

ELEVATE



*Committed to
advancing lives*

Introduction



If our mission at Thiel College is “to empower our students to reach their full potential,” the first priority has to be the relationships we form and nurture here on our campus. Thiel faculty is in many ways the nerve center of the College, carrying forth the values and traditions from 1866 to today.

At no other time in Thiel history has this been so clearly and passionately demonstrated by the fantastic faculty members who serve as teachers, advisors, mentors, life coaches and friends to each of our students. The focus of this special edition is the faculty, but a strong team is made up of many valuable members. The faculty is backed with the tremendous dedication of Thiel College’s coaching, support and administrative staff.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is challenging us in many ways. It required the nimble responses of many to quickly move all learning online to support our students with minimal disruption. The challenges that face our society extend beyond the healthcare crisis. Faculty members play an important role to ensure that the Thiel community is open, thoughtful and committed to making everyone feel validated and welcomed.

In this special summer 2020 edition of *The Bell*, I am privileged to introduce just a few of the many faculty who answered the call swiftly and with aplomb this past spring. I hope you enjoy learning more about Thiel's remarkable faculty members and their commitment to our students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Frombgen".

Elizabeth Frombgen, Ph.D.

*Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Dean of the College*

Michael T. Balas, Ph.D.

Professor of Biology



6-second résumé

- **B.A.**, 1989, Swarthmore College
- **M.S.**, 1991, University of Rochester
- **Ph.D.**, 1995, University of Rochester

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel College?

The chance to work one-on-one with students on their independent studies is by far the most rewarding part of teaching at Thiel. The small size and undergraduate focus at Thiel allows us faculty to give students the opportunity to work closely with us on independent studies. This is an opportunity that wouldn't be as common at a larger school with graduate students. This is where I observe the greatest maturation of our students' skills and work ethic. I've mentored over 80 students in my 20 years at Thiel.

“The chance to work one-on-one with students on their independent studies is by far the most rewarding part.”

The pride I feel when they finish a study continues to be the primary reason I stay.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

The greatest insight I have gained from this experience is the importance of building a relationship of mutual trust and respect between the students and the professor. Anyone can learn the newest techniques in teaching and apply them by the book. The most successful professors learn how to have students trust them that the material they present and the tasks they have them perform are going to result in learning. Without that trust, all of the tools merely become, to paraphrase the apostle Paul, “noisy gongs and clanging cymbals.”

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

I was pleased to see that the students took the changes we made to accommodate online teaching in stride. When I changed a group assignment to an individual one in a class to accommodate students who had difficulty moving online, the quality of the papers did not diminish from previous years.

Tyla Belton '21



“ The greatest reward of being a Thiel student would be that I am not just another number. At Thiel, the faculty and staff know me, and they do everything in their power to ensure that all students have every opportunity to succeed in all aspects. We are all family at Thiel. That’s not something you see at every college or university. ”

Kristin M. Carlson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Languages,
Director of the ESOL Program,
Chair of the Department of Languages



6-second résumé

- **Diploma**, 1994, La Universidad Complutense, Madrid
- **B.A.**, 1995, Rider University
- **M.A.**, 2006, Purdue University
- **Ph.D.**, 2014, Purdue University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel College?

Without a doubt, being a part of our students' successes in college and beyond. Teaching language classes in the core allows me the opportunity to get to know a large majority of our student population over the course of two semesters.

My classes are generally small enough and meet frequently enough to allow me to get to know my students' academic strengths as well as areas in need of strengthening, so I can tailor a course to the unique dynamic of each class. Knowing that I, in some small way, helped contribute to the growth and success of our students is the greatest reward I could ask for as a teacher.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

Our students are just as flexible, committed, and strong as we, the faculty and staff of Thiel College, are. We all were able to successfully pivot to a fully-online teaching, learning and work situation in a matter of days. I also found for the majority of my students that flexibility, when needed, was preferred and appreciated. I believe that we all found some comfort in interacting with one another in real time, albeit in a virtual classroom environment.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

Working on a weekly basis with some of our faculty as well as the student support teams to monitor and discuss student engagement during our time online reinforced for me that we all care about and value the success and well-being of our students.

Teaching from home the last few weeks of the semester allowed me to become an integral part of my daughters' education, since they were also learning online at home.

I really enjoy having this more active opportunity to contribute to their academic growth and success.

Shannon Deets, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Psychology



6-second résumé

- **B.S.**, 2000, Allegheny College
- **M.S.**, 2004, Gannon University
- **Ph.D.**, 2013, Gannon University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

The greatest reward of teaching at Thiel College is the relationships with students, faculty and staff that form. Thiel is truly a place where everyone finds acceptance, support, encouragement and friendship. Over the past six years, that I have been here, Thiel has become a second family. I consider myself truly lucky to be able to get to know and understand all of people at this tiny piece of peace and hope called Thiel College.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

Teaching during COVID-19 has really shown that relationship is important in learning. Teaching is not a mere transmission of information, instead it is a living breathing co-operative agreement between the student and the teacher. It is through applying the knowledge in our own lives that we truly experience intellectual growth. COVID-19 forced everyone in the world to transmit information in a very sterile manner but at Thiel the learning relationship did not stop. It was wonderful to see how many students and professors were finding new and creative ways to engage with the material. This really placed a spotlight on the importance of the relationship in teaching. Because Thiel already places this academic relationship in high regard, it was a natural transition for professors at Thiel College to continue to strengthen the relationships even in the face of online instruction.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

I was excited to see all the creativity develop over the course of the semester. Problem solving is often one of the most creative things you can do and COVID gave our community a chance to really be creative. It was fun to see all the different ways professors approached engaging their students. I was also really proud of all the kindness and compassion shown. It was really impressive to see and know everything that our students were doing at home to help their families and communities, all the while getting their education!

Daniel F. Eppley, Ph.D.

Professor of Religion

6th-second resumé

- **B.A.**, 1988, Gustavus Adolphus College
- **M.S.**, 1990, Cornell University
- **Ph.D.**, 2000, University of Iowa

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

I find the most rewarding thing about teaching at Thiel College to be the opportunity to share my fascination with the study of religion with students from an array of religious and non-religious backgrounds. As we explore different perspectives on what it means to be human and how communities define and discover meaning and purpose,



I love to work together with young adults who are thinking about themselves and their lives in light of new insights from traditions they have just discovered or from traditions that they know well but are considering from a new perspective.

In short, I have a great job. I get paid to think about interesting ideas and talk about them with people to help us all understand them a little better.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

The last semester was certainly challenging for everyone. Students who never intended to take online classes were thrown into a situation in which they not only had to start learning online, but they had to do so in classes that were not designed to be delivered virtually, in some cases taught by professors who did not have much formal training in online teaching.



Professor of Religion Daniel F. Eppley, Ph.D. with his son and wife following his son's high school cross country meet.

The first insight to which this experience led me was to emphasize how much I enjoy teaching in person. The connections that can be made and the freedom with which new ideas can be raised and explored in person is tough to match online. I look forward to additional training that will help faculty learn strategies and skills to replicate the in-person experience virtually. And, then, I hope that we will not need to use them.

The second insight I gained this semester was a new level of appreciation for how dedicated, resilient and resourceful Thiel students are. Despite challenges arising from unreliable wifi, 12-hour time zone differences, radically altered home and work schedules, and a host of other hurdles this past semester, the vast majority of students in my classes continued to meet and often to exceed course expectations. The agility with which students pivoted to new class formats that evolved as the shutdown stretched on and more assignments needed to move online was singularly impressive.

Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D. Professor of English, Chair of the Department of English



Professor of English and Chair of the Department of English Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D., and her husband, Donald, at Niagara Falls.

6-second résumé

- **B.A.**, 1975, Seton Hill College
- **M.A.**, 1987, Carnegie Mellon University
- **Ph.D.**, 1991, Duquesne University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

Teaching at Thiel for the past 20 has been a privilege and a joy. I had taught in two institutions (one of which was my alma mater) before coming to Thiel, and, while I enjoyed them very much, the Thiel community is very different and quite unique in its appreciation of the vocation of each individual—a spirit that really resonates with me. This is part of the

Lutheran tradition and, although I am not Lutheran, I have come to value the sacredness of each person and the gifts and talents that each person brings to Thiel and to the world. In my classes—whether face-to-face or online—my students and I try every day to make the material relevant to today and to our lives as we try to understand our reason for being in the world and to make a contribution to strengthening the academic community at Thiel.



My greatest reward of teaching at Thiel College is, simply and unequivocally, the students and the Thiel community. Thiel is a place of possibilities. I see those possibilities unfolding each day, especially in the classroom and in co-curricular events.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

For the most part, I'm proud that my students finished strong. While pre-pandemic faculty would look on with satisfaction while seniors walked across the stage and received their diploma in the Passavant Center, this year that experience was absent as May 3 came and went and, as W.H. Auden said, "A few thousand will think of this day/As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual." A positive development, in my lived experience of COVID-19 vis-à-vis the teaching experience, is that we have come to value and appreciate each other so much more. If I had difficulty maneuvering through a particular learning platform, I could e-mail or text a colleague or student and receive a quick reply, almost as if people were so happy to have their self-worth confirmed in a technological way while sheltering in place!

Faculty and administrators tried very conscientiously and deliberately to stay in contact with us; we didn't lose any meetings and still maintained business as usual, and I was most impressed with that.

Once classes began online, faculty and students immediately stepped up and met the challenge, instilling in me an even greater pride in what the Thiel community can do when we come together for an important cause and continue to trust each other.

Jared Hanneman, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Sociology



“ A community isn’t in classrooms, or dorms, or laboratories—it’s in the relationships we build with one another. ”

Assistant Professor of Sociology Jared Hanneman, Ph.D., (front left) paddles the whitewater during a Thiel College outing.

6-second résumé

- **B.A.**, 2000, Miami University of Ohio
- **M.A.**, 2003, University of Pittsburgh
- **Ph.D.**, 2014, City University of New York

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

What I have found most rewarding teaching at Thiel for the last six years is the opportunity to work closely with students who find that they are developing a deep interest in sociology and criminal justice. I’ve been fortunate to work with students on some summer research projects and on honors theses that turned out to be great collaborative experiences.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

The last weeks of the spring semester were a powerful awakening to the importance of being innovative and flexible in teaching and learning. While the emergency remote education that we all accomplished in the spring is an entirely distinct type of instruction from intentionally designed online courses, many useful elements and strategies to engage with students emerged over that period. We also saw just how important the strong sense of community we have here at Thiel can be. Students were able to reach out to faculty and one another for assistance, for collaboration, and just to talk. A community isn’t in classrooms, or dorms, or laboratories—it’s in the relationships we build with one another.



Louie Karellas '21



“ The greatest reward that Thiel provided me with is the concept of community. The professors have truly stood alongside me as I develop into a well-rounded professional. The continuous support network within our department has proven to me that high-quality support drives high-quality results. Since they all have had hands-on experience in business, students receive stronger preparation for the real-world and are provided a unique experience that makes Thiel stand out. During my internships at Walt Disney Company and the Pa. Department of Labor and Industry, I took what I learned in the classroom setting and applied it to real-life situations. Opportunity is endless, and with the one-on-one attention from the faculty and staff, Thiel has truly made my potential growth become a successful reality. ”

Douglas R. Hazlett, Ph.D.

Professor of Education

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

That's an easy question to answer: THE STUDENTS. The best part of this job is absolutely our great students. They are a joy to be around and make everything else worth it!

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

The circumstances of the pandemic has required educators to have persistence and resiliency, not to mention some basic technology skills. Our students have needed our emotional support more than ever. I have to say that my wonderful students provided me with great positive emotional energy as well. I feel very fortunate to work with such caring young people. Another issue that needs to be highlighted is the digital divide (the gulf between those who have ready access to computers and the Internet, and those who do not). It is absurd that in such a wealthy nation, we have students who still have difficulty accessing the internet from their homes.



We need to come together as a nation and lift everyone up so that we all enjoy the benefits of an enlightened society. We should not be a nation of haves and have nots, especially in the education realm.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

I actually grew even closer to many of my students. We were literally "all in this together." We shared successes, failures, worries and our shared life experiences.



Professor of Education Doug Hazlett, Ph.D. (left), in Seward, Alaska with his daughters, Emily and Megan, and his wife, Lisa.

6-second resumé

- **B.M.**, 1980, Westminster College
- **M.Ed.**, 1987, Westminster College
- **Ph.D.**, 1997, Kent State University

Neil Lax, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Neuroscience,
Chair of the Department of Neuroscience



6-second résumé

- **B.S.**, 2012, University of Pittsburgh
- **Ph.D.**, 2018 Duquesne University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

The greatest reward of teaching at Thiel College has been getting to know each and every one of my students through Thiel's small class sizes. Every semester, I make it a priority to learn my new students' names and get to know them as quickly as possible. This allows me to interact with them on a more personal level and tailor some of my course content to their goals. Discussion and interaction are greatly enhanced by this. Students are comfortable, desire to ask questions, share their opinions and respond to my prompts. Developing this type of rapport with a class is truly one of the best parts of teaching at Thiel. The small classes that Thiel is known for guarantees this and makes sure that no one is just a face in the crowd of a big lecture hall.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

Teaching during the shutdown brought on by COVID-19 has certainly given me insight into the importance of flexibility and creativity in the classroom. As a professor of neuroscience, I was always aware that things sometimes do not go as planned, especially in the laboratory. Being able to think on my feet and develop alternate approaches when problems arise are two things I was trained to do as a scientist. However, I could have never predicted that I would have to turn everything about my courses into a remote learning format in a matter of days.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

One of the biggest positive developments that grew out of this online teaching experience was that students and faculty had the opportunity to form deeper connections with one another.

Melissa S. Oakes, C.P.A., C.F.E., M.B.A. '03

Associate Professor of Business Administration and Accounting, Associate Chair of the Arthur McGonigal Department of Business Administration and Accounting



we are able to with them outside of the classroom. I love when students come into my office just to chat about their day, what their vacation plans are, or to receive additional help on an assignment. It's even humbling after they've graduated and they invite you to their wedding, they send you pictures of their new baby, or they tell you about a job promotion they received. I just truly get joy out of lots of aspects of what I get to do on campus.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

Although I received my M.B.A. through taking online courses, being in the position of a professor is very different than being in the shoes of a student. While teaching online definitely posed challenges when students were sent home for the remainder of the semester, it also proved to be rewarding.

Most students were still eager to learn, they still sought out the help they needed, and they excelled on their exams even though the circumstances weren't ideal. I've learned a lot about myself through this process, things I will change not only in the classroom for the future but in preparation should we have to go online again.

6-second résumé

- **B.A.**, 2003, Thiel College
- **M.B.A.**, 2012, Clarion University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

For me one of the greatest rewards teaching at Thiel College is seeing the success of our students. They work so hard. It is gratifying to see them fulfill their goals by possibly being employed for companies

they've always dreamt about working for, realizing a new skill that they never knew they were good at, or getting an opportunity that they never would've had available to them if they wouldn't have chosen Thiel College. Right up there with seeing them succeed would be forming the relationships

Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of History,
Director of the Dietrich Honors Institute



:06 resume

- **B.A.**, 2002, Boston College
- **D.E.C.**, 2003, Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium
- **M.A.**, 2008, University of Notre Dame
- **Ph.D.**, 2012, University of Notre Dame

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

The most rewarding thing about teaching at Thiel is that I get to learn alongside my students. I have learned so much from them and am grateful for the curiosity, insight, and perspective

Thiel students are willing to share with us as faculty. They bring their whole selves to class. This was what made the sudden disruption in March workable for me and my students. When we had to close suddenly in March because of COVID, these relationships served us well. I focused on how we could keep learning in such an uncertain and frightening times. Sharing our ideas and experiences helped get us through some difficult weeks. I gained insights into my students' perspectives, their determination to grow and learn, and their care for one another. I am looking forward to re-connecting with them in the fall semester and rekindling our community of learners.

Ross Nugent, M.F.A.

Assistant Professor of Communication



6-second résumé

- **B.A.**, 2003, University of Pittsburgh
- **M.F.A.**, 2011, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

The most rewarding part of teaching at Thiel College is working with students on media productions. Specifically, once students start to own their projects, it really opens up the potential for them to make meaningful content. There is no magic wand (or digital filter, camera preset, lighting hack, etc.) that I can use to ensure that students “get inside” of the work. And

there is no telling when this might happen—frankly, it won’t happen for some—but that’s what makes it special. For example, it’s one thing for me, as the teacher, to be impressed by a really stellar video project, but when the students are surprised by the outcome, that shows real growth. I am thankful that this does happen many times throughout the semester as we work on productions. To this end, I take on the role of a producer, getting to tinker and tweak ideas, scripts, shots, sounds, edits...all of the pieces that students bring to me for feedback. It is rewarding to push students to make creative decisions. So long as they are working intentionally, “mistakes” are welcome because students can learn from them.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

I think that the main keys to success in college—organization, communication and commitment—remained the same in the remote setting, though we all made adjustments that we would not have been required to make in traditional, face-to-face classes. In other words, there were new challenges in terms of figuring out how to reconfigure the class, keep us all connected in a meaningful way, and keep alive the fire in our bellies. To be sure, there are subtle distinctions in how to address these issues for each and every student.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

We still hit the mark in terms of creating live broadcasts, making some major adjustments to our original plans. We had actually just started production on our two programs before leaving campus in March, having spent the first part of the semester learning how to use technical equipment in the Pedas Center’s TV studio and developing the shows through pre-production including scripts, storyboards, lighting plots, and media elements like music and graphics. Those materials will be useful when we do return to the studio.

Anna Reinsel, Ph.D. '06

Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Chemistry,
Chair of the Department of Environmental Science



6th-second resumé

- **B.A.**, 2006, Thiel College
- **Ph.D.**, 2012, The University of Akron

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

My students! They are amazing and have taught me so much. They become family and for that I am so grateful.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

I really miss the conversations in my office and the atmosphere of the classroom. The students interacting with each other and me makes the class time much more fun and creates more meaningful experiences.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

The flexibility it provided that is not as easily accomplished with being restricted to class meeting times. I was able to allow students to take quizzes, tests and complete assignments in a time-frame that worked for them.

Sarah J. Swerdlow, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biology,
Chair of the Department of Biology



6th-second resumé

- **B.S.**, 2005, Clarion University
- **Ph.D.**, 2009, Case Western Reserve University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

The greatest reward is working with the students. Encouraging the students and helping them gain confidence in their skills and knowledge is what I love best teaching at Thiel.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

These circumstances have led me to be more creative with assignments for the students that enable them to learn the information and make it into a format that they understand and can remember. Normally we would do these assignments in class but now they are able to make them into videos that future classes could use.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

Some positive developments were the ability to see the students in a different environment. Being able to video conference with the students and see them sitting outside or in their computer room or using an interesting background of Hawaii, was a new way to get to learn about them and their personality.

We had the students video record their research poster presentations and that was great, because now we have a different way to share their research.

Gary J. Witosky, C.P.A., C.G.M.A., M.Acc. '79

Professor of Business Administration and Accounting and Professor David M. Miller Endowed Chair of Accounting



Professor of Business Administration and Accounting and Professor David M. Miller Endowed Chair of Accounting Gary Witosky, C.P.A., C.G.M.A., M.Acc. '79 and some of his students enjoy a trip to an area ice cream stand.

6-second
resumé

- **B.A.**, 1979, Thiel College
- **M.Acc.**, 2012, Stetson University

What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

Without question the greatest reward from teaching at Thiel is the privilege of working with so many wonderful and talented students.

The opportunity to share with students my experiences and passion for accounting and

business is a true blessing. Over the past 10 years more than 25 former students have passed the C.P.A. and/or C.F.E. exams, while several others have completed graduate degrees, law school, or attained other professional certifications. This level of achievement is proof that the Department of Business Administration and Accounting is delivering on our motto, “Your Success is Our Business.”

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

In short, being in the classroom is

superior to remote delivery. While I believe it is possible to teach effectively in an online format, there are important elements that cannot be fully replicated online. My master’s degree was an entirely online program, so I am not unfamiliar with the format, but in my opinion, it lacks the personal interaction that is so important and that defines a Thiel education.

What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

One positive development is that I became much more knowledgeable about certain technology which will be useful to me in the future, but that I might not otherwise have explored. I was also very impressed, but not surprised, by the resilience and determination of my students. This was a very challenging semester and not one of the nearly 60 students in my classes reduced their effort or focus. To me, however, the most significant positive development was the realization of how much we missed being together in the classroom. I think this was a case of not fully appreciating what we had until it was taken from us. Without a doubt, we all know now.



Jie Wu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science

6-second resumé

- **B.S.**, 1989, Central South University of Technology, China
- **M.S.**, 1992, Zhejiang University, China
- **Ph.D.**, 2007, Louisiana State University



What has been the greatest reward of teaching at Thiel?

Achievements of my students are the reward of my teaching. The greatest reward of teaching comes to me at the moment my students walk up to the stage to fetch their graduation diplomas during our Commencement.

What teaching insights developed during the pandemic?

To uphold effective learning for students and maximize engagement with students under the circumstances of COVID-19, it was very important to keep frequent email exchange with students and accommodate reasonable flexibility in scheduling coursework for students. My goal was to make sure each student was constantly supported everyday until the final day of the semester during the unprecedented period of time.

“*My goal was to make sure each student was constantly supported.*”

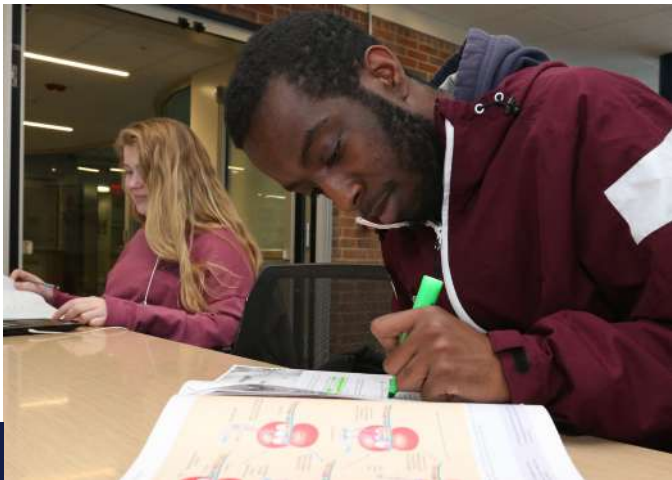
What were the positive elements of teaching in an online format?

- I adopted an online interactive whiteboard app called “ExplainEverything,” and started to use this app to create videos for my online teaching in less than three days. This app can assign a cloud-link almost instantly to let students get access to my lectures.
- I reached out to every student in my classes via e-mail, either to send some encouraging words, or ask why the latest homework was missing, or find out why a student was falling behind.
- For every example for each homework problem, I wrote my solution steps as detailed as possible and made sure my students would not be suffering unnecessary confusions and frustrations.
- I encouraged my students by emails to find me for help any time they had questions, no matter if it is on weekdays or weekends, or day or night time. To my understanding, a student studying from home really needs more support from his/her professors than studying in school.

Rising...

Thiel College offering new graduate and bachelor's programs and developing more

- Undergraduates can apply for a guaranteed seat and graduate with an M.B.A. or speech-language pathology master's degree in five years.
- New physician's assistant master's degree program and Bachelor's of Science in nursing coming in 2021.



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