistry & Molecular Biology*

... I will be a pharmacist in Philadelphia.

Matt Emrick | *Criminal Justice*

... I will be working for a detective agency and living in one of Bob Wurster's beach houses.

Tyler Romel | *Accounting*

... I will be at some boring accounting desk job while spending my weekends drinking at my beach house in Nantucket.

Danny Galvez | *Computer Science & Digital Communication*

... I will be a regional manager at Sunoco.

Keegan Corwell | *English*

... I will be the next Jordan Belfort.

Dylan Baxter | *Business Administration*

... I will be Vice President at my current wealth management firm I'm working at.

Jenna Lysakowski | *Exercise Science*

... I will be happily married with the start of a family and I will be working in sports medicine PT.

Rachel Kagarise | *Exercise Science*

... I will be working as a physical therapist in either a hospital or outpatient facility while continuing to travel and keep up with my LVC friends.

Bridgett Finn | *Exercise Science*

... I will be a sports performance coach training top tier athletes and enjoying every moment of my life!

Luke Tamberino | *Exercise Science*

... I will be growing a young and happy family and will be serving my community with the medicine of movement through physical therapy.

Emily Bainbridge | *English*

... I'd like to be married, have a house to call my own, a job as both an editor and freelance writer, and have as many pets as I can afford.

Ethan Swayze | *Audio and Music Production*

... I'll be chillin'

Kaitlyn Petry | *Psychology*

... I'll have a job that fulfills me.

Faith Addison | *Business Administration*

... I'll be on the beach.

Meridyth Sanders | *English*

... I'll be keeping Ethan out of trouble.

Madison Donahue | *Business Communications*

...Coming home to my husband holding a margarita for me after work

Brenden Smith | *Business Administration*

... I hope to be working for a company that I like and have a stable career working with technology and managing a group of like minded people to accomplish tasks and ultimately give something to the community and people that they find useful.

Zach Tucker | *Business*

... I will be running my own business in different regions along the east coast.

Justin Baker | *Business*

... I will be sitting courtside with LeBron at a Lakers game.

Dental school bound

HANNAH SHIREY '23

STAFF WRITER

While most children absolutely despise their annual trips to the dental office, Jessica Heister, a senior biochemistry and molecular biology major, loved going to the dentist. Heister's interest in dentistry only increased as she grew older, resulting in her recent decision to attend dental school post-graduation.

Although Heister was always fascinated by the dental field, it wasn't until she was in high school that she started seriously thinking about the possibility of attending dental school. Attending dental school became a career goal of hers during her first year of college.

"The first thing I notice about someone is their smile and being able to be confident in your smile is really important," Heister said.

Heister began the application process in May 2020. She applied to a total of nine schools, all on the east coast. She knew she wanted to stay in Pennsylvania so she could still come home to see her family on holidays and occasional weekends.

Heister describes the application process to dental school as being "intense." Once she finally had everything submitted including letters of recommendations, results from the Dental Admissions Test (DAT), personal interviews and dental office shadowing experiences, Heister dealt with the anticipation of hearing back from schools.

"It was very long and stressful because I spent pretty much the entire school year just waiting to hear back about interview invitations or acceptances," Heister said.

Interviews began as early as October, while others weren't scheduled until February.

In March, Heister finally began to hear back from schools. The months of eagerness and stress paid off, and Heister's goal of getting accepted to dental school was achieved.

"I was overwhelmed because I truly couldn't believe it at first, I actually started to cry," Heister said. "Then it hit me that I was going to have to start getting everything figured out for next year, like where I am going to live and how I am going to pay for school."

Impressed by both the location and the dental program, Heister ultimately has decided to attend Temple University Kornberg School of Dentistry this fall. She will be a graduate student at Temple University for four years.



Photo provided by: Jessica Heister

In addition to her acceptance to dental school, Heister also applied for and accepted a four-year scholarship through the United States Navy.

Heister will enter the Navy as an officer this summer while they help cover her expenses at Temple University over the next four years. After Heister graduates from dental school, she will serve as a Naval dentist for four years.

"I am really excited for the opportunities that will come with this experience and career opportunity in the Navy," Heister said.

Heister aids a lot of her success and acceptance to dental school to her time as a student at LVC. She specifically appreciates all the support she received from her advisors and professors.

"They have connected me with so many opportunities that I know contributed to my acceptance," Heister said. "I had the ability to do research here at LVC, and I was also connected with some LVC alumni who are dentists."

As a Lebanon native, Heister had no interest in attending LVC while in high school. However, it was the interactions with science professors at discovery days and other on-campus events that made her want to attend LVC over any other school.

Heister has had an extremely positive experience at LVC and says that it has truly prepared her for the next steps towards her future.

"Looking back over my last four years here, I am so glad that I decided to come to LVC, and I wouldn't change anything about my experience," Heister said.

Heister plans on taking all of her undergraduate experiences and knowledge with her to Temple University Kornberg School of Dentistry this fall. She hopes to one day be a dentist who children look forward to visiting.

Class of 2020 student highlights

MEGAN FINLAN '21
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

It's been more than a year since the pandemic began. A year since students were sent home from campus, and a year since the class of 2020 learned they would be without a traditional graduation. As the class of 2021 prepares to tackle life after LVC, three class of 2020 graduates share their experiences.

Claire Fitzgibbons

As a fall 2020 graduate, Claire Fitzgibbons wasn't impacted by many of the issues COVID-19 caused on LVC's campus. However, her perfect gap year before law school was ultimately uprooted.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in English, Fitzgibbons knew she wanted to take a year off before heading to law school. Unfortunately, COVID-19 threw a wrench in her plans to travel. Rather than taking in some foreign sights, Fitzgibbons was stuck with the same day-to-day sights the Lebanon area had to offer.

"During my gap year, I applied to law school and worked, mostly, as an LSAT tutor," Fitzgibbons said. "I also spent a lot of time hiking with Liam Schmidt, which was probably the highlight of my year. I was planning on spending the year traveling the world, and instead spent the year traveling to and from the kitchen to grab more snacks."

Despite being homebound for the majority of her gap year, Fitzgibbons put her time to good use as she was able to complete the application process for 14 of the top law schools in the country. However, she expressed the difficulty in applying for law school during COVID-19 as schools saw a rise in applications, causing the admission cycle to be more competitive than usual. Fitzgibbons highlights the English department faculty for her success in being prepared to take on this next chapter in her life.

"The English department had some of my all-time favorite teachers, and I miss having them in class and sitting in the English suite trading stories with them," Fitzgibbons said. "They prepared me for applying and going to law school better than I could have imagined, and I am so grateful to them for all of their guidance and feedback on my writing and analytical skills."

Looking forward, Fitzgibbons is set to attend University of Pennsylvania Law School, ranked 7th in the country by U.S. News, this upcoming fall.

Claire's advice to the class of 2021: Be ambitious. A year ago, I would have never imagined that I would be attending the 7th ranked law school in the country, but I set my sights high and worked hard to get to where I wanted to be. With drive and work ethic, you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

Brandon Roy

While some students took a year off before heading to graduate school because of COVID-19, Brandon Roy headed straight to Cornell University this past fall after completing his undergraduate degree in the spring.

Roy graduated in spring 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry & molecular biology, and he is now a Ph.D. student at Cornell where he is enrolled in the plant pathology and plant-microbe program. In spite of COVID-19, Roy is able to enjoy a, somewhat, normal experience as a graduate student.

"My daily life involves many virtual classes and some socially distanced research in my lab," Roy said. "I joined Marc Fuchs' group to study Grapevine fanleaf virus and its molecular characteristics behind infection. I have only LVC to thank for preparing me for the courses during grad school — it's been a blast."

Even though Roy's time is mostly filled with classes, labs and studying, he is looking forward to the graduation LVC has planned for the class of 2020 this upcoming May.

"I certainly hope I'll be able to make the journey back to LVC for graduation in May, of course following all CDC guidelines and my university's restrictions for travel," Roy said. "I was able to get vaccinated early from participating in a COVID-19 vaccine trial, so I'm less concerned as I see more and more people also get the vaccine. I'm most looking forward to seeing my friends and classmates to see what they've done in their time since the shutdown."

Looking forward, Roy has his sights set on completing his Ph.D. at Cornell and aspires to one day teach in a college setting.

Brandon's advice to the class of 2021: Keeping in touch with classmates will help you navigate the unknown waters beyond LVC. Even if you are fortunate enough to know your next steps, the friends you make at LVC are for life, and mine have brought stability to my life even during the pandemic when we are hundreds of miles away.

Paige Bryson

As a New Hampshire native, Paige Bryson found herself staying in

Pennsylvania for her work after being sent home early during her final undergraduate semester.

Being an out-of-state student, Bryson was fortunate enough to have her fiancé, now husband, to stay with when LVC announced the campus closure. Looking back after over a year from that day, Bryson still feels emotional over how her senior year ended.

"It was like knowing a storm was coming and not being able to do anything to prep for it," Bryson said. "It was a really anxious time. I had really been looking forward to graduation to close out the year, get photos with my friends, professors and colleagues and enjoy the energy that comes with the last few weeks of senior year. So, when we knew we weren't coming back, and I realized none of that would be happening, I was so sad. To be honest, I still don't really feel like I have the closure I needed to finish out the year."

Even without the closure granted by a traditional graduation, Bryson was able to move forward to continue her job search post-graduation. While she fully intended beginning a full-time job in May, her transition into the workforce was delayed due to hiring freezes caused by COVID-19. Bryson now works as a permit coordinator for Momentum Solar and has been with the company since August.

Despite passing the one-year mark of completing her bachelor's degree in English, Bryson can't help but reminisce on the aspects of college life and LVC that she misses.

"I miss a lot of things about LVC," Bryson said. "I miss all the places to chill out on campus, easy access to the gym and of course my professors. But I think the biggest thing I miss is my friends and just being around people. I miss conversations over dinner, catching up in passing and chatting in between classes. It was nice when these things just happened naturally, rather than being scheduled times since we're all apart."

After being sent off with a virtual graduation in 2020, Bryson is looking forward to coming back to campus to celebrate in-person with her fellow graduates in May.

Paige's advice to the class of 2021: Take it all in. Enjoy every second of it because you won't get another undergraduate graduation/senior week. And take as many pictures as possible.

EDITORIAL Light at the end of the tunnel

MARJ O'NEILL '21
ASSISTANT EDITOR

COVID-19 spread to the United States in early 2020 and has largely impacted life as we knew it.

The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for all American adults, which is the beginning of steps toward herd immunity for the pandemic in the country. The more individuals in the country who get vaccinated, the safer it will be for everyone, and the number of cases will gradually decline. The vaccine is America's light at the end of the tunnel, and the key towards going back to normal; therefore, every American should do their part and get vaccinated.

The vaccine has been proven to be safe and effective and has undergone multiple clinical trials and research. Studies from the CDC have shown it helps to prevent individuals from getting the virus. In other words, the vaccine allows you to best protect yourself and others.

The COVID-19 vaccine has been intensely safety monitored more than any other vaccine in American history. The government is now providing vaccines to individuals throughout the country for free, and vaccination providers may not deny anyone without health insurance. This means it is very accessible to everyone.

The more people who get vaccinated, the closer America is to population, or herd immunity, which is when enough people in the population are protected from getting COVID-19 because they already had it or have been vaccinated. This will make it harder for the disease to spread.

Additionally, the CDC guidelines say that individuals who are fully vaccinated are permitted to start doing more things they were doing before the pandemic, especially when they are with other fully vaccinated people. Although vaccinated people still must be careful, follow public place COVID-19 safety guidelines and wear a mask, the more people who are fully vaccinated in America, the higher chance that things will return to normal.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is your moral responsibility as an American citizen to protect yourself and others and will help the country reach herd immunity sooner.

I urge you to make your appointment to get your vaccination today. And congratulations if you have already been vaccinated.

Swimming through finals and into med school

MERIDYTH SANDERS '21
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

For seniors, this last year of school has been a rollercoaster of unusual circumstances and trying to find some new level of "normal" while still facing the reality of entering the workforce or graduate school amidst a global pandemic.

Senior biology major Kaitlyn Welch was upended by COVID-19 as it completely reconstructed her final swim season and gave her decision to enter the medical field a newfound sense of importance as well as risk.

The swim team's traditional winter season was pushed back last fall, as all sports under the NCAA were suspended until spring semester of 2021.

"Unfortunately, we have not been able to have any real meets against other teams," Welch said. "The only meets we have had so far are among our own team. It is really nice because it allows us to practice racing and swimming our events before championships in April. However, it is difficult not having another team to race against, so it is more difficult to get in the meet mindset and push yourself."

Additionally, in compliance with LVC's rule on spectators for sporting events, visitors and families were not permitted to come to many of the swim team's meets.

"It has also been a shame that my parents are not able to come and watch, since that is something they try to do every meet," Welch said. "Even if it is different, though, I am glad Coach Mary is doing what she can to make this as normal as possible."

The lack of official meets against other teams also affects a team's ability to bond as a group, especially for a team that can no longer share a pool all together for practices. Coaches across all sports have been forced to get creative with safe, socially-distanced team bonding activities for their athletes.

"We can only have two people in a lane at a time, so instead of practicing all at once as a team, we sign up for times to go throughout the day," Welch said. "Mary does her best to make up for this by having team bonding events outside with relay races and scavenger hunts. She also makes an effort to make fun relays for us at the meets that are a mix of different years and majors to help

us meet other people, and the night before the meet we get together to create a poster to support our relay, which helps with bonding."

Despite the strangeness of this final season, Welch has found a new silver lining to hold onto.



Photo provided by: LVC Athletic Communications

"On the bright side, though, because there are a lot fewer people practicing at a time, I do feel like I get to talk with Mary a lot more, and I do feel like we have become closer as a result," Welch said.

Besides swimming, Kaitlyn is heavily invested in entering the medical field and has already been accepted into the Philadelphia College of Os-

teopathic Medicine.

Although she will be entering medical school at such a tumultuous time, Welch is committed to her decision.

"COVID-19 has not really impacted my choice to attend medical school, however, it has caused me to think about medicine in a slightly different way," Welch said. "For me, I know that my passion lies in medicine and there is nothing else I could imagine myself doing."

Even though Welch knows all too well that the process of applying and preparing to enter medical school can be intense and overwhelming, she also encourages others following the same path to remember to make time to relax.

"The journey to medical school is not easy, and you need to work really hard to get there, but you also need to remember to prioritize yourself too," Welch said. "Make time for friends, family and hobbies. There is always going to be something that adds stress to your life, so work on finding the balance and find time for the little things that make you happy."

Welch will begin classes in Philadelphia in August.

Preparing for a familiar future

ZACK KIME '22
STAFF WRITER

Entering his senior year at LVC, Mason Jerden, a political science major, hit what most would consider a roadblock.

Having already completed two internships, three years of college lacrosse and countless courses, it was all beginning to build up to be too much for Jerden.

"I was getting stuck in a negative cycle," Jerden said. "I wasn't sure how to ask for help and honestly, I was afraid to talk about it with my parents and my advisor."

Yet, it was once Jerden made a point to have a conversation with his father and figure out what courses he needed to put on his schedule for his final semester of college that he started to feel more at ease.

"Always try to enjoy your classes and avoid those negative cycles of getting rundown," Jerden said. "Be open with parents and advisors and don't be afraid to ask for help, they're there to help and care about your success in the end."

2018 was a big year for Jerden, having completed internships during both the fall and summer,

one in Pennsylvania and the other in California. While in California, Jerden worked for Amgen, where he focused on environmental renewability and business infrastructure.

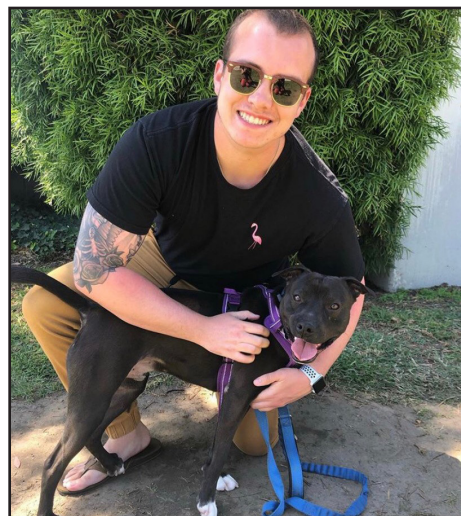


Photo provided by: Cleat Jerden

"I was working on presentations, communicating with VPs and took on a somewhat significant role in the company while I was there," Jerden said. "They also provided the interns with housing, brought us to promotional events and let us pick the brains of any of the bosses we worked alongside."

Jerden felt the time he then spent

with Red Maverik Media in the fall really gave him a look into the rules of politics and what political consulting was really all about. This internship was still relatively hands-off, allowing him to get a sense of what lobbyists did with their days and understand what a potential career in this field would look like.

"I got to visit and work in the Pennsylvania State Capitol Complex and sit in on some high-level lobbyist meetings around the state," Jerden said.

Although he utilized much of what he had learned in his classes here at LVC, Jerden made a point to emphasize the importance of real-life, team-oriented skills too.

"Social skills, networking and interpersonal communication have to be the top three when it comes to real-life skills that I used on the job," Jerden said.

In terms of the skills acquired from lacrosse, Jerden feels that over the years he's improved on his punctuality drastically. Besides this, his level of teamwork and leadership in and among a group have been greatly enhanced as a result of working with his teammates over the years.

Outside of lacrosse and school-work, Jerden likes to take drives and spend time with his four-legged friend Bolt. He recently adopted Bolt over quarantine and together, the pair have gone to countless beaches and taken many scenic road trips.

"It's important to find places where you can center yourself, find time to be calm and at peace," Jerden said. "Going to the beach and spending some time away from everything else can really help during those tough times."

Coming full circle, Jerden intends on returning to Amgen following his senior year to work in manufacturing and logistics. He's choosing to work back home in California, a place he knows well and loves.

"That's definitely something to keep in mind, find a job or an internship in a location where you know you'll be happy," Jerden said.

Although this may not be his dream job, Jerden is going back to a company that made him feel at home and taught him valuable lessons in his field of work. And although Jerden is moving on from LVC, he's ultimately settling in to a familiar future.

Justin Baker: Former walk-on turns key player

HANNAH SHIREY '22

STAFF WRITER

For most people, being told one isn't good enough is defeating, but for LVC senior Justin Baker, the doubts of others are viewed as motivation.

Baker, a Lebanon High School graduate, had his eyes set on attending LVC for several years because of a program called Lebanon Valley Education Partnership (LVEP). LVEP involves a unique mentorship program for students in the Lebanon School District focused on the idea of further education and a clear path to get there.

LVC awards several scholarships to Lebanon High School students who are in the LVEP program and choose to enroll at LVC, making the cost of their education essentially tuition-free. Baker was awarded one of those life-changing scholarships.

"I couldn't pass up such a great opportunity to come here for a significantly lower price," Baker said.

Baker began his freshman year at LVC in 2016. As a former high school basketball player, he knew he wanted to play basketball in college, but he was too scared to try. Baker will be the first to admit that he was not the best basketball player in high school.

"I wasn't very good in high school," Baker says. "I averaged about 2 points a game."

During his first year at LVC, he decided to focus on school, but he noticed that his grades were struggling. He even questioned if college was for him.



Photo provided by: Alex Detter

However, Baker had a passion for basketball that he could not ignore. He hadn't forgotten about the sport while attending college. Baker was still playing basketball almost daily, improving his skills and gaining confidence.

He finally decided to try out for the team his sophomore year. Baker says his decision can be accredited to the few people that believed in him and gave him the confidence to try out.

"I was at a disadvantage being a walk-on because you are constantly overlooked," Baker said. "I was a huge mystery in the coaches' eyes."

Baker understood his role on the team during his first year. He was more of a practice player, competing in only six games.

"I had to work harder than everyone else to get on the court, even if it would take an entire year or longer," Baker said.

And in just a year, Baker's time did come. Baker went from playing in six games to playing in all 25 games and starting in 22.

Baker was named captain of the team for both the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 seasons. He decided to extend his time at LVC so he could play basketball. He will graduate in May with a degree in business administration.

His final basketball season came to an end in early March. Baker led the team to the MAC Commonwealth Championship game against Albright College. In the end, the Dutchmen fell to the Lions 82-77.

Still, Baker left his all on the court of the Sorrentino Gymnasium for his final game. He scored a game-high 24 points on 10-of-13 shooting. He was also named MAD Defensive Player of the year.

Basketball has been a huge part of Baker's life. He has devoted an endless number of hours playing the sport and improving his skills.

"Many people did not think I could play at this level or be successful," Baker said. "I would say that I proved many people wrong."

Baker went from being an anxious walk-on player to starting every game, playing in two championship games and being named team captain twice. Without basketball, Baker isn't sure what would have happened with his academics.

"Ultimately, basketball is what saved my college career," Baker said.

LVC Senior Focuses on Future

JUSTIN HALL '22

STAFF WRITER

Zachary Balodis is a senior biochemistry and molecular biology major who has spent his four years at LVC balancing an intricate academic workload with a rigorous hockey schedule and excelled at both.

Originally from Parma, Ohio, Zach Balodis began playing hockey when he was just three years old. He fell in love with the game and began playing for some of the most elite travel teams in the Midwest, often traveling all over the country and even competing in top international tournaments in countries like Russia and Canada.

Balodis explained how the experiences playing in foreign countries promoted his passion for hockey.

"Being exposed to top competition hockey all over the world furthered my interest in the game and helped me realize that hockey could offer me future opportunities," Balodis said.

As his career progressed, Balodis kept improving and drew the attention of several college scouts across the country. He was presented with numerous offers from different colleges, but ultimately decided to attend LVC based off its reputation as a strong academic institution.

"The academics definitely played the biggest role in my decision to come to LVC," Balodis said. "I knew that I had to prioritize my life after hockey and I felt that LVC was the best option to reach my professional aspirations."

The science program at LVC appealed to Balodis, who had always known chemistry was his biggest

academic strength. He knew the workload would be demanding, especially while he had to juggle his hockey responsibilities as well.

Balodis' efforts inside the classroom were apparent, as he appeared on the dean's list on several occasions. In both his sophomore and junior seasons, Balodis was awarded a position on the Middle Athletic Conference all-academic team for his outstanding performance academically.

On his long list of accolades, Balodis identified his academic awards as the accomplishments he is most proud of.

"I am very proud of my academic honors," Balodis said. "I have always placed a priority on my schoolwork because I know that will help me more in the future than any of my athletic abilities."

While Balodis shined academically, he also orchestrated one of the most successful careers the LVC men's ice hockey program has ever seen. He was a starter for all four years and anchored the defensive core as one of the most important players on the roster.

After his rookie season, Balodis was selected by his teammates as the freshman of the year for his immediate impact. Balodis continued to develop his skills and his role on the team continued to increase each season. After an amazing junior season, Balodis was voted by players and coaches as the defensive player of the year and was named an alternate captain for his senior year with the Dutchmen.

"It meant a lot that my teammates and coaches even considered me for the award," Balodis said. "I played with a lot of great players during my time

here who made my experience that much better. I will always remember playing at LVC and how much fun I had suiting up each night."

Unfortunately, Balodis' senior season was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which effectively ended his competitive hockey career.

"It's tough because obviously I wanted to finish my career the right way, battling with my teammates," Balodis said. "It was a hard pill to swallow, but I'm still happy with the memories I made throughout my career."

Now that his hockey career at LVC is complete, Balodis has turned his attention to graduate school and is currently applying to attend pharmacy school at Thomas Jefferson University, Lake Erie College and Northeast Ohio Medical University. Balodis contemplated pursuing a brief professional hockey career but ultimately decided to fully commit to his dream of becoming a pharmacist.

"My college experience at LVC was everything I hoped it would be," Balodis said. "I enjoyed meeting lifelong friends and developing both as a student and an athlete. I wouldn't trade my experience here for anything, and I feel well prepared moving forward thanks to my time at LVC."

Zach Balodis has been an exemplary student athlete during his time at LVC and represented himself with an admirable level of integrity and respect. The devotion he showed on the ice and in the classroom was commendable and he will serve as a lasting example of what it means to be a Dutchman.