

ALVERNO magazine

SPECIAL EDITION | 2023

A professional portrait of Christy L. Brown, JD, Alverno College's ninth president. She is a Black woman with short, curly, light-colored hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black blazer over a black top and a multi-strand pearl necklace. The background is a soft-focus, bright outdoor setting.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW PRESIDENT

*Christy L. Brown, JD
Alverno College's ninth president*

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ALVERNO MAGAZINE | SUMMER 2023

COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

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Alverno Magazine connects the members of the college community by sharing the stories of our strength, inspiration and meaningful engagement with the world.

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Welcome

There is always something to celebrate at Alverno. We recently celebrated the triumphant successes of our amazing graduates who are now taking the next steps in their lives of personal and professional distinction. We celebrated promotions and retirements among our wonderful staff and faculty. We celebrated the honors and recognitions bestowed on some of our outstanding alums. And, this summer, we are celebrating the start of Alverno's ninth president, Christy L. Brown, JD!

A powerful advocate for, and outstanding exemplar of, the excellence of women's leadership, Christy comes to Alverno from the Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast where she has served as the chief executive officer since 2012. Christy earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Stanford University, and a Master of Arts in Humanities and Juris Doctorate at Duke University. Prior to her work with the Girl Scouts, Christy served as the vice chancellor for Finance and Administrative Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and as interim president at Milwaukee Area Technical College, in addition to her role as executive vice president and general counsel. Christy has also worked as a vice president for Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, and as an associate attorney at the law firm of Michael Best and Friedrich.

What excites me most about Christy serving in the role of president of Alverno College is her deep commitment to the advancement of women's leadership and inclusive excellence. As a first-generation college student, Christy understands the unique ways in which higher education needs to adapt in service to others, and her commitment to the Franciscan value of hospitality will ensure that Alverno remains a welcoming campus, committed to providing access, and will help advance efforts to promote a sense of belonging for all. She leads with integrity and vision, and her heart is in the important mission and work of Alverno.

Put simply, Christy Brown is Alverno Strong!

As we welcome this exciting change for Alverno, I want to also take a moment to thank everyone within the extended Alverno family for your support and kindness. In July, I will be departing Alverno to assume the role of president of Benedictine University in Illinois and Arizona. The turning of this page is both exciting and bittersweet. I sincerely love Alverno and its mission.

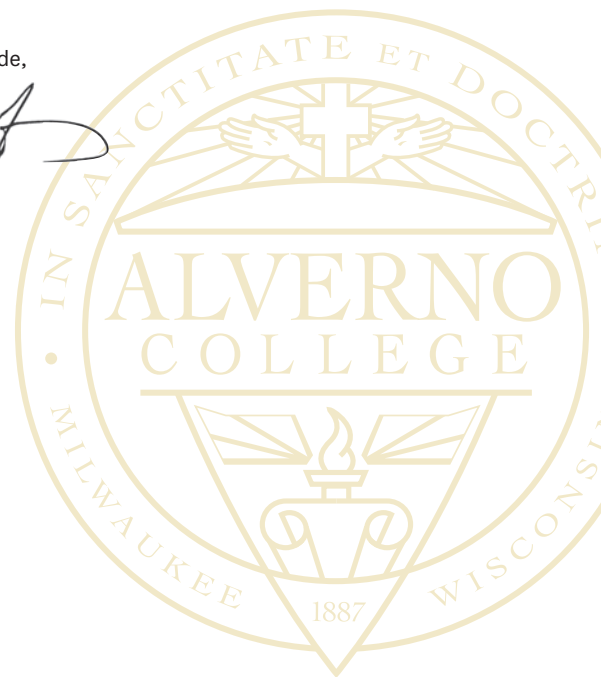
The students, staff, faculty, alums and our many supporters and benefactors have left an indelible mark on my spirit. Thank you all so much.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us, "There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the Heavens." I have learned so much during my time at Alverno as the vice president for Academic Affairs and in my service as interim president over this past year. I have made many wonderful friends and learned so much about myself, about community and about servant-leadership in my years at Alverno. I know that I will always hold this beloved community within my grateful heart.

I pray God grants prosperity and abundant blessings on the truly magnificent work happening here. I believe that Christy saying "yes" to the call to serve as Alverno's next president is a visible sign that has already begun.

With deepest gratitude,

Joseph J. Foy, PhD
Interim President





Alverno's New President is Called to Lead

By Jackie Avial

When Christy L. Brown stood in front of the Duke University School of Law graduating class of 1994, she shared a quote with the peers who elected her as their commencement speaker.

Not just any quote — a Scripture passage. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48).

These are the wise words that have guided Brown through a career that has always been centered on helping others.

“I’ve been completely blessed, and I want to give back. That’s why I’m still in nonprofits. That’s why I continue to do the work that I’m doing,” she says.

The early years

Brown grew up in Milwaukee, the third of four children born to Joyce and the late Charles Brown, each an inspiration to their family. Her father was an Air Force veteran and postal employee who later purchased his father-in-law’s commercial waste management company, leaving a stable job for a riskier path as an entrepreneur in a segregated city.

“When my grandfather started the company in 1941, white waste management companies

did not pick up Black-owned companies’ garbage. He saw a path there. My dad bought the company in the early 1970s and did that for the rest of his career,” Brown recalls.

Brown’s mother worked at the Veterans Administration and Allis-Chalmers until starting a family. After, she worked part-time jobs, including as a secretary for a lawyer and Avon sales representative, in order to be present for her children before and after school.

“My mother probably should have gone to college,” Brown says. “She was very smart, and some of her friends were going. She recalls always having been number one in her high school class until they brought in two white male students right before graduation to take the valedictorian and salutatorian spots. So she graduated third in her class.”

Neither of Brown’s parents attended a four-year college, but they expected their children to pursue higher education — and they did. Brown chose Stanford University at the recommendation of a guidance counselor.

“I didn’t know anything about it, other than it was in California. I didn’t know it was a

prestigious place. I didn’t know that a lot of people applied and didn’t get in,” Brown recalls. “When I got the letter saying that I was in, I was ecstatic.”

Finding her path

At Stanford, Brown originally declared an electrical engineering major because of her aptitude for math and science, but it wasn’t the right fit. She changed her major to psychology after her first year. “It should have been day two!” she laughs.

After graduating, she worked for the financial aid office and thrilled in remaining part of the campus community, attending lectures and campus events — that is, until she received an important call.

“I talked to my grandmother on the phone, and she said, ‘Baby, you’ve been out there a long time. I think it’s time for you to go home,’” Brown recalls.

Back in Milwaukee, Brown worked part-time at Pathfinders as an outreach coordinator and counselor for teen mothers, then as an admissions counselor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she loved encouraging youth in their higher education journeys.

Four years after graduation, Brown headed to Duke University School of Law to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a lawyer. Brown had first been introduced to the law and its utility as a tool to help people through her mother's work as a legal secretary.

Transforming lives and institutions

Brown worked at a Milwaukee law firm for three years before returning to the nonprofit world, first as vice president and corporate counsel at Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. There, she embraced the organization's mission to "help people improve the quality of their lives, motivated by the compassion of Christ" through a wide range of services, including refugee resettlement, adoption, foster care, community-based residential facilities for youth, and mental health care.

Then, as executive vice president and general counsel at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), Brown partnered with human resources and labor unions to ensure that all facets of the college — from faculty to administrative staff — better reflected the diversity of the student population.

When Brown became vice chancellor for Finance and Administrative Affairs at UWM, she led a team that secured state

approval for \$300 million worth of capital expenses to enhance the university's research capacity.

"It was incredible what our team did because it had never been done before at UWM. That was more than what the university had gotten approved in the previous 20 years total," Brown says. "I listened to the people around me who had good ideas. If you're a good boss, you say okay, let's do it."

In 2012, Brown joined the Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast as chief executive with a mandate to raise the visibility of the organization.

"It was a well-kept secret in a lot of communities. We wanted people to know about the benefits of Girl Scouting, particularly in those places where we have populations that are under-represented," she says.

The mission of Girl Scouts is to build "girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place." Brown knows firsthand the power of building girls' confidence. For the first 12 years of her childhood, she was very quiet and shy.

"I often wonder whether my not talking much before seventh grade also just had to do with being a girl and feeling like my voice wouldn't be heard," she says. "That's why I wanted to do this job at Girl Scouts. When I started, my daughter was seven. I want her to be anything she wants to be, and that's what Girl Scouts helps girls see."

Now at Alverno, Brown views her work as the next phase of the Girl Scout mission. "I feel like I'm still going to be doing the same

thing, just in a different environment," she says. "It's on a continuum of building women's leadership and helping women and girls find their voices."

Alverno Strong

In fact, Alverno's history as a women's college is one of the many reasons Brown was attracted to the presidency.

"We know this environment provides benefits for young people and for women, because they won't have that environment when they go out into the real world," she says.

Other strengths that Brown sees are the 8 Abilities, the diversity of the student body, the Franciscan values that center on social justice and equity, and the dedication of faculty and staff.

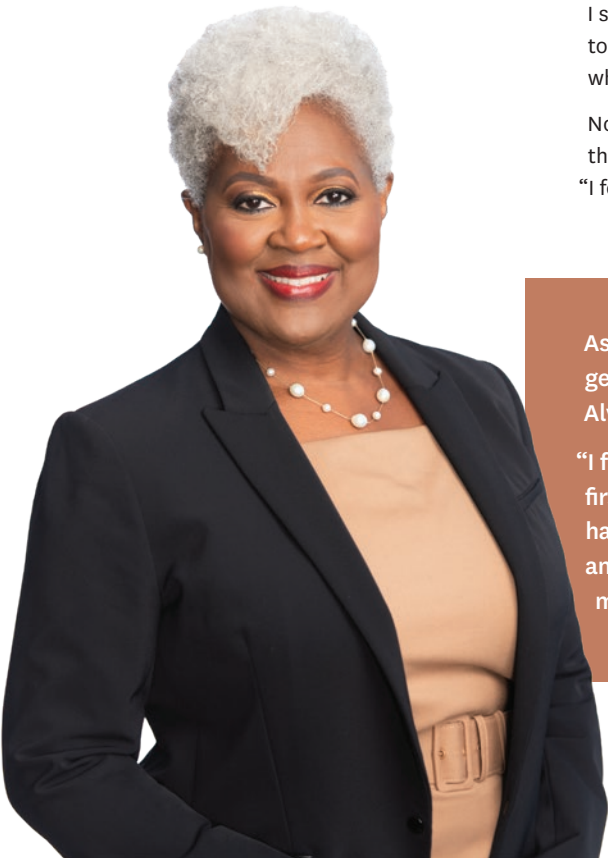
"I was completely blown away by how much they care about Alverno, the students and their learning," she says. "I think some of the awards and recognition that Alverno has received over the years are a testament to that level of dedication and caring."

Together, these are the reasons that inspire students to choose Alverno. Brown wants the world to take note.

"I feel like on some level, Alverno is still a very well-kept secret and we need for people not only in our community but outside of our community to understand what a jewel it is," she says. "I've always admired Alverno from afar, and during this process, I learned so much more about it and how much people love it. And now I love it, too."

As an African American woman who is married with children, and as a first-generation college student, Brown brings unique life experience to the Alverno presidency.

"I feel like I will be like many of the students who are there. A lot of them are first-generation. A lot of them are women of color. I understand that everyone has lives outside of this institution," she says. "We are not monolithic peoples and groups, but it gives me some insight into perhaps what might be in people's minds as they come to the institution and engage with the institution."



get to know **CHRISTY**

A family who serves

Christy's father was an Air Force veteran, her older brother is an Army veteran, and her younger brother is an Air National Guard veteran. Each of her three siblings is in a helping profession: her sister is a faculty member at Milwaukee Area Technical College, her older brother works for the Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and her younger brother is a retired Milwaukee police officer.

Education

Rufus King International High School

Stanford University: Bachelor of Arts, Psychology (1987)

Duke University Graduate School: Master of Arts, Humanities (1994)

Duke University School of Law: Juris Doctor (1994)

Family

Husband Brian Bullock is a special education educational assistant at Brown Deer High School; daughter AJ (A Bronze and Silver Award Girl Scout) is starting college at Morgan State University in Baltimore this August, and son Tony is a rising senior at Menomonee Falls High School.

Last book she read



"Finding Me" by Viola Davis. "It was incredible. She's had an incredible upbringing — food insecurity, poverty, abuse. And look at her now."

What she's reading now

"Greenlights" by Matthew McConaughey. "Someone recommended it, and so far I like it. Typically, however, I love mysteries. James Patterson is my go-to airport/traveling read."



The happiest place on Earth

"We go to Disney World almost every year — we're a Disney family. We're going to Universal Studios this summer for my daughter's high school graduation present."

Most memorable trip

"I love traveling. My family and I went to Europe before COVID-19, on a 10-day Mediterranean cruise with stops in Spain, Italy and France. It was incredible. My husband and I want to go back!"

Dream trip

"My dream trip is to travel back to the Mediterranean, and not on a cruise this time, so we can enjoy more specific cultures, and it would include Greece."

Her perfect day in Milwaukee

“The weather would have to be warm so I can go to the lakefront. I love Lake Michigan. I love to hear water; it’s comforting. I would have breakfast or coffee with friends at the Colectivo by the lakefront, and then we’d go on a boat ride. It would be during Summerfest, and we’d go see an R&B or jazz act or whatever’s not on the main stage. I would have a beer and cheese platter because it’s Milwaukee — you just have to! Later, I’d enjoy small plates and wine with friends at La Merenda or Balzac. Then I’d watch a Brewers game, and then a Bucks game. Finally, I’d hang out with my family on the patio with the fire pit going.”



Hobbies

“I love seeing movies in the theater. I’m a Marvel girl. I like action movies. At home, I still watch ‘Die Hard,’ ‘Lethal Weapon’ and ‘John Wick.’”

Favorite Girl Scout cookie

Thin Mint: “You can’t beat that!”

Best advice she’s ever received

Gnothi seauton
ancient Greek for ‘know thyself.’



“When you know yourself, you make better choices. My sociology teacher gave me this advice when I was a student, and I give this as advice, too!”

Historical heroes

Barbara Jordan, the first Black woman elected to the Texas Senate and the first Southern Black woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives: “a lawyer and great orator — I just loved her as a child.”

Martin Luther King Jr.: “He was always talking about justice and equality, and all of those appealed to me as a young child.”



A 90-DAY PLAN

Ask Christy Brown her action plan for the first 90 days of her Alverno presidency, and you'll immediately get a sense of her leadership style.

"My 90-day plan is to listen," she says. "To me, you can't make relationships or create a vision if you aren't a listener. I want to know what everyone thinks is important for me to be doing in the first 12 or 18 months. People care that you're listening to what they're saying."

Brown is working to arrange conversations with the many members of the Alverno community: students, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, the School Sisters of St. Francis and others.

Only after listening can a comprehensive vision for Alverno be crafted. To Brown, this is not work to be undertaken alone or in a vacuum.

"It has to be a shared vision created with, by, and through our stakeholders," she says.

Once a plan, decision or vision is reached, Brown says it's equally important, if not more so, to communicate the outcome as well as the process behind it.

"People like that I share why we didn't do something. Otherwise, people may think you didn't hear them or that you're making a bad decision because they may not know another fact that you know. That helps build credibility with people," she explains. "They will see that we listened, we heard, we evaluated, and then we decided to go with a possibly different but well-reasoned course."

In her first 90 days, Brown wants to identify stakeholders' concerns as well as the many things to celebrate.

"Rituals are very important," she explains. "What is it that this community is about? How do we celebrate things? Do we need to create new celebrations?"

Brown says such an evolution is something that every longstanding institution must confront — and Alverno may be no exception. She believes there are many things to celebrate and honor as the community works to build an inclusive vision for the college's future.

"We have to hold onto our identity and the Franciscan values that drive us while creating space for listening and moving forward," she says.



A Blessing

on Alverno College and its new president, Christy Brown

Loving Creator God, we School Sisters of St. Francis, in this 150th year of our foundation, humbly and happily ask Your blessing on Alverno College and on this valiant woman, Christy Brown, who has accepted the enormous responsibility of its presidency.

We thank You for the powerful spiritual and intellectual gifts and talents offered to Alverno by dedicated Sister and lay administrators, faculty and staff since its beginning. And we thank You for the many students who brought their minds and hearts to Alverno and emerged from this institution as strong adult women, well prepared and eager to serve this increasingly complex world.

We ask Your blessing on Christy Brown. In the years ahead, she will be the voice and face of Alverno in the public arena. Give her a strong voice and an empathic face. Give her strong leadership and a Franciscan spirit in discerning and calling forth the gifts and talents of her faculty and staff. Help her to be an inspiration and example to the students who come to Alverno to be formed into loving, dedicated, strong moral citizens of the world in this 21st century.

Our three foundresses — Mother Alexia, Mother Alfons, and Sister Clara — renewed their religious vows 150 years ago on April 28, 1874. The next day — or more probably that same afternoon — they rolled up their sleeves and got to work. In their lofty dreams of educating the children of Campbellsport, Wis., they did not for a minute forget that these *kleine kinder* whom God had entrusted to them needed to be nourished with potatoes, tomatoes, carrots and beans, as well as with the Word of God and the formidable mysteries of English grammar and spelling, mathematics and music. It was spring and so they planted a garden.

We ask that you, Christy Brown, follow their example: that you, too, will plant seeds of truth which will grow to nourish and promote persons of integrity. May they, in turn, plant seeds of justice and peace in the untilled gardens of the future.

Christy, we School Sisters of St. Francis humbly and happily thank you as we entrust you with the presidency of this, our beloved institution. When our foundress Mother Alexia Hoell faced impossible tasks, she audaciously announced that the word “impossible” had no meaning for her. (“Impossible,” she said, “that is a word I do not know.”) We offer you her example. When you are faced with daunting and risky decisions to be made, discern as best you can and then leave the rest in God’s hands. Further, we offer you the promise of our prayers and that of the hundreds of Franciscan sisters who dedicated their lives to the students of Alverno College while on Earth. They are now your strong advocates before God.

You have only to ask their help.

In your mission as president, Christy, we ask God to bless you with wisdom, courage and joy as we offer you our traditional Franciscan song of blessing:

May God bless you and keep you.

May the Holy One show you mercy.

May the Face of Love shine on you and give you peace.

And give you peace.

What People Are Saying



“Christy Brown is an innovative and creative leader who generously shares her time, talent, treasure and ties in order to enrich her community. As a homegrown Milwaukeean, her ties to this community are immense and will deeply benefit Alverno, as will her extensive experience in the corporate, academic and nonprofit worlds. She truly loves this city and is passionate about making a difference in people’s lives.”

— Jackie Herd-Barber,
Community Volunteer



“Christy’s knowledge and connection to the Milwaukee community will serve and enrich Alverno and our students. She is a leader who knows the opportunities and challenges that Milwaukee families and women face, and she knows who their greatest advocates are and how to bring people together to ensure their success. From Girl Scouts to the Rotary Club of Milwaukee to multiple business and higher education boards, Christy has been in the rooms where decisions are made to create opportunities for Milwaukee and Milwaukee women. I have full confidence that she will ensure that Alverno and Alverno students are always top of mind in those spaces.”

— Kate Lundeen
*Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing,
Alverno College*



“As CEO of Girl Scouts Wisconsin Southeast (GSWISE) Christy Brown helped make the development of courage, confidence, and character, not just words but realities in each girl’s scouting experience. In her conversations with Alverno faculty and staff, she has noted the connection of these three Girl Scouting pillars to Alverno’s 8 Abilities. She knows that you don’t just hope that important abilities are achieved; you need to plan, teach, coach and mentor them.

At GSWISE, Christy was a hands-on leader who enjoyed meeting with and participating in activities with girls of all ages. She will bring this same energy, enthusiasm and presence to her work as president at Alverno.”

— Kathleen O’Brien, OSF ’67
*Provincial Coordinator of the
School Sisters of Saint Francis (United States Province) and
Presidential Search Committee Co-Chair*

STRONG, STEADY LEADERSHIP



By Kelly Cole

For the past year, Joseph Foy, PhD, has served as Alverno's interim president, leading with purpose, thoughtfulness and above all, humility.

Foy was named vice president for Academic Affairs in the spring of 2020, beginning his appointment just weeks after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the College to rethink how it could safely deliver its curriculum in the engaged, attentive manner that is one of the hallmarks of an Alverno education. Challenging as those first few months were, Foy navigated the upheaval with principled leadership and careful consideration, resolving to meet the needs of students and faculty alike.

He also led the transition back to in-person learning, balancing the precautions necessary to ensure everyone's safety with the need to reintroduce a sense of community.

It was because of his steadfast leadership through these unimaginable challenges that he was asked to serve as interim president while a national search to identify Alverno's ninth president was conducted. Now, as he prepares to begin his appointment as the 13th president of Benedictine University in Lisle, Ill., Foy leaves a legacy of kindness, collaboration and dedicated service.





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