

THE CROSS ROAD

Alumni Newsletter of American National University



Update from Academics

BY DR. CAROLYN SCOTT, CHIEF
ACADEMIC OFFICER

As we move into the new year, I am excited to share some important updates from American National University that highlight our continued commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Advancement in Pharmacy Technician Training:

We are pleased to announce that the Associate Degree in Pharmacy Technician now qualifies students to become Advanced Pharmacy Technicians. This advancement is due to the addition of our Sterile Compounding class, which offers critical skills and knowledge in this essential area of pharmacy practice. We believe this will better prepare our graduates for a dynamic and rewarding career in the healthcare field.

Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society:

As we look forward to graduation in June, we are thrilled to recognize and honor the hard work and dedication of our students. In particular, we will be inviting students with enrollment GPAs of 3.5 or higher at American National University of Virginia, who are graduating at the end of term 250, to join the prestigious Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society. Invitations will be sent out in the coming weeks, and we encourage students who meet the criteria to consider this opportunity. If you are a graduate who earned a 3.5 or higher enrollment GPA and are interested in joining the society, please reach out to me at cscott@an.edu for more details.

New Partnership with Tutor.com for Extra Academic Support:

In our ongoing efforts to provide students with the resources they need to succeed, we are excited to announce a new partnership with Tutor.com. This service will give our students access to on-demand, one-on-one tutoring sessions outside of regular instructor office hours. Whether students need help with specific course material, exam preparation, or just want extra support to reinforce their learning, Tutor.com provides an additional layer of academic assistance to help them achieve their goals. We encourage all students to take advantage of this valuable resource.

As always, we remain dedicated to providing our students with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed. I look forward to celebrating the achievements of our students in the months ahead and watching them take the next steps in their academic and professional journeys.

Class Notes

GOT MARRIED?
HAD A BABY?
LANDED A NEW JOB?

WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!
SUBMIT A CLASS NOTE HERE:
[HTTPS://ALUMNI.AN.EDU/CLASS-
NOTES/](https://alumni.an.edu/class-notes/)

Aim High and Be All That You Can Be: Kaitlyn's Journey with ANU

BY CHLOE DANIELS

After moving away from home in Massachusetts to build a life with her husband states away, Kaitlyn Pennington set her sights on an education that would align with her dreams for a meaningful career. With her husband's unwavering support, she embarked on a journey to find the perfect program at the right school. Her path at ANU began in the Medical Billing and Coding program and soon transitioned to Administrative Medical Assisting, demonstrating her determination to find the best fit for her goals. Now, Kaitlyn celebrates the completion of her MBA—a remarkable culmination of hard work and dedication—while returning to her Medical Billing and Coding program beginning to further enrich her healthcare-focused education. Inspired by the memory of her grandfather's belief in her potential, Kaitlyn's story is one of perseverance, passion, and the transformative power of education to build a brighter future.

When purchasing her first home in Kentucky with her husband, Kaitlyn was inspired to pursue a career in healthcare, influenced by her mother's work in a nursing home. While working at Kentucky Medical Services Foundation, she met a coworker who was a professional medical coder, sparking her interest in the field. A quick Google search led her to ANU, where she began exploring opportunities in Medical Billing and Coding. However, after discovering her true calling, Kaitlyn's student advisor guided her to transition into ANU's Administrative Medical Assistant program. "I told my husband about [the program]. He was like, 'oh my god, that sounds exactly like you... **I ended up switching over and I really liked it,**" she explains. Kaitlyn even took her finals and certification exams just days after having her first son with the flexibility of our online programs. "**And that solidified it for me that I was like, 'you know what? If I can do all that, then I can go ahead and get my bachelor's. I can go ahead and get my master's.'** So it just gave me the push to want to continue on!"

Going to school with two young children is no easy feat for any student, but Kaitlyn used her children as her motivators to keep going. What really helped her through it all was the understanding of her professors. While attending her MBA program, she had her second son while also caring for her oldest as a toddler. She was worried about having to go off camera or care for her children would affect her grades. However, "**But Dr. Mary Tan was amazing throughout the whole time, even Dr. Dominika Falsey [too]. And I reached out to them just to let them know how appreciative I was of them, because having someone in your corner like that when you're going through a difficult graduate degree is really important,**" she says. Even more so, Kaitlyn feels incredibly grateful for Professor Rhonda Brewer. Rhonda's guidance throughout her education helped her get through the toughest parts of her degree path. "**When I was doing my bachelor's program, she was pretty much my go to person for everything,**" she says with a smile, "**I definitely wouldn't have been able to remain in such good spirits, I think, if it weren't for her guidance.**" And with Rhonda's encouragement, Kaitlyn knew she could earn her MBA.

Kaitlyn's grandfather is the one who motivated her to earn her education as he is the only other person in her family who earned a graduate degree. Family has always been important to her – she moved back home to be closer to her parents and in-laws after her father had a health scare – and the inspiration from her grandfather kept her going. "I had just started going back to school and he was praising me so much. He was telling me, 'you know what, kid? This is what I always told you. You just keep going.' And the one phrase that he would always say is, '**aim high and be all you can be.**'" She reminds herself of his inspiration even after his passing by keeping a picture he kept of her on his desk with that same quote. This is the advice she would give any student looking to earn their education – from diploma to master's.

Would she recommend ANU to others? "Yes, I would and yes, I already have!"



"And then I just so happened to have these other excellent professors when I was in my master's, and that's what made me really appreciate the school... I made lifelong friends from the institution, and I had such good professors just throughout the whole process. [I feel] lucky to have been given all of the opportunities because they kind of all just fell into place for me and I just kind of branched out from there."

KAITLYN PENNINGTON

Faculty Feature

DR. MISTY CHISUM

Dr. Misty Chisum is an instructor at American National University and an Executive Functions Coach. She has her doctorate in education. She is currently pursuing graduate certificates in Teaching Neurodiverse Learners with an emphasis in Autism and Executive Function.

In addition to over two decades in higher education, Dr. Chisum is certified to teach English Language Arts (ELA) for grades 5 through 12, as well as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). She has done extensive work in online instruction outside of ANU, as well as dual enrollment.

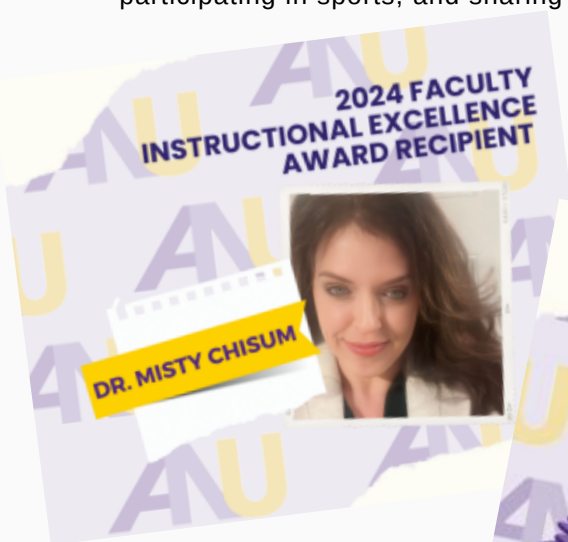
Her research interests include student-instructor engagement in distance education and equity-based instruction.

She is nominated for her innovative ways of presenting material, her weekly announcements and pep talks – both of which help her students understand key concepts and stay motivated – as well as her overall supportive demeanor!

DR. NATHAN SULLIVAN

Dr. Sullivan has been teaching at the college level for four years and has over 13 years of experience in the cybersecurity industry. He currently serves as a Senior Cybersecurity Engineer for the government, specializing in the certification and accreditation of computer systems. His academic accomplishments include earning three associate degrees, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree in Information Assurance and Cybersecurity, and a doctorate in Information Assurance from the University of Fairfax.

In addition to his academic achievements, Dr. Sullivan holds 13 industry certifications, including CEH Master, Security+, Pentest+, Linux, AWS, and Project Management. A veteran of the U.S. military, he served for six years. Outside of his professional life, he enjoys playing strategy computer games, participating in sports, and sharing his knowledge through teaching.



In Memoriam

With deep respect and gratitude, we honor the lives of our alumni who have passed away. Their contributions to our university community and the impact they made in their personal and professional lives will not be forgotten. As we remember them, we extend our heartfelt condolences to their families, friends, and loved ones.

MOHAMMAD SAHARIER ISLAM, '24 MSIT

Survived by his wife. Mohammad valued his education and made studying a priority in his day-to-day life. Mohammad was a straight A student, with a 4.0 GPA when he graduated. He was participating in post-completion OPT at the time of his passing.

VERNELLE SLOUGH WALKER, 1924-2025

Vernelle was a proud graduate of National Business College where she laid the groundwork for an exceptional career. Vernelle dedicated 40 years of service to Johnston Vest Electric Company. She served as President and was a lifetime member of the Credit Women International of Roanoke, District 12.

Bridging the Gap: Your Major and Your Career

BY CHLOE DANIELS

One of the most rewarding milestones in an adult's life is graduating from college. Years of hard work culminate into one degree, hours of dedication, passion, and personal growth born from education. However, for most graduates, once their diploma is hung on the wall, and their cap and gown put away, they ask themselves: What's next? For some, plans have been in motion for years, and they can jump into their desired careers as soon as they find the right job. For others, the connection between what they majored in, and the professional world may not always be a straightforward path. The transition from college to career is more than just sending out resumes — it's about bridging the gap between the academic knowledge you've gained, and the practical skills employers seek. However, with the right mindset and strategies, anyone can turn their degree into a successful and fulfilling career.

First: Understand How Your Degree Fits the Job Market

When graduating, it's important to begin your search for things that relate to your major and the skills you earned during your education. For example, an English major may look for jobs that have to do with writing, editing, or communications, while a biology major looks for jobs within healthcare, research, or environmental science. For ANU students, most of our programs are designed to transfer into a career — so our Pharmacy Technician students can begin work in a pharmacy, or our Medical Assistants in a clinic, or our Cybersecurity students within a business's security department.

However, it is important for graduates to know that careers are not strictly their majors. While **pharmacy technicians** are typically seen in retail or hospital pharmacies, but also within research labs or within government or regulatory bodies. Medical assistants can work within clinics or hospitals, but also outpatient care centers, research centers, or insurance companies among other opportunities. And cybersecurity professionals can work within a business's security department, government agencies, or even own their own businesses defeating cyber criminals.

Second: Consider Additional Certifications or Training

Sure, you just earned your degree. What more could you do? For many careers, having specific qualifications or certifications can help you find a career. If a medical assistant graduate joined our Phlebotomy and ECG Training program, this could open up opportunities in a specific part of the healthcare field. If a cybersecurity graduate enrolled in our business diploma program, they could understand more about how security affects a business or even the steps they need to take to create their own cyber security business. If a business administration graduate took our accounting diploma program, they could better understand bookkeeping or accounts payable/receivable.

Three: Network!

Networking is one of the most important parts of finding and making a career after graduation. While ANU is an online environment, **our students can still network** not only with each other, but their professors and faculty, too. Alumni networks are invaluable to entering your career field so that you can find people to help you find your next move.

Four: Stay Open to Entry-Level Opportunities

Entry-level may not always be the ideal goal of a career, especially after putting in years of work to earn your education. However, joining these roles can not only provide you with valuable experience, but pivot the direction of your career in a place you may not have thought before. If you majored in business administration, a role in sales or customer service may still offer you some beneficial information about the market of a business or what customers are wanting. If you joined a medical assistant program, working in a physician's office can help you develop rapport with patients and enhance your phlebotomy and diagnostic skills.

Tip: Focus on your growth potential rather. Choose roles where you see opportunities to learn and grow. Even if it's not your ideal position, experience in your industry will make you more competitive when applying for your dream role.

Five: When in Doubt, Consult Career Services

One of the benefits of ANU education is having our dedicated **Career Services team** to help you navigate the world after graduating. You should rely on them to help you with many things, like resume building or editing, finding job postings tailored to your field, and even prep for interviews with mock interviews. They tailor the consultation to you and your experience/needs.

Bridging the gap between college and a meaningful career may seem daunting, but it's an achievable goal with the right mindset, strategies, and support. **Transitioning successfully** involves recognizing the value of your academic experiences, honing transferable skills, and staying adaptable in an ever-changing job market. It's a journey, not a race, so as long as you make it to your goals, it doesn't matter how long it takes to get there. Reflect on all you've learned in your education, lean on those who are there to support you, and be proactive. The future is full of possibilities—embrace it with confidence and determination.

2025 Virtual Commencement Ceremony

CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR 2025 GRADUATES BY JOINING US JUNE 21, 2025 AT NOON

Congratulations, Class of 2024/2025! Your hard work and dedication have led you to this incredible milestone, and we are excited to celebrate your success.

Join us for the 2024/2025 Virtual Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, June 21st, 2025, at Noon EST. This special event will recognize your achievements and mark the beginning of your next journey.

The University would like for all Alumni to attend and celebrate the 2024/2025 graduates of American National University (ANU) & University of Fairfax (UOF). Let's come together as a community to honor this momentous occasion!

✔ RSVP today to secure your spot! Click the link to register and receive additional event details.

Let's honor this moment together! We can't wait to celebrate with you. <https://www.eventcombo.com/ms/ev/74286/american-national-university--university-of-fairfax-2025-com/home>

CALLING ALL GRADUATES!

Please scan the QR code to take this post-graduation survey



Alumni Site

DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A WEBSITE DEDICATED TO OUR ESTEEMED ALUM?

On this site, you will find:

ANU News - a selection of news and updates from American National University

ANU Eagle Nation - a selection of current students making waves in their degree programs, careers, and communities

Alumni newsletters

Archive Library full of historical catalogs (with more legendary content coming soon!)

Alumni Resources - links to Career Services, a reminder about the refresher courses you are entitled to take, Ordering your Transcripts, Updating your contact information, Class Notes so we can feature our alumni achievements in this newsletter and on our site, our social media accounts, and our gear store

Alumni.AN.edu

