

THE CRUSADER

HAPPY BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER, CRUSADERS!

Commuter Students and Jobs

BY: MARY SENECAL



Photo Credit: Bethany Welch

There are many residential students who are very dedicated to their education at Belmont Abbey College. Then there are commuter students, who have jobs that they go to between or after their classes. Their reasons for this range from saving up for textbooks and supplies to helping pay off their tuition or other needs. They do this by finding jobs that are close to campus or to home, which can cause unique struggles for these students.

Many commuters struggle to find a job to support themselves because of other financial issues such as paying tuition or student loans, or necessities like affording rent. This can cause other problems with their studies, because their jobs distract them from classes, or because not having enough money affects their mental health.

One anonymous student who has been a commuter since 2021 described her experience as follows: “I have been going to classes and working for about four years, and there is a challenge when it comes to finding jobs for part-time because most jobs don’t accept college students like me because they want someone to work full-time, not part-time. I wish there were other opportunities to work and get paid while going to classes.”

Even though students face the challenges of attending college and at the same time going to work, there are plenty of benefits to having a job while studying. One of the main reasons is that the working student is gaining experience, whether it is working only one job or moving into multiple

jobs, which helps them to learn about potential future careers. For example, the anonymous student quoted above was a part-time manager at a fast food restaurant, which helped her gain experience in managerial tasks, such as leadership skills, problem-solving, and communication skills. Despite the difficulties, then, perhaps more students should find a way to get small jobs to gain experience for their future careers?

Art History Independent Study

BY: JULIANNA LUTZ

For the fall semester of 2024, the penultimate semester of my senior year at Belmont Abbey, I had the opportunity to be in an independent study class with Dr. Linda Pastryk, the head of the Art History department. In this class, we studied 17th-century European art with a focus on curatorial abilities. The 17th-century marked a crucial period in art history as Europe moved out of the Renaissance and into the Baroque period. In the course of our study, we covered this period of history country by country, especially looking into Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Spain. After diving into the rich artistic history of each country during the 17th-century, Dr. Pastryk advised me in completing a final project in which I curated a plan for a room of an art exhibit with European pieces from the 17th-century.

When faced with the hundreds of works I had referenced and studied, it was a difficult task to choose just a few artworks to form a cohesive theme. I looked back over what I had studied and remembered the pieces that had struck me the most. I had been captivated by the way that artists in 17th-century Europe were revisiting popular mythic, historical, and religious scenes with a new, more expressive lens. They were moving away from the Renaissance style of idealism and leaning into a style that captured the emotional and realistic depths of the scene in question. The pieces that inspired me most were oil paintings of important women from these recognizable scenes and stories. By moving away from idealization and evoking drama and emotion in this new style, artists of the 17th-century were finding ways in which to capture feminine heroism in a new light.

I decided to explore the different styles and approaches used by these artists to portray female heroes in the new Baroque period. I therefore named my imagined exhibit, “Historical

Women Depicted in 17th-century Oil Painting.” The displays of feminine heroism that I chose to display also illuminated the differences between the ideas of masculine heroism and feminine heroism as portrayed in traditional art. 17th-century artists explored new techniques to express heroism in a distinctly feminine light. These artists forwent traditionally masculine strength of body in favor of the strength of character and resolution. They substituted loud, outward displays of power for quiet contemplation and determination. With these ideas in mind, I chose to highlight Rembrandt’s painting entitled Lucretia (1666) to set the tone for the room, positioning it prominently across from where most visitors would be entering the room. Lucretia by Rembrandt establishes a sense of introspection and dignified reverence and evokes the quiet strength of all the women portrayed in the exhibit. These qualities tie together the contrasting styles and approaches used by the various artists in the exhibit. Regardless of style, each artist chooses to portray their feminine subject as beautiful, dignified, and morally strong.

The other paintings that I chose to exhibit in the room were Susanna and the Elders by Artemisia Gentileschi (1610), Judith Slaying Holofernes by Artemisia Gentileschi (1613), Magdalene with Two Flames by Georges de la Tour (1640), Lucretia by Veronese (1580), and Saint Mary of Egypt by Jusepe de Ribera (1641). These works, taken from throughout the 17th-century and from various countries in Europe, provide both contrast and cohesion that leads one to contemplate the ideas of femininity, heroism, bravery, and the depth of the interior life. For example, Veronese’s Lucretia is an example of an earlier, more traditional portrayal of the historical figure Lucretia than that of Rembrandt. I positioned these two works beside one another on adjacent walls so as to show the contrast between the two styles and portrayals. Rembrandt’s painting of Lucretia differs from traditional portrayals in that it shows her after she has stabbed herself, fully clothed, and instead of laying sensually and helplessly on a bed or falling to the floor, Rembrandt’s Lucretia is upright and composed. Even though she still holds the knife with which she has just stabbed her stomach, she calmly reaches for a bell cord to summon her servants so that they may find her after she collapses. These stylistic choices stand out next to Veronese’s traditional portrayal of Lucretia and lead the audience to ponder the reasons Rembrandt may have included those details and attempted to evoke those emotions.

In order to formulate a concept for a potential art museum exhibit, I was challenged to look at the art I had studied with more than a merely analytical eye. I was drawn to see the pieces for the emotions and values evoked in each piece and how they reflected the art of the period as a whole. The project also encouraged my contemplation of bigger ideas such as femininity, heroism, and courage. In this way, I was given a thought-provoking taste of the task of an art curator: to see art for what connects it to life and to impress the audience through evocative cohesion.

Interviewing a Belmont Abbey Dancer: Featuring Emily Buerkle

BY: KATHERINE BUERKLE

The dance community is a bright and vibrant one here at Belmont Abbey College. Our dance minor is becoming increasingly popular, and this year's dance showcase included several sold-out showings. To give a more in-depth idea of what the dance program at the Abbey has to offer, I interviewed a dance minor and featured dancer from this year's showcase, Emily Buerkle, about why she chose to be a part of the Belmont Abbey dance community.

Here are some of the insights she was able to share:

Why did you choose to pursue dancing in college?

“Dance is my escape, it makes me forget about all my life problems and just be in the moment.”

Why did you choose to minor in dance?

“I wanted to further my dance education to help me be able to share my passion with others.”

What styles of dance have you trained in here, and do you have a favorite?

“I train in many different styles, but my favorite is jazz.”

What does a typical day look like for you as a college dancer preparing for Dance Showcase?

"Stretching and running my Dance multiple times by myself and through my head.”

What are your goals after college? Do you see dance in your future?

“Yes, I 100% see dance in my future, whether it’s teaching or supporting my future children.”

What is your favorite thing about preparing for the Showcase?

“Spending time with my fellow dancers, and everyone’s eagerness to help each other backstage.”

What advice would you give other students interested in performing in next year’s showcase or even looking into a dance minor?

“Just be confident and not scared or embarrassed of what other people might think of you; just go out there, have fun, and perform all out.”

Earning Credits with Swords

BY: BETHANY WELCH

Swords can be heard clashing from 2:30-3:45 in the Haid Ballroom on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Feet could also be heard stomping on the wooden floors. It all depends on what Director of the Abbey Players and professional stuntman

Christopher Donahue is teaching his students that day in Stage Movement and Combat.

The Rapier class progresses from blunted rapiers to real sharp blades for the final at the end of the semester. The Broadsword class uses heavy swords and real blades the whole semester. Blocks and strikes from 1-5 are perfected with a heavy two-handed Broadsword, and 1-8 are perfected with a lighter, one-handed Rapier. Marches, Sitting Statues, and other exercises are also done during both semester courses to help prepare body movement, core strength, and character development for the movement of the sword and the final.

As the semester progresses, the students begin to learn the sets for the final. There are five sets for the final with dialogue, the fifth being given near the exam and individualized for each scene. Students are given class time to work on the set on the whiteboard before another one is added, and so forth. After the moves are constantly practiced, scene dialogue is added and the students must perform everything in front of their peers.

Many take the unique Stage Movement and Combat Theatre course because it is a fun way to earn the required core theatre credit. As senior John Clarity states, “The class is very easy and fun [. . .] to take if your schedule is very busy.” Others take it as a part of the theatre minor. Combat is used in some of the theatre department's plays, and many of the students who are Abbey Players take the class as well. Donahue offers the three credit Stage Movement and Combat class every semester, with Fall being Rapier swords and Spring being Broadwords.

Building Community

BY: BETHANY WELCH

The Helping Hands Club, founded in 2023, is a club for students with accommodations. Club members meet once a month on campus, whether in the Alumni House, Center for Student Success, or the Mezz. Meetings include engaging game nights, movie nights, or service projects.

The focus of the club’s founding was to connect students that have accommodations and build a stable community of friends through the group. Ultimately, the goal was to allow these students to have an outlet, and a support group, which includes knowing that they are not alone in needing a little more academic assistance.

John Minnich, who will graduate in May, states that he “really enjoyed it [Helping Hands Club] and it makes me happy that there is a place for people with accommodations to go to so they can feel safe and secure and feel like they belong somewhere.”

The members are looking forward to their next meeting and to continue building community. New individuals are always welcome.

If you are a student with accommodations and have an interest in joining the club, email the Director of Accessibility Services, Carrie Minnich, at carrieminnich@bac.edu.

Abbey Disc Golf Course a Big Hit for Students

BY: ADAM WILLETT



Photo Credit: Adam Willett

Since 2021, the disc golf course at Belmont Abbey has been entertaining students, offering them an opportunity to try an accessible, low-budget pastime with friends. The course has seen teammates try a new activity together. Individuals play for a break from studies, and newcomers make friends and pick up a hobby.

Belmont Abbey senior Brian Sause, who competes for the Abbey cross country and track and field teams, has been playing the disc golf course since it was created. He has been inviting teammates to play with him over the years and has amassed a solid group of guys who like to play with him. Sause describes the Abbey course as a “fun, easy course to play with beginners through the beautiful Belmont Abbey campus.”

Set in the center of campus, the course follows a loop along popular campus destinations. Players begin the first hole of the course at the science building, continuing past the library, Haid Theatre, Student Commons, and St. Scholastica and St. Benedict residence halls. Finishing back at the science building, players will have enjoyed a scenic loop around campus with a little competition involved.

Playing a regular round at the Abbey course, which consists of nine holes, takes only around an hour at a casual pace with friends. Because the Abbey course is so accessible and open to beginners, why not give it a try? You might just find a new hobby!

Belmont Bracket Breakers

BY: OLIVER FUSSELL

Today, the Belmont Abbey rugby team made it to the semi-final of the 7s College Rugby Championship in Washington D.C. The young team, made up of primarily first-year students, has had a season of ups and downs. They started their season at the Wake Forest tournament, where they did not live up to their hype and struggled to produce results against a group of competitive teams. Despite this start to the season, the team pushed on and continuously worked on themselves and their playing style. Their hard work and determination started to show as they headed into the Peach

Cup tournament in Atlanta. The team narrowly missed the final, but the coaches and the players regained their confidence and started believing that the team could do great things. After their tournament in Atlanta, I spoke with the head coach and asked him how he was feeling going into the next tournament, which was a qualifier. Head Coach Genaro said, “We have a lot of young, talented players who have great potential going forward, and we are excited to see what we can do.” In the next tournament, the team went 4-1 and ended up winning the tournament to qualify for the nationals with hopes of going far.

The Collegiate Rugby Championship that commenced today saw Belmont take on Drury, a newcomer to the tournament, so the team did not know what to expect. Despite the uncertainty, the Belmont boys made light work of them, beating them by twelve points. They next faced Marian, who was a well-established team with a history of winning. This game came down to the wire, but Belmont came out victorious with a last-minute try from freshman Hugo Taylor-Jones. The final match of the day was Dartmouth, a college known all around the country for its academics; but could their rugby be held to the same standard? The answer was no, as the Belmont team won by nine points and dominated them the whole game. The captain of the team, Kenneth Bird, said this in an interview afterward: “I am pleased with how the team has gelled this year and how we have built a winning culture.”

Tomorrow, the team will face a strong St. Bonaventure side hailing from New York state. This will be a massive test for the team to see if their success has just been the result of luck or hard work and determination. Going into this game, it is certain to see from the fans and the general atmosphere that St. Bonaventure is the absolute favorite. However, Belmont is known to cause upsets in these big tournaments. For instance, two years ago they went on a winning streak to place third, beating Mary Washington along the way, which no one was expecting.

So, will Belmont go on to win the tournament with a chance of facing their rivals, Queens, in the final for the ultimate bragging rights, or will they crumble under pressure? The stage is set, the teams are ready, and the only thing left is for the whistle to be blown. This would be a historical victory for Belmont that will be spoken about for generations to come.

flexibility, and balance are just as important if you want to perform at your best when the pressure’s on.”

As rugby players, the demands are intense. Matches are fast-paced, physical, and punishing on the body. That’s why the team has built a stronger focus on stretching and recovery into their daily routines. Before practices, players run through dynamic stretches like the World’s Greatest Stretch to open up their hips, hamstrings, and shoulders. After practice, it’s restorative movements like Child’s Pose and deep hamstring stretches to help muscles recover and reduce injury risk.

“We know that if we want to stay competitive at Nationals, it’s about more than just fitness, it’s about keeping our bodies healthy and durable,” Milling said. Exercises like single-leg balance drills, core strength work, and mindfulness breathing sessions have been a big part of the team’s preparation, aiming to sharpen focus and protect against the small injuries that could make a big difference on game day.

The importance of this work shows in the team’s confidence heading into Nationals. After a season of hard work and smart recovery habits, Belmont Abbey Rugby players are feeling faster, stronger, and more resilient than ever. “You can’t control everything on the field,” Milling said, “but you can control how well you prepare. Taking care of the little things like stretching and recovery gives us the edge.”

As the team travels to Nationals, they carry with them not only the skills they’ve sharpened in games and practices but also the unseen work that happens behind the scenes. It’s all part of what makes a champion.

Abbey Rugby Reaches National Final Four

BY: JOSHUA MILLING



Photo Credit: Joshua Milling

Second-seeded Belmont Abbey Rugby won the south division at the Maryland Sportsplex, seeing off Drury University, Marian University, and Dartmouth to reach the National Collegiate Rugby’s Final Four. Belmont’s Division 1 premier bracket kicked off at field 12, where they would defeat eighth-seeded Drury 19-5. The next two games occurred in the stadium, where Belmont would defeat third-seed Marian 12-7 and upset first-seed Dartmouth 19-10.

This result comes off a strong Belmont season, winning NCR’s Ruck the Rock qualifier and a notable 3rd-place finish at the Peach Cup. Despite losses against opponents like Queens University and Mary Washington a week before

Belmont Abbey Rugby Players Stretch Their Way to Nationals

BY: KA’RON YOUNG

This weekend, the Belmont Abbey College Rugby team heads to Nationals to compete in the 7s championship, and preparation is everything. For these athletes, it’s not just about hitting the gym or running drills, it’s about taking care of their bodies in every way possible, including stretching, balance work, and recovery training.

Joshua Milling, a junior on the Belmont Abbey Rugby team, says the team’s preparation this year has been different. “In the past, we focused so much on lifting heavy and sprinting fast,” Milling said. “Now we’re realizing that mobility,

the national tournament, the team still looks set to match or improve upon their 2023 finish of 4th place.

Team captain Kenneth Byrd from Pretoria, South Africa, was asked about the team’s performance after beating Dartmouth in the quarter-final. He stated, “They stuck to the basics and offloads were always on.” As a Belmont senior, Byrd will surely be looking for glory in his last chance at gold.

Belmont will face the winner of the East bracket, Saint Bonaventure, in the semi-final. The other semi-final includes last year’s champions, Wheeling University, and crosstown rivals Queens. An action-packed final day lies ahead for the Crusaders as they seek to win their first National Championship.

Belmont Abbey College’s Men’s Lacrosse Team Defeats Mount Olive at Home in the Semi-Finals

BY: MATTHEW CAMPFIELD



Photo Credit: Matthew Campfield

Friday, April 25th, 2025, the Belmont Abbey College men’s lacrosse team hit the road to play their in-conference rivals, the University of Mount Olive. This was Belmont’s biggest game of the season and would determine who made the conference championship game. Prior to this game, Belmont Abbey beat Mount Olive 13-6 in the regular season.

The semi-final game ended with Belmont Abbey 10, Mount Olive 8, which secured the Abbey’s bid to the championship game that will be played on Sunday against North Greenville University. The game opened up with a goal from Belmont Abbey player number 28, senior Mikey Sweigart, and then another scoop and dunk on the crease goal from freshman number 35, Jacob Chandler.

Belmont Abbey’s defense stood on its head with the goaltender Eddie Kielkopf leading the charge and coming out with 22 saves and a .692 save percentage. Keilkopf started the season as Belmont’s backup, but due to an unfortunate injury, Eddie got bumped up to the starter role and has been playing lights out for the Crusaders.

This win meant a lot to the five seniors who were freshmen the last time Belmont won the conference, back in 2022 when they beat Mount Olive 12-6. This was also a redemption game from last year’s conference championship, where Mount Olive beat Belmont Abbey in overtime. The up-and-coming game against the number one seed, NGU, will be played Sunday, the 27th, and will mark the last ever conference game for 10 Belmont seniors and

graduate students.

Men’s Basketball Beats University of Mount Olive

BY: JAYDEN DESIR

On February 22nd, 2025, the Belmont Abbey College Men’s Basketball team defeated one of their rival teams, University of Mount Olive. This was a crucial win for the Crusaders because the game was their first Division II win as they didn't have the picture-perfect season they imagined.

The score of the game concluded with Belmont Abbey 82 and University of Mount Olive 81. The statistics for the game reveal that Belmont Abbey shot 52.4 percent (33 of 63) from the field overall and 8 of 16 from three-point range. The 50-percent shooting effort marked the first of the conference season. The player most responsible for this victory is freshman guard Jordan Patton. Patton scored a career-high 27 points, shooting 11-of-17 from the field and grabbing a career-best 9 rebounds.

Although it was a great performance from Patton, it was a complete dog fight from the Crusaders. Guards Judah Saltz and Khamani Wertz flirted with 20-point games to come out with a strong finish. Lastly, we can't forget senior big Alhousseny Diallo, as he posted his second career double-double, both of which occurred in the last three games.

Although the Crusaders weren’t eligible for the playoffs this year, they never gave up. In fact, they developed a faster pace and executed well on the defensive end as the season went on. These are signs that good things should be coming to the Crusaders in the future.

Meet The Crusader Staff and Contributors

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