



AUGUST 2026

THE CROSS ROAD

Student Newsletter of American National University

The Power of Persistence

BY DR. CAROLYN SCOTT, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

At the beginning of a new academic program, students often feel energized, optimistic, and highly motivated. New goals feel exciting. Future opportunities feel close. The decision to return to school may feel empowering and full of possibility.

However, most long-term goals eventually encounter a quieter phase.

At some point during nearly every academic journey, students experience a moment when completing coursework feels more difficult than rewarding. Fatigue builds. Responsibilities compete for attention. Assignments become stressful. The excitement that existed during enrollment may no longer feel as strong as it once did.

These moments are normal.

One of the most important things students can do during difficult periods is revisit the reasons they originally chose to pursue their education. Those reasons may involve career advancement, financial stability, professional growth, personal fulfillment, providing opportunities for family members, or achieving a long-term personal goal. While motivation naturally changes over time, the underlying reasons students begin their educational journeys are often still meaningful.

It is also important to recognize that persistence does not require students to feel confident or inspired every day. Progress is often built during ordinary weeks through routine effort, time management, participation, and the decision to continue moving forward even when the process becomes difficult.

Students should also remember that they have agency. Higher education is a significant commitment, and thoughtful reflection about personal goals, responsibilities, and priorities is important throughout the educational process. However, when students make intentional decisions about their futures, remaining connected to those decisions can help them navigate the inevitable challenges that arise along the way.

At American National University, we recognize the resilience required to continue pursuing educational goals through changing circumstances, competing obligations, and difficult seasons of life. We remain proud of the determination our students demonstrate each term as they continue building opportunities for themselves and their futures.

To Benefit Those Who Served

BY CHLOE DANIELS

For years, pursuing a career in law remained a dream on the back burner for Melissa Winans. Between supporting her husband through a decade of active-duty military service in the Marines, raising two children, working full-time, and earning both an associate and bachelor's degree online, life was filled with responsibilities that came first. With a strong work ethic instilled by her mother and a determination to keep moving forward, Melissa built a successful career spanning across customer service, operations, management, and government services. But the goal of working in the legal field never faded. Inspired by the belief that it's never too late to pursue a passion, she enrolled in American National University's Paralegal Studies Certificate program, viewing it as the opportunity to finally turn a lifelong interest in law into a new career path. Her dedication to her education earned her the title of Term Trailblazer in her final term!

Working in law has been Melissa's dream for as long as she can remember, but life changed the course of her plans as she started her family and supported her husband through active-duty service. However, after working with a "phenomenal" paralegal, Melissa knew where she wanted her future career to go. **"It was that point for me when I looked at him and was like, 'I'm going back to school!' That was my turning point right there,"** she explains.

[Read More Here](#)

A Note From Student Services

BY JESSICA WILLIAMS

Did you know that August was named after Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor? It was originally called Sextilis, meaning "sixth," before being renamed in his honor! Just like August marks a new chapter in the year, you are also moving forward in your academic journey!

We are now more than one-third of the way to the completion line for this term. That means you have already accomplished a significant part of your journey—and now is the time to keep your momentum going!

If things feel challenging, remember: you don't have to finish everything today. You just have to keep taking the next step. Log in, complete that assignment, participate in your discussions, reach out to your instructor or advisor, and keep moving forward.

The finish line is getting closer—don't stop now!

We are proud of the progress you are making. Keep going, stay focused, and remember that every assignment completed is one step closer to your goal.

You've got this!



"I did a lot of research. I knew that I absolutely, hands-down, needed an ABA-approved school. I want that ABA stamp on there. So I went further, I looked into the Military Friendly, because I did utilize Chapter 35 [benefits]. So I'm like 'who has this program? Who could I possibly have classes with veterans or their family members?' And it was 100% [ANU]."

MELISSA WINANS

Introducing ASCEND

CONNECTING CLASSROOM LEARNING TO WORKPLACE SUCCESS

ANU is proud to announce the launch of **Applied Skills & Competency Enhancement Development** (ASCEND), a no-cost training initiative designed to equip students with practical, career-ready skills that align with today's workforce demands.

ASCEND reflects the University's continued commitment to student success, workforce development, and expanding access to high-impact educational opportunities. Through this initiative, students gain access to a comprehensive suite of applied training courses designed to enhance competencies across multiple disciplines.

Students can easily self-register for ASCEND trainings through their Canvas portal, choosing as many or as few sessions as they like. This flexible, student-driven program allows learners to tailor their skill development to their academic and career goals while supporting American National University's commitment to a high-tech, high-touch education that prepares graduates with both credentials and real-world competencies.

Current Course List:

- Academic Integrity, Resilience, and the Growth Mindset
- AI for Academic Research: Productivity, Integrity, and Information Literacy
- Netiquette, Professional Communication, and Networking Skills
- Personal Wellness and Productivity in Digital Environments
- University Success: Financial Literacy for the Online Student
- Phishing Awareness for Students: Spot, Respond, and Report for University Protection
- Mastering Enterprise AI Tools: Driving Value
- Microsoft Copilot: Productivity Essentials for Students
- AI Fluency for Students in Higher Education
- Safe and Responsible AI in Healthcare: Principles and Practice
- RefWorks Integration: Efficient Reference Management for Students
- Academic Success Through Effective Study Strategies

With more courses coming soon!



APPLIED SKILLS & COMPETENCY ENHANCEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Key features of ASCEND:

These non-credit-bearing courses are designed to support personal, academic, and professional development beyond traditional degree requirements. Students who successfully complete the courses may earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Each self-paced course typically requires 1–3 hours to complete.

- **No-Cost Access:** Available to eligible American National University students as part of the University's commitment to student success
- **Flexible, Self-Paced Enrollment:** Students register directly through Canvas and participate on their own schedule
- **Career-Focused Training:** Courses aligned with workforce needs across healthcare, business, and technology
- **Applied Learning Approach:** Emphasis on practical skills, tools, and real-world scenarios

Students interested in participating in ASCEND training programs are encouraged to log into their Canvas portal or contact their academic advisor for more information.

Student Loan Repayment

BY BETH OVERBEY

Know What You Owe Before You Graduate

When you are focused on classes, assignments, and reaching graduation, it can be easy to think of student loan repayment as something to worry about later. But understanding your student loans while you are still enrolled can make the transition after graduation much easier.

If you are using federal student loans, take a few minutes periodically to log in to your StudentAid.gov account and review your borrowing. You can see your federal loan balances, interest rates, and other important information about the aid you have received.

Borrow With the Finish Line in Mind

A financial aid offer tells you what you are eligible to borrow, but that does not necessarily mean you have to borrow the full amount offered. Before accepting additional loan funds, consider what you need for your educational and related expenses. Every additional dollar borrowed is a dollar that may need to be repaid—with interest—after you leave school.

This is especially important for students who have attended multiple institutions, changed programs, or have borrowed for several years. Federal student loans have annual and lifetime borrowing limits, so knowing where you stand can help you plan for the remainder of your program.

Do Not Wait Until Graduation to Look

Make checking your federal student loan information part of your financial routine. Ask yourself:

- How much have I borrowed so far?
- How much longer do I have until graduation?
- Am I borrowing more than I need?
- Do I know who my federal loan servicer will be?
- Have I considered what my future monthly payment could look like?

Being informed now gives you more time to plan.

Take Advantage of IonTuition

If you have not already created your IonTuition account, now is a great time to do so. IonTuition provides tools and support to help you understand and manage your student loans, including access to loan information, repayment resources, and student loan counselors. Getting familiar with these resources while you are still enrolled can make the transition into repayment much easier. Create Your Account: portal.IonTuition.com

Graduation should be about celebrating what you have accomplished—not being surprised by your student loan balance. Know what you owe, borrow thoughtfully, and start preparing for repayment before your final term.



Paralegal Department Spotlight

COMMON QUESTIONS I AM ASKED

1. “Why is this so hard?”

My response is always the same: “Because we are teaching you to think differently, and then we ask you to put that thinking into practice.”

Learning in a professional paralegal program goes beyond reading a textbook or memorizing information. True learning occurs when students must analyze situations, apply legal concepts, exercise sound judgment, and solve real-world problems. That transition from theory to practice can be challenging, but it is also where meaningful growth occurs.

The Paralegal Program at American National University is intentionally designed to mirror professional expectations from the very first day of class. Professionalism, compliance, workplace etiquette, rigorous coursework, and instruction from experienced attorneys and paralegals all contribute to a learning environment focused on practical application. Every aspect of the program is aimed at preparing students for the realities of today's legal workplace.

2. “When does it all start to click?”

For many students, the turning point occurs around Weeks 4 or 5 of their first term, although every student's journey is unique. It is often during this time that confidence begins to emerge. Students become more comfortable with legal analysis, participate more actively in class discussions, and demonstrate greater confidence in their abilities and professional demeanor.

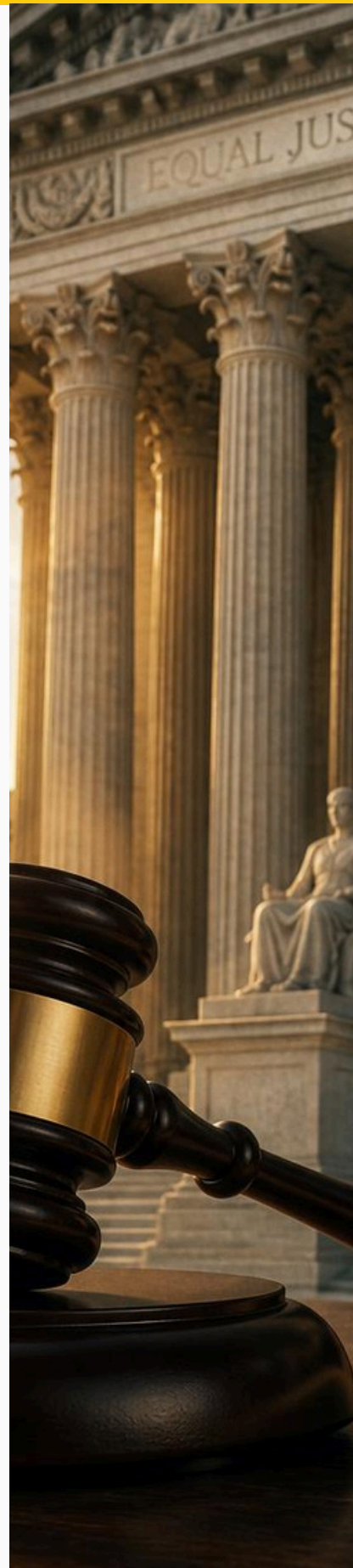
3. The most important advice I can offer to new students is simple.

Trust the process and trust your critical thinking skills.

There will be moments of frustration, stress, and self-doubt. Those feelings are not signs of failure; they are often indicators of growth. Developing the skills required of a legal professional is challenging by design. The discomfort that accompanies learning is frequently the very thing that leads to confidence, competence, and success.

Stay committed, remain engaged, and keep moving forward. The skills you are developing today are preparing you for a rewarding and impactful career in the legal profession.

— Wendy Notz, J.D., Dean of the Paralegal Program





In Memoriam

With deep respect and gratitude, we honor the lives of our students and staff 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.

KATHRYN LOUISE BONDS, 1936-2026

Sister Kathryn was educated in Bedford County and was in the first class at Susie G. Gibson High School. Then she attended National Business College. She worked as an instructional aide in Bedford County Schools for many years; and retired from Golden West Foods. She ended her working career at the Bedford Museum.

DOROTHY STUFF BOURNE, 1932-2026

Dorothy graduated from National Business College in Roanoke, where she met the love of her life, Billy Thomas Bourne. The two were married in 1952 and built a life together centered on love, family, and devotion. She held a special interest in World War II history, particularly D-Day, and fulfilled a lifelong dream by visiting Normandy on her 85th birthday. She also found great joy in painting, often capturing landscapes and meaningful places through her art.

BOBBY STONE SIMPSON, 1932-2026

Bobby graduated from the National Business College in Roanoke, Virginia. He co-owned and operated W.S. Simpson Mill in Pilot Mountain, North Carolina, for over 30 years.

NANCY FARISS STOCKERMANN, 1933-2026

Nancy grew up in the Roanoke Valley and graduated from Andrew Lewis High School in Salem, Virginia, with the Class of 1952. She began raising her family, devoting herself to her three children while continuing to pursue her education at National Business College, preparing for a successful career in banking. Her banking career included positions as a loan officer and assistant bank manager.

DOLPHINE SWOFFORD, 1928-2026

Dolphine was a graduate of Montvale High School and National Business College. Marrying USAF Master Sargent, James Swofford, she created a loving home in many US States and Okinawa Japan, raising five children. Her passions were sewing, reading, crafting and baking goodies.

REBECCA HANCOCK WADE

Rebecca graduated from National Business College and worked for Norfolk & Western in the Accounting Dept. and Freight Claims, and for Norfolk Southern in Marketing as Contract Officer.