

Gabby Cataloni '22

*Hermitage, Pennsylvania
B.S., Computer Engineering
University of Mount Union*



Gabby Cataloni '22 wasn't quite sure what she was looking for in her college experience, but she knew she wanted a place where she could explore her interests and talents. After applying to more than 20 institutions, Cataloni ultimately chose Mount Union because of its diverse selection of programs and offerings.

"There were so many majors, opportunities, and paths to choose from that I knew I would be able to find what I wanted to do here," she said.

When she arrived on campus in the fall of 2018, she planned to experiment with different courses before deciding on a major. However, she didn't feel that spark of excitement for her educational path until her mom recommended an engineering course.

"In our first course, we went through all the different engineering paths, but I really felt my passion ignite when we got to computer engineering" she said. "Ever since then, I've decided this is what I'm going to do."

Cataloni has since completed a summer internship at Tennessee Technological

University and authored multiple undergraduate research publications. Outside of being a top computer engineering student, she serves as a Preview guide and Raider guide in Mount Union's Office of First Year Initiatives. In these roles, Cataloni works as an orientation leader and peer mentor for first-year students as they are welcomed to Mount Union.

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- Gabby Cataloni

"I think it's super awesome to be able to help other students and guide them through their college career, because, when I was in their position and someone was there to help me, it meant the world," she said.

Cataloni is also Student Senate President and a member of Alpha Phi Omega, a service fraternity on campus. She enjoys

giving back to her community in these roles and being a part of Mount Union's positive change. She appreciates that Mount Union allows her to be a multi-faceted leader and knows it will set her apart.

"There's always something new that Mount Union has to offer," she said. "I think that's an extremely important part of a college experience because you get to have all these different ways to get involved. Like everyone says, Mount Union is an 'and' school – you can be this and that, which is exactly what I've done with my four years here."

Cataloni is especially appreciative of the donor support that has allowed her to discover her passion while sustaining her educational experience.

"I am a scholarship recipient, and being able to take some of that financial burden off the shoulders of myself and my family is so important," she said. "I could almost cry just knowing someone has been able to help me fund my education and believes in me and my career goals. If it weren't for donor generosity, I don't know if I would've been able to continue going to college."

OPPORTUNITY.

That's what a Mount Union education means to **Armon Cook '22**. Originally from Akron, Ohio, Armon is a proud graduate of Firestone High School. His Mount Union story began with his love for the arts and choir. As he prepares for graduation, the endless opportunities provided through his Mount Union education have equipped him with the confidence to write his next chapter.

Growing up, Armon always had a passion for political science and the arts, but never knew where it would lead him in life.

"It was not until Dr. Grant Cook came to my high school that I understood, at Mount Union, I could pursue both while on a music scholarship," he stated. "I remember telling my family that day, 'I'm going to Mount Union' and they were like, 'Let's make it happen!'"

After months of preparation and performing at the music scholarship auditions, he received the music scholarship.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity Dr. Cook provided me to audition for the scholarship, and as a result, Mount Union became my home," he said.

Not only is Armon a political science major and member of the Concert Choir, but he also serves as a Preview guide, assistant resident life manager, and the vice president of the Black Student Union. In recognition of his transformational work, he also had the opportunity to serve as a student voice for the Anti-Racism Task Force during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, and was awarded the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award this past spring.

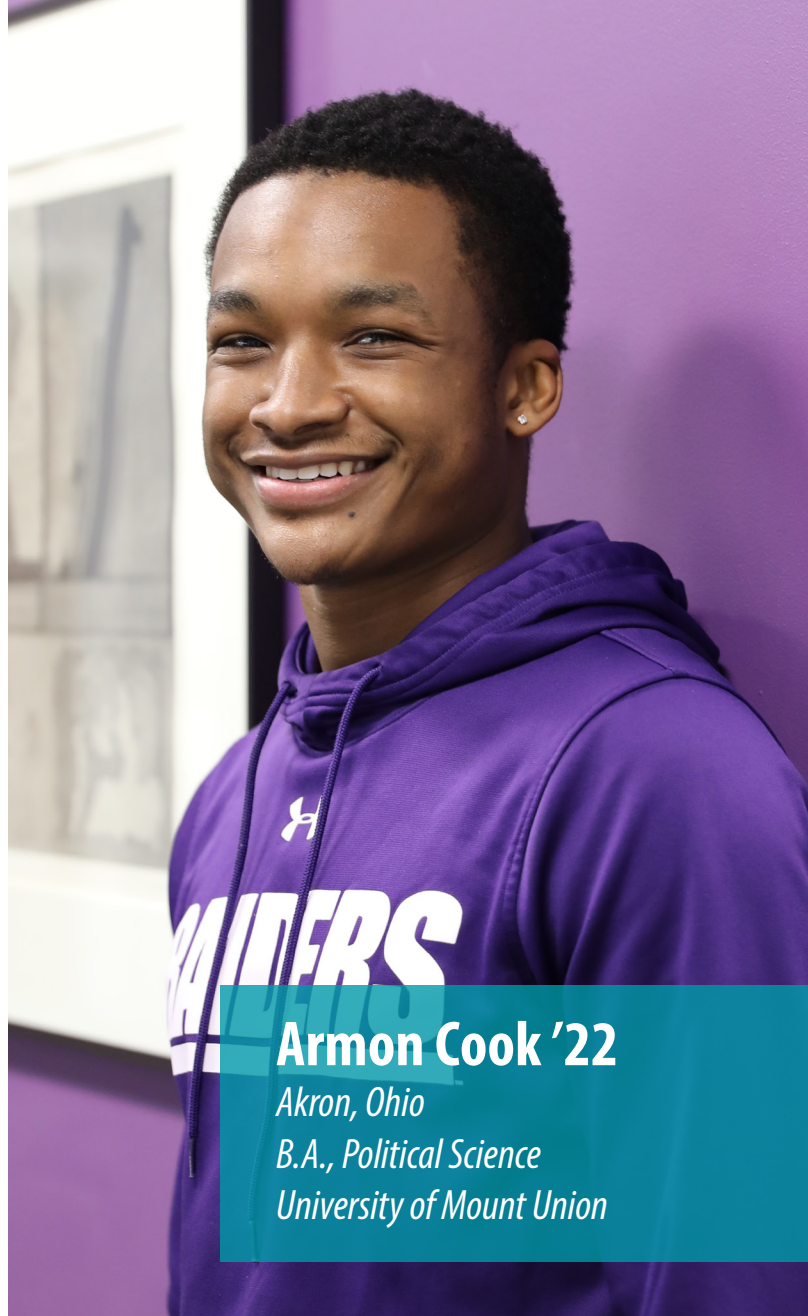
"I'm involved in a lot," he expressed. "I love the opportunity to create an inclusive campus culture and build a community despite differences."

Alongside the memories created during his involvement on campus, Armon shared that his favorite Mount Union experience was taking part in the Rachel Boyce Lang Choir Tour in Scotland during the summer of 2019.

"To represent Mount Union while singing in castles that have been around for 1,000+ years was a life-changing experience," he said.

Donor support holds a special place in Armon's heart, as it has played a big role in his Mount Union story.

"Donor generosity put me in a position where my education became financially realistic," he stated. "I am thankful for the inspiring support and scholarships I've received while at Mount Union as it has allowed me the opportunity to fully focus on my academics and enjoy my college experience. The time I've spent



Armon Cook '22
Akron, Ohio
B.A., Political Science
University of Mount Union

"I love the opportunity to create an inclusive campus culture and build a community despite differences."

- Armon Cook

here is an investment in my future because of the opportunities I've received from the Mount Union community."

Upon graduation, Armon will be interning with the Washington Center in Washington, DC with a focus on policy in law. He knows that, with his Mount Union experiences, he will be prepared for the next chapter.

"Mount Union has transitioned me from a high school kid to an adult ready to take on the world – it's my time."

Bob Floor '22

Alliance, Ohio

B.A., Sport Business

University of Mount Union



Finishing STRONG

When Bob Floor '22 stepped to the starting line of his first collegiate cross country race, he kept telling himself, **“Just don’t be last.”**

That might not seem like the most motivating of mantras, but at 51-years-old, going toe-to-toe with those athletes is simply part of Floor’s incredible story.

Born and raised in Alliance, Floor graduated from Alliance High School in 1988 without playing any organized sports. In 2010, around the time of his 40th birthday, he found himself needing surgery after discovering that his left kidney “blew up five times the size” of his right kidney. After some time to recover, Floor searched for something to stay active.

It was then, at age 41, that he found his passion for running. In the years that followed, Floor entered nine marathons and was running a local 5K or 10K road race every weekend. He even won some of those races, including the Run-A-MUC in 2015.

In January 2019, while still racing and entering his third decade working for the local Giant Eagle, Floor’s wife, Shelley, was hired by Mount Union in the Office of the University Registrar. Through the University’s employee benefits program, spouses can earn degrees from Mount Union at no cost to them. To Floor, who earned an associate degree in business management from the University of Akron in 1993, this was an opportunity.

“If I ever want to advance my career or relocate for a new position, a bachelor’s degree is often required now,” Floor said. “Plus, when I learned that Division III athletics had no age requirement, a light went off in my brain, recognizing a new challenge.”

With Mount Union’s accessible transfer pathways, Floor transferred his Akron credits over, enrolled in the spring of 2020, and joined the cross country team. With many athletic seasons canceled last year,

“I was absolutely nervous about new technology...but the faculty, and some of my classmates with whom I worked on group projects, were fantastic in helping me get up to speed.”

- Bob Floor



Floor earned his first chance to compete with the team this October, but that is not what is most important to him.

“I know that I can’t run as fast as 20-year-old collegiate runners on the team,” Floor said. “I’m older than some of their parents, after all. But my goal is to run with them and do the workouts, knowing it can make me a faster runner.”

While athletics played a role in Floor’s return to education, his degree is still the primary focus. Yet, for most adult learners in the new educational environment, his journey has not been without a few hiccups.

“I was absolutely nervous about new technology,” Floor said. “Being nearly 30 years removed from a classroom, things like Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Zoom were new to me. But the faculty, and some of my classmates with whom I worked on group projects, were fantastic in helping me get up to speed.”

Floor has been like any other student engaging in digital learning, direct study, and traditional classroom learning over the past few years to earn his degree. Yet, his unique experiences have brought new ideas to the table.

“Professors seem to like having me in class because of the different perspectives I have to offer,” Floor said.

Though balancing a full-time job at Giant Eagle, maintaining an athletic schedule, and carrying a 4.0 grade-point average is no easy feat, Floor is on track to graduate in May with a degree in sport business, while qualifying for the majority of the cross country team’s races.

So, what happened in Floor’s first race as a college athlete? Well, he did not win, but he managed to have significant distance between himself and the last finisher. While achieving this personal goal, he also experienced something unexpected.

“It was awesome to hear the team cheering ‘Let’s go, Bob!’ at the finish line. These guys bring out something in me, pushing me to compete and keep going, and that’s a great feeling.”

GRIDIRON LEADERS

For **James Daniels '11** and **Daryl Ely '09**, football is about more than X's and O's. Their passion for the pigskin is what brought each of them to Alliance from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Winter Springs, Florida, respectively. Now, more than a decade removed from their playing days, these college football coaches recently earned the prestigious opportunity to participate in the Bill Walsh NFL Diversity Coaching Fellowship.

For more than 30 years, the fellowship – named for the late Bill Walsh, a Pro Football Hall of Fame coach – gives coaches from all levels the chance to participate in NFL training camps and workout programs. Designed as a tool to increase the number of minority coaches in the NFL, all 32 teams participate in the program every year.

Working with the Best

Daniels, a sport business graduate who earned a Master of Education in curriculum and instruction from Loyola University in Maryland, was a member of the football team during his time at Mount Union. He is currently in his third season as defensive backs coach at East Stroudsburg University (ESU) in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, and when he found out about the fellowship, he did not want to let the opportunity pass him by.

“Other than the application process, I sent handwritten letters to all 32 NFL head coaches,” Daniels said. “Plus, [Denver Broncos Head Coach] Vic Fangio is an ESU grad, and one of his quality control coaches had family coaching at ESU. When they saw that letterhead, they started digging into my résumé, and I got the opportunity.”



“I want to be sure I’m helping the people who need it, because many of those guys who are 18-23 years old don’t have the types of mentors or resources that I was provided.”

- James Daniels

Daniels’ first year in the fellowship was in 2020, and although he was able to make it out to Denver, the experience was slightly hindered due to the pandemic. One year later, Daniels returned to the mile-high city and soaked in as much of training camp as he could.

“I got the opportunity to work in-person with these great athletes and coaches and pick their brains on certain things while also correcting mistakes when I saw them – they actually let me coach out there,” Daniels said. “It was a unique experience to get to do that at the NFL level and learn from the best of the best.”

Daniels credits much of his professional journey to his experiences at Mount Union. From learning what makes a program successful, to leading and creating a structure for players both on and off the field, Daniels attributes some of his own regiments to Larry Kehres ’74 and his coaching staffs.

While grateful for the NFL experience, Daniels sees himself staying at the collegiate level with the goal of being a defensive coordinator at a Division I program. It’s not as though he is limiting his dreams, but rather thinking of ways to continue to make a meaningful impact.

“The NFL was never really in my plans,” Daniels said. “I want to be sure I’m help-

James Daniels '11 and Daryl Ely '09 selected for prestigious Bill Walsh NFL Diversity Coaching Fellowship



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- Daryl Ely

on the experience of participating in the Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship

ing the people who need it, because many of those guys who are 18-23 years-old don’t have the types of mentors or resources that I was provided. I want to be someone who can help people grow and hopefully be part of a better community.”

The Purple Raider Connection

There was a time when Ely had never heard of Mount Union; that time is long gone. Now in his 16th season at Mount Union, four as a player and 12 as a defensive coach, Ely was able to utilize

the Mount Union network to earn his fellowship opportunity with the Philadelphia Eagles.

Much like how Daniels was brought on by the Broncos, Ely made his way to the city of brotherly love this past summer to work with new Eagles Head Coach, and Mount Union alumnus, Nick Sirianni '03. Like Sirianni’s experience prior to the NFL, Ely feels that working with and learning from both Larry and Vince '98 Kehres prepared him for the fellowship and the future.

“I think the Mount Union connection was huge and played a part in my ability to get the fellowship,” Ely said. “We were working on opposite sides of the football at camp, but Sirianni was my position coach my first year as a player, so it was great to catch up and talk Mount Union.”

Given the ability to collaborate with the coaches and players, Ely was sure to take in as much as he could to bring back to his Purple Raider athletes.

“I was engaged in the camp for two weeks and I feel like I learned more

in that time than I could in two years’ time,” Ely said. “It really was like getting a master’s degree in coaching from great individuals who were very open and answered all my questions.”

Like Daniels, Ely intends to lead lockdown college defenses for the rest of his career. Though he went into his fellowship experience with preconceived notions about coaching in the NFL, Ely came out of it with a changed mind and a different perspective that he hopes will lead to his continued growth as a coach and a leader.

Ely has fond memories of his time as an undergraduate at Mount Union, including being part of the 2006 and 2008 National Championship teams. Though the banners fly forever, what left the biggest impression on Ely during his time were the relationships he built and the home he created.

“Two of my best friends went to Mount, and the memories we have are great,” Ely said. “The relationships built here really do last a lifetime.” ■

