

WHERE TO

A resource dedicated to student-athletes
and their Life after Notre Dame.



LAND

JUNE 2024

A NOTE FROM DR. TOM CARTER III



Happy summer! The theme guiding this issue is “new beginnings” and several of LAND’s key initiatives are off to an incredible start, thanks to you, our Class Reps and service partners.

Our objective to introduce LAND’s pillars to an expanding network bore fruit in April at our social during Blue-Gold Legacy weekend. We connected with a number of former athletes who stopped by Legends Restaurant, our gracious host. Thank you to event sponsor South Bend Orthopaedics and LAND Board Member Dr. Brian Ratigan (ND ‘93) for his inspiring keynote address. Riddell, our official Notre Dame helmet sponsor, and ND Events and ND LEGENDS Teams also helped make our event memorable.

If you weren’t able to join us, take a moment to [watch our video](#), expertly produced by Salvi Media. Thank you, Christopher Salvi and William Salvi (ND ‘13), and team.

Another vital undertaking has been the launch of our app, LANDing Pad. We asked you to join this new community and spread the word, and the response has been tremendous! Please keep up the enthusiasm by encouraging your fellow Notre Dame teammates to join, too. They can download LANDing Pad from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

In this issue’s [Partnership Place](#), meet our new mental health services partner, LifeStance, which provides trusted, affordable, and personalized mental healthcare and helps each person design their own customized care plan.

Starting a job or career is one of life’s most exciting new beginnings, but doing so requires a strategic approach. Our [Career Connections](#) article offers some proven ways to be successful from day one. And in their own accounts for our Spotlight section, [Rachel Creighton](#) (ND ‘10) and [Martin Vergara](#), (ND ‘06) describe their post-sports career paths as circuitous or marked by stops and starts, but always grounded in their student-athlete experience.

Remember to let us know about jobs, internships, and mentorships you can offer, and we will add them to our database of opportunities and to LANDing Pad. Contact Program Director [Brandyn Curry](#) to learn more.

Thank you for reading about what’s new at Project LAND. Have a great summer! I’ll end with a shoutout to the No. 1 Notre Dame Men’s Lacrosse team and Coach Kevin Corrigan for winning their second-straight NCAA national title. Congratulations!

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MENTAL WELLNESS AND SAFETY NET NAVIGATION: LIFESTANCE HEALTH



LifeStance
HEALTH

Project LAND provides customized services to former student athletes, managers, and trainers as they transition to life after sports. As one of the nation's largest providers of outpatient mental healthcare, LifeStance believes that there is no one face to mental health conditions and no one-size-fits-all approach to treatment.

LifeStance is proud to partner with LAND to provide trusted, affordable, and personalized mental healthcare and help each person design their own customized care plan.

ABOUT LIFESTANCE

LifeStance and its supported clinicians include **psychiatrists, psychologists, and licensed therapists** who are ready to support you. LifeStance supported practices offer **both in-person and telehealth appointments**, so you get the care you need in the format that serves you best. LifeStance also **accepts most insurance plans**, allowing you to get the most from your treatment plan.

ACCESS COMPREHENSIVE CARE, PERSONALIZED TO YOU

LifeStance provides a range of comprehensive outpatient **services**, including psychotherapy, psychiatry, medication management, psychological testing and evaluation, and more. Patients can choose in-person or virtual visits, select from one of the largest networks of providers, and book appointments with ease online or over the phone.

HOW TO GET STARTED

With over 6,800 clinicians across 33 states, it's easy to **find a provider**. You can filter your search by **service, location, condition, and insurance**. Choose in-person or virtual visits and book appointments with ease online or over the phone. For more information, visit www.lifstance.com.

At LifeStance, patient care is paramount – its clinicians are ready to help former student-athletes, managers, and trainers with mental health services when and where they need it.

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ONCE YOU’VE LANDED, USE THESE STRATEGIES FOR CAREER SUCCESS

By Ashley Morgan



In today’s fast-paced workforce, achieving career success requires a strategic approach. Whether you’re just starting your career or aiming for advancement, here are some proven plans that will help you get the most out of your professional journey.

- **Prioritize continuous learning to stay ahead.** Commit to lifelong education through online courses, workshops, or certifications to keep your skills sharp and relevant. Embrace new technologies, methodologies, and industry trends that enable you to seize opportunities and overcome challenges.
- **Keep on networking.** Build meaningful connections by attending industry events, joining professional associations, and leveraging platforms like LinkedIn. These connections can open doors to mentorships, job opportunities, and valuable insights.
- **Use digital tools to streamline tasks, boost productivity, and showcase your capabilities.** Technology proficiency is non-negotiable. But as you gain technical skills, also hone soft skills such as communication, leadership, and emotional intelligence. These are essential for teamwork, leadership roles, and client interactions.
- **Set clear goals to guide your career trajectory.** Define short-term and long-term objectives, and regularly assess your progress. Seek feedback from supervisors, colleagues, or mentors to identify areas for improvement and strengths you can leverage.
- **View challenges as opportunities for growth.** Take on projects that stretch your abilities and allow you to demonstrate your talents – while also maintaining a work-life balance. Prioritize self-care and allocate time for personal interests and relationships to avoid burnout.
- **Stay resilient in the face of setbacks.** Learn from failures that are inevitable for everyone. Use your ability to adapt as you keep moving forward with your career goals.

By embracing continuous growth and leveraging available resources, you can maximize your potential and achieve fulfillment in your profession. Your career is a marathon, not a sprint – take the time to invest in yourself and your future.



POST-ATHLETIC CAREER TRANSITIONS PYRAMID



Publisher’s Note: Project LAND and the Where to LAND newsletter team wish to thank Ashley for her support in establishing the services offered by our Post-Athletics Career Transitions pillar, and for sharing her vast talent development and talent marketing expertise through her article series. Ashley has been instrumental in helping former student-athletes, managers, and trainers ascend to the top of the Career Transitions Pyramid and LAND their new positions.

NEW BEGINNINGS: THEY CONTAIN MULTITUDES

By Rachel Creighton, ND '10



Sometimes the transition to life after sports follows a straight line, while other times, it comes full circle. One definition of coming full circle is to return to an original position or state after going through a series or cycle.

This sums up my experience since 2010, when I graduated from Notre Dame after an exhilarating four years as a student-athlete, including winning the Big East Conference championship with my lacrosse teammates. From that point, I moved away from involvement with sports, then came back again, before starting a family and a photography business that reflects my undergraduate study.

My full circle is woven with a thread that ties each of these experiences together – a dedication to service and community that was instilled in me at Notre Dame. Today, I’m creating a space within my studio that offers women support and connection. Arriving at this place, however, came after one of the most excruciating experiences a woman can endure.

COMMUNITY BORN FROM CRISIS

Three years ago, shortly after the birth of my twins, I went through a severe postpartum depression. I had struggled with seasonal depression and was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder my junior year at Notre Dame, and was fortunate to have the support of my coaching team and the resources of the university to aid in my recovery.

This latest bout with postpartum depression consumed every part of my being. I became a shell of myself, but put forward a brave face until my condition grew too serious, and my life became too dark. As I emerged from depths lower than I knew were possible, I learned that this wasn’t my fault, that I was having a medical crisis, and that I wasn’t alone – one in five mothers suffers from postpartum depression.



I took a leave of absence from my photography business to focus on my health, and when I reached the other side of my crisis, I knew my business capturing images of newborns, women, and families needed to offer something more. I was determined to help other women find themselves again, as I did.

That’s how the Wildflower Collective came to be. When I’m not shooting photos, my studio becomes a space for women to come together, be together, and grow together. The name comes from the Tom Petty song that was playing in the background when my first child was born. One lyric truly resonates: “Far away from your troubles and worry. You belong somewhere you feel free.”

At the Wildflower Collective, women can take time for themselves to read a book, catch up with friends, collaborate with others, Zoom with their therapist, or just take a nap. I’m also developing expert-led workshops here, focused on mental health awareness and education to help women transition through the stages of pregnancy, motherhood, and womanhood.

This latest endeavor reminds me of being in the community of women who were my teammates at Notre Dame. We came together to achieve something bigger than ourselves, both on and off the field, through our commitment to excellence in sports and in service to others.

IN SERVICE TO OTHERS, FINDING OURSELVES

When I arrived at Notre Dame, I quickly took to the girls and the coaching staff. They were warm and welcoming, helping me feel at home when Long Island was a 12-hour drive away. Notre Dame is unique in its ability to recreate the close-knit family dynamic for its student-athletes. Through the bus rides, the late nights, the 6 a.m. workouts, as well as through our community service projects, we were always in it together.

I didn’t realize how much the emphasis on service had taken root in me until a representative from Teach for America visited one of my classes. I felt a connection to their description of the program’s mission and was compelled to join the organization.

This first job, coupled with living in Philadelphia, was so exciting – I was 22 and outside the bubble of a college campus and a lacrosse locker room, feeling liberated to do whatever I wanted. But I sometimes struggled with this new life. Who am I without sports? For years, I had been known simply as “Guerrera” to my teammates and coaches. Now I was introducing myself to people who didn’t know (or even seem to care) much about my former life as an athlete.

I missed the world of sports, and after completing my two-year commitment with Teach for America, I joined Drexel University, first as an academic advisor to student-athletes and later as assistant director of student-athlete development. I soon thrived, as I was able to apply the leadership skills I developed at Notre Dame and see them grow within the Drexel student-athletes I was guiding through networking opportunities and community service projects.

In addition to my day job at Drexel, I picked up a camera and started teaching myself the art of photography. This led to another turn in the road for me, reviving the creativity I had tucked away since my college days majoring in Arts, American Studies/Film, Theater, and Television. It also sparked my ambitious side – a feeling many Notre Dame student-athletes know well. Now I was tapping into parts of myself that hadn’t been fully realized and I became intrigued by where this might take me.

The answer is full circle – to my photography business and the Wildflower Collective, with a foundation in service and community.

Both underscore my role as a Class Rep for Project LAND, too. My hope is that former student-athletes, managers, and trainers who connect with LAND’s offerings and supportive Notre Dame alumni network can find reassurance in my story; that the path after sports is often twisty. But along the way, you find a deeper understanding of yourself and more certainty around your choices.

Don’t wait to reach out to LAND. Through it, you have a built-in and accessible community of Notre Dame alumni who are always willing to connect with you – it’s never a bother. They’re your people, and they understand that you may be inclined as a former student-athlete to put on a brave face. Put that aside and share your doubts and struggles to get the personalized help you need. You’ll find, like I did as a student-athlete with anxiety and depression, that you become so much stronger from a caring community.

For Rachel (Guerrera) Creighton, ND '10, sports was a huge part of growing up in Wantagh, Long Island, New York. She “liked every sport imaginable,” but settled on soccer in the fall and lacrosse in the spring. She added track in high school, winning three letters in that sport to complement her four in soccer and lacrosse. A natural leader, Rachel captained all three teams in her senior year and played for the New York 1 team in the U.S. Lacrosse National Championships. Lacrosse was still a growing sport when she was recruited to Notre Dame, and through her outstanding defensive play, Rachel helped cement its place on the university roster when she and her teammates won the Big East Championship her junior year. The team was an NCAA tournament fixture three of Rachel’s four years of play, and by the end of her senior year, she was team captain as well as a three-time Monogram winner and two-time All-Big East team selection as a defender. An award-winning journalist and gifted teacher, Rachel earned her bachelor’s degree in Arts, American Studies/Film, Theater, and Television, and master’s degree in Secondary Education from Chestnut Hill College. In 2020, Rachel and fellow alumna Jane Adler, ND '13, launched **New and Gold**, on social media, based on their theory that other new mothers like them must have questions and would welcome advice and resources. They were right, and the unofficial Notre Dame alumni group of more than 2,000 members has become a beloved community. Rachel’s creativity shines through in her business, **Rachel Roshani Photography + Lifestyle**, established in 2018 and specializing in images of newborns, women, and families. Rachel is expanding her business’s scope to include the Wildflower Collective as she and husband Mike Creighton, ND '10, raise their five-year-old son and three-year-old twins in Havertown, PA.

NEW BEGINNINGS: THE IMPORTANCE OF TELLING MY STORY

By Martin Vergara, ND '06



When I offer career advice in my role as Global Head of Talent Acquisition at Morgan Stanley, I’m truly speaking from experience. My presentation is personal, framed in three sections: Embrace the Struggle, Be Your Own Best Coach, and Persistence. Underlying each of these are hard lessons learned and big dreams fulfilled. My story starts in Paterson, New Jersey, but as I tell every new employee and student-athlete I encounter through work, Monogram Club or Project LAND, all of our stories are never-ending.

FIRST IN FAMILY

Neither of my parents went to college – only one of them graduated from high school. And they had me when they were quite young, just 17 and 18 years old. But they knew enough to invest in me, by sending me to a great school that would set me up for life and help me to someday elevate my own family. I wanted that, too, and so I chose Notre Dame. I would be the first in my family to go to college, get a high-quality education, and become eligible for the draft again, after choosing the Fighting Irish over Cleveland in high school. That part of the plan didn’t quite work out.

While those who get recruited to Notre Dame know their stuff is good enough to compete with anybody, my transition from high school included facing a new lineup of tough hitters – one through nine, not two through five. I learned quickly that there’s no letting your hair down in the batting order as you work every hitter.

All told, I was on the field almost 40 hours a week, with long practices and games. It was basically a full-time job, with the added role of student. So this was next level for me, and I struggled a bit off the mound.

Fortunately, the Office of Academic Services for Student-Athletes, and one of its team members in particular, Adam Sargent, helped me to improve my time management skills so I could prioritize being a student as well as an athlete. Adam is now the office’s associate director, and we still keep in touch. (As I do with my coach Paul Mainieri, whose son Nick is an academic advisor for today’s Notre Dame student-athletes).

Adam’s guidance reinforced the significance of my “first in my family to go to college” status, and though I had long held dreams of becoming a doctor, I soon realized how much additional schooling and time that would entail. My interests shifted to the world of Wall Street, and I applied my athletic mindset toward achieving a finance degree and career in this competitive field.

Meanwhile, on the baseball field, my freshman teammates and I were making memorable moments, starting with wins in the super regionals (equivalent: Sweet 16), then competing in a best of three series (Elite 8). To ultimately earn a place in the College World Series, we needed to defeat Florida State, the number one team in the country, by far. And we took them down, on their home field at that. It was awesome – dog pile on the pitcher’s mound and next stop Omaha for a chance at the championship.

This marked only the second time a Notre Dame team advanced this far. It happened first in 1957 and a third time in 2022. This most recent team to make it to the World Series still had the banner from the 2002 team. It felt like we made it back.

BE YOUR OWN BEST COACH



In my third year at Notre Dame, I made a move to re-enter the draft. And if I had been my own best coach, I might have been successful. But at that moment, I didn’t understand how to maximize my athletic DNA, to know, deeply, what skills made me great. If I did, I would have tweaked certain things and not given in to being reshaped into someone else.

I left the university to undergo a journey that eventually led me back to Notre Dame to complete my studies and enter the workforce, rather than the draft and professional baseball. This part of my plan resulted in disappointment, but I use this life lesson as I mentor people at work and in life.

There are many great leaders at Morgan Stanley. I can’t copy their skills completely; that would be impossible. But what I can do – to use a golf analogy – is copy one or two of their great clubs and put them in my bag. I have continued to do this throughout my career, adding clubs to the bag of skills I brought to the game.

I’m living proof that skills outweigh experiences. I’m currently leading recruiting for the firm, but I never worked in human resources before. What I do know is how to lead people, develop strategies, and spur transformation in a global organization. The technicalities of recruiting – I can figure that out. I remind my Monogram Club group that, because they are student-athletes, they come much more prepared than they think. They, too, have a bag of skills that will fill up over their long careers.

THE NEXT PITCH

When I left Notre Dame in my third year, I received coaching from Tom House. He co-founded the National Pitching Association, and I later completed one of his programs and learned about what he calls “the next pitch.” It’s the most important pitch in baseball. If you give up a Grand Slam home run in the first inning, what are you going to do? Walk around the mound and mope, or get back on the hill and pitch a shutout the rest of the game? When your team comes back and wins 5-4, that represents a great victory.

In starting and building a career, the next pitch is the next step you take. Step by step, you keep making the next pitch, until you eventually win.

After my first “pitch” to Morgan Stanley, I learned that you can’t take things personally. The firm didn’t tell me no because they believed Martin Vergara isn’t good enough to work here, ever. They said at this moment in time, for this role, I wasn’t ready. So I pushed to get feedback, improved myself, and went back. The third time I tried, it worked. I didn’t mope; I got back on the mound and won.

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

We’re not entitled to a job, and sliding a résumé across the table like I did the first time at Morgan Stanley is not enough. We have to tell our story, explain why we’re the person for the job. One way to perfect your story for a particular company and role is through networking. It’s the way to navigate the transition from student-athlete to the corporate world. You discover what’s behind that curtain, a day in the life, and how you can take your step.

I’ve seen many candidates come through the door head down and book smart, but they can’t have the conversation about what they bring to my organization. Networking helps you gain understanding of what happens there so you can effectively answer when asked, “why you.”

If you’re in the early stages of pursuing your career, leverage your teammates who are already in the business; if there aren’t any, and you’re, say, a baseball player who wants to go to Wall Street, I bet you some former lacrosse player will take your call. Leverage the Monogram Club and Project LAND, to make those connections with someone who is in their first, second, or third year in the business or area you’re shooting for, because that’s the most realistic move to make.

Then, once you get in the game of the business, your competitive spirit – that DNA of a student-athlete – will take over, putting all your preparation into play. Your persistence in gaining your first, third, or tenth job will never stop. Along the way, you’ll be adding to your golf bag and articulating why you. And it’s not about overworking, because it’s important to have a balanced life. It’s about refinement and paying attention to the details, practices that are rooted in your authenticity, belief in self, resilience, commitment to service, and connection to place and culture.

Martin Vergara, ND '06, was born, raised, and resides in Paterson, New Jersey, and he couldn't be prouder. Founded by Alexander Hamilton and called “America's first Silicon Valley,” Paterson continues to inspire Martin's family, service, and professional lives. Baseball is part of the city's history, too, and playing the sport and getting a great education became central pursuits for Martin and his parents. They sacrificed to send him to Catholic schools and with private pitching instruction from supportive community members, Martin honed his natural skills. Named Gatorade High School Player of the Year for New Jersey and selected by Cleveland to play professionally, Martin chose instead to attend Notre Dame for the academic and sports experiences that promised a level of success to match his parents' commitment. As a freshman in 2002, Martin helped the Fighting Irish advance to the College World Series for just the second time in program history. During his career, Notre Dame made five NCAA Tournament appearances, won five Big East Tournament titles and captured three regular-season Big East Championships. Martin graduated from Mendoza College of Business with a degree in Finance and earned his MBA from Columbia University. Over 17 years, he has steadily progressed at Morgan Stanley, and today is Managing Director, Global Head of Talent Acquisition. Martin and his wife Deniz and their two children live in Paterson in what they call “the first and last house they'll ever buy,” and Martin serves as board chair of two nonprofits. One led the creation of an urban National Park that is home to Hinchliffe Stadium, one of just two remaining Negro League stadiums in the country, as well as a future state-of-the-art Visitors Center; ground-breaking is planned for next year. Martin also founded an organization offering free baseball instruction to Paterson families that helped nurture their children's love of the sport. (He takes his own son to Sunday morning practice on Larry Doby Field, named for the Paterson native and second Black man to break the MLB color barrier.) Martin's focus on the community his grandparents first called home reflects his belief that if you do well in life, you give back to those who helped you get there. This principle extends to Notre Dame and its student-athletes, through Martin's roles as Monogram Club Director and Project LAND Class Rep.