For many years, Bill DeForest has spearheaded the graphic design program here at Syracuse North. However, the Spring 2017 semester will be the last for Bill, as he prepares to begin a new life and a new job in Vermont.

Back in the summer of 2004, Bill was living in a renovated chicken coop in the Ithaca area and in the midst of professional uncertainty. After earning two arts degrees focused in printmaking and drawing, he had recently gone back to school to complete a second master’s degree in computer graphics. “I had bounced around a bunch,” Bill recalls. “I had no real career prospects at the time.”

As he grew weary of working part-time jobs, Bill turned his attention to polishing his portfolio and resume. “It was almost like magic,” he says. “As soon as I had done that, someone sent me a post about this job. By 10:30 the next morning, I was standing in front of [former academic dean] Kathy Zakri with my portfolio and resume.”

Kathy was impressed enough to invite Bill for a second interview and, after meeting with 13 members of an interview panel, he was hired. With this decision, the campus gained a tireless advocate for the field of graphic design. According to Bill, “design has the potential to create change in the world. It’s a force for good as well as for commerce.”

Soon the search was on for other instructors who would share his dedication and enthusiasm. “The first thing I did was call Lee Shelton. She came in for an interview the next day. That was the best decision I ever made as program director.”

Together, Bill and Lee developed a close-knit department complete with its own traditions, such as annual bus trip to New York City to see artistic masterpieces in person. Graphic design students have also had numerous opportunities to apply their skills in the larger community, through collaborations with organizations like Byrne Dairy and, most recently, the Matilda Joslyn Gage Center in Fayetteville.

Bill’s impact has been felt throughout the Syracuse North campus as he’s become involved in initiatives such as the Middle States Accreditation Self-Study, Career Life Prep, and curriculum realignment. Bill’s co-workers have repeatedly nominated him for the Above and Beyond award, and he has nothing but praise for his colleagues: “I’ve always admired all the faculty and staff and admire them for their commitment to their students.”

In addition, he acknowledges the commitment of our director of Syracuse Campuses, Sue Cumoletti: “Sue has been just a flawless leader who has always put the needs of the campus and the students in front of everything.”

Ultimately, however, it is all about the students for Bill. “My students have always taught me
**Bill DeForest Says Goodbye**

why this job is so important. They never let me forget how important what we do here is.”

One of his favorite memories has been witnessing students overcome obstacles and experience success. “I love it when students get jobs or go on to a bachelor’s degree. It feels like I’m doing something really important in the world when that happens.”

As a program that is not found on every Bryant & Stratton campus, graphic design is able to attract students who are looking for something unique. “I love the fact that someone who feels they are creative can come here to start a career that’s both professional and creative,” Bill says.

Given the fact that he has enjoyed so many aspects of his time at Bryant & Stratton, making the decision to leave has not been an easy one for Bill. Later this month he will begin a new position as assistant professor in the graphic design department at Castleton University in Vermont. Castleton is the process of expanding its concentration in graphic design into a full degree program, and Bill will be responsible for constructing and facilitating this new program as well as teaching four classes himself.

Castleton has only two semesters each year, with a long summer break that will allow Bill to pursue his own art. “It’s an opportunity to work in my studio and pursue both my fine art and my graphic design background,” Bill explains, adding that he plans to return to Central New York each summer.

“This change really does scare me, but change is scary,” Bill says. “Sometimes it’s something you need to go through. Career, like life, is a journey.”

**Robin Hiserodt Offers Advice to New Students**

“You came to school for a reason. Be serious about it.” That’s the advice medical administrative assistant Robin Hiserodt offers to her fellow students.

Robin’s own reason for pursuing a college education can be found in her work history. In 2007 she lost her job at Camillus Cutlery when the company closed. After that, she discovered that “jobs were few and far between.”

While she got by with a string of short-term jobs, Robin remembers, she “would get emails from friends about job posting and noticed many of them wanted medical background.” Unfortunately, it was a background she lacked: “I just got frustrated.”

She told herself it was time to check out schools. After eliminating some other possibilities, she chose Bryant & Stratton and began in January 2016.

“At Bryant & Stratton College you are given great opportunities in many different avenues,” Robin points out, specifying “great networking, friendships, clubs, work study, and tremendous resources at your fingertips.”

Her favorite memories include learning from instructors Pat Cameron and Erin Togni, as well as the overall helpfulness of the faculty and staff: “No matter how big or small the problem, it’s always solvable.”

In Robin’s mind, it’s never too late to pursue the dream of achieving a degree. “You can go at any age,” she says. “If I end up with a good job, it’s worth it in the long run.”

According to Robin, it is up to the student to put in the necessary work: “Attendance matters. If you don’t treat it like a job, you’ll wonder why you have difficulties.”
Khira Wall’s Hard Work Pays Off

Medical assisting major and August graduate Khira Wall chose Bryant & Stratton College because “they were they most flexible with classes since I still had to earn a living while in school.” The necessity of juggling a job and coursework is a challenge that many of our students can relate to.

For Khira, the solution to this challenge is simple, if not always easy: “Just go to class and do the work. The instructors are great about working with you to make sure you learn the material as long as you put in some effort too.”

It doesn’t hurt that Khira has a genuine interest in the medical field, noting that her “best memories were in my clinical and med lab classes, learning hands-on how to do everything.” Sometimes those classes created impossible-to-forget experiences, such as the time Khira partnered with another student, warning her that she always choked during rapid strep tests, and the student decided not to put on a face shield – a decision she would later regret when Khira’s warning came true. “We were all laughing about it, including her. She and I still laugh about it.”

In addition to medical instructors like Dr. Bob Jaworski and Sherry Pearsall, Khira’s favorite teachers include John Adams and Deb Lum. However she says that “I really enjoyed all of my instructors and don’t want any of them to feel left out.”

Now that she is graduating, Khira’s immediate plans include working as a medical assistant at her current job. Eventually she intends to move south and pursue a bachelor’s degree in biology or nursing: “I haven’t completely decided which one I want yet.”

Breakfast Honors August Graduates

The Graduation Breakfast, held Friday, July 28, was an opportunity to share memories and bid farewell to teachers and friends. From left: Anna Cottet, Greg Grow, Adrienne Foy, Melissa Eichenlaub, Alyssa Mulderig, Jessica Demaio, Danielle Bowles, and Robin Hiserodt.
Shelby Vecchio Earns Degrees in Accounting and Finance

When Shelby Vecchio started college, her goal was not to become an accountant. She planned to be an occupational therapy assistant, but studying anatomy wasn’t her cup of tea. Next she switched to a business major. “While taking business classes, I took Accounting 110, and fell in love with accounting,” she says, and knew that she had found the right major for her.

Having chosen Bryant & Stratton because she “liked the smaller class sizes and the one-on-one help from the staff,” Shelby continued to study at the James Street campus, where the occupational therapy assistant program is located. But she eventually enrolled in courses at Syracuse North, where she met long-time instructor Bill Rava. Shelby says that Mr. Rava “has been the greatest professor I have ever studied under. He is so passionate about his students, and wants them to succeed. It is very reassuring.”

Mr. Rava was also the person who told her about the financial support services degree. “I looked into it and I only needed the two finance classes to complete it,” Shelby recalls. “I only needed two more classes to complete my accounting degree as well so I decided to get it all done in one semester. It has been quite difficult but I believe that it was definitely worth it.”

By this time, Shelby had decided to take all her classes at Syracuse North and officially graduate from this campus. Now that graduation is here, she plans to work for a bit and then obtain a bachelor’s degree in accounting.

Upcoming Events

August 8 & 9
Textbook Buyback

August 10
Official Last Day of Semester

September 6
Fall Classes Begin

Shelby Vecchio Earns Degrees in Accounting and Finance

Shelby Vecchio

After a college experience that has spanned two campuses and at least three majors, Shelby’s best advice to other students is, not surprisingly, about the value of organization and support: “Keep track of your due dates with a planner, and get help when you need it! It is ok to ask for help.”