

BELLIN COLLEGE
forward

Spring/Summer 2025

A newsletter for alumni and friends of Bellin College



FUELING TWO PASSIONS

Ashley Williams excels on the track and in the classroom with the help of donor scholarships

p. 8

A Message From the President



Dear Friends of Bellin College,

As we close out the spring semester, we have accomplished so many things since our last Bellin College Forward publication. We reflect with gratitude on the growth and progress we've made, which wouldn't be possible without your continued support.

Thanks to your generosity and commitment, Bellin College has taken remarkable strides in advancing our mission.

- Celebrated our largest commencement, which included the inaugural class from our Doctor of Physical Therapy program
- Engaged with over 260 students through the Healthcare Academy
- Launched innovative programs through CASTLE (Center for Academic Success, Teaching and Learning Excellence), formally known as our Student Success Center, by serving over 2500 student appointments

Your support helps us create opportunities that transform lives. Whether it's through scholarships, new learning spaces or amenities for our students, every gift strengthens the experiences and services provided at Bellin College.

As you review this edition of the Bellin College Forward, we welcome four new members of our Advancement team. This team brings together a group of talented professionals dedicated to strengthening our fundraising efforts, building strategic partnerships, and advancing the goals of our organization. With diverse experience in donor relations and community engagement, this team is equipped to drive innovation and growth in everything we do.

This edition highlights a few of our many scholarships, including the "Be Like Bryant" Scholarship and the Brian LaViolette Scholarship. Bryant Hodkiewicz, class of 2000 who died in Feb. 2024, led by example and cared deeply for all the patients in his care. He brought both skill and compassion into every day of his career. Brian LaViolette tragically lost his life in a swimming accident at the age of 15. The scholarship was established in memory of Brian, and honors hard work and community service; offering inspiration, and sharing in the belief that "The Journey is the Reward."

We also celebrate Robert Clausen, a Bellin College Board of Trustee member who has served for 40 years on the board. Bob's commitment to financial success has shaped the college and its forward progress. He has touched thousands of our students through his dedication to our mission of educating healthcare professionals.

In addition, Chris Woleske is retiring as the Bellin Health and Bellin and Gundersen Health System (Emplify), Executive Vice President and Bellin Region President. She guided the college to develop a strategic presence at the system, supported the college's strategic plan, and helped to secure a solid future for sustainability. We want to say thank Chris for her dedication, commitment, and guidance during the past seven years.

As you page through this edition, please enjoy all the excitement and forward progress that Bellin College has achieved from student and alumni stories to our generous donors. I welcome you to stop by and visit us any time and at either location. Thank you for believing in us and the transformative power of higher education. I am deeply grateful for your continued generosity, advocacy, and pride in what we do at Bellin College.

With Gratitude,

Connie J. Boerst

Connie J. Boerst, EdD, RN
President/CEO
Bellin College

4

Advancement Team Update

Meet the Bellin College Advancement Department

6

Be Like Bryant

OSMS honors Alumni and supports current students

8

Racing Toward a Future in Healing

Student Spotlight - Ashley Williams BSRS 2026

10

Alumni & Donor Spotlights

Deborah Breunig & The Brian LaViolette Foundation

12

A Woman of Many Dreams

Student Spotlight - Lily Derenne BSN 2027

14

Congratulations Class of 2025!

May 2025 Commencement

Contents

Mission

Bellin College is dedicated to educating healthcare professionals through innovation, leadership, and service that promotes lifelong learning and excellence.

Vision

Bellin College will be the leader in health science higher education.

Values

Excellence – being the best

Integrity – honest and ethical behavior

Community – collaboration and inclusion

Caring – empowering relationships based on empathy and respect

Follow Us!



Meet the Advancement Team!



Morgan Fuller - VP of Advancement

Hi, I'm Morgan Fuller, I am the Vice President of Advancement for Bellin College. I am new to Bellin College as of September 2024. I've known from a young age that fundraising is what I was meant to do and I've been very fortunate to be a part of several non-profits working to improve their fundraising efforts during my career. I come to Bellin College with 11 years of professional fundraising experience all in different subsets – Annual Giving, Event Planning, Major Gifts, etc. Through this experience, I've learned at a deep level that relationships and meaningful connections can create lasting impact. I'm excited to be bringing this experience and vision to Bellin College.

As you'll see, we are a brand-new team, and we are eager to get to know YOU – our donors, alumni, and community. Thank you for picking up this Bellin College Forward magazine and learning more about who we are.

Kayla Lindal - Development Specialist

Hi, I'm Kayla Lindal, Development Specialist at Bellin College since December 2024. I'm proud to work alongside our generous supporters, local businesses, and foundations to strengthen our mission. I also have the joy of connecting with our amazing alumni as the college's alumni relations contact. With a passion for building strong communities through strategic fundraising and meaningful relationships, Bellin College is where my purpose meets impact.

Fun fact: My grandmother was a returning adult student and graduated from Bellin College in 1994 with a Bachelor's in Nursing—continuing the legacy makes this work even more meaningful.



Alei Mandli - Advancement Operations Coordinator

Hi there, I'm Alei Mandli, the Advancement Operations Coordinator at Bellin College. I began my role in December 2024 and am proud to support the college's mission through the management of scholarships, data integrity, project coordination, and donor stewardship. I work behind the scenes to ensure scholarship funds are accurately tracked, donor and alumni records are well-maintained, and key projects run smoothly. I also help foster meaningful relationships with donors through timely acknowledgments and impact reporting.

This work is especially rewarding because it directly supports students' educational journeys and strengthens the lasting connections between our college and its supporters. This is especially important work to me as I received scholarships to attend college and would not be where I am today without them!

Nicole Deprey - Special Events Coordinator

Hello, I'm Nicole Deprey, joined the advancement team as the Special Events Coordinator in February 2025. I bring more than two decades of experience from Bellin Health (now Emplify Health), where I worked as a Certified Medical Assistant since 2001. My medical background includes pediatrics, surgical clinic support, EPIC implementation projects, and employee health. Also, I'm a graduate of the Certified Nursing Assistant program at Bellin College (2002).

In addition to my healthcare career, I have a long-standing passion for event planning. I have organized a wide range of events for her son's activities—including baseball and hockey team functions, graduations, and birthday parties—and have collaborated with other coordinators on numerous weddings both on Washington Island and in Green Bay. Born and raised on Washington Island, I enjoy spending quality time with family and friends in the special place I still call home. In my free time I enjoy camping, watching spots, and scrapbooking.



**Has your contact information changed?
Please update it using our QR code!**

Board of Trustees Update



Chris Woleske - After more than 26 years with Bellin Health and Bellin and Gundersen Health System, Executive Vice President and Bellin Region President Chris Woleske has announced her retirement, effective July 1, 2025. Woleske has served in many leadership roles during her time with the system, as well as

on the Bellin College Board of Trustees since 2018. The Bellin College Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and administration, want to thank Chris for her dedication, commitment, and guidance during the past seven years. And thank her for her transformational leadership and care of all of us at Bellin College.



Robert Clausen - Robert "Bob" Clausen has retired from the Bellin College Board of Trustees after serving for 40 years. Bob filled a variety of roles, such as board chair, Finance Committee Chair, member of the Investment and Development Committees and a multitude of other duties and responsibilities.

Through his thoughtful leadership, tireless advocacy, and strategic insight, Bob has left an indelible mark on our organization. Bob was presented with an honorary degree at the most recent Commencement ceremony as a thank you for his years on board.



Be Like Bryant

A Legacy of Compassion in Nursing

Being a great nurse requires more than just clinical training, it requires heart. While mastering technical skills is vital, soft skills like empathy, a positive attitude, and the ability to communicate with patients and colleagues set a good nurse apart from a great nurse. Bryant Hodkiewicz embodied this balance perfectly, bringing both skill and compassion into every day of his career.

Bryant graduated from Bellin College in 2000 and started working at Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Specialists (OSMS) as an orthopedic nurse, where he not only stood for his passion for his career, but also for building meaningful relationships with everyone he encountered.

“In every facet of his life, Bryant led by example and went the extra mile for others.” said Sandy Fragale, Chief Executive Officer at OSMS, “For his patients, Bryant would go out of his way to wow them by calling every single one of them after surgery to follow up and check in to see how they were doing. To go even further in his community of Oconto Falls, he would personally stop at his patients’ houses to check in on them. He was always showing his patients how much he truly cared about them, and letting his co-workers know he would always be someone to turn to.”

After a battle with illness, Bryant passed away in February 2024. His family and colleagues sought out a way to honor his life and pass on the values that Bryant lived by. **The OSMS annual scholarship “Be Like Bryant” was created to inspire the next generation of nurses to slow down and practice their soft skills of empathy, leadership and community building, just like Bryant had.**



Bryant with his wife and three kids

“Be Like Bryant is defined in this way: work hard on developing meaningful relationships. Be willing to share your skills and knowledge to educate and empower those around you. Show unlimited empathy with every interaction. And in Bryant’s own words, ‘slow down and realize what is important and what you are thankful for.’” says Fragale.

“There is no need for competition, as in healthcare, everyone is equal and united to meet the same goal.”



Bryant participating in one of many races with his OSMS team



Bryant with his daughters and dog



Bryant in his element in the operating room



Racing Toward a Future in Healing

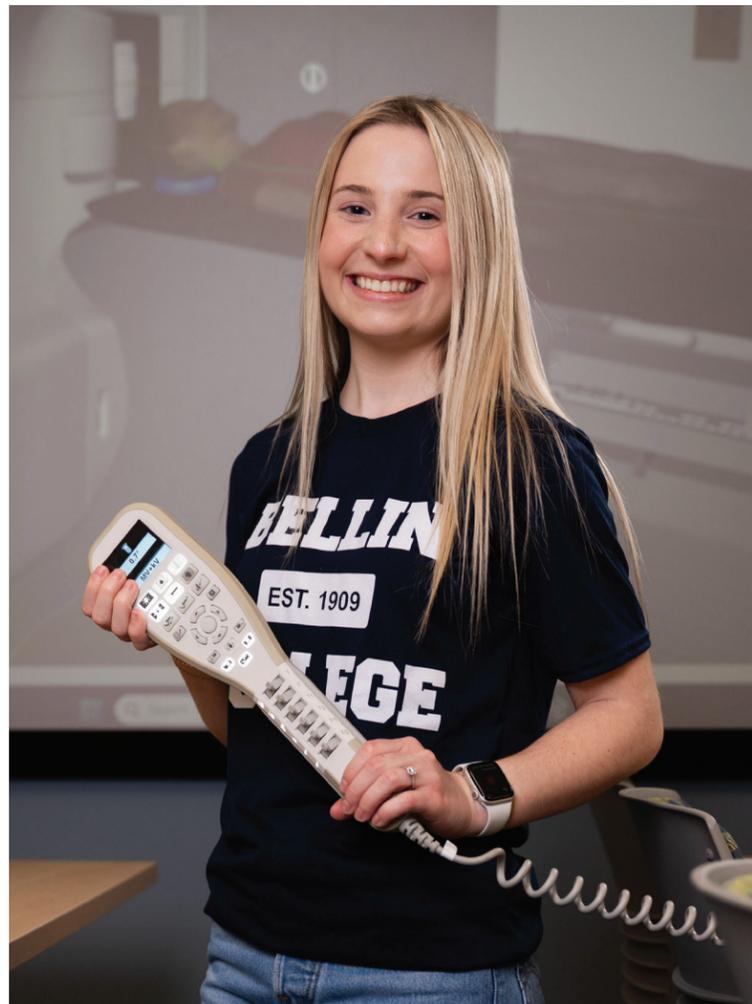
Ashley Williams, Bachelor of Science in Radiation Therapy student

“Do you want to race?” her dad asked in 2012, offering an opportunity to the girl who had already piloted everything from a small snowmobile to the family lawn tractor. Ashley Williams said yes, climbed in and never left.

Twelve seasons, two Rookie-of-the-Year awards and multiple track championships later, she now steers a non-wing sprint car across Midwest clay with her father turning wrenches as her crew chief.

“I always enjoyed being behind the wheel,” says Ashley, “Once we got my first race car and I hit the track, I discovered my passion and love for the sport. Since then, I’ve raced every chance I could get. Over the years, I’ve moved up through different classes, stepping into bigger, faster cars and sharpening my skills against tougher competition.”

A second, equally defining realization followed as Ashley started thinking about where to begin her college career.



Ashley in the radiation therapy lab with the VERT simulator

“I knew I wanted a healthcare career where I could make a difference in people’s lives,” Ashley says.

Bellin College’s Bachelor of Science in Radiation Therapy answered with the same spark of purpose that Ashley felt behind the wheel. Direct program acceptance, hands-on labs, and faculty who know every student by name convinced her that precision and compassion could share the same lane.

“When I toured Bellin College, it just felt right. I’m proud to be a part of a school that truly goes the extra mile,” said Ashley. “When I first learned about the field, something immediately clicked. I love the idea of not only providing treatment but also being a familiar, supportive face for patients throughout some of their most difficult moments.”

Between long weekends on the track and hours studying and working toward her degree, Ashley dives headfirst into her passions and has mastered balancing both.

“Racing demands a lot of time and commitment, both on and off the track, more than many people realize,” Ashley remarked. “From April through October, racing fills nearly every weekend. Each week, we perform routine maintenance on the car to ensure it’s in top condition and ready to compete. I am incredibly lucky to have my dad as my crew chief—he handles much of the work while I am away at school, which allows me to stay competitive at a high level.”

Ashley’s support stretches beyond her racing team at home in Elmo Lake, Minnesota. She has received multiple scholarships, including Bellin College donor scholarships, which ease tuition costs and allows her to focus on her studies, and even create on-campus organizations such as the Radiation Therapy Club.

“These scholarships have had a significant impact on my college journey, not only easing the financial burden but also opening up new opportunities,” said Ashley. “They have allowed me to focus more on my studies to pursue my academic goals, continue racing, have social and family time, and be an active part of the college community, without the constant worry of tuition costs.”

Ashley strives to support her college the way she has always felt supported. A fresh Bellin College decal on her

sprint car signals a partnership that travels far beyond campus.

“Having the Bellin College logo on my race car and receiving their support means more to me than words can fully express,” said Ashley. “Displaying it in such a prominent place offers a chance to introduce the college to an audience that may not have otherwise heard of it. It also allows me to proudly represent a school I deeply admire and hopefully inspire potential students to explore the amazing programs and opportunities Bellin has to offer.”

Before Ashley graduates in the spring of 2026 with her Bachelor of Science in Radiation Therapy, she will travel to Jacksonville, Florida, to complete her clinical and Ashley knows that the encouragement of her racing team and Bellin College will still be felt.

“The support from Bellin feels personal and genuine,” said Ashley. “And it drives me to give my best, both in the classroom and on the racetrack.”

Ashley speaking at the 2024 Scholarship Salute



“Being selected as a speaker at the Scholarship Salute was an incredible honor. This experience gave me a deeper understanding of the unique reasons behind each donor’s contribution.”

Alumni Spotlight



Deborah with her donor in 1995

'There is nothing better than to say, "I'm a Bellin Grad!"'

Deborah Breunig always knew she wanted to work in healthcare, specifically as a Bellin College graduate.

"I was accepted to Bellin School of Nursing in 1976," said Deborah. "But my life took a different direction, and I ended up not attending that year. Fifteen years later, I was driving past the school and telling my two young daughters, "That's where Mom was going to go to school." I found myself thinking, I want to be able to say to my daughters, "That is where Mom went to school."

She decided to contact Bellin College about her options as a returning adult. Four years later, Deborah graduated with her BSN, with her daughters in the audience cheering her on.

Deborah also knew that before graduating that she wanted to be able to give back to the college and help future students through scholarships, as had been done for her while she was a student.

"Attending college requires commitments on many levels," said Deborah. "The curriculum and schedules are challenging and receiving support financially helped to ease the cost of tuition. I recall attending the scholarship



Deborah with her donor recipient in 2017

dinner of my Senior year and making a vow to myself that someday I would give back and become a scholarship donor. I am very honored that I can now give back!"

Deborah enjoys attending Bellin College's Scholarship Salute events, where she can meet with the students who receive her scholarship donation and hear their stories firsthand.

"It is heartwarming to gather with the students and the donors and share in the celebration of giving. The students share their stories of how financial support impacted them. Each story is unique, just as our lives and reasons for giving are unique," said Deborah.

Deborah encourages alumni who are interested in giving back in a meaningful way to reach out to Bellin College's Advancement department to explore donation and scholarship opportunities.

"Your gift has such a positive impact not only on the individual and their family, but also a positive impact on our community and the future of healthcare," said Deborah. "I am so grateful that I can give back and thank Bellin for the impact it has had on me and my family."

Interested in creating your own scholarship?
Reach out to the Advancement Office at advancement@bellincollege.edu for more information!

Donor Spotlight

A Promise Kept: How the LaViolette Family is Inspiring Future Generations Through Scholarship

The Brian LaViolette Foundation has been making a positive impact on the community for more than 30 years. Established in 1992 by Renee and Doug LaViolette, the Foundation was created in memory of their son, Brian, who tragically passed away at the age of 15 in a swimming accident. In his honor, they committed to achieving great things in his name and memory.

The Foundation awards over 50 scholarships annually, including one through Bellin College. The LaViolette family was inspired to honor and thank nurses who dedicate their lives to helping others and for their hard work and dedication.

"We strongly believe in Bellin College and its mission." Said Kim LaViolette Mosteller, Brian's younger sister, "To be associated with Bellin College makes us proud. As a foundation, and as community members, we have witnessed the difference the students and staff of Bellin have made in healthcare, and in the lives of others."

The LaViolette family loves seeing the impact the foundation makes on the community. They regularly attend Bellin College's Scholarship Salute, an event where they can meet the recipients of their scholarship, exchange stories, and learn how scholarships have had a positive effect on their education. The family looks forward to continued growth with the Foundation and creating lasting impact in the community where it all began.

"Brian's legacy has touched countless people all over the world," said Kim, "It has been a remarkable journey of support, inspiring future generations, and bringing people together. The Foundation has worked very hard to accomplish great things, and its journey truly has been the reward!"



Brian LaViolette, 8th Grade



Emma Jeschke, Bellin College student and Scholarship recipient



Renee and Doug LaViolette with their donor recipient in 2027



Lily (right) studying with another nursing student in the Resch Atrium

'I am a woman of many dreams, most of which revolve around education.'

Lily Derenne, Bachelor of Science in Nursing student

What made you choose Nursing for a career and how did that lead you to Bellin College?

Though some things may seem small, they might represent big meanings. I aspire to be everyone's sunshine in the darkness. That is my goal. I could write a 50-page paper on why I chose nursing- nurses live a life surrounded by love. I realized I could utilize my empathetic qualities and love for science as a nurse. Additionally, nursing is an ever-changing field with

endless things to learn. I was led to Bellin College through taking college credits at my high school. I ended up loving the aspect of how every class (even general education) was applicable to my future career.

What is a moment during your time at Bellin College that you are especially proud of?

I don't think this will be a typical answer, but there is no moment that I am especially proud of. I am rather proud of the person that

I have become because of Bellin College. I never felt like myself during high school. The second I stepped foot onto campus, I morphed into the person I always wanted to become. My "nerdy" and rather witty personality quickly became well-known with my peers. For the first time in my life, it felt cool to prioritize school. By popular request, I now make study guides to send to my entire cohort- all 59 individuals. The best part is, I always sign the email off with "With love, Lily", and

it has now become one of my many quirks. I am proud of the way that I can become fascinated by just about every subject (minus algebra trig!).

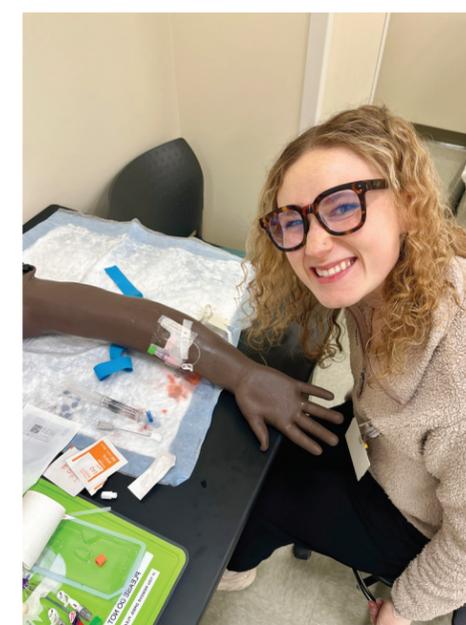
Can you share some of the scholarship and grant opportunities you've received and how they've shaped your college journey?

Without scholarship and grant opportunities, there would have been no journey. I would have lived a completely different life. From a fundamental perspective, the core of my success can be attributed to financial assistance. Since childhood, I can recall having intense financial anxiety. On the surface, many people have the misconception that scholarships are "just money". To me, my scholarships have allowed me the gift of fully immersing myself in my studies. Instead of going to school or work because I "have to", my mindset heavily revolves around "I get to". I love my job, and I adore being able to apply what I am learning in school. Otherwise, knowing myself, not

knowing whether I could afford my schooling would have left me in a constant state of panic. The adjective "blessed" would be an understatement.

Are there extracurriculars, volunteer opportunities, or clinical experiences that have been especially meaningful to you?

My entire clinical experience on 1South at Bellin will forever hold a special place in my heart. I loved the diverse group of patients, as well as my cath lab experience. Throughout my time there, I had an abundance of conversations with doctors and nurses about why they chose healthcare. It felt encouraging for me to interact with the people who were living out a form of my dreams. I also got a Bellin Star from one of the 1South employees, who stated how staff members looked forward to seeing me on my clinical days. It gave me a great sense of purpose and officially solidified my career choice in nursing/critical care.



What advice would you give to incoming students who are considering Bellin College or a nursing career?

I won't sugar coat it: nursing school can be exceedingly difficult. But the truth is, nursing school will be difficult no matter where you go. If you're going to do something hard, do it surrounded by people who want to see you succeed (aka the faculty at Bellin College!). I do not think that many individuals understand how important a caring support system is until it becomes hard to be your own support. Bellin College does a fabulous job

"To me, my scholarships have allowed me the gift of fully immersing myself in my studies. Instead of going to school or work because *I have to*, my mindset heavily revolves around *I get to*."

of creating a sense of community. As for my nursing advice, always remember why you started!

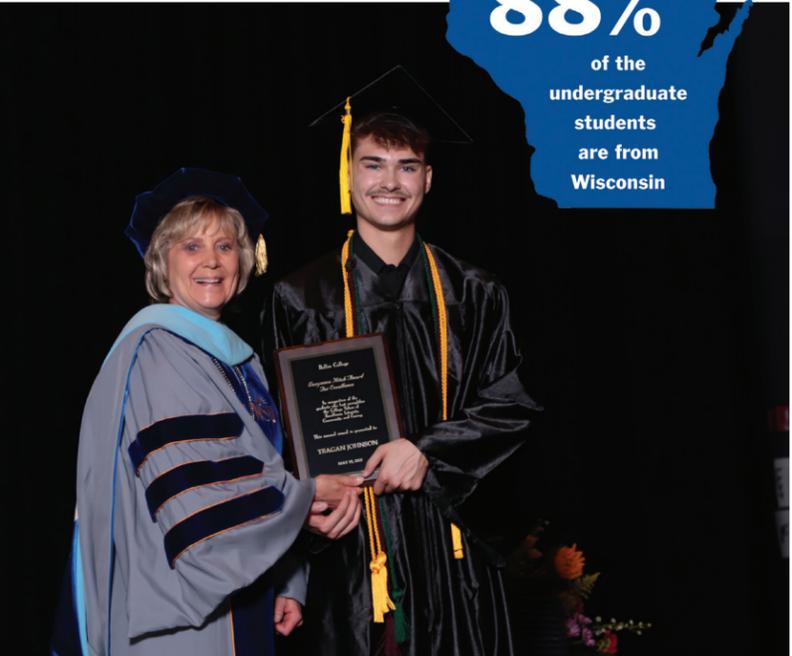
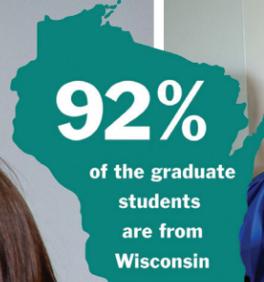
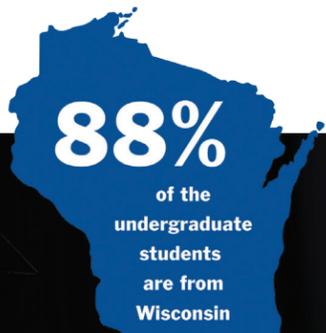
What are your plans for the future/post-graduation?

I am a woman of many dreams, most of which revolve around education. I would like to acquire certifications in medical Spanish, critical care nursing, and complete a capstone at UW-Madison for pharmacology. After graduation, I aspire to be an ICU nurse. I would like to work at Bellin Hospital until retirement- my goal is to be able to celebrate my 50th work anniversary (I have almost 3 down, so only 48 left!). I like to joke that I would like to buy a vintage house in Astor Park so I can walk to work every day. My dream job would be to become a nurse anesthetist and teach at Bellin College. I love to learn (and could talk about science forever), so teaching seems like a natural fit. I think that having a nurse anesthetist as an instructor would open many doors for the college, as I could act as a resource for students interested in the field.



**Congratulations to the Bellin College
Class of May 2025!**

Bellin College 2025 Commencement was held on May 17th, 2025 at The Weidner in Green Bay. The graduating class consisted of 171 students from the following programs: undergraduate nursing, diagnostic medical sonography, radiologic sciences, radiation therapy and surgical assisting as well as, graduate nursing and physical therapy. This year consisted of the first graduating class of the Doctor of Physical Therapy program.





3201 Eaton Road
Green Bay WI 54311

Stay Connected

For the latest Bellin College news and information, visit our website at www.bellincollege.edu or follow us on social media @bellincollege (920) 433-6699

BELLIN COLLEGE Scholarships

I AM CONFIDENT IN THE IMPACT THAT BELLIN COLLEGE'S GRADUATES WILL HAVE ON THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY.

I have dedicated over 40 years of my career to nursing, with 20 of those years serving as faculty and Dean of Nursing at Bellin College. My passion for the college's mission and values has led me to include them in my will. I trust in their commitment to excellence and believe that the healthcare field will benefit from more graduates from Bellin College.

– Retired Bellin College Dean of Nursing, Dr. Mary Rolloff



CREATE YOUR OWN SCHOLARSHIP AT
www.bellincollege.edu/support/

