BUSINESS MINDED
Entrepreneurship thrives among alums

RIGHT-BRAIN MASTERS
Fine arts professionals make their mark

» PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR STEM
Unleashing our Creativity
by Mark Putnam, Central College president

One of the most widely watched TED Talks is focused on the subject of education. For those not familiar, TED, which stands for Technology, Education and Design, produces brief online video lectures and presentations on a wide range of topics that explore emerging trends, describe interpretive frameworks and challenge conventional wisdom. The popularity of these online videos is a reminder of how much our society craves thoughtful inquiry, encounters with others and engagement in practice settings. It sounds a lot like the richness of experience we find in a liberal arts college, particularly Central College.

The diversity of experience we create for our students is among our greatest strengths. I often hear from students as they complete their time at Central that they “can’t believe they got to do so many things.” Societal pressures are seeking to create even more conformity in higher education and less creativity. This is a reality we cannot accept. Our mission is to propel students into a future they have not fully imagined or articulated.

It is also essential we make room for mistakes. Our society has stigmatized mistakes, forcing many to conclude that taking a risk is not worth it. As Robinson puts it, “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you will never come up with anything original. We must teach our students to be resilient in the face of failure, which inherently requires that they encounter failure along the way.”

In the broader landscape, if we can find a way to break through the tyranny of educational conformity in our society, we can make it possible for the emerging generation of students to tackle the challenges they will inevitably face as they age into leadership. Our task will be to make the Bible come alive in the realms of art, theater and music.
Master of humor tells stories on campus

All eyes were on Kevin Kling, waiting for the next gut-buster, and he definitely didn’t disappoint during his Writers Reading appearance Feb. 20. Kling performed a variety of essays and anecdotes on family life, softball, Christmas and prayer, all threaded together through his master storytelling.

Sophomore Courtney Nelson attended the performance. “I found his humor to be something that appealed to a wide audience because it was generation-less,” Nelson says. “I also loved how he used humor to evoke meaning.”

Kling, a storyteller, actor, playwright, author and essayist, spent Feb. 17-22 in residence at Central visiting classes, teaching workshops and performing in Central’s Writers Reading series and his one man show “Breakin’ Hearts and Taking Names.” Kling’s production “The Ice Fishing Play” was also performed by Theatre Central from Feb. 26-March 1.

Kling visited Joshua Doležal’s Personal Essay class while in residence. To prepare for Kling’s visit, the class read three of his essays from his book “The Dog Says How.”

Doležal says, “Kling exemplifies this talent more than any performer I’ve seen.”

ANTHROPOLOGIST-IN-RESIDENCE CYNTHIA MAHMOOD

Cynthia Mahmood visited campus March 10-13 as the Frank Moore Visiting Anthropologist-in-Residence. The scholar, author and former Central College professor detailed her research, which has focused on religious motivations for militancy and the anthropology of violence, war and peace, terrorism, guerrilla warfare and language and culture.

Mahmood, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Notre Dame, attended a number of classes, including Jeff Bass’ Anthropology of Human Rights. He says students found her visit “inspirational.” Bass says students expressed awe at Mahmood’s bravery after her experiences with armed Islamic militants in Kashmir. In addition to visiting classes, Mahmood met with students and faculty and presented a lecture, “Religion and Conflict Resolution: Taking the Risk of the Face-to-Face.”

An expert on India, she has conducted decades of research on the international Sikh community, including the movement for statehood, human rights in Punjab and Sikh religious issues. Mahmood has published a number of works, including the ethnography “Fighting for Faith and For statehood, human rights in Punjab and Sikh religious issues. Mahmood has published a number of works, including the ethnography “Fighting for Faith and Taking Names.” Kling’s production “The Ice Fishing Play” was also performed by Theatre Central from Feb. 26-March 1.

Kling visited Joshua Doležal’s Personal Essay class while in residence. To prepare for Kling’s visit, the class read three of his essays from his book “The Dog Says How.” Doležal says, “Kling is a master of pacing. He’s not purely an entertainer. He’s also a thinker. And the magic of his performance is that he makes us think while we’re laughing.” Kling’s performance ability brought his stories to life, allowing the listener to enter into the narrative.

STUDY ABROAD KICKS OFF 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

It’s a year of celebration for Central’s study abroad programs. In 1965, the first program was launched in Paris, and over the years many more opportunities have developed for students to gain international experience.

To kick off “A Year of Global Citizenship,” Central held events during the week of March 24 including receptions with program directors both on campus and at locations around the Midwest. Alumni had the chance to meet with directors at receptions in Minneapolis, Des Moines and Naperville, Ill. Events will continue to take place throughout 2014 and 2015.

At a reception held in the Vermeer Banquet Hall on campus, students and staff mingled with international program directors and enjoyed the foods of the countries represented. With all program directors together in one room, the event presented an opportunity to learn more about Central’s international programs.

Approximately 50 percent of Central students study abroad, compared to a national average of 14 percent. Central operates programs in Austria, England, France, Ghana, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Wales.
ATHLETICS UPDATES

Worst to first—Central surprises with men’s basketball crown

Exactly no one saw this coming. But then again, no team in Iowa Conference history had previously made the leap from last place in the league men’s basketball race to conference champions the following year. The fact that league coaches in a preseason poll picked Central to finish last again made it even sweeter when the Dutch cut down the nets in Kuyper Gym in late February.

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Robots are all around us these days. They exist as vacuums that automatically clean our floors and as components of cars that can park themselves. But while robots are functional and fun, the skills needed to build a robot and control it are also applicable in many other areas, according to Stephen Fyfe ’87, professor of computer science at Central. To promote these skills, Fyfe and students in the computer science department helped host a robotics competition that allowed high school students to test their talents in computer science. “There aren’t as many courses in computer science (in high schools) as there are in math and physics, so any exposure students can have at an earlier age is very important,” he says. He cites a coming shortage of computer professionals and sees a need to get students interested in the field.

While team members learn the technical skills of working with a robot, they also gain broader skills in programming, design and engineering that can prove valuable in many fields. “This goes way beyond robotics,” Fyfe says. The competition also introduced many students to Central College. “We wanted to show students that a discipline like computer science can be studied at a liberal arts college like Central,” Fyfe says. “We want to get them thinking about Central as an option.”

Not only do students learn important skills in computer science, they also learn what it means to be a courteous professional. FTC actually has a trademarked term for what it hopes to instill in young professionals: Gracious Professionalism. The idea encompasses emphasizing the value of others and respecting individuals and the community, all while doing high-quality work and competing to the best of their ability.

Fyfe says, “I really like that part of the competition. They learn how to work together, to be competitive and yet work with another team. So you see teams helping each other out even though later they might be competing against each other.”

During the Central competition, three teams qualified for the state level, which was held in February at the University of Iowa.

This June, high school students will have another chance to explore robots during a workshop Fyfe is hosting on campus. Students entering grades 8-10 can take part in a robotics programming summer camp June 9-13. They’ll learn how to program a robot using simple Python commands. Perhaps one day these students will use the skills they acquire to develop new solutions in computer science or engineering.
Central alumni find success with entrepreneurship.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP HAPPENS FOR MANY REASONS. Sometimes it’s born of necessity, while other times it results from years of planning and dreams. But three Central College grads seem to have one thing in common: a belief in what they are doing and a drive to follow through to make their businesses succeed.

Starting a business is risky. But these successful entrepreneurs were able to bring their visions to fruition. Skills they learned during college formed the foundation of their future enterprises, and today they are able to chart their own course in the business world.

Distinctive Custom Cabinetry routinely works on multimillion dollar properties, including the homes of the owner of the Arizona Cardinals football team and many athletes. “We provide custom cabinets and closets in-house, then we have our own custom wrought-iron fabricator who can custom design doors, railings and gates. One of our biggest advantages is we can offer builders a lot of services,” Poortinga says.

When creating a business plan for Distinctive Custom Cabinetry, Poortinga drew on the skills he learned while studying his major at Central. Finance has been especially beneficial, and he says, “Debela Birru was my advisor, and I remember trying to decide between marketing and finance for my focus, and he steered me toward finance. I’m so glad because owning your own business it’s so important to have a really good base and knowledge of numbers.”

Marc Poortinga ’98 and his wife Ellen Gallinger Poortinga ’04

"You have to have a lot of perseverance, because there are times when you really don’t feel like you can see the end in sight, but you keep on pushing yourself and persevere through everything.”

Marc Poortinga ’98

Every experience counts. That’s the message Marc Poortinga ’98 has for would-be entrepreneurs. When he started his business in 2008, he drew from a variety of experiences in order to make it succeed.

With a partner, Poortinga founded Distinctive Custom Cabinetry in Phoenix, Ariz. The business provides a variety of high-quality, custom home pieces including cabinets, closets and storage, millwork and ironwork. When the partners started the business, the economy was tough, but they saw that as an opportunity to grow with the market as it recovered. “You’re ready to grow when the market’s ready to grow,” Poortinga says. “Actually the market was bad in 2008, ’09 and ’10, so we had a little longer tough times than we expected, but since then it’s been really good.”

After majoring in business management with a focus on finance at Central, he worked eight years for Pella Windows, then moved to a smaller company. Seeing both sides allowed Poortinga to understand how a business runs. “With the smaller company people wear so many more hats,” he says. Both companies were in the window and door business, so Poortinga built up a large stable of knowledge in the industry, and when he moved to Phoenix, he made many contacts among builders that proved invaluable when striking out on his own.

Marc Poortinga ’98

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Marc Poortinga ’98
As Poortinga learned, starting a business requires skills in a variety of areas. Working for different companies helped him become well rounded, and he stresses the value of internships. “Internships are so important, and any experience is better than no experience,” he says. “A lot of people want to get this big-time job right out of college. I think it’s more important to get really good experience and do as many different things as you can because it all ties back together.”

Distinctive Custom Cabinetry now has more than 40 employees, and the thought that the business provides for all of their families drives Poortinga to succeed. He says, “It puts a little more pressure on us, with 40-some people relying on us.” The business has a team mentality, which suits Poortinga just fine. He played football at Central and says that experience was also part of his professional development—it helped him understand the dynamics of working as a group.

He says in both football and in business “you have to have a lot of perseverance, because there are times when you really don’t feel like you can see the end in sight, but you keep on pushing yourself and persevere through everything.”

Chris Rouw ‘93

Sometimes, starting a business requires flexibility. Chris Rouw ‘93 and his partners in Far Reach learned that lesson when they were launching their startup in 2007. The partners had worked together at an insurance company in Cedar Falls and decided they wanted to go into business for themselves. But deciding on exactly what that business would be required a bit of trial and error.

Rouw graduated from Central with majors in math and computer science. He knew he wanted to work in computer programming after taking a couple of classes in high school, and that feeling was reinforced during his first programming class in college. After graduation, he worked in Des Moines for five years at the Principal Financial Group, then moved to Cedar Falls with his wife.

While working at CUNA Mutual in Waverly, Rouw and some coworkers began talking about starting a company. Five of them developed a business plan to create software for K-12 schools, and in 2007 they left CUNA to found Far Reach.

But after doing some market research, the team learned that the K-12 software concept would be very challenging to implement. So, they changed course and began doing consulting work and building websites. This marked the beginning of Far Reach as a service and consulting company, specializing in web development, custom software and marketing.

But the company didn’t stop there. Rouw and partners began looking for opportunities to team up with people who had good ideas for businesses.

Margaret Street ‘85 turned a pastime into a successful business.

Margaret (Debner) Street ‘85 has in abundance. She has stuck with her business idea for almost 30 years and through several moves from one city to another.

Street majored in home economics at Central, but she hadn’t thought about turning her passion for sewing into a business until a move to Chicago after graduation required her to come up with a way to make money. She decided to start an alterations and sewing business in her home. She named it Street Clothes, and in the beginning finding clients was the biggest challenge.

Street first tried advertising in the Yellow Pages, which led to calls, but not the type she wanted. “I was really young and naive,” she says, citing callers who were more interested in discussing their legal problems than paying for alterations. But Street persevered, visiting shops like Jo-Ann Fabric and other sewing stores to leave her business card, and relying on word of mouth.

“Always tell people, I think either you’re an entrepreneur or you’re not. If you’re always thinking of different ways to solve problems; if you’re seeing how things could be improved, chances are you might be an entrepreneur.”

Chris Rouw ’93

Clients began calling, and Street was able to build a substantial business. She’s kept it going through moves to Iowa City, Minneapolis and most recently to Ames during the past year. Throughout the many years she’s been in business and the many moves, Street Clothes has ebbed and flowed. “Over the years it’s kind of morphed into more business when I had more time, less when I had less,” Street says.

One of the best things about running her own business has been the ability to stay home with her children and still make an income. “What appeals to me the most is you can set your own hours. Now I’m going to school, so I can do it when I have time around my school work,” Street says. She is taking classes to obtain her teaching license.

Street also values the loyal clients she’s had over the years. “I had clients who were mailing their pants to me to hem when I moved from Iowa City to Minneapolis,” she says. Creating great relationships with customers is something Street has learned to do well, and now she’s doing it again as she works to reach new clients in the Ames area.

To others who might have the itch to start a business, Street says, “Absolutely, go for it.” However, she cautions that people don’t necessarily have to jump in and invest all their money and time right from the start. “I started slow and it just gradually picked up for me,” she says.

Street has managed to keep her business going through various stages of her life, as well as ups and downs in the larger economy. For her, doing something she is passionate about makes it all worthwhile.

Launching a business requires a stick-with-it attitude. That’s something Margaret (Debner) Street ’85 has in abundance. She has stuck with her business idea for almost 30 years and through several moves from one city to another.

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Street has managed to keep her business going through various stages of her life, as well as ups and downs in the larger economy. For her, doing something she is passionate about makes it all worthwhile.
“What we look for is a collaboration where we can be the technical side and our partner is the subject matter expert,” Rouw says.

For example, Far Reach has invested in projects such as Mortgage MarketSmart, which provides a comprehensive mortgage market intelligence solution. Far Reach provided software and website development and has partnered with iEmergent on the project.

Rouw sees the creation of Far Reach as an opportunity to set his own path, though he says entrepreneurship requires sacrifices. “As a service company, instead of having one boss, or one or two people I report to, I’m working on behalf of many people. It’s challenging to keep those relationships going strong,” he says.

How can someone tell if entrepreneurship is the right path? Rouw says, “I always tell people, I think either you’re an entrepreneur or you’re not. If you’re always thinking of different ways to solve problems; if you’re seeing how things could be improved, chances are you might be an entrepreneur.”

But before people make the leap, he suggests they do their homework. “Talk to people who have been there and done that—get advice from people,” he says. One way Rouw has done that is to interact with other Central alumni. He’s connected with a number of other entrepreneurs over the years, as well as staying in contact with professors. “You need to have a team of advisers, people you can trust and you can go to,” he says.

Starting a business also requires good old-fashioned hard work and discipline, and Rouw says Central reinforced those things for him. “You have to have the base of hard work and you have to be self-motivated,” he says.

Students learn the skills needed to drive change and see results.

Can entrepreneurship be taught? Yes, says Wade Steenhoek, director of Central’s Martin Heerema Entrepreneurship Program. The program aims to give students the tools they need to start a venture or, perhaps more importantly, apply that entrepreneurial mindset at any organization for which they work.

This means seeing different ways of solving a problem. Steenhoek says he wants students to learn how to “conceptualize something that doesn’t necessarily exist today, to see a different way of doing it and figure out ‘how can I solve this problem in a way that’s valuable to someone else?’ That’s what entrepreneurs do.”

And while these skills are valuable when starting a business, they are also vital for anyone working within an organization. Steenhoek cites a study by IBM that revealed the No.1 skill CEOs are looking for in employees is creativity. “That’s problem solving,” Steenhoek says. “They wanted innovators who could solve problems.”

Central’s program is working to instill those skills in students. The Martin Heerema Endowment in Entrepreneurship was established in 2007, funded by an endowment from Bruce and Sandy Heerema. Today, the program offers courses in various aspects of entrepreneurship, which can culminate in a minor for students.

Steenhoek joined the program in fall 2011, and he brought with him a plan to focus the curriculum on the real world of entrepreneurial skills. This meant less time spent writing business plans and studying small businesses, and more emphasis on experiential learning. To make sure he used best-in-class curriculum, Steenhoek was certified in curriculum endorsed and funded by the Kaufman Foundation in Kansas City, a leading organization in entrepreneurship.

The program now begins with the course “Entrepreneurial Mindset” where students learn the basics of thinking like a problem solver. “It is very experiential. It’s the best real-world practice they can get.”

Later, students can put their skills to the test during Startup Semester. In this advanced class, students learn about business models and actually start and operate their own businesses, making real transactions with real customers.

“During the semester they identify their market, their customer, how they’ll reach them and what’s unique about their product, and then attempt to sell their services. So it’s very experiential. It’s the best real-world practice they can get,” Steenhoek says.

The program isn’t just geared toward business students but instead has an interdisciplinary focus. Steenhoek wants to see students across all disciplines learn the entrepreneurial mindset. To this end, he launched a new class during the spring semester called “Marketing Your Creative Self.” The course teaches creatives—artists, musicians, writers—how to market and sell their artistic services. Arts faculty helped design the class and lead it, and overall it’s designed to marry entrepreneurial and creative skills. At the end of the semester, students put on a pop-up fair to sell their creative wares.

So far, Steenhoek says demand for the Entrepreneurship Program has been high, especially when compared with entrepreneurship offerings at other colleges and universities. He sees the high level of interest reflecting what studies show about today’s students. “A lot of students want to do new things, but they don’t know what steps to take,” he says. “Among college students, 60 percent say they want to start their own business someday, yet fewer than 6 percent actually do. I understand that gap now. They’ve never been given the roadmap of how you do it.”

Providing that roadmap is what the entrepreneurial program is all about. Steenhoek calls it the Three E model: education, examples and experience. Students have the opportunity to try new things and take risks in a controlled environment. Startup Semester is the culmination of that journey, where students launch businesses or products to real customers.

Some of the projects so far have included a job placement board for the logistics industry, which resulted in real revenue for the student. Another project, a specialty product for the show cattle industry, is in development for sale in catalogs. During the most recent semester, projects included a remote controlled drone to perform aerial photography of crops, an e-waste recycling company to properly dispose of office computers, printers and monitors; and a children’s workshop/laboratory where kids can develop their creative skills. Whether or not these projects ultimately make money, the goal has already been achieved: Students have learned the skills needed to solve problems and bring new ideas to fruition.

Students learn the skills needed to drive change and see results.

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Wade Steenhoek

SPRING 2014
Grant McMartin ’93

For the Love of Art

says. “Since I did three different shows in October, I work in a couple of different styles, and you might start recognizing his work. Thye (his middle names) in the art world, and his hard work is paying off.

Of all the museums in all the world, Grant McMartin ’93 still prefers the Des Moines Art Center. After taking a field trip there as a child, McMartin set his life goal to become an artist, and his hard work is paying off.

McMartin tries to keep to a schedule that results in a lot of long hours. He often tries to get to the studio by 6 a.m. with a break in the afternoon before staying until he gets tired of painting. He may work long hours, but he has the freedom to work on the projects he chooses, and he equates that success to his general studies major at Central.

“One of the best parts of a liberal arts education is you are just so much more well-rounded and you can really look at things differently than just through your chosen major,” he says. “You look at different sides of things—you can see the parallels of art and business and how they can work together. That’s one of the biggest things that has helped me break through in the art industry.”

Whether you are strolling through campus (he has a piece displayed in the Roe Center) or through a local museum, look for McMartin’s rolling Iowa landscapes or abstract still life. He counts himself among the lucky artists who enjoys every aspect of the job, and with his Central education among his arsenal of paintbrushes, expect to see him painting his way into museums across the country. This fall, he will have a solo show at Central’s homecoming.

Molly Lehr Blythe ’08

Jack of All Trades

Let’s talk art…and theatre…and music. It’s time to get right-brain creative with three Central alums that are painting, acting and singing big in the fine arts world.

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When there isn’t a role for him in an upcoming Theatre Central performance, Lindley found a way to create one. Whether that was through directing one-acts or putting on a reading of his favorite play, he knew that exposure was key. And thanks to his persistence and direction from theatre professors, Central taught him a prized skill.

“Theatre Central is small, so it requires you to be a jack of all trades. That is so valuable in the theatre business, especially early on in your career when you might be hired for summer stock to act in two shows, build sets for one and run wardrobe for the whole season,” Lindley added. “Central made me a better person. I met the best people there and it made me value friendship and the families we get to create.”

Following his graduation from Central with a theatre major, Lindley found work traveling the country as a touring actor and director, and then made his way back to the Midwest in the Windy City. In 1997, he enrolled at The Second City, the school of improvisation campaigns, including one for Buitoni Pasta. The full-time artist has only been focusing solely on his art career for seven years—before he decided to save up money to be away from his job for two years to become an artist, McMartin worked at Pella Corporation and an insurance company. His general studies major (now integrated studies) prepared him to do a lot of different things, but what he really wanted to was to set out a plan to support himself with art because there is nothing else he would rather be doing.

“I am happy all day long,” McMartin says of when he’s working. “I get to experiment and play and do what I love every day. I could be painting along and turn around and look at the clock and it could be 9 p.m. Sometimes I’ll get mad because I’ll have to stop and go home and get dinner. I feel like I’m retired!” It seems like all play and no work, but McMartin tries to keep to a schedule that results in a lot of long hours. He often tries to get to the studio by 6 a.m. with a break in the afternoon before staying until he gets tired of painting. He may work long hours, but he has the freedom to work on the projects he chooses, and he equates that success to his general studies major at Central.

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Rob Lindley ’95 isn’t one for pigeon-holing. If there wasn’t a role for him in an upcoming Theatre Central performance, Lindley found a way to create one. Whether that was through directing one-acts or putting on a reading of his favorite play, he knew that exposure was key. And thanks to his persistence and direction from theatre professors, Central taught him a prized skill.

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It took just one knock on a door to change the entire course of Molly Lehr Blythe’s (’08) career. After transferring from a large state university following her freshman year, Blythe was looking to get involved on campus when she saw a flyer for the Vocal and Instrumental Jazz and Pop Combos musical group and stumbled into the office of professor of music Gabriel Espinosa ’79.

Blythe was just interested in music as an extracurricular—she was passionate about psychology and a member of the soccer team and she didn’t think she had the time to commit completely to another group. “I started singing in Combos as a side thing because I wanted to be a clinical psychologist and I was very serious about it,” she says. “I wasn’t going to do music and Gabriel kept telling me that I should think about a music career.”

Blythe decided to step down from the soccer team and focus on singing the following year. She performed in numerous concerts and found that although she loved psychology and the professors within the department, she couldn’t shake her love of music.

“(Espinosa) kept giving me opportunities to excel, so, at the end of my three years at Central, I was doing a lot of psychology, but I was also very involved with music.”

But Blythe is quick to point out that music and psychology go hand-in-hand. “Music and psychology aren’t really all that different,” she says. “Each seeks to know and express things about the human condition and focuses heavily on relationships. What I’m finding is I’m using all of what I learned in psychology in what I’m doing right now. I never think of it in terms of a black and white—I don’t switch back and forth. In my mind I’m using both degrees that I have to the fullest.”

Currently, Blythe teaches music education at St. John Berchmans School in Chicago, Ill., where she oversees the education of kindergartners through fifth grade students. After graduating from Central, Blythe gave herself a year to decide if she wanted to pursue music and go to music schools. During that time she was an aide in a special needs classroom while applying to music schools across the country. Today, the news came that she was accepted into the prestigious Berklee School of Music in Boston, Mass.

Blythe studied performance and arranging where she was involved in a lot of different projects vocally and as a professional arranger. She has been able to share the stage with Terri Lynn Carrington, Ivan Lins, Kathy Mattea, Oleta Adams and her mentor, Espinosa. Currently, she says 90 percent of her day is teaching, but her teacher’s schedule lends itself well to flexibility. Depending on which projects present themselves, she could be spending more time writing or performing. In the past she has performed with Espinosa’s band, Ashanti, and she even had a small role in Espinosa’s 2012 CD, “Celebrando,” as a back-up singer.

“Gabriel changed everything for me,” she explains. “He pushed me and challenged me. He took me as a student and allowed me to do projects professionally with him doing songs and styles that may have been over my head and with players who were, in terms of experience and ability, leaps and bounds ahead of me. He is a Berklee alum as well, so he knew what I needed to do to be successful and held me accountable.”

While Espinosa was preparing Blythe to tackle the music industry, Central was giving her the experience she needed to thrive within the fine arts community.

“The common thing I see in my Central years and my music experience is that I started out thinking I was going to do one thing and ended up doing another,” she says. “Central gave me a chance to explore everything that I wanted to do which gave me the skills and the freedom to be kind of like a Renaissance girl. I got to do so many things and now that helps me stick my fingers in a lot of different areas and that is exactly the skill that I needed to be successful in the music industry.”

Don't let people try to put you in a category or tell you to master one thing.
After spending eight years in the Marine Corps, marrying his high school sweetheart and majoring in psychology as an undergraduate, professor of religion Chad Pierce came to a realization while on a trip to Israel—he loved reading the Bible in its context.

A Holland, Mich. native, Pierce was raised in a Christian home and attended a Christian school, but it wasn’t until earning a psychology degree from Calvin College in Michigan and choosing to travel to Jerusalem University College for a master’s degree that he knew religion would play such a large role in his life.

“I like to learn with my feet,” Pierce says. “So going to Jerusalem really helped me learn—a lot of our class was field trips. It just dawned on me that when we would go to these historical sites and study history and religion, we are studying real people. When we are hiking up mountains in Jerusalem and learning about the Bible, you learn a lot about people.”

Jerusalem wasn’t the only place he studied—after receiving a Master of Arts in historical backgrounds of the New Testament, Pierce also got a Master of Divinity at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich. and a doctorate in early Judaism at Durham University in England.

By the time he was finished with school, he felt he had found his career path. “I wanted to be a minister,” he says. “I originally thought about joining the Marine Corps after I went to a Marine Corps Officers Candidate School and I was kind of set on being a career marine, but I switched to being a pastor. I knew I wanted to be in a service type of profession.”

Pierce served as a minister in the Reformed Church of America for five years before pursuing a career in education—and it all began with a few acquaintances. “I happened to go to a conference, only to see all of my friends who had become professors in Israel,” he explains. “I was waiting by the elevator and one of my friends introduced me to a professor who studied the same academic area as me. He sparked my interest in teaching and that’s what began the journey.”

For five years, Pierce taught at Calvin College—he started at Central in 2008 and built a life in Pella with his wife, Jodi, and their three children, Jenna, 12, Michael, 9, and David, 5. He and his wife are also in the process of adopting a daughter from Haiti.

Although he has been teaching for many years, he is still active in the church. Pierce is the president of the Central Iowa Classis for RCA churches in Des Moines and Pella—and you might find him speaking in a few services on occasion. And every year he takes students to Israel—Central students are among the numbers that go, but he partners with Pella Christian High School to help younger students delve into their faith.

“The trips have been primarily faith-driven trips,” he says. “We go and study the material as historically as we can, but I really want the students to connect with and explore their faith in a new way.”

In his Central classes, Pierce wants to challenge his students, and not just academically.

“I try and introduce students to the academic study of religion, but at the same time showing them how this can help deepen their faith even though it’s challenging their faith—it’s a real shock for Christians when I start to talk about who wrote what, who copied what from whom and students can be uncomfortable with the ideas. For students of different faiths or no faiths, I like to introduce them to an informed understanding of the Christian tradition.”

Whether it’s in the classroom, from the pulpit or on a mountaintop, Pierce is finding ways to learn from others, study the Bible and connect with his faith all the while teaching and fostering Central students’ curiosity. Pierce is drawn to Central, not only because he has the freedom to teach religion at Central, but because of its commitment to diversity and multiculturalism.

“I’ve had many amazing opportunities since arriving at Central,” he says. “I have taught in Merida, Mexico, worked with fantastic faculty and students and led Christian ministry emphasis which allows students to explore seminary. There are so many ways to help students as well as engage the community. Teaching is a challenging, yet rewarding, experience.”
Join alumni, families and friends at homecoming to enjoy a variety of events for all ages. For a full schedule, visit www.central.edu/alumni/homecoming. Highlights include:

2014 HOMECOMING: OCTOBER 3-5

FRIDAY OCT. 3

2-5 p.m. Maytag Student Center Open House.
6 p.m. Lemming Race.
6-7:30 p.m. Street Festival: alumni and family barbecue, pop rally, coronation, street party.
6:30 p.m. Athletics Hall of Honor banquet.
7:30-9 p.m. Alumni social time.

10:30 a.m. Alumni award presentation and lunch.
11 a.m. Tailgate under the big tent.
1 p.m. Football: Central vs. Wartburg.
Postgame—6 p.m. Party on the Plaza. Join us for Happy Hour on the Plaza!
7 p.m. Alumni gathering.

SUNDAY OCT. 5

9 a.m. A Cappella Choir assisting in worship at Second Reformed Church.
11 a.m. Sunday brunch.
1 p.m. Football: Central vs. Wartburg.
Postgame—6 p.m. Party on the Plaza. Join us for Happy Hour on the Plaza!
7 p.m. Alumni gathering.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

• Join Central InterVarsity alumni and friends from the last 20+ years as we celebrate the legacy of IV on Central’s campus.
• Art Exhibit from Grant McMartin ’93.
• Central College Theatre Production: The Game’s Afoot (or Holmes for the Holidays) by Ken Ludwig.
• Study Abroad mini reunions
• A Cappella Choir alumni are invited to sing with the A Cappella Choir during 9:45 a.m. worship at Second Reformed Church.

For information about Jack Walvoord ’54, Joan Wassenaar Walvoord ’54 and Gary Timmer ’55, see the ‘60s.
Kenneth Van ’52, retired professor of philosophy at Lyndon State College, announced the publication of his autobiography, “Up the Hayloft Ladder,” which traces the joys and rigors of a farm boy in a Dutch Calvinist culture in southwest Minnesota in the later years of the Great Depression. In the book, Ken devotes a chapter to his experiences at Central. The central theme of the book is the author’s gratitude that life gave him a second chance at a vocation, and happy marriage. He enjoys maple sugaring, softball, hunting and early American antiques. Ken and wife Frances live in Sheffield, Vt.
Jan Van Zomeren Beran ’53 traveled to the United Nations headquarters in New York, N.Y., March 10 – 21 as part of the Presbyterian Church’s delegation to advocate for gender equity with the 58th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Jan’s assignment as an advocate for the delegation is a two-year commitment. Jan and husband George live in Ames.
Marian Ross Langenberg ’58 spends her winters in Mesa, Ariz., and otherwise lives in Des Moines. She attended Central from 1954 – 56 and graduated from Iowa State. She taught in public schools for more than 30 years before her retirement. She has wonderful memories from her college years at Central, especially the choir trip to California in 1956.

For information about Mark D’Cecco ’94 and Bruce Hesvold ’83, see the ‘90s.
Jon Kuyper ’64 is executive director of Jacobs Concert Series in Augusta, Ga., where he lives with wife Linda Barstler.
Jon Kuyper ’69 came out of retirement to serve the Central Square Community Church/UCC as minister of special events. Jon and husband Angelo DiMaria spend the winter in Moore Haven, Fla., and the summer at their home in the village of
The career began in 1979 in New York when he and wife Janva Waseumann Wasewan '64, Garey De Cook '64, his wife Maurine and Harold's close friend were preparing for the Annual Student Reunion. She has started a new set of classes teaching oil painting, whether as the artist or teacher. She has started a new set of classes teaching oil painting at the Charlotte Cultural Center, and she and her students are preparing for the Annual Student Competition.

**CLASS OF 1965 REUNION**

Bea Wener Dolby '65 and husband Harold '65 enjoy a reunion every year with Harold's high school classmate, Wilbur Wasewan '64, his wife Janva Waseumann Wasewan '64, Garey De Cook '64, his wife Maurine and Harold's close friend were preparing for the Annual Student Reunion. She has started a new set of classes teaching oil painting, whether as the artist or teacher. She has started a new set of classes teaching oil painting at the Charlotte Cultural Center, and she and her students are preparing for the Annual Student Competition.

**THE '70S**

For information about Mary Hay Heerema '73, Diane Huddle Koester '73, Bruce Crane '73 and George Mares '76, see the '80s.

Bruce Carpenter '70 continues to serve United Methodist Churches in the Central Texas Annual Conference. Brixie and wife Judy live in Corsicana.

Larry Henning '71 of Washington, D.C., is assistant program manager Europe and Black Sea for the Naval Sea Systems Command.

Allan Raynor '76 relocated after 30 years as the vice of social consciousness of Long Island in 2012. Allan's long and varied career began in 1979 in New York when he and wife to work at Glucci on the Avenue and ended at The Brookville Church in 2012. He was inducted into The Long Island Press Publix Hall of Fame after being named one of the 50 Most Powerful People on Long Island for five consecutive years. The Long Island Business News named Allan to The Influential – Ten People Who Changed Long Island. Through the years he was profiled by the NY Times, Newsday and other Long Island media. CNN and the top three networks regularly assign his opinion on immigration, undocumented workers, homeless people and other issues of social concern. His most notable career was attended by a wide range of groups from day laborers to government officials. Allan relocated to Mexico City, Mexico, where he continues to travel.

Michael Niendorf '79 is tour manager for Blue Martie Journeys in Ankeny, where he lives with wife Janja.

**THE '80S**

For information about Greta DeCook McCarty '81, see the '90s. For information about Larry Hayep '81, Steve Kowchuck '81, Don Konkon '82 and Robin Rossman Konkon '82 see the '90s.

Deb Benton Geesey '82 relocated from her teaching position after 33 years. Deb and husband Karen Konkon of Des Moines continue to travel to Alaska in the summers. This year she finally got to see the beautiful fall foliage in the Northeast. They are looking forward to the birth of their daughter this summer.

Helen Ackerdon Siberich '84 is a benefits specialist and human resource manager at Fairchild Sports in St. Petersburg, Fla. Helen and husband Michael live in Tampa. Margaret DeBowen Street '85 of Arvada started classes at Iowa State University in January to obtain her teaching license in FCS.

Michael Esser '87 is a Visa coordinator for Schwab All Sports in West Des Moines. Michael and wife Donna Taylor Esser '80 live in Westland, Dear. John is a professor at Southeastern Community College in Creston.

John Fisher '87 was named CEO and president of First American Bank. John and wife Julie potthoff Fisher '80 live in Naples, Fla. Julie is a corporate counselor for Mask Sports Lighting.

Mary Ann Page '81 is preparing her second year as part of the Phoenix Children's Chorus artistic staff, where she is an accompanist and theory instructor for the Cadet Choir. Mary also serves as an elementary music educator and choral director for grades K-6 at Summit Academy in Mesa. Mary and husband Jim live in Mesa, Ariz., with their son.

Susan Healy '88 of West Des Moines, is a fashion designer and Los Angeles area clothing designer, Carol Anderson (Cabio). Lisa Boman Harsh '89 is the student success advisor at Black Hills State University. Lisa and husband Doug live in Spearfish, S.D. They are the parents of two children.

**THE '90S**

For information about Janene Taylor Esser '90, see the '80s. For information about Myers Dysck '90, see the '80s.

Weston Staley DeWaard '90 is a teacher associate for the Pella Community School District. Husband Spencer DeWaard '89 is a business manager.

Taj Shabaz '91 was featured in Marco Santanta's press in The Des Moines Register “14 to Watch: Love of Learning Guides Startup Mentor.” Taj Shabaz has the idea for a business incubator. He has been a mentor at several startups at the tech-transfer based business incubator Startup City Des Moines that debuted in Oct. 2011. Taj and wife Karen Spencer DeWaard '91 live in Grimes with their two children. Karen is in the Systems Consulting Department at Advanced Technology Group in Des Moines. Cory Hall '92 is vice president at The Dana Company in Des Moines. Cory and wife by the team he coaches at Des Moines North High School for playing a major role in their remarkable story. The Polwar Shuers basketball team was ranked—noteworthy accomplishment considering as freshmen this team won just three of their games. Their story is filled with personal comebacks and they give Coach Ryan kudos for the role he’s played in their lives and off the court. The boulder he carries is brought by many other rocks surrounding him including his assistant coach Taylor Phillips '06 of Altoona. The two, along with the team they coach, were featured in The Des Moines Register.

Melissa Cinda Hollard '92 live in Urbandale with their two children. Melissa is a buyer at John Deere Des Moines Works in Ankeny. Daniel DeCook '90 of Pella, and business partner The Horenea '88 of Pella, unveiled one of the most exciting events in the 30 year history of Heritage Lace—the licensing agreement to design, manufacture and sell home decor and textiles like tablecloths and napkins inspired by the popular public television series “Downton Abbey.” Dan’s cousin, Greta DeCook McCarty ‘81, is eager to get at the look of the product line, which will be featured in home goods and gift store, Sisters, in West Des Moines’ Valley Junction shopping district. The producers of the British television series, NBCUniversal International Television Production were impressed by Heritage Lace, a family-run company that was founded by the fathers of Dan and Tim, Mark DeCook ‘64 and Bruce Heerema ‘88.

Sarah Kahn Henderson ‘96 was named to the Top 20 Most Influential People in the Imaging Industry for 2013 by The Week in Imaging. Sarah is the director of MPS operations at West Fifth of a grandparent’s company that was founded by the fathers of Dan and Tim, Mark DeCook ‘64 and Bruce Heerema ‘88.

For information about Daniel Beyer '04 received the Young Professionals Connection Young Professional of the Year Award in late 2013, and in January he was named to the Des Moines Business Record’s 2014 Forty Under 40. Dan, who is a third-generation representative at Kabel Business Services in West Des Moines, sits as a board member of the Des Moines Business Record. Dan, who is a third-generation representative at Kabel Business Services in West Des Moines, sits as a board member of the Des Moines Business Record.
Where are they now?

Megan Clayberg served Central for 14 years coaching the volleyball team to three national titles and teaching in the exercise science department from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. She is now a full-time physical education teacher at Polk High School and cares for her family.

“I enjoyed as many aspects of the work I did at Central,” she says. “But honestly, the best part of coaching at the college level is building relationships with those young women, sharing life with them.”

Clayberg can often be found in the bleachers supporting her children in one of their many sporting activities. Watching her children play has become one of her main passions since leaving Central.

“I know that Central was the right place to be at the time, and when it was time to be done and be done with my family, I knew that as well,” Clayberg says. “Central was so gracious to allow me to follow my heart’s desire on both courts—when I came and when it was time to be done.”

To read the full Q&A with Megan Clayberg, visit civitas.central.edu.

In Memoriam

Muriel Mouw Bell '43 of Storm Lake, June 20

Devent Van De Veest '43 of Joliet, Ill., Mar. 3

Elise Van Heukelom Van Zante '43 of Dike, Oct. 20

Stanley Bergman '49 of Clinton, Jan. 24

Lloyd Southfield '52 of Minneota, Jan. 11

Walter Scherman '71 of Schamburg, Ill., Feb. 18

Chris Nelson '73 of Corona, Calif., Jan. 13
How does a class change the course of your career?

Rachel Jordan Lindstrom ’10 never intended to be a sociology or anthropology major—but now she has a master’s in marriage and family therapy and is on her way to a doctorate in sociology. Lindstrom was prepared to declare a business major before the course of her life was turned upside down by one class.

“After taking a sociology of families class with Dawn Reece (associate professor of sociology) it really seemed like a good fit and something that I might want to do,” Lindstrom recalls. “It was easy to switch to a different major at Central because I had already completed most of my required courses.”

During the class, Lindstrom read the required book, “Alone Together,” which studies factors contributing to dysfunctional and healthy marriages in the U.S. She then tacked on an honors credit to her regular coursework to study families, and now she is on her way to her dream job of investigating demographics for the U.S. Census Bureau or working with a company like Pew Research Center. With everything she has accomplished in her academic career so far, Lindstrom can’t picture beginning her academic journey anywhere but Central.

“It just made sense to me to continue on,” she says. “I enjoyed getting to know my professors and I couldn’t imagine going to a large university like a lot of people in my current program,” she says. “Central opened up a lot of doors for me that I couldn’t even envision at the time.”

Read more about Rachel’s story online at civitas.central.edu.
A Path to Nonprofits

Michelle Bahl Raymer ’06 has made a habit of taking the road less traveled. She did this literally through service work with the Peace Corps in Guinea, West Africa, as well as through her career path in the nonprofit sector.

Raymer’s fascination with the wider world began during college at Central, where she triple majored in political science, Spanish and international studies. During a semester studying abroad in Granada, Spain, she learned to view the world from a global perspective and knew she wanted to travel more in the future.

Post-college, the Peace Corps presented a great option to serve abroad. “Right after graduation, my husband and I got married and 11 days later we left for the Peace Corps,” Raymer says. The couple wanted to do service work internationally, and they chose the Peace Corps because it also provided three months of intensive language, cultural and technical training in the country before their work began.

While in Guinea, Raymer worked teaching English. After eight months in the country, government unrest led to volunteers being pulled out. But once back in the U.S., Raymer continued looking for ways to make a difference through her work. She started making a name for herself in the Des Moines nonprofit sector, first volunteering for AmeriCorps VISTA then eventually being hired on as a staff member.

When grant funding ended for that position—a common occurrence in the nonprofit world—Raymer worked at Community Housing Initiatives, an organization dedicated to building affordable housing across the state. Later, she worked for Community Youth Concepts and recently took a position with the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. She also serves as secretary and was one of the founders of the Des Moines branch of the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. The group focuses on providing young professionals in the nonprofit field with development opportunities such as networking and training.

Though a career in nonprofits may not be top-of-mind for most college students, Raymer says she wishes more students looked at the field as an option. “During college I don’t know if I really thought about nonprofits as a professional career path,” she says, “but I knew I wanted to do something that would have a bigger purpose. Coming back to the United States after the Peace Corps … I realized that was where my passion lay.”

Raymer looks back to her time at Central as providing a firm foundation for her career. She says her political science classes continue to inform her work today, as well as her study abroad experience in Spain. “I learned so much there,” she says.

To read the full story about Michelle, visit civitas.central.edu!