

Muhlenberg

Magazine

SUMMER 2021

On Brand

Mike Doyle '94 leads the world's
fifth-largest public relations firm



And ... Scene

Look back on the careers of two
Muhlenberg theatre legends

Growing as Scholars

Muhlenberg's four honors programs
nurture curiosity and engagement

Senior Send-Off

The ongoing pandemic meant
changes to Commencement

STRONGER THROUGH TEAMWORK

Meet the dedicated Class Leadership Committee Chairs (CLCC)

who assist with fundraising, class communications and events to bring fellow alumni together and keep Muhlenberg's legacy alive.

Join your fellow CLCC team members in supporting our students today.

“For over 45 years, Muhlenberg has been a huge part of my life. When I look at everything Muhlenberg has given me and my family, I'm happily compelled to give back.”



RUDY FAVOCCI '79

“I am proud to be part of the Muhlenberg alumni family and enjoy staying connected through my role as a class leader. I choose to give back because of the education, friendships and opportunities that Muhlenberg has given to me.”



NOA BOONIN '19

“I have always had a love for Muhlenberg and the connections I made during my four years on campus. While I have always stayed in touch with the school and attended many alumni events, being a class leader allows me to strengthen those ties while reaching out to classmates who are ready to reconnect with their alma mater and each other.”



MITCH GOLDBLATT '79

“Muhlenberg will always hold a special place in my heart, and I'm so grateful for the community of friends and mentors it has given me. It takes a village of alumni, faculty and staff to foster high-achieving, successful students. That's why I believe so strongly in giving back to the College.”



KAITYLNN ELI '19

“I am proud to be able to give back to Muhlenberg, in a variety of ways, for all it has given to me. To be able to have my classmates updated, informed, supported, and to bring them back together on campus to celebrate every few years, gives me great joy.”



CHIP HURD '86

“Muhlenberg is an institution that is full of resources for students to become the best version of themselves once they graduate. Being at a small liberal arts college gave me the opportunity to create camaraderie among my peers. I cherish the friendships and experiences I don't think I would've gotten anywhere else, which is why I decided to be a class leader.”



EVAN PLAZA '19

To learn more about your CLCC or to volunteer, visit
muhlenberg.edu/alumni/classvolunteer
or contact Brandon Marth at brandonmarth@muhlenberg.edu.

Muhlenberg

SUMMER 2021

Magazine

FEATURES



Speaking Up 28

Through his work in communications, Mike Doyle '94 helps companies tell their stories.



Honored 36

Muhlenberg's honors programs expose students to new ideas and challenges so they can enter the world ready to lead and make a positive change.



And ... Scene 42

After 40 years, two longtime leaders of Muhlenberg's storied theatre program take their bows and reflect.

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ON THE COVER Brooke Slezak photographed Mike Doyle '94, CEO and president of Ketchum, near the firm's New York City office.

From the Editor



One of my first assignments as a writer with Muhlenberg was to accompany students and Career Center staff to New York City for the Fall 2017 Career Road Trip. One group visited the public relations firm Ketchum, where Mike Doyle '94 was, at the time, regional president of the company's North America division.

That day, he captivated his audience—myself included—with the story of how he came to be a student at Muhlenberg. In “Speaking Up” (page 28), he shares the same story, and even though I heard it a few years ago, I still find it powerful.

That gift—not just for telling a compelling story, but for keeping it compelling and consistent as it is told and retold—is what helped Doyle rise to the top position at Ketchum, the fifth-largest PR firm in the world. As CEO and president, he oversees a massive company whose mission is to help brands (including Mastercard, Target and Wendy's, to name a few) tell their own compelling and consistent stories. He also serves on the board of directors for GLAAD, a 36-year-old advocacy group dedicated to furthering LGBTQ acceptance. “Speaking Up” explores how this role intersects with his work at Ketchum as well as his own personal journey.

This issue also pays tribute to a pair of Muhlenberg legends—Charles Richter, professor and director of theatre, and Curtis Dretsch, professor and director of design & technical theatre. After more than 40 years with the College, the duo retired at the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. “And ... Scene” (page 42) details how Richter and Dretsch helped grow the Department of Theatre & Dance into a nationally ranked union of the performing and the liberal arts.

Finally, in “Honored” (page 36), faculty, alumni and current students extol the benefits of Muhlenberg's four honors programs: Muhlenberg Scholars, Dana Scholars, Shankweiler Scholars and RJ Fellows. In these programs, the College's most exemplary students are able to connect with one another and challenge themselves to become more critical thinkers and more engaged citizens.

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More Than a Hard Rock Expert

I was very interested to see the feature on Dave Fricke '73 ("Behind the Music," Spring 2021). We appropriately met at the studios of WMUH on the first night of my freshman orientation. He was broadcasting while the station manager gave my friends and me a tour. When we entered the studio he introduced Dave as "our resident hard rock expert." Dave responded with his usual modest grin. Through the years, I got to know Dave much better, and clearly he was far more than a "hard rock expert." His musical tastes and selections were far more eclectic.

As program/music director he single-handedly took WMUH from an obscure little local station to a well-respected organization among college radio stations, bringing us to the attention of the representatives for all the major music labels.

When Dave graduated, I was his immediate successor as music director, and his groundwork made the job far easier for me when I stepped into his very large shoes.

He followed his music journalism career, and I went to medical school, and after a few years we lost touch, though I have followed his work from afar.

Dr. Richard E. Krieger '74



Behind Seegers Union, the former site of WMUH: Fricke, front row, far right, standing with glasses; Krieger, top row, far left, sitting

Professional Opinion

Unless I haven't been paying attention, *Muhlenberg Magazine* has a new look and feel. I want to congratulate the staff on a terrific job. It is very attractive in every way—format, photos, use of color, very inviting and with a broad range of articles. In my public relations career, I produced a number of magazines and newsletters, which is why I'm especially impressed by how professional and attractive the magazine is. My friend who was in the Class of '62 called my attention to the Spring 2021 issue. I met my friend when I was a freshman and we've been friends ever since—we were in the second class of women at Muhlenberg, and we attended our 50th reunion in 2012.

Mary Hoffmann '62

Share your thoughts about stories in the magazine. Email your letters to magazine@muhlenberg.edu.

ONLINE STORIES NOT TO MISS

Check out these features on the Muhlenberg website.

Finding a Welcoming Community

For students of color, it can be difficult to adjust to life on campus at a predominantly white institution (PWI). The Emerging Leaders Program was designed to allow first-year students of color to be a part of a cohort of leaders at Muhlenberg while learning how to navigate the culture shock of coming to campus. To learn how the program supports these students, visit muhlenberg.edu/emergingleaders.



Turning Grief Into Action

Jacob Sarrel '21, a business administration major and member of Muhlenberg's men's lacrosse team, lost his father to COVID-19 last April. When Sarrel's uncle, an orthopedic surgeon, was vaccinated in January, his mind went to his late brother-in-law: "This jab's for you." Sarrel took that idea and rolled out a marketing campaign to encourage vaccination. To read more about "This Jab's For You," visit muhlenberg.edu/jab.

Pursuing Ph.D.s

This fall, a record number of Muhlenberg alumni will attend some of the top neuroscience graduate programs. Jeremy Teissère, Stanley Road Chair in Neuroscience, says he's seeing a trend in students choosing lab experience over an honors thesis in the field of neuroscience. The Muhlenberg Career Center started developing workshops with the department to prepare students for the required networking and cold-emailing of professors for research jobs. Read the full article at muhlenberg.edu/neurosciencephd.





College President Kathleen Harring with Alice Banta '21, a theatre and music double major

Muhlenberg Hosts First In-Person Commencement Since the COVID-19 Pandemic Began

The College's 173rd Commencement celebrated the Class of 2021 in a pair of socially distanced ceremonies held in downtown Allentown.

For the first time since 2013, a Muhlenberg Commencement took place indoors, but not in its usual rain location of Memorial Hall, and not because of rain. On Monday, May 24, the Class of 2021 graduated in Allentown's PPL Center, a hockey arena chosen for its ability to accommodate six feet of social distancing between graduates. Their guests sat in spaced-out pods in the stands. Half the class received its diplomas at 10 a.m. and the other half at 2 p.m. to comply with Pennsylvania's indoor occupancy limits. The national anthem, performed by graduate Tess Rhian, was prerecorded on campus to avoid releasing the aerosols associated with singing into the arena's shared air.

The first in-person Commencement since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic was also the first Commencement at which the graduates' proud smiles had to be obscured by face masks. But the fact that the two ceremonies could take place at all was a welcome turning point after more than a year of having little to celebrate.

Honorary degree recipient Eboo Patel, who addressed the Class of 2021 virtually, reflected on the moment in his speech: "You can do hard things. Did you ever think you'd have to navigate through a pandemic to get to this day?"

Patel, the founder and president of the nonprofit organi-

zation Interfaith Youth Core, drew upon a Bob Dylan poem to encourage graduates as they entered a world that continues to be radically changed by the ongoing pandemic. In "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," Dylan describes the universal experience of sometimes feeling despondent and the individual and shared ways we might navigate out of life's low points.

"Where are you going to find your hope? Constantly ask yourself that question," Patel said. "And better yet, find answers to it."

The two graduates who addressed their classmates were Michelle Rajan, a neuroscience major and creative writing minor, and Jesenia Peralta, a business administration major in the School of Continuing Studies.

Ten members of the Class of 2021 were co-valedictorians: Betty Ben Dor, Jackson Davis, Jessica Deemer, Marissa Dibilio, Alexandra Franchino, Michael Gatazka, Stephanie Haik, Gianna Perri, Nguyen Bao Tram Pham and Arika Troxell. Sarah Vetesi and Ariel Wursta received Alumni Association Future Alumni Leader Awards. Dawn Lonsinger, associate professor of English, earned the Paul C. Empie '29 Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching.

In addition to Patel, internationally recognized cancer expert Dr. Karen Antman '70 and director and choreographer Jeffrey Page received honorary degrees. —*Meghan Kita*

CLASS OF
2020
CELEBRATION
— WEEKEND —

Muhlenberg will honor the Class of 2020 during a celebration weekend held on October 8 and 9. Members of the Class of 2020 can visit muhlenberg.edu/alumni/celebrate2020 to find more information about the weekend's events.



PHOTOS BY KRISTI MORRIS OF LITTLEWING PHOTOGRAPHY



Top to bottom, left to right: Emily Giuseffi '21, Henry Giwa '21 and Charlotte Glassett '21 sit at the start of the morning Commencement ceremony; Victor Jacobs '21 processes out of the PPL Center; a cap; Mia Panzak '21, Vanessa Pham '21 and Tram Pham '21 pose together before the afternoon ceremony; School of Continuing Studies speaker Jesenia Peralta '21; Alycia Long '21 processes out of the PPL Center; Mikal Kalus '21 and Natanya Sher '21 take a selfie before the afternoon ceremony.



Muhlenberg Breaks Ground for Parkway Boulevard Building

PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON



A group of Muhlenberg community members gathered for the ground-breaking on May 6.

The three-story building, which will be one of the first 20 projects in the world to pursue CORE green certification, was celebrated at an event in May. The campus building will provide more than 20,000 square feet of academic and student programming space, housing the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Program, Institute of Public Opinion, School of Graduate Studies, School of Continuing Studies, Office of Community Engagement and art studio space.

“Our students and alumni exemplify engaged citizenship,” President Kathleen Harring told guests at the ground-breaking. “There are many ways Muhlenberg imbues this characteristic; chief among them are an integrated educational experience and purposeful community engagement. This building will, in many ways, serve as a living example of these values.”

A transformative \$7.5 million gift received in 2020 is providing significant support for this capital project as well as the expansion and enhancement of The J. Conrad and Hazel J. Seegers Union. The donors, who wish to remain anonymous at this time, are a Muhlenberg alum who graduated during the 1970s and his wife. The building, scheduled to be completed in fall 2022,

will reside on the hillside between Chew Street and Parkway Boulevard.

The Core Green Building Certification and Living Building Challenge outline the 10 best practice achievements that a building needs to be considered a green or sustainable building by the International Living Future Institute.

The sustainable design will include native landscaping; support for low-carbon and human-centered transportation with covered bike storage, shower facilities and electric car charging stations; a rainwater recycling system to help reduce water consumption; a rooftop solar panel array; and reduced energy use from efficient HVAC and lighting systems.

The building will be good for the birds, too: Professor of Ornithology & Conservation Biology Dan Klem—the world’s foremost authority on bird-window collisions and bird-safe glass—and Acopian Ornithological Specialist Peter Saenger worked with the team at Re:Vision Architecture to ensure that the windows in the building will have bird-safe coatings.

State Representative Michael Schlossberg ’05 and Allentown Mayor Ray O’Connell also spoke at the ground-breaking. —*Kristine Yahna Todaro ’84*

Seven Faculty Members Granted Tenure

The Board of Trustees, on the recommendation of President Kathleen Haring, granted tenure and promoted the following seven faculty members to associate professor:



Ioanna Chatzidimitriou (French) teaches the newly redesigned French & Francophone Studies Program, which she helped develop. She published a book, *Translingual Francophonie and the Limits of Translation*, last year. Chatzidimitriou earned her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and her B.A. from the University of Athens, Greece.



Chrysan Cronin (public health) helped design the Public Health Program, which debuted as a minor in 2006. Public health has become one of the most popular majors at the College. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, Cronin has shared her expertise with journalists and the public. She earned her M.P.H. and Dr.P.H. from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, her M.S. from New Mexico State University and her B.S. from the University of New Hampshire.



Maura Finkelstein (anthropology) has two long-term ethnographic projects in the subfields of urban anthropology and medical anthropology/interspecies ethnography. Her first book, *The Archive of Loss: Lively Ruination in Mill Land Mumbai*, was published in 2019. Finkelstein earned her Ph.D. from Stanford University, her M.A. from Columbia University and her B.A. from Colorado State University.



Ermira Mazziotta (accounting) aims to connect the classroom to the practical business world. Her interests include how businesses can be profitable while also being good citizens to their local and global communities. Mazziotta earned her M.B.A. from Saint Joseph's University and her B.S. from the University of Tirana, Albania.



Dustin Nash (religion studies) studies the nexus between religion, politics and identity in the formation of the Hebrew Bible. He received his M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, his M.A. and Ph.D. from Cornell University and his B.A. from Luther College. Nash also was a non-degree visiting graduate student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Ranajoy Ray-Chaudhuri (economics) recently published two books: *The Changing Face of American Banking* and *Central Bank Independence, Regulations and Monetary Policy*. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from Ohio State University, an M.A. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, and his B.A. from Jadavpur University, India.



Justin Sparks (chemistry) emphasizes the interconnected nature of scientific principles to help students organize complicated topics into a cohesive concept network. Sparks earned his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University and his B.S. from DeSales University. —KYT



Muhlenberg Becomes Inaugural Member of Racial Equity Leadership Alliance

Muhlenberg is among the 51 inaugural members of the Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance (LACRELA), which was recently founded by a group of liberal arts college presidents of color and launched by the University of Southern California Race and Equity Center. Presidents of Alliance member colleges meet quarterly to share strategies, seek advice and identify ways to leverage the Alliance for collective impact on racial equity in higher education.

Member institutions have the opportunity to collaborate and share resources to collectively impact racial diversity, equity and inclusion on their campuses. Throughout 2021, Muhlenberg will send eight employees to attend monthly virtual seminars hosted by the Center that feature experts on race and higher education. The College also has access to an online repository of resources and tools the Center developed for member colleges.

The College Community Celebrates Black History Month

In February, a series of programs, available to the Muhlenberg community and the general public, honored individuals central to Black liberation movements.

The first part of the programming consisted of a two-event series, "Blackness, Disability and Our Current Moment," which examined the intersections of Blackness and disability in contemporary society. The events centered on the experiences of the communities who live at those intersections and their contributions to Black liberation movements, including those of our current moment.

The closing event, "Black Excellence: Lifting Our Voices in Solidarity," brought together the voices of Muhlenberg students, faculty and staff with community leaders and experts in diversity and inclusion. The event keynote was delivered by activist Amanda Hikes, chief equity and inclusion officer for the American Civil Liberties Union and the former executive director of the Office of LGBT Affairs for the City of Philadelphia.

The events were developed and organized by the Africana Studies Program, the Office of Multicultural Life and the Black Students Association, in collaboration with a number of offices and departments.

Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of the Africana Studies Program Emanuela Kucik was thrilled by the outpouring of support for the series.

"We have gotten so many warm, incredible messages from people within the Muhlenberg community and the larger public. People have told us that they learned a lot, that they felt particularly seen by these conversations and that they are grateful the College is centering these discussions," says Kucik, who organized the "Blackness, Disability and our Current Moment" programming and co-facilitated individual events.

Sean Schofield Joins Muhlenberg as Executive Director of the Career Center



Schofield brings 11 years of career services experience in higher education to the Career Center. He started his position on May 3. Before joining Muhlenberg, Schofield was the associate director of graduate career advising at William & Mary. Especially important to Muhlenberg's mission is Schofield's experience on William & Mary's Mason School of Business diversity

and inclusion committee, where he served as a facilitator for conversations about race, gender and sexuality. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate at William & Mary in educational policy, planning and leadership with a concentration in higher education administration. Schofield's dissertation will look at college presidents' reflections on their responses to COVID-19.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS



"Examining the Intersections of Blackness and Deafness: A Conversation with [Disability Advocate] Michael Agyin" (pictured)

Facilitated by Associate Director of Prevention Education Jules Purnell, Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik, Director of Multicultural Life Robin Riley-Casey and the Black Students Association (BSA) executive board

"But You Don't Look Disabled! A Conversation About Invisible Disabilities, Blackness and Systemic Racism"

Facilitated by Kucik, Assistant Professor of Sociology Crystal Adams, Associate Provost for Faculty & Diversity Initiatives Brooke Vick, Riley-Casey and the BSA executive board

"Lifting Our Voices in Solidarity"

Co-sponsored by the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber African American Business Leaders Council and organized by the Office of Multicultural Life, with reflections from Muhlenberg community members

Megan Ryan Named Vice President for Enrollment Management

Ryan is responsible for overseeing traditional undergraduate admissions and financial aid operations and started her position at the College on June 1. Most recently, Ryan served as the interim vice president for enrollment and executive director of admissions and financial aid at Allegheny College, where she kept the school on track for admissions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, she served as associate director of admission at Carnegie Mellon University, where she developed the university's first financial aid and analytics team. Ryan serves as the membership committee chair for the Pennsylvania Association for College Admissions Counseling and is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the Pennsylvania Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.



Why I Study ... the racist epic *The Birth of a Nation* Professor of Media & Communication and Film Studies Paul McEwan



When I started studying film in the late '90s, scholars would make the argument that historical veracity in fiction films didn't really

matter. Historians would critique inaccuracies, but film scholars found that annoying, sometimes saying history was socially constructed.

In 1915, when D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* came out, people flocked to theaters, spending up to \$50 in today's dollars to see it. It was a blockbuster.

The Birth of a Nation was an interesting example of the historical accuracy argument because it's a film that no one would watch and say its inaccuracies don't matter.

It depicts the history of Reconstruction. The film argues that it was a terrible mistake to give Black

people rights and that they behaved terribly until the Ku Klux Klan "came to the rescue."

You can't critique that film without saying it's inaccurate.

The film had lasting effects, too. You're supposed to feel warm and fuzzy about the end—white people rallying against Black people. And many people did. The story makes the Klan into heroes. At the time, the Klan had become a defunct organization. But it was refounded in Atlanta on Thanksgiving in 1915, around the time *The Birth of a Nation* was released there.

I teach the film in several courses, including Intro to Film Analysis and Film History. It's tricky because you've got to think about why you're showing this racist epic to predominantly white students. There might be a lesson in racism they didn't know about. For students of color, you've got to ask whether subjecting them to these images is worth it.

I just finished writing a book called *Cinema's Original Sin: D.W. Griffith, American Racism and the Rise of Film Culture*, which will come out next year, about how cinefiles, academics and filmmakers have had to grapple with this film for more than a century. It's always been this troublesome object

Recently, Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* had a scene of the Klan watching *The Birth of a Nation*. Lee uses cross-cutting, or parallel editing, a technique Griffith helped pioneer, to show Civil Rights activists listening to a description of a 1916 lynching while cutting to Klan members watching *The Birth of a Nation*, explicitly suggesting the film was linked to the murder.

Even though this technique is now common, there is no chance that it's random. Lee knew exactly what he was doing: using Griffith's techniques to condemn Griffith's most famous film.

Touching the Past

Associate Professor of Religion Studies Jessica Cooperman emphasizes the importance of primary documents to tell history and focus on the future.

Sitting in the reading room of the Center for Jewish History in New York City, Jessica Cooperman gently took hold of a decades-old document. It was a memo, distributed by the U.S. occupation forces in post-World War II Germany, announcing Rosh Hashanah services—the first since the country’s liberation and a tangible sign of hope for the Jewish community.

As Cooperman scanned the words, they began to blur. It was not the first time she shed tears while working in an archive.

“There’s something so moving about holding a letter, a book or a diary that was written a century ago, having that tactile experience and feeling that

intense personal connection,” she says. “I wish I could take students with me to the archives.”

Because she can’t take her students with her, Cooperman, an associate professor of religion studies and director of the Jewish Studies Program at Muhlenberg College, insists on something analogous. No matter what she’s teaching about—religion in America, American Jewish culture or the Holocaust—Cooperman requires her students to read primary documents.

For many, particularly those accustomed to reading textbooks that slice the past into manageable bites, the experience of reading a firsthand account of history is unfamiliar and exhilarating—precisely why Cooperman assigns it.

“I want to free students from the idea that history comes in prepackaged form,” she says. “I want them to feel like history, culture and ideas are something with which they can engage.”

Though Cooperman was raised in a Jewish household on Long Island, she wasn’t immediately drawn to Jewish or religious studies. Instead, she majored in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. But she soon found that grappling with big ideas alone was not fully satisfying. She wanted to ground those ideas in space and time.

Studying history was her way of doing just that. After living, working and traveling in the United Kingdom and India, Cooperman ended up at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. There, she dug into centuries-old texts and took a collection of Jewish history courses that were a just-right blend of the universal and specific. She realized that the Jewish experience could be used as a unique lens to view the world’s—and particularly America’s—most crucial and complex issues, including immigration, race and religious freedom.

“Of course, we can study Jewish history for its own sake, but it also allows us to appreciate the dynamics of a Western society,” Cooperman says. “It has this intersection.”

She returned to the United States to earn graduate degrees in history and Judaic studies at New York University, a 15-minute walk from the Ameri-

Associate Professor Jessica Cooperman requires her students to study primary documents to better understand history. She frequents the Center for Jewish History in New York City. At right, she reviews documents at Trexler Library.



PHOTOS BY MARCO CALDERON

can Jewish Historical Society, which is housed at the Center for Jewish History.

Cooperman's interests focus on modern American Judaism and the intersection of religion and state. Her first book, *Making Judaism Safe for America: World War I and the Origins of American Religious Pluralism*, investigates the way military policy changed the country's views on religion.

At the start of World War I, the War Department (now the Department of Defense) commissioned the YMCA to provide soldiers with welfare services—the social and religious activities that dominated non-combat life. But the Protestant-centered services couldn't meet the needs of the country's growing number of Jewish soldiers. So, leveraging its power, the newly formed Jewish Welfare Board advocated for Jewish soldiers, ensuring accommodations like time to pray on Saturdays and distribution of Yiddish newspapers. The equal footing Jewish—and, in turn, Catholic—soldiers found in the military eventually translated to civilian life.

"It was an engine of change in American views on religion and religious pluralism," Cooperman says. "We continue to live with the legacy of those changes today."

Cooperman's current research further investigates that kind of interfaith understanding, focusing on Christian-Jewish relations after World War II.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, Cooperman received a fellowship from the Center for Jewish History and Fordham University for research on Jewish-Christian relations. And this past spring semester, she honed those ideas and delved into others as a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

The fellowship allowed her to spend time with some of the country's foremost experts in Jewish studies—"all the people who wrote all the papers," as she laughingly describes it—and has only strengthened her belief that Jewish history can play an important role in America's present.

The issues that have permeated Jewish culture—race, immigration, assimilation—are the same issues the U.S. is grappling with on a broader



"I want to free students from the idea that history comes in prepackaged form. I want them to feel like history, culture and ideas are something with which they can engage."

—JESSICA COOPERMAN (RELIGION STUDIES)

scale today. And Cooperman posits that perhaps looking back on those struggles is a strategy for moving forward.

"Our present moment is so fraught," Cooperman says. "But if we're able to step back and look at immigration debates from the 1920s, it can help us understand the complexity of the contemporary moment." —*April Johnston*

Power Chords

Juliette Reilly '16, a music major with creative writing and English minors, is on a mission with her music. Around age 9, when she saw her aunt perform on Broadway—in shows like *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*—she knew she wanted to be a singer. With time, her goal shifted from Broadway to writing, and during her sophomore year in college, she composed her first anti-bullying song. Today she writes and sings what she calls “Indie Pop-timism” to help fans cope with the mental health challenges of being a teen. The singer’s fan base now includes 200,000 people across social media platforms.

Muhlenberg Magazine What inspired you to write and sing songs about teen bullying?

Juliette Reilly '16 I was bullied in high school. The first song I wrote that did well on YouTube was basically a letter to my younger self and my little sister, who was in middle school, called “Hero.” It was produced by fellow alumni Mike Emmerich '15 and David Goodheart '13. I had fans send in videos of themselves holding up signs and singing along for the video, and that’s when I learned how big an impact writing songs could have on a young audience.

MM What’s been the most meaningful message you’ve received from a fan?

JR I’ve had people direct-message me or send letters saying that my songs have saved their lives, or send photos of them getting tattoos of my lyrics. A lot of my fans struggle with mental health, and for my music to make that much of a difference in someone’s life means the world to me. It’s why I do what I do.

MM Tell us about your work with Project Semicolon.

JR In addition to my own battles with mental health, I’ve had many friends and family who struggle with it and who have had even more traumatic experiences. Hearing their stories and now those of my fans, I realized that many more people deal with it than we think and that it’s critical to raise awareness.

Project Semicolon is a teen suicide prevention nonprofit organization dedicated to solidarity



PHOTO BY LIBBY DANFORTH

against depression, addiction and other mental health issues. I have written original music for them and performed with them and was featured in their book. They have been a great resource for me to share with my audience as well.

MM What are you proudest of so far in your career?

JR The fact that I’ve stayed true to my message: to inspire and empower teens, in particular teenage girls, to be their own heroes. This has led me to incredible places like Nashville, Tennessee, where I moved after college to further connect and grow as a songwriter. It’s very easy to get caught up in what the next trend is, and it’s good to be aware, but it’s infinitely more important to stay true to what’s most important to you.

MM What’s next for you?

JR I’m releasing a new project this year called *Emotional Influencer*, which consists of two EPs highlighting the contrast of who we are on the inside versus what we portray on social media. I also recently started a project for TV/film music that’s landed some 2021 ads and major network placements, including MTV’s *Teen Mom*, CBS’s *General Hospital* and the new Hulu series *Kung Fu*. I’m writing original music for a national anti-bullying play called *Speak Life* that’s currently in more than 300 schools.

Juliette Reilly '16 (above) was bullied in high school. She uses that experience to influence her songwriting in an effort to help children and teens stay true to themselves. Her social media fan base includes more than 200,000 people.



Ioanna Chatzidimitriou
(French)
Translingual Francophonie and the Limits of Translation
Routledge, 212 pages

Chatzidimitriou focuses on the uses of translation by code-switching authors in contemporary francophone literature.



Thomas Shotzbarger
(Graver Arboretum grounds manager)
American Chestnut Tree Conservation Field Course: Manual for Forest Ecology and Conservation of

the North-East United States
Antinanco Earth Arts School, 86 pages

Shotzbarger partnered with three co-authors to write this manual that focuses on the conservation of the American chestnut tree species. The manual served as inspiration for the Antinanco Earth Arts School's American Chestnut Tree Conservation Field Course, open to high-school and undergraduate students.



David Romberg
(film studies)
Man of the Monkey
Feature film,
90 minutes

Romberg was always fascinated by a story his father told about a man who lived in isolation with a chimpanzee not far from Romberg's childhood home on a remote island. To create this documentary, which premiered at the Miami Jewish Film Festival, Romberg traveled back to Brazil to search for the legendary Man of the Monkey. Once there, he found so much more.

Kevan Shah '22 Named 2021 Goldwater Scholar, Newman Civic Fellow, Truman Scholar Finalist

It's been a busy year for Kevan Shah '22. The public health and neuroscience double major was named a Goldwater Scholar, Newman Civic Fellow and Truman Scholar finalist.

The Goldwater Scholarship is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious national scholarships in the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics.

"Muhlenberg, in particular, gave me the chance to conduct research as early as my freshman year, and I jumped on that opportunity," says Shah.

The junior was also selected as a Newman Civic Fellow, which recognizes students for their commitment to solving public problems. Shah was instrumental in Muhlenberg receiving an Opioid Prevention in Higher Education Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. The \$100,000 grant—the largest amount awarded to any single institution in the state—supports a program in which Muhlenberg students learn to train members of the Lehigh Valley community to administer Narcan.

Shah was also named a Truman Scholar finalist. The Truman Scholarship, which received a record number of applicants this year, is awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding leadership potential, academic excellence and a commitment to a career in government or the nonprofit sector. —KYT



PHOTO BY BILL KELLER



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

Reminiscing *Analytically*

As beloved Professors of English David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen retire this year, they reflect on their Muhlenberg legacies and hopes for the future of the Writing Program.

As I settle into a Zoom call with Professors David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen to chat about their time at Muhlenberg, I am reminded of the feeling of being in one of their classes—even though the subject matter is well-trod for them, we are having a wholly unique conversation, unearthing observations and ideas that have never before been spoken aloud. That’s the experience they’ve given to so many students over their decades teaching in the Department of English.

As the co-founders of the Writing Program, Rosenwasser and Stephen began thinking about the importance of teaching writing shortly after they arrived as professors in 1985 and 1987, respectively.

“We asked faculty, what do you want from student writing? And they answered, ‘We want them to have ideas.’ So we said, ‘Well, what does

it mean to have an idea and how do you go about having one?’” Rosenwasser says.

In attempting to answer that question, the pair developed the Writing Across the Curriculum Program, requiring all students, regardless of their major, to take two writing-intensive courses. It was refreshing, Stephen says, to find faculty in agreement that students “don’t learn to write in one semester.”

This exploration led to the publication of their co-authored book, *Writing Analytically*, in 1991, now in its eighth edition. The book became an academic hit, adopted as a primary textbook for large schools including Indiana University, Syracuse University and The Ohio State University.

In 1992, Rosenwasser and Stephen worked with the faculty Academic Policy Committee to replace first-year composition as a requirement with the First-Year Seminar (FYS) Program, a

curricular change for which the faculty voted unanimously. The first-year seminars sneak an intense introductory writing education into courses with titles like *Do Robots Dream?*; *Quentin Tarantino, Film Geek*; and *Coffee: The Great Soberer*. Every seminar is devised and taught by full-time faculty members.

“It’s an opportunity to teach something they might not get an opportunity to do in their departments,” Stephen says. “There’s a built-in reward, and then for the College, there’s a reward because it’s a form of faculty development. They’re really thinking about what they want to teach and why.”

Rosenwasser and Stephen have co-directed the College’s Writing Across the Curriculum Program since its inception in 1989. Since 2007, they have also co-directed the Writing Center and the FYS Program. They recruit and train a staff of more than 50 student tutors for whom they team-teach a semester-long course on the history and practice of writing instruction.

Former Interim Provost Bruce Anderson lauds Rosenwasser and Stephen’s work on the Writing Program and notes how well it prepares alumni for jobs and graduate schools.

“Their book and emphasis on writing analytically has helped thousands of students over the years become stronger, more thoughtful writers,” Anderson says.

The Writing Program is led with an approach that elevates students’ ideas rather than telling them what they’re doing “wrong.”

“Teachers who are involved in writing-intensive courses, it changes their pedagogy, and it becomes more student-centered and oriented,” Rosenwasser says.

When he first started teaching, he would plan out his questions in advance. But he soon put the onus on the students, asking “what did you learn?” and letting the conversation flow from there. “Classes are increasingly more improvisatory, so the teacher ends up learning along with the students,” he says.

That habit has filtered down to other faculty members who teach writing-intensive courses.

“Jill and David have inspired countless Muhlenberg faculty to joyfully experiment in the classroom, ceding a little bit of their professorial authority in order to accompany their students

on new intellectual journeys,” says Associate Professor of Media & Communication and Film Studies Amy Corbin, who serves as director of the Writing Program Committee.

Both professors have developed student-favorite specialties within the English Department. Stephen specializes in poetry, and her course *Milton and the Age of Revolution* became one of Muhlenberg’s most popular. Every year for the past 30 years, students have clamored to read *Paradise Lost* with Stephen.

Rosenwasser has crafted several senior seminars in Irish literature and contemporary plays. He will often invite Associate Professor of Theatre Troy Dwyer to teach students the basics of Irish dialect, so they can hear the musicality of the language when it’s read aloud in class.

Looking ahead, Rosenwasser and Stephen say they might take a break from academic writing, but they won’t be leaving the analytical lens behind.

“As it turns out, Dave and I really love interviewing,” Stephen says.

They frequent local farmers markets and are fascinated by the stories of the vendors there; an interview series on the purveyors of small-batch kombucha and organic produce might be their next joint project.

When imagining the future of the Writing Program, both posit that it may shift to be more electronic, to eventually abandon the standard essay for other forms of expression in a digital age. But they hope it doesn’t lose its core philosophy that writing is about discovering and fostering new ways of thinking.

“I think the act of sitting down and trying to figure out what you think about something and being able to inhabit that space long enough to have ideas—that’s what a liberal arts education can do for students,” Stephen says. “And I hope that continues to happen.”

—Megan Bungeroth ’07

“Jill and David have inspired countless Muhlenberg faculty to joyfully experiment in the classroom, ceding a little bit of their professorial authority in order to accompany their students on new intellectual journeys.”

— AMY CORBIN (MEDIA & COMMUNICATION AND FILM STUDIES)

Q&A

10 Questions With ... Leen Madanat '19

Data & analytics consultant in the United Arab Emirates

3

If you weren't a data & analytics consultant, what would you be?

A personal trainer or life coach. I spend 10+ hours a week exercising or being active in one way or another because I believe it's a way of life. I would love to infuse this energy into other people as well.

1

Describe what you do in five words or fewer.

Tell stories with data

2

What historical figure do you most identify with?

Marie Curie, a Polish scientist and the first woman in history to win a Nobel Prize in 1911. Her dedication, hard work and discoveries are fascinating.

4

What three songs best describe you?

"Miss Independent" by Ne-Yo
"Let It Go" by James Bay
"Rewind" by Cornpop

5

What's the best piece of advice you have received and who said it?

"Always know your worth. Know when to compromise as best you can for the right person, always challenge yourself to learn and grow, but don't ever hide your faults or pretend to be something you're not." A close colleague said this to me once, and I constantly remember it.

6

What quality in others do you most admire?

Resilience

7

What is your favorite place?

The beach or the mountains—anywhere I can zone out and relax!

8

What is your greatest fear?

Not having a purpose. I fear it most so I work hard every day to make sure I am happy doing my job and happy with my family and friends.

9

Which living person do you most admire?

My grandpa. His work ethic is unbeatable, even at the age of 85, even while fighting a health battle. He is a soldier.

10

What is your most treasured possession?

I don't have a treasured possession. I have treasured memories. I'm very much a people person and am not really inclined to valuing material over memories.



Muhlenberg in the Media

A CBS News crew visited campus to film a segment highlighting Muhlenberg's efforts to welcome students back safely for the spring semester. Allison Mintz '23 and Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Allison Gulati were interviewed. The segment aired on nearly 200 CBS affiliate stations nationwide.

Dr. Dayna McCarthy '05 is making news for treating patients suffering from long-term COVID effects. She was profiled on CBS's *60 Minutes*, interviewed by CNN and featured in *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times Magazine*. (Read more about her on page 20.)

Kathleen Bachynski (public health) was interviewed by several media outlets regarding the coronavirus. She spoke with *Forbes* about how the pandemic can be used to reimagine global health teaching, *The New York Times* on fans attending the NCAA basketball tournaments and *The Washington Post* about postponed baseball games due to coronavirus concerns.

Marten Edwards (biology) and two former student researchers, Rick Crist '05 and Michael Sitvarin '06, spoke with *The Morning Call* about the Brood X cicada event. Edwards was also featured on WHYY's *Radio Times*.

***Harper's Bazaar* interviewed Elizabeth Nathanson (media & communication) about how inequalities have been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic.**

Rebecca Minor '11, a licensed clinical social worker, was interviewed for a *New York Times* article that looked at gender identity. The article was entitled, "How Do I Define My Gender if No One Is Watching Me?"

Andrew Martin '09 helped spearhead the restoration of 80 acres of freshwater wetlands, which are part of the Great Cypress Swamp, in Delaware. An Associated Press wire service article, which featured the project, ran in 16 news outlets, including *The Washington Post* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Lanethea Mathews-Schultz (political science) and her students penned a *Philadelphia Inquirer* op-ed regarding misinformation and the role it plays in voter confidence. She was also interviewed for an *Inquirer* article about Pennsylvania voters who left the Republican party since the Capitol attack.

Francesca Coppa (English) was quoted in Brazil's major media outlet *UOL.com* in an article about the role fanfiction plays in saving literature. "There is an idea that the writing of teenage girls is bad," Coppa said. "I have sent lots of feedback to young women: 'Hey, if I wrote like you at your age, I would rule the world.'"

Student Award Honors Legacy of Lecturer Roberta Meek



PHOTO BY RYAN HULVAT

As her final year of teaching approaches, the College is honoring Roberta Meek, who has woven education, activism and advocacy throughout her career, by celebrating students who share a

commitment to those values with the Professor Roberta Meek Africana Studies Award.

Meek, a lecturer of media & communication and Africana studies, began teaching at Muhlenberg in 2009. She directed the Africana Studies Program from 2014 to 2019.

During her tenure, Meek has earned a reputation for pushing students to think outside the classroom when it comes to understanding African American history and how it intersects with social movements, race and media.

"The award is a direct reflection of the ways that Professor Meek's classes and the work she does with her community remind us of the full humanity of Black people in a world that tries to dehumanize them," says Emanuela Kucik, assistant professor of English and Africana studies and co-director of the Africana Studies Program.

The award—which was originally announced as a potential scholarship last February—has been endowed by an anonymous Muhlenberg alum. It will be presented annually to a student who embodies the Africana Studies Program's core tenet of intertwining scholarship and activism, following the example of Meek, Kucik says.

Robin Riley-Casey, director of the Office of Multicultural Life, was spurred to establish the award after hearing students praise Meek for her "intellectually challenging and socially uplifting" classes, which inspired them to become more active and engaged citizens.

The recipient of the inaugural award, Giovanni Merrifield '23, was chosen by the Office of Multicultural Life and the directors of the Africana Studies Program and was announced at the 2021 Honors Convocation. (Read more about Merrifield on page 22.) —MB

SPRING VIRTUAL EVENTS

COVID-19 Vaccine Panel Discussion

Hosted by Kelly Cannon of Trexler Library, expert panelists Jacqueline Antonovich (history), Kathleen Bachynski (public health), Chrysan Cronin (public health) and Rachel Hamelers (Trexler Library) held an informative discussion that covered the history of vaccine hesitancy and anti-vaccine activism, how the vaccines for COVID-19 work and their accelerated approval process and misinformation surrounding COVID-19. During a Q&A period, attendees asked questions on various topics, including vaccine storage and how hesitancy can affect herd immunity.

Organizing Interracial Solidarity With a Focus on Indigenous Perspectives

This event, part of the “From the Ashes of Relentless Racial Crises: Creating a New United States of America” series designed to navigate and fight radicalized violence with interracial solidarity, included a talk from Visiting Assistant Professor of Art Matthew Williams as well as participant engagement. Williams, an enrolled tribal member of The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, focused on how Indigenous communities have engaged with other cultural groups and ways people can practice solidarity with Indigenous communities.

Black in Neuro Spotlight Series

The inaugural series featured talks from Taraz Lee, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, and Leah Whitlow, a doctoral candidate from Brigham Young University. Lee’s lecture was titled, “The Impact of Motivation on the Interaction Between Cognition and Skilled Action.” Whitlow’s lecture was titled, “Neuropsychological Approaches for Treating Memory Impairment: Cognitive Rehabilitation Following Traumatic Brain Injury.”

Elaine Ayers

A History of Reciprocal Change: The Entangled Relationships Between Plants and People

As part of the College’s Earth Day celebration, Elaine Ayers of the Department of Museum Studies at New York University delivered the keynote address, “Unnatural History: Plants as Objects in Colonial Nature 1750-1950.” The keynote was followed by research and project presentations by the Class of 2021 RJ Fellows. (See “Honored,” page 36, to learn more about the RJ Fellows Program.)



Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo, mayfield brooks, Autumn Knight (pictured, left to right) *Black Feminist Art and Action*

This roundtable discussion featured three artists discussing Black feminist legacies, the importance and urgency of centering those legacies and how art can engage with Black feminism to create new, liberated beginnings. The featured artists presented their work before conversing with one other, the co-organizers and attendees.

Samantha Jonson '09

Creating a Career Playbook: Opportunities in the Burgeoning Field of Translational Science

Jonson, who was featured in the Spring 2021 issue of *Muhlenberg Magazine*, works for the National Institutes of Health’s National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. Her talk focused on her career, which involves taking observations from the laboratory, clinic and community and translating them into interventions that improve individual and public health.

J. Russell Ramsay

I Know What I Need to Do, I Just Don’t Do It: Adult ADHD and ‘Procrastivity’

Ramsay, associate professor of clinical psychology at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, is the author of several books that focus on adult ADHD. His talk, the second in the newly designated John B. Rosenberg ’63 and Stephanie Lambert Speaker Series in Psychology, explored the notion that ADHD is a performance problem, not a knowledge problem, which reflects the fundamental problem of ADHD—difficulty consistently organizing and executing behaviors over time to achieve desired goals, including in therapies aimed at behavior change.

This History-Making Yankee Was a Mule First

In the fall of 1959, Alphonso Downing of Trenton, New Jersey, joined the freshman class at Muhlenberg College on an athletic scholarship. Downing had been a multi-sport varsity athlete for three years in high school, and he served as president of his class. At Muhlenberg, Downing was recognized as a star of the freshman basketball team (where he donned Jackie Robinson's number).

After one year, Downing left the College and returned to Trenton, where he played in the 1960 sandlot season in a Police Athletic League-sponsored league. He caught the eye of Yankees scout Bill Yancey, a former shortstop in the Negro Leagues, and was signed to the New York organization.

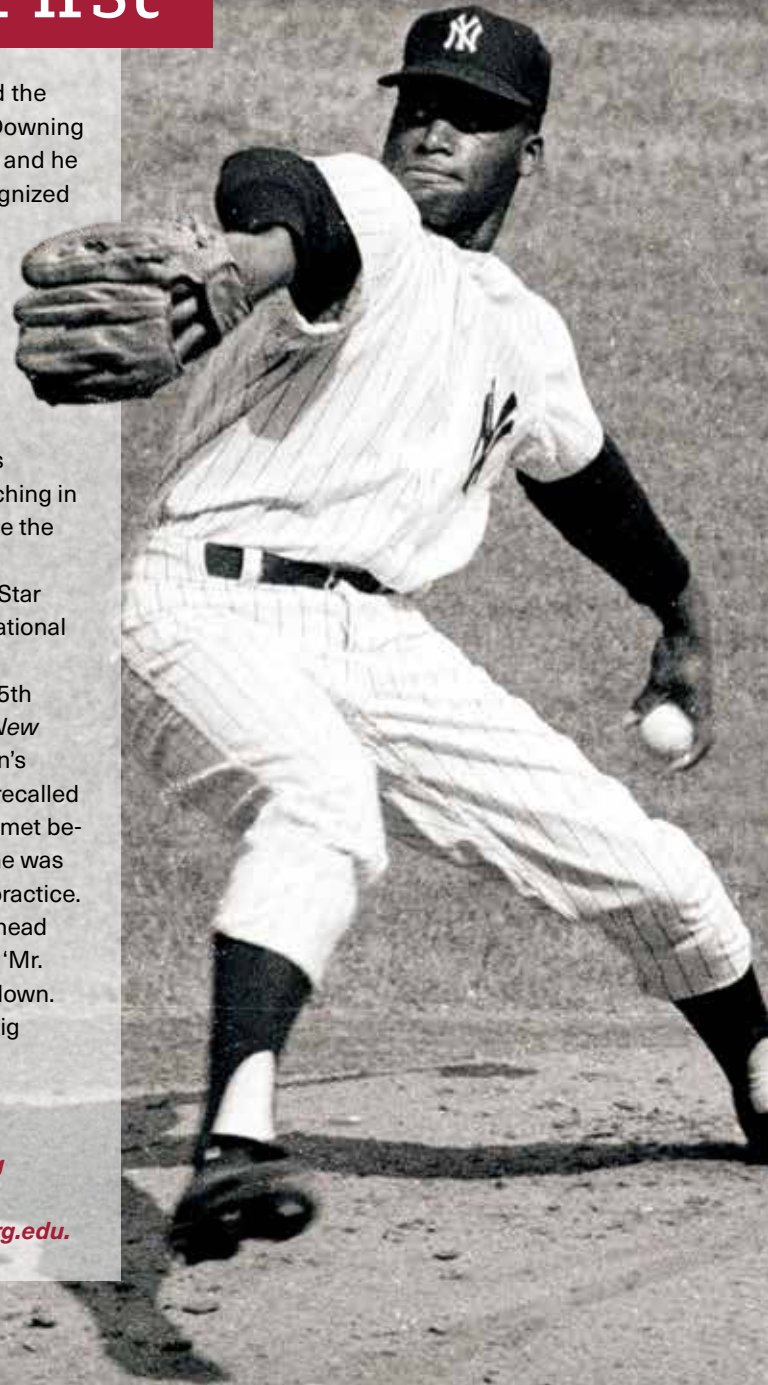
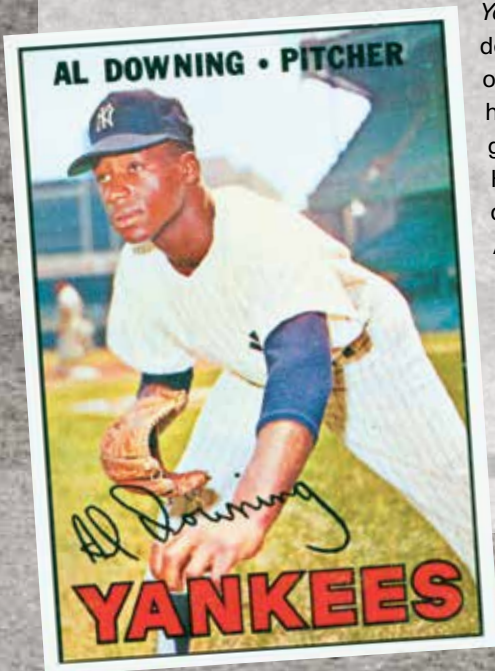
On July 19, 1961, after just 12 games with the Binghamton Triplets farm team, Downing, then 20, took to the mound for his first start. Pitching in Yankee pinstripes against the Washington Senators, Downing became the first Black pitcher in Yankees history.

Downing played 17 seasons in the Major Leagues. He was an All-Star in 1967, led the American League in strikeouts in 1964 and led the National League in shutouts in 1971.

On April 8, 1974, it was Al Downing who allowed Hank Aaron's 715th home run, which broke Babe Ruth's record. In an interview with *The New*

York Times at the time of Aaron's death in early 2021, Downing recalled of that milestone event: "[W]e met behind the cage on the field as he was getting ready to take batting practice. He told me: 'Don't keep your head down. Don't feel sorry.' I said: 'Mr. Aaron, I don't have my head down. It's a pleasure to play in the big leagues against you.'"

If you have any items of interest to the Muhlenberg archives, please contact susanfalciani@muhlenberg.edu.



The Silent Second Pandemic

Dr. Dayna McCarthy '05 works with patients who suffer from persistent symptoms for months after a COVID-19 diagnosis.

When COVID-19 clobbered New York City in the spring of 2020, Dr. Dayna McCarthy '05 was one of many Mount Sinai Health System physicians who “redeployed.” McCarthy’s specialties are rehabilitation and sports medicine, but during the COVID surge, she helped wherever she was needed.

Among other responsibilities, she worked on adapting the remote patient monitoring system the rehabilitation team had used for stroke patients to work for acute COVID patients. Upon a COVID-positive patient’s discharge from the emergency room, they would be onboarded into the patient monitoring system and given a hotline number and a home pulse oximeter, a tool that measures blood oxygen levels. If the levels dipped below a certain threshold, the patients were told to call the hotline, which physical and occupational therapists had been redeployed to monitor. This allowed the hospital system, which had already exceeded capacity, to keep tabs on borderline patients without admitting them.

McCarthy and her colleagues expected to be able to discharge patients from the remote monitoring system after 21 days—anyone with mild enough disease to avoid hospital admission should be better by then, they thought. But, “that wasn’t happening, in a number of patients that was high enough to be concerning,” says McCarthy, who was a business administration major and music minor at Muhlenberg. At the same time, Mount Sinai doctors became aware of communities forming on social media of “COVID long-haulers,” patients who continued to experience symptoms long after a positive test.

In May 2020, Mount Sinai announced the opening of its Center for Post-COVID Care. By late January 2021, more than 1,600 patients had utilized the center. Approximately 10 percent of

COVID patients may go on to suffer from persistent symptoms, which can include fatigue, brain fog, headaches, shortness of breath, heart rate variability, tingling in the extremities, loss of taste and smell, gastrointestinal distress and intolerance of physical and/or cognitive exertion.

McCarthy herself is among those affected—she developed acute COVID in March 2020 and seemed to recover. But soon after she returned to work, she began to forget what she was doing midway through a task. She developed severe headaches. She tried to return to exercise—she’d worked out six days per week pre-COVID—and could barely manage five minutes of gentle pedaling on her Peloton. Last June, she noticed that while her senses of smell and taste had returned, they were wonky—shampoo smelled like ammonia; everything tasted burnt.

“I am one of those people who said, ‘Okay, I’m young, I’m healthy, I’m going to get over it.’ In hindsight, I did myself a disservice,” McCarthy says. “I jumped back into work and was helping on every single level I could.”

An immune system overreaction is what causes post-acute COVID syndrome, though why some patients’ immune systems overreact while others’ don’t is a question Mount Sinai doctors and scientists are working with colleagues elsewhere to try to answer. However, some common characteristics among the Center for Post-COVID Care’s patients may offer clues. For example, two-thirds are women, who are more likely than men to suffer from autoimmune disorders, and almost all are “the Type A, fifth-gear New Yorker,” per McCarthy.

Whether returning too quickly to one’s pre-COVID lifestyle can cause persistent symptoms or whether the people who do so are more likely to have the ability and desire to seek treatment is unclear. McCarthy worries about the patients



ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX WILLIAMSON

the health-care system is missing—those who are uninsured or underinsured, or who may not have the time or means to undergo the extensive testing (to rule out other conditions) and long-term rehabilitative care patients with post-acute COVID syndrome need.

What that care looks like varies from patient to patient, but much of it involves optimizing a patient’s sleep, nutrition and stress levels. Patients might also undergo physical therapy that focuses on regulating the nervous system, starting with breathing exercises. Improvement can be painfully gradual and nonlinear, and none of McCarthy’s patients had made a complete recovery as of early this year. As she points out, the original SARS disease left some patients with long-term symptoms that took an average of 18 months to resolve.

If 10 percent of the more than 33 million Americans who’ve been diagnosed with COVID so far go on to suffer from persistent symptoms, the impact will be tremendous. In addition to the aforementioned strain on the U.S. health-care system, the economy will also suffer—the vast majority of McCarthy’s patients were young and healthy prior to COVID, and now some are too sick to work. But, McCarthy understands why this phenomenon hadn’t, until quite recently, received mainstream attention. (The National Institutes of Health, for example, only announced an initiative to study “long COVID” late this February.)

“Here’s the problem: We’re still in the midst of a pandemic,” McCarthy says. “This is the silent second pandemic. Nobody has the wherewithal or the capacity to focus on that.”—MK

Personally Speaking...

PHOTO BY FRED FIELD



Giovanni Merrifield '23

Sociology major, Africana studies minor, Standish, Maine

He hoped to be less overbooked at Muhlenberg than he was in high school ...

"It's a funny story. I had come to college hoping not to do much in the way of extracurricular activities because my high school career was very, very busy. So my goal in college was to kind of relax."

... but he now holds positions in four College clubs and organizations.

"I got involved and one thing led to another. The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) looked interesting—I applied and was accepted. As a sophomore, I am a mentor, and I make sure my community has what it needs to succeed. My friend was the previous president of Black Students Association, and she wanted to train someone to be the president for future years. Because there weren't other candidates, it sort of slid into my hands. Another friend introduced me to the Bow Tie Club [a program that pairs students who identify as men with children at Roosevelt Elementary School who identify as boys in a mentorship], for which I'm now a co-coordinator. I really wanted to help these kids, usually boys of color who are at risk for not graduating. I wanted them to see that they have potential, no matter what anyone says. As for my involvement in the Men of Color Network, it happened like all the other groups. I was introduced through mutual connections. I went to a meeting and they needed a secretary, so I applied for it."

Hailing from Maine, he never saw what "authentic, raw Blackness" really was ...

"My town is very, very conservative. I come from a place with a lack of diversity. I knew Muhlenberg College was predominantly white, so I was surprised that after my first year I found my own community, primarily through ELP. I had always dreamed about going to a historically Black college or university (HBCU). It was a fantasy. Because of this, the Office of Multicultural Life's 2020 cultural immersion spring break trip, in which we toured [HBCUs] Howard University and Morgan State University, was very important. When I went to these universities with the Muhlenberg College program, there was a huge sense of belonging that I had never felt in my whole life. I am truly a different person because of that trip."

... and his experiences as a Black person helped draw him to his fields of study.

"I chose sociology because I realized, in order to understand the implications of oppressive systems that affect my community, I needed to have and use a sociological lens. Through that lens, I won't just see what's going on above the surface level but also below it. By understanding the systems, I can begin to dismantle them to further the progression of the Black community. I can start implementing programs to stop the high-school-to-prison pipeline, the stigma of mental health issues in the Black community, the transphobia and transmisogynoir that precede attacks on Black trans folks, the food deserts, the drug crisis, the cycle of poverty, police brutality and so much more. That is why I also chose Africana studies—I needed to learn how much we've been through as a people to truly understand the specific areas that needed the most help, support and awareness in the Black community. Not only that, but the U.S. educational system seems to avoid teaching Black history in high school, so I felt it was necessary to educate myself on the wonderful and magnificent achievements my community has accomplished. Without Black history, there would be no U.S. history."

He calls the College's custodial and dining services staff his family.

"A lot of my professors happen to be white, and I love them, but I don't see myself in those professors. The custodial and dining staff, those are my family members. We have a bond, a connection. Before I left campus because of the pandemic, I asked Guillermo [Rosario, a member of the housekeeping staff], or Jerry, as we call him, if he was able to leave. He told me his job doesn't stop because there's a pandemic. He's such a genuine and caring person like all of the custodial and dining staff, who truly make my time at Muhlenberg so wonderful."

A Season Worth Celebrating

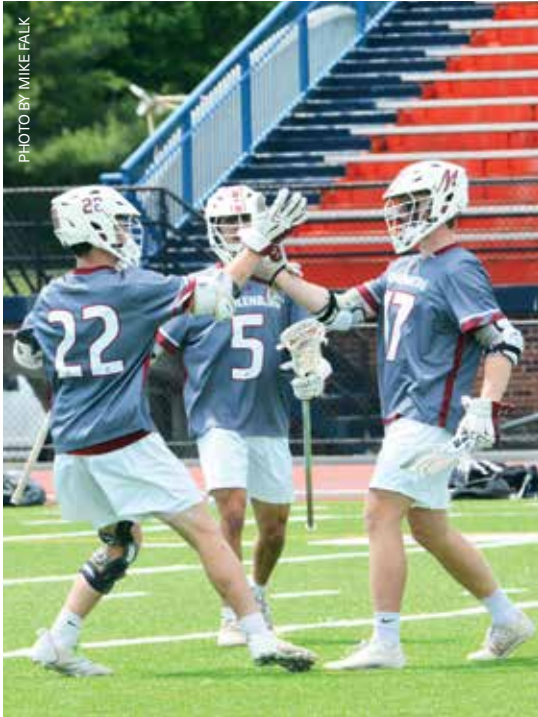


PHOTO BY MIKE FALK

Left to right, Ethan Grossman '21, Matt Marrella '22 and Wyatt Malia '24, celebrate during the men's lacrosse team's first road win ever against Gettysburg College.

COVID-19 protocols radically changed the sports that resumed this spring, but after a long hiatus, the teams and their coaches were grateful to be competing at all.

It was the middle of March, a little more than a year after the Muhlenberg men's lacrosse team had played its last game. The Mules had gone 5-0 before the pandemic ended their 2020 season. So what better way to open 2021 than with a game against Ursinus College, a team ranked fifth in one Division III preseason poll?

In the week leading up to the game, the coaching staff pored over available film of Ursinus so they could present a scouting report to the team on Thursday, two days before the game. But Thursday brought a different kind of report: Due to a rise in COVID-19 cases at Ursinus, all their athletic competitions scheduled for the weekend were postponed.

That's the kind of spring it was for the Muhlenberg athletic teams. Although they sometimes didn't know which athletes they would have available, which athletes the opponent would have available or even who the opponent would be until a day before the competition, they all completed their modified schedules, and they did it in a healthy way.

"I don't think we could be any happier than we were with our guys," says Jake Plunket, head men's lacrosse coach. "Because if we didn't follow every single protocol, and we didn't take care of what we could control, then there's no way we're playing the season. And I think they did a great job with that."

In addition to twice-weekly testing, Mule athletes and coaches had to adjust to a schedule that initially had competitions only against Centennial Conference opponents and only on Saturdays. Postgame handshakes were eliminated for all con-

tests. Sport-specific changes occurred, too—for example, in baseball and softball, dugout capacity was limited, so players had to spread out along the foul lines, often sitting in bleachers outside the fence. Muhlenberg athletes accepted the changes, at times grudgingly, because after a rough year on the sidelines, they just wanted to compete.

In the case of the men's lacrosse team, it turned out that they were going to play Franklin & Marshall College, not Ursinus, that first weekend. The Diplomats had an opening in their schedule, so the two colleges agreed to play a non-conference game. It happened again the following week, when a late Gettysburg College scratch led the Mules to play a non-conference game at Dickinson College.

Those two hastily scheduled games showed Muhlenberg that it was ready to compete in the challenging CC. The Mules lost to F&M—the eventual conference champion—by two goals in a game that was tied late in the fourth quarter, and they lost to Dickinson in quadruple overtime. But they hadn't been close to either team in recent history, and the two games were a springboard to a successful season.

The Mules finished with a record of 5-4, with the four losses coming by a total of five goals, three of them to nationally ranked teams. They went 4-2 in the CC, and if the league had conducted a post-season tournament, Muhlenberg would have been the second seed. In their final game, the Mules won 15-10 at tenth-ranked Gettysburg, their first road win ever against the Bullets. They received 12 votes, four spots shy of the top 20, in the final Division III poll.

"It throws a wrinkle into it, for sure," said Assistant Coach Alex Stone, who coordinates the defense, of the late schedule changes. "Obviously we'd like to have a routine and stick with it. We had to cram a little bit ... Lacrosse is a free-flowing sport and I think it allows for more creativity."

Creativity was something all Muhlenberg coaches had to employ throughout the year, in

keeping their teams united during the fall semester, when it was mostly first-year students on their practice fields; in conducting practices or film sessions when the team could not gather together in one room; and in shuffling starting lineups when athletes were unavailable due to isolation or quarantine.

Even so, “nobody was complaining about anything,” says Plunket. “We were just happy to have the opportunity to be out there. I think our administration did an unbelievable job saying that the athletes need their games. So at the end of the day, we’re just pumped to get all those games for our seniors.”

“Nobody was complaining about anything. We were just happy to have the opportunity to be out there. I think our administration did an unbelievable job saying that the athletes need their games. So at the end of the day, we’re just pumped to get all those games for our seniors.”

—JAKE PLUNKET, HEAD MEN’S LACROSSE COACH

MULE ROUNDUP



In **TRACK & FIELD**, Ben Arehart '22 tied for eighth place in the high jump at the NCAA Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championships in late May to become the Mules' first-ever All-American in the event. He qualified for the national meet by clearing 6 feet, 8¾ inches, to break a school record that had stood for 34 years.



He also won one of four gold medals for the Muhlenberg teams at the Centennial Conference Championships, joined by Zach Lill '21 in the pole vault, Marielle Avola '22 in the steeplechase and the 4x800-meter team of Nathan Reimer '24, Gregory Shanahan '21, Sam Morgan '21 and Luke Ullmann '21 ...



The **MEN'S LACROSSE** team placed a school-record eight members on the All-Centennial Conference team. All-time scoring leader Ethan Grossman '21 made the All-CC first team and received All-America honorable mention ... **WOMEN'S LACROSSE** produced one of the most memorable moments of the year, defeating Ursi-



nus 11-10 on an overtime goal by Emily Gaffney '23 ... Kersti Svenningsen '24 (**SOFTBALL**) and Jonathan Toth '24 (**BASEBALL**) made history 11 days apart, both homering in their first career at-bats. That feat had been accomplished only once previously in baseball, never in softball. Catcher Genna Cicchetti '22 repeated as the CC Gold Glove of the Year in softball, while the baseball team won consecutive games of more than nine innings for the first time since 1958 ...



The **MEN'S TENNIS** team enjoyed its best season since 2003, finishing 4-3 in the CC and defeating Washington College for the first time ever ...



The young **WOMEN'S TENNIS** team blanked McDaniel College, 9-0, for its first CC shutout since 2016 ... A dual-match win against DeSales University highlighted the **GOLF** season for the men. The women were led by Emma Mueller '22, who won the Gettysburg Invitational by one stroke.

Sustainable Growth

The Biden administration's proposed infrastructure plan—a more than \$2 trillion investment—incorporates significant climate action at a cost much lower than if we continue on our current trajectory.

By Rich Niesenbaum

This spring, the Biden administration's massive infrastructure proposal made headlines for its ambitiousness and its price tag. The administration's rhetoric surrounding the so-called American Jobs Plan, which legislators were negotiating at press time, has largely focused on the employment opportunities the proposal would generate. The plan calls for building a world-class transportation system, making much-needed improvements to our public utilities and expanding our digital infrastructure, among other job-creating investments. But, embedded within these goals, the American Jobs Plan also offers historic climate action.

The plan calls for establishing standards on future carbon emissions based on what is required to stabilize global warming at no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, the threshold beyond which the most catastrophic effects of climate change will occur. The plan also sets the goal of eliminating fossil fuels from the power sector by 2035. To do this, the government would directly support and spur investment in renewable energy, increased energy efficiency, improvements in battery storage, clean manufacturing, the electrification of vehicles and carbon capture and sequestration.

Climate change has already disproportionately harmed marginalized communities. A just transition to clean energy cannot result in increased prices for the average consumer or rely on tax credits that benefit only the wealthy. The American Jobs Plan addresses these issues through investments in retrofitting homes, schools, hospitals and other facilities to make them more energy resilient, particularly in distressed urban centers and rural areas. It encourages the expansion of clean manufacturing and energy facilities in the communities

where polluting industries have historically been located and offers job training to prepare workers for the new, higher-wage jobs created by these investments. Additionally, the plan calls for the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps—a modern version of the Civilian Conservation Corps, one the most popular of all FDR's New Deal programs—that would employ thousands of young people to address the threat of climate change, enhance the country's treasured natural areas and maintain its ailing public lands. The plan would also invest in infrastructure that would provide safe drinking water to all Americans.

However, the plan's proposed cost, of more than \$2 trillion, has caused some legislators to balk. In early June, National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy acknowledged the potential need to remove some of the action on climate from the plan to broaden support for it. But to put that \$2 trillion into context, consider the price we've already paid for inaction: From 2008 to 2018, extreme weather events related directly to climate change cost an average of \$84 billion per year, according to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association.

And continued inaction will drive up costs further. Both the Environmental Protection Agency and the World Meteorological Organization report accelerating warming trends that will result in continued ocean warming, which fuels both the frequency and intensity of destructive hurricanes as well as damage from rising sea levels. Every passing year of inaction ensures escalating costs from these physical losses, reduction in asset values of properties prone to these damages, decreased economic growth as we further deplete nonrenewable resources and economic volatility as climate change further destabilizes food and water

The plan calls for building a world-class transportation system, making much-needed improvements to our public utilities and expanding our digital infrastructure, among other job-creating investments. But, embedded within these goals, the American Jobs Plan also offers historic climate action.



supplies through increased drought. Based on our current trajectory, we could see a 4.5-degree Celsius increase in average global temperature by 2050, a point at which economic risk to private and public assets in the U.S. could exceed \$5.2 trillion.

Americans know it's time to act: Recent polling by the Pew Research Center and Muhlenberg's nationally recognized Institute of Public Opinion shows that a majority of U.S. adults view action on climate change as a top priority. This is particularly true for millennials and Gen Z, who are emerging as the country's largest voting bloc.

According to leading climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, one of the most powerful things any

individual person can do about climate change is to talk about it—but language matters. She urges that our dialogue should recognize the priorities of those with whom we are conversing. This has, in essence, been the approach of the Biden administration with the American Jobs Plan, which incorporates significant action on climate within the broader context of infrastructure, job creation and economic growth. By marrying these priorities, the proposal increases its potential bipartisan appeal, which gives us a better chance to avoid the real consequences of continued inaction.

Rich Niesenbaum is a professor of biology and director of sustainability studies at Muhlenberg.



SPEAKING **UP**

Through his work in communications, Mike Doyle '94 helps companies tell their stories.



BY CAITLIN GIDDINGS



Mike Doyle '94 was at a crossroads. He had no idea what he wanted to do with his life, but he was open to anything. Just one year after graduating from Muhlenberg, unsatisfied with his first job at a shipping company and his then-current D.C. internship, he picked up the phone and dialed his trusted mentor at the College for some guidance.

"You're a solid writer, you like public speaking, you're intellectually curious—I think you should give public relations a try," former Dean of Admissions Chris Hooker-Haring '72 told him.

And with that, Doyle's path—a course that would lead him to become CEO and president of the fifth-largest PR firm in the world—appeared to be set. The trouble was, he hung up the phone unsure of what public relations even was. "I've since joked, 'If Chris had told me to be an acrobat, I might be in the circus today,'" Doyle says.

It was one of several turning points that led him to a 25-year career at Ketchum, where he worked his way up from an entry-level account coordinator position to the top spot in a company with more than 130 offices and affiliates in 70 countries. Doyle, who studied English and psychology at Muhlenberg, is a dynamic storyteller, by nature and trade, and his story speaks to the power of being true to

yourself and trusting that that level of openness will make it all work out.

It's also a lesson in second chances: After researching everything he could about the field of PR that day in 1995, Doyle shopped his resume all over Washington and landed his first interview at the company he would one day lead. He didn't get the job. Ketchum chose someone else.

Devastated, Doyle continued to intern on the Hill. But Ketchum's initial hire quit after three days, overwhelmed by the pressure of the position. "I've said to everyone over the years, 'I was Ketchum's best second choice,'" he jokes. It was his first break into a field that he soon realized aligned with the way he was already wired—and the value he placed on empathy, authenticity and maintaining relationships.

Doyle started in the D.C. office by working in the public affairs and issues management teams leading corporate responsibility projects. He would go on to help launch new products, services and initiatives for household names like Target, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, FedEx, Mastercard, Wendy's, Pfizer, IKEA, Bank of America, Procter & Gamble and many more. So much of the work of public relations is nebulous and behind the scenes. But Doyle demystifies it.

"At the end of the day, we help companies tell their stories," he says. "We help them figure out

what they want to be as employers, as marketers, as organizations that are trying to do good in the world and do work that matters.”

Doing work that matters is a big part of Ketchum's statement of purpose—and Doyle's own personal code. He grew up outside of Philly in Downingtown, Pennsylvania—a place that “was perfectly suburban in all the ways one might assume were great,” he says. His high school looked like it was straight out of a John Hughes movie, like *The Breakfast Club*. “I was definitely the geek who got shoved into the locker,” Doyle says.

Muhlenberg wasn't his first-choice college—he had already decided on the University of Richmond. But Doyle had been offered an academic scholarship to Muhlenberg, so his dad persuaded him to take one last trip to the campus and give it a second look. As they stepped into Egner Memorial Chapel as part of a campus tour, the late coach Frank Marino, an institution at Muhlenberg, rose to introduce himself.

“He put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Michael, you're going to come to Muhlenberg and your life is going to change and you don't even know why yet,’” Doyle says, remembering the chance encounter.

Decades later, it was a story he would tell at his wedding beneath the same stunning, Gothic architecture. Doyle met his husband, Bret Kobler '94, while the two were students at Muhlenberg; their 2016 ceremony was the first same-sex marriage of two alumni held at the chapel. Kobler is now the treasurer of the Alumni Board.

The couple celebrated by establishing The Bret G. Kobler '94 and Michael J. Doyle '94 Scholarship, described as “a four-year award that will recognize an incoming freshman who has demonstrated commitment to service and inclusion in his or her school and local community.”

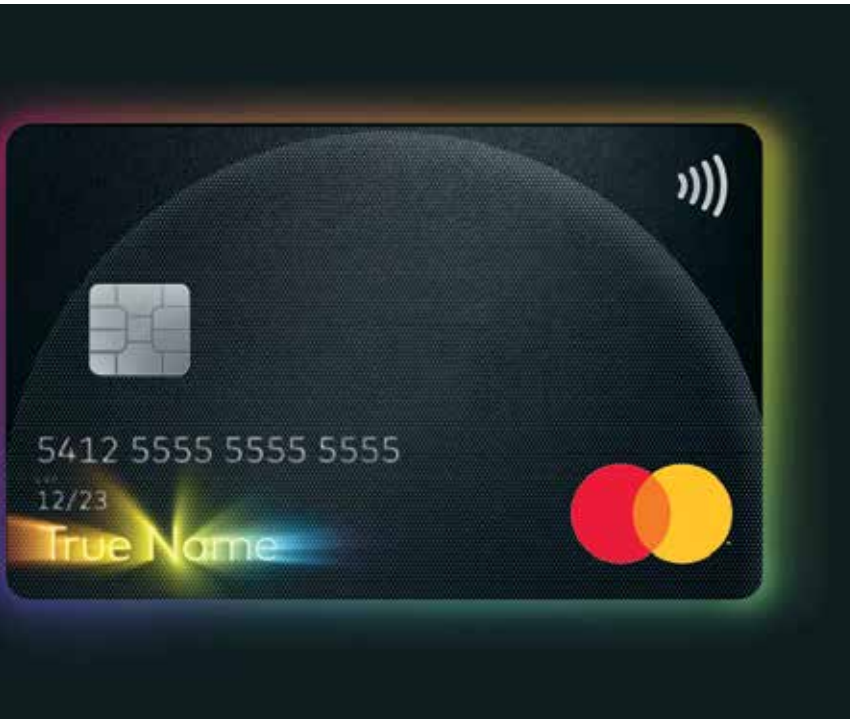
In attendance with the grooms' families was their present-day friend group, which had grown out of their College social circle. The odd providence of Doyle's path isn't lost on him.

“At the end of the day, we help companies tell their stories. We help them figure out what they want to be as employers, as marketers, as organizations that are trying to **DO GOOD IN THE WORLD AND DO WORK THAT MATTERS.**”

—MIKE DOYLE '94



Mike Doyle '94, and Bret Kobler '94 (center) got married at Egner Memorial Chapel in November 2016. It was the first same-sex wedding of two alumni held there.



Mastercard's True Name campaign allowed transgender card holders to have their chosen names printed on the card. The campaign launch event during June (Pride Month) 2019 featured a sign that evolved New York City's Gay St. to include the many more dimensions of being LGBTQ in modern society.

“Something led me to Muhlenberg, to Coach Marino, to the best friends I’ve ever had in my life, to a career that’s been fulfilling and the chance to marry my best friend,” he says. “I realize how lucky I am and try very hard not to take it for granted.”

But getting there wasn’t without hitches. When Doyle first started his career, he wasn’t out as gay—to anyone. It was the pre-*Will and Grace* mid-’90s, and acceptance, let alone inclusion and celebration, wasn’t the default expectation. The young PR pro honed his skills at being vague when clients asked how he spent his weekends or whether he had a girlfriend.

“I was pretty convinced, if I was honest with myself and the world, that I would not be able to advance in my career and would constantly be looked at as less than, or as an other,” he says.


Doyle says he spent his teens and 20s trying to deny who he was, and his early 30s figuring out how to accept it. Only later did he realize that it was one of his many strengths—particularly in learning to bring his full self to his work in public relations.

“I thought I had to show up every day as someone who was right for the room or the moment or the client,” he says. “It took me a long time to realize the best thing I can do for a client or colleague is to be authentic, to be who I am. I am ‘an other,’ and now I realize what a gift that is.”

That commitment to authenticity has manifested in some of his most interesting projects at Ketchum. Two years ago, he was standing outside of a press conference and panel discussion being held to launch a new collaboration with Mastercard known as the “True Name” campaign. The campaign broke ground by allowing transgender card holders to have their chosen names printed on the credit card instead of their names given at birth.

It was a big effort to show awareness of some of the hurdles faced by the LGBTQ community. Imagine if every time you wanted to buy something you had to present a card with a name that didn’t match your preferred one—and also didn’t match your appearance, gender identity and true self. That was the case for many trans and non-binary people, particularly those earlier in their transitions or grappling with the many financial and legal barriers to official name change.

According to a 2015 report from the National Center for Transgender Equality, these were challenges faced by a huge portion of the trans community. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of transgender respondents indicated “that none of their IDs or records had both the name and gender they preferred.” The report also showed this had dehumanizing real-world implications, finding that 32 percent of people who had shown IDs with a



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“MY BUSINESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER— TO BE THE WATCHDOG OF TRUTH.

There’s never been a time when communications and authenticity have mattered more.”

—MIKE DOYLE '94



Above and at right, Doyle presents the True Name campaign at the PProvoked Global Summit in October 2019 alongside SVP of Communications and Digital Marketing for Mastercard Jim Issokson.

name or gender that didn’t match their presentation “reported negative experiences, such as being harassed, denied services and/or attacked.”

Mastercard used this research to inform its campaign. True Name was a move to honor card users’ authentic selves and personal safety without sacrificing account security. The campaign was rolled out during Pride Month in 2019 and included videos of trans people sharing their true stories of anxiety and harassment when presenting credit cards that didn’t match their identities.

Standing at the back of the campaign launch, Doyle was moved. He noticed the woman standing next to him also looked emotional. The two struck up a conversation. *I can’t believe I’m here*, she told him. *I’m a trans woman and this is the first time I’ve ever felt fully seen by a brand like this.*

“She had tears in her eyes, and I had tears in my eyes, and I thought, ‘This is what representation means,’” Doyle says. “That was progress that a world-class brand was able to make at an individual level. I’ll never get over it that I get to do this for a living.”


Working on that campaign was Doyle’s first professional collaboration with GLAAD, a 36-year-old advocacy group dedicated to furthering LGBTQ acceptance. In March 2020, Doyle joined the organization’s board of directors. GLAAD has always pushed for more LGBTQ rep-

resentation in media and culture with the understanding that it matters for young queer and trans people to see themselves in TV shows, movies and advertising—not just intuitively, but in measurable, statistically proven ways. For Doyle, whose own path to self-acceptance took some time, the opportunity to work with GLAAD has been a huge gift. “I’d never thought in a million years that I’d be in a position where the way that I’m built and the career I’ve chosen could be married with an organization’s mission like this,” he says.

Helping brands find their stories and connecting them to projects that are meaningful on a larger scale made Doyle realize early in the pandemic that Ketchum needed to hammer down its own purpose. He and his team settled on this: “We show up every day for each other and our clients to do work that matters for the world.” It took some time to piece together what “showing up” meant in a time of Zoom conferencing and home offices, but he’s learned to adapt the company culture to the times.

Today Doyle and Kobler split their time between New York City and Asbury Park, New Jersey, where the two enjoy the area’s growing diversity and LGBTQ community, as well as the shore access. The past year has been a big one for Doyle—in addition to joining GLAAD’s board, in June 2020 he was named to his current position as the head of Ketchum when the former CEO stepped down for a position at Wells Fargo. As the new CEO, he feels an obligation to create the type of open, inclusive environment and office culture in which 25-year-old Mike Doyle would have felt comfortable being himself.

He also feels as committed as ever to the work and power of PR and communications, even while modern digital platforms make it easier and easier to spread misinformation and challenges to company credibility.

“My business is more important than ever—to be the watchdog of truth,” he says. “There’s never been a time when communications and authenticity have mattered more.” 



HONOR



ED

BY BRITTANY RISHER ENGLERT

Muhlenberg's honors programs expose students to new ideas and challenges so they can enter the world ready to lead and make a positive change.



PHOTO BY MATT LESTER

In 1988, Ted Schick, professor of philosophy, started the Muhlenberg Scholars program, the College's first merit-based honors program. "The purpose was to attract and retain exceptional students by providing unique opportunities for intellectual exploration, growth and development," explains Ranajoy Ray-Chaudhuri, assistant professor of economics and current director of the Muhlenberg Scholars Honors Program.

Since then, Muhlenberg has added three more honors programs to "provide an opportunity for students to engage beyond the classroom and to think critically about the diversity of the human experience from multiple disciplinary lenses," says Dean of Academic Life Michele Deegan. "They learn to develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills in order to be more agile, engaged citizens."

Academically, this involves courses designed to complement and enhance the College's liberal arts requirements. Socially, the honors programs facilitate making interdisciplinary connections with students, faculty and guest speakers. The ultimate goal is to help students thrive after they graduate.

"Through program requirements, they're exposed to opportunities to wrestle with the complexities of our world during their time at Muhlenberg," Deegan says. "They develop a deeper understanding of the challenges locally, nationally and globally and are more prepared to jump into graduate school or careers with greater awareness of the diversity of the human condition and experience."

“MUHLENBERG SCHOLARS

gave me the confidence to apply to med school”

The Muhlenberg Scholars program, designed for intellectually curious students across disciplines, has tested Lindsay Scott '22, a biology major and statistics minor, in the most positive ways. “Through my scholars seminars, I have been exposed to the beliefs of other cultures. The most challenging experience has been trying to remain open to new ideas and ways of thinking,” she says.

The faculty teaching Muhlenberg Scholars courses purposely emphasize original-source materials rather than textbooks to facilitate this shift. “They collate a reading list from a range of sources such as journal articles, research reports, data sets, newspapers, magazines and audiovisual materials. Even in instances when these are not purely objective, they are intentionally chosen to represent a multitude of perspectives,” Ray-Chaudhuri explains. This way, “readers synthesize the information and come to their own conclusions regarding the content rather than rely on someone else’s interpretation.”

After a first-year seminar intended to develop analytical writing skills, sophomores choose an academic project. Scott wrote a paper on the relationship between DNA and the ethical issues surrounding collecting DNA samples. She spent an entire semester researching and writing. “The final project is something that I am very proud of, and it was amazing to see all of my hard work come together,” she says.

This year was an integrative seminar on immigration of all races and ethnicities, and next year will be the senior capstone seminar. “The goal for these Scholars-only classes is to forge an intellectual community as well as

develop specific marketable skills,” Ray-Chaudhuri says. Scott enjoys both the diversity of the seminars and the ability

to collaborate with students outside of her science classes. “I have been in class with the same 20 students for four years. This helps build camaraderie, and it allows all of us to be very open and honest with each other,” she says. “It is very rewarding to be in class with other students who care about learning and becoming more well-rounded individuals.”

But it’s not all work. Muhlenberg Scholars also have the chance to attend exclusive talks by speakers drawn from within and beyond the campus and end-of-semester dinners. Last year included a session organized by Christopher Herrick, professor of political science and the director of prestigious awards, on

postgraduate awards—such as the Fulbright, Gates Cambridge, Marshall and Rhodes Scholars programs—and how to successfully prepare to compete for them.

With all of this under her belt, Scott says she’s grown as a student and as a person. “This program has prompted me to take initiative. I have learned how to organize my thoughts, research and present my findings in a coherent and effective manner, and the connections I’ve made with students and professors have supported me in achieving my goals,” she says. “The various projects and breadth of knowledge that I’ve gained have given me the confidence to apply to medical school, and I know these skills will be useful if I choose to take a research year.”

“This program has prompted me to take initiative. I have learned how to organize my thoughts, research and present my findings in a coherent and effective manner, and the connections I’ve made with students and professors have supported me in achieving my goals.”

LINDSAY SCOTT '22



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

“I have the knowledge and skills to provide the best care for my patients in the future thanks to SHANKWEILER SCHOLARS”

A quality doctor is trained on diagnoses, procedures and standard patient care, but an excellent physician can do those things while ensuring patients are heard and supported, says public health major Nour Yousry '23. As a Shankweiler Scholar, she feels confident that she's on the path to becoming this kind of doctor.

“I realized early on that the field of medicine ties so many aspects of various disciplines, such as history, religion, anthropology, psychology and sociology,”

Yousry says. No wonder Shankweiler Scholars, which welcomed its first cohort of students in 2019, attracted her.

“Shankweiler Scholars are not only preparing for a successful career in medicine, they're encouraged and challenged to draw connections between their premedical interests and other aspects of our liberal arts curriculum to gain a better understanding of how the practice of medicine truly is a human endeavor,” explains Assistant Professor of Anthropology Casey James Miller, who's been director of the program since 2019.

Students start with a fall seminar, *Medicine as a Human Endeavor*, to introduce them to the Shankweiler philosophy. The program's faculty

experts come from a wide range of disciplines, including religion, anthropology, history, psychology and public health.

In their second year, Shankweiler Scholars take *Medicine and Society*. Working with a faculty mentor, students invite a guest speaker to give a public lecture on a topic related to medicine. They also read and discuss literature written by that speaker. Yousry looks forward to hearing from Johns Hopkins University's Travis Rieder, director of the Berman Institute of Bioethics, who will talk about his research regarding the opioid pandemic and its impacts on the health-care system and society.

“This is an incredibly unique experience, as it allows our class to work together to invite a scholar that may enlighten the minds of Muhlenberg students and staff,” Yousry says. “The Shankweiler Scholars cohort plans on discussing various healthcare disparities and the opioid pandemic with Dr. Rieder, in addition to inviting the wider campus community to his talk.”

Students also work on a self-designed curriculum to explore their own interests in medicine and the liberal arts. “My curriculum seeks to explore the experiences of people with various socioeconomic statuses in the field of medicine,” Yousry says. “By identifying the disparities in access to medicine and medical care, I aim to better equip myself with the knowledge and tools to tackle these issues through my current volunteer experiences, imminent medical studies and future practice as a medical physician.”

When this individualized course of study wraps, students share their learnings with each other during their senior year.

Yousry feels empowered by her experiences as a Shankweiler Scholar. “I have been able to combine so many disciplines into the field of medicine, which will give me the knowledge and skills to deal with various patient scenarios and circumstances and provide the best care for my patients in the future,” she says.



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

“DANA SCHOLARS

allowed me to show up as a student in a holistic way”

When Professor of Political Science Mohsin Hashim became director of Dana Scholars roughly 12 years ago, he wanted to promote the notion of engaged scholarship. “A Dana student should show civic initiative and see the linkages between how structures of power and knowledge are related,” he says.

Dana Scholars participate in shared seminars, independent research projects, internships and trips. This includes a second-year seminar on a theme chosen by the Center for Ethics (CFE) that applies to science, social sciences, humanities and the arts. “The CFE is our single largest intellectual investment on issues that transcend disciplines and delve into larger ethical issues,” Hashim explains. “We decided to connect our best and brightest students to larger questions and leading scholars and thinkers that the CFE brings in.” This experience further helps students explore Americans’ ethical obligations to their fellow citizens and how they think about their role as global citizens.

The opportunity to be part of a community of students who share a love for creative learning and

innovation appealed to Mel Ferrara ’15, a gender and sexuality studies (which they self-designed) and philosophy/political thought double major. “Encouraging our collaboration deeply shaped my approaches to thinking and problem-solving,” they say. “It also equipped me with skills for communicating my ideas with those with different areas of specialization from myself.”

The most testing experience for the students is the final group thesis project during their senior year, which culminates in a public presentation at the Dana Forum symposium. “My teammates and I wrote about student activism and coalitional politics,” Ferrara says. “During our time at Muhlenberg, there was a specific rise in anti-racist activism, calling public attention to the extremely high levels of marginalization experienced by students, faculty and staff of color at our predominantly white institution. We wanted to use our project to contribute to an archive of student activism at Muhlenberg. Ultimately, completing it implored us to be deeply self-reflexive as white students as we navigated the complex terrains of the politics of archival work and storytelling.”

Not only did they learn time management, collaboration and being realistic about personal workload capacity—abilities that serve them today—the overall Dana Scholar experience helped Ferrara, now an adjunct instructor at Muhlenberg who recently successfully defended their Ph.D. dissertation, explore the relationships between academic work, innovation and teamwork. “As a first-generation college student, I’ve often felt uncomfortable with conceptions of college campuses as completely divorced from the ‘real world.’ This is a false dichotomy—one that is rooted in elitism and the exclusivity of higher education,” they say. “The program allowed me to show up as a student in a holistic way, highlighting awareness of both our positionalities and the importance of being engaged community members.”



PHOTO BY MAGGIE EWALD

“RJ FELLOWS

taught me that I can make a difference in my community”

Jessica Orofino '21, a prehealth neuroscience major, didn't know of RJ Fellows until she received a letter about the program the summer before her first year at Muhlenberg. "Community service has always played a pretty big role in my life, so it was the perfect opportunity," she says. "I wanted to get to know the people in the areas I would be calling home for the next four years. I also liked the idea of being pushed to take courses outside of my general science comfort zone."

Established in 2002 and funded in part by the generosity of the RJ Foundation, the RJ Fellows Program aims to help students understand and manage change and, through this knowledge, grow into leaders and agents of change, says Rich Niesenbaum, professor of biology and director of sustainability studies and RJ Fellows.

As seniors, students complete a fall capstone seminar as part of their culminating undergraduate experience (CUE) in which they examine an interdisciplinary topic related to the program themes of change, leadership and community engagement. In the spring, students develop projects that reflect these themes and present their work at the Senior Symposium.

During the Fall 2020 semester, seniors learned about plants in terms of their history; their use in design and engineering, medicine and pop culture; and the colonial nature of botanical exploration. The goal for the spring semester was to "bring about some meaningful change in our community and have it relate to plants," Orofino explains.

"Throughout my RJ experience, I've been able to take courses that speak to change, how it comes about and what colors a change as 'good' or 'bad.' The most significant message I've taken from the combination of these courses is that change, and what it means for a community, seems to be based on whether the community wanted that change and how it was brought about," she says. "So in thinking about that message, we faced the challenge of trying to decide on how to bring positive change to our Allentown community."

The less structured project portion of the CUE in the second semester offers students a lot of freedom to explore issues and ideas related to the capstone theme that are important to them. "That's a really cool thing. You don't get that in any other course, and it gives us a lot of responsibility

and also a chance to show ourselves what we're capable of as both a group and as individuals," she says.

Orofino says the RJ Fellows Program taught her to actively seek new perspectives that helped build a sense of responsibility for herself as a part of her community. "I can't really say, 'I can't make a difference,' or 'I don't know how to make a difference,' because this program taught us all how, and I think that's really important in the world we live in today," she says.

"Community service has always played a pretty big role in my life, so it was the perfect opportunity. I wanted to get to know the people in the areas I would be calling home for the next four years. I also liked the idea of being pushed to take courses outside of my general science comfort zone."

JESSICA OROFINO '21

PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON



ANDS



After 40 years, two longtime leaders of Muhlenberg's storied theatre program take their bows and reflect.

By Cindy Kuzma



I know we don't get to decide our legacy.

But I believe it has much less to do with the product we've put on stages or the physical manifestations of our contributions than with the way we've helped generations of students, along with our colleagues and collaborators at the institution, understand the world in a way that makes them healthier human beings."

—Curtis Dretsch

An audience files into a theatre (or, in pandemic times, fires up a Zoom). Then—without leaving their seats—they're transported to another time and place, be it the deck of an ocean liner, a New York City fire escape or a fictional small town at the turn of the century.

Building these worlds, and making them meaningful, takes both an overarching vision and meticulous execution—a grasp on the big picture, then hours of rehearsal, choreography and nuts-and-bolts set and costume construction to bring it all to life.

Few people know this better than Charles Richter, professor and director of theatre, and Curtis Dretsch, professor and director of design & technical theatre. Over careers spanning four decades, Richter has directed more than 80 performances at the College and Dretsch has designed for more than 100.

The same combination of vision and execution also, it turns out, works for building an acclaimed Department of Theatre & Dance.

For many years, the College was best known for its science and premedical programs, albeit with a liberal arts grounding. But in the late 1960s, lead-

ership noticed the burgeoning creative community on campus. To nurture this, it commissioned world-renowned architect Philip Johnson to design the Dorothy and Dexter Baker Center for the Arts.

The site was dedicated in 1974, and four years later, Richter, then 28, was brought on to help Muhlenberg further develop dramaturgically. "When I walked into that building, I got the sense these people were serious about what they were doing," Richter says. He and the approximately 16 students in the Muhlenberg Theatre Association wasted no time, staging a production of *Our Town* that fall. Shortly afterward, he hired a designer he'd met in graduate school, Curtis Dretsch, to join him.

The greater vision? "A bachelor of arts program that was about students getting a broad-based education but also getting excellent professional instruction as artists," Richter says. To build it took countless hours on and around the stage and teaching classes. In addition, Richter served as department chair for 25 years, while Dretsch oversaw building projects on campus and spent a decade in College administration.

Today, theatre & dance is the largest department on campus, repeatedly recognized as among the country's best by The Princeton Review and other authoritative organizations. The students it draws

are just the type of curious, multifaceted individuals Richter had in mind—and alumni have gone on to significant success both in the performance world and outside of it, as stars of stage and screen, creators of hit Netflix series, medical ethicists, attorneys and nationally known psychiatrists.

Richter and Dretsch retired at the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. As they look back, they can hardly believe the scale of the growth to which they've contributed. And their impact goes beyond the metrics of enrollment numbers or rankings. After all, theatre is far more than a means of entertainment, they believe—it's a way of looking at the world and creating connections within it.

"I know we don't get to decide our legacy," Dretsch says. "But I believe it has much less to do with the product we've put on stages or the physical manifestations of our contributions than with the way we've helped generations of students, along with our colleagues and collaborators at the institution, understand the world in a way that makes them healthier human beings."

ARTISTIC BEGINNINGS

Richter grew up on Long Island. His older sister acted and dragged him onstage alongside her: "I was a snow child in *Carousel* at about age 10," he says. During high school, he worked at a summer stock theatre at the Lakewood Playhouse in Barnesville, Pennsylvania, ascending from apprentice to lighting designer and assistant stage manager.

He earned his bachelor's degree in drama at Syracuse University, then his M.F.A. at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where he and Dretsch first met (Dretsch designed the costumes for Richter's master's thesis production, Molière's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*). A Fulbright scholarship funded a year with the field's top scholars at the University of Bristol, then two more years of graduate study at Cornell, before he accepted the position at Muhlenberg.

Though Richter's theatre knowledge is vast, his specialty lies in classics of the golden age. "That man knows more about musical theatre than anyone else alive," says Frankie Grande '05, now a Broadway performer and TV personality. Grande starred under Richter, whom he calls "a phenomenal person and director," in productions like *On the Town* and *The Pirates of Penzance* as an undergraduate; he also returned for the Muhlenberg Summer Music Theatre

productions of *George M!*, *Crazy for You* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

Dretsch, meanwhile, spent his childhood in vocal and choral music and other creative pursuits in South Dakota. He attended Montana State University intending to study architecture, but after two and a half years, transitioned to theatre and music. He headed straight to SMU to earn his M.F.A. under legendary husband-and-wife design team Bill and Jean Eckart, then spent about a year designing for the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre before Richter called him to Muhlenberg.

Dretsch is a "brilliant designer of all disciplines," says Donald Holder, who began working for the department as a technical assistant in 1981 and is now a Tony Award-winning Broadway lighting designer. He's also a doer, Holder says—an expert carpenter, electrician, scenic painter, tailor and draftsman who combined a legendary work ethic with an infectious laugh. "I'll always remember Curtis' clear tenor drifting through the theatre at midnight, singing excerpts from whatever musical we were in the midst of building, despite his exhaustion after working a 16-hour day still several hours from ending."

Dretsch's aesthetic range is broad, but he's passionate about drawing an audience in with details. During a production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* at the Summer Music Theatre in 1982, he wowed the crowd with a moon that moved across the sky during the act. He added crystal chandeliers, drapes and other frills to the Parisian flat for Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear* in 2008-2009. And the three-story row of brownstones he built for the school's second production of Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* six years ago is the stuff of legend.

Artistically speaking, Richter and Dretsch have each had considerable success beyond the College as well. Richter served as artistic director of the Pennsylvania Stage Company, worked extensively with New York City Opera, spent a season as artist-in-residence at the University of Music and Art of the City of Vienna in Austria and directed productions in regional theatres and at high-level New York venues. Dretsch's

Charles Richter (top) and Curtis Dretsch (bottom) in their Ciarla yearbook portraits from their first years with the College



Dretsch designed the set for Spring 2015's *Street Scene*, which Richter directed.



work, meanwhile, has graced stages from Baltimore to New York City to London. He has designed for the Dallas Shakespeare Festival and Terry Beck Dance Troupe; for 12 years, he was principal guest designer at the Pennsylvania Stage Company.

While they could have easily spent their lives pursuing their own dreams, the pair dedicated themselves to Muhlenberg. There, they found the freedom to create, the stability often lacking in artistic careers and the fulfillment of teaching. "It was the best combination of possibilities and opportunities," Dretsch says.

and the tremendous sense of potential to make something wonderful."

This degree of talent required and enabled Muhlenberg to continue mounting high-quality productions, some during the academic year and others at its renowned Summer Music Theatre. These gave students important opportunities to perform while enriching culture and the Lehigh Valley theatre community.

In addition to classics, the department embraced a more challenging repertoire, including experimental pieces by Jeffrey Weiss and other emerging artists. Dretsch set the bar high for production values, making the results beautiful in addition to presenting compelling content. Many involved dance—Dearborn says they've collaborated on more than 25 productions—and some involved guest artists, as well.

"Charlie and Curtis were not just putting on little college shows. They were daring to think bigger and more boldly than I'd ever imagined," says David Masenheimer '81, whose acting resume includes five Broadway shows and who now owns a business designing and building scenery for special events and parties. "And they were challenging their students to join this journey with them, constantly raising the stakes, raising the bar and, in the meantime, putting Muhlenberg on the map as a first-rate training facility for aspiring actors and theatre technicians."

Especially in the department's earlier years, students could act in multiple productions each year, as well as try their hands at various tasks on other parts on the stage. "I was able to explore nearly every facet of theatre from acting to stagecraft, including lighting, construction, properties, costuming and more," says Neil Hever '82, who is now operations director at WDIY, one of the Lehigh Valley's NPR stations. "Having such a diverse experience makes you more aware of the team effort needed to pull off a production. It was helpful to know how all the parts fit and what challenges others may have."

This broad-ranging, practical approach undoubtedly benefited many students who became professional performers, directors or designers. But it paid dividends, too, for those who would go on to careers in unrelated fields.

Dr. Lucy Puryear '81, who starred in Richter's original production of *Our Town* and is now a psychiatrist at Baylor College of Medicine and a Muhlenberg trustee, credits Richter and Dretsch with the skills essential in both her professional and personal lives. "Every time I pick up a hammer or a jigsaw, I remember Curtis giving me the confidence as a woman to

EXPANSION & EXCELLENCE

To grow the department, Richter took a hands-on approach to recruitment. Each year, he'd fly to Los Angeles to meet prospective students; he estimates he's conducted somewhere around 5,000 to 8,000 auditions and interviews. "There is no one who's come through the theatre program who Charlie didn't help, either by shaping their admittance to Muhlenberg or their experience while they were here," says Rebekkah Brown '99, who's now the College's vice president for advancement and an adjunct professor of tap.

Another key to expansion was a focus on exemplary faculty. "We've looked for people who are not only master teachers but were also really fine artists," Richter says. Take Karen Dearborn, a talented performer and scholar who joined the faculty in 1993 to become the founding director of the Dance Program (she's now chair and professor of dance). "When I interviewed for the position with Charlie and Curtis, I felt their energy and commitment to creating an excellent program," she says. "I was inspired by their drive and vision

build things," she says. "Every time I give a lecture to medical students, I rely on the training as an actor I received from Charlie." Brown, too, says the curiosity, coordination and listening skills she fine-tuned in the program now pay off in the emotional intelligence needed to successfully connect with prospective donors to Muhlenberg.

"Theatre production is a great training ground for the working world," Richter says. "You have to learn how to work collaboratively and be sensitive to other people's feelings. You have to work on a deadline and get the job done. No matter what our students end up doing after they graduate, the experiences they've had in theatre make them more efficient and creative."

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Dretsch recruited and interviewed many design students and has also served the College in other ways. In 1993, after he began informally advising the administration on remodeling projects, Dretsch was

named dean of the College for academic life. There, he oversaw academic advising, academic records and the Trexler Library. He then was named dean of the College for faculty in 1996, and added the title of vice president for academic affairs in 1999.

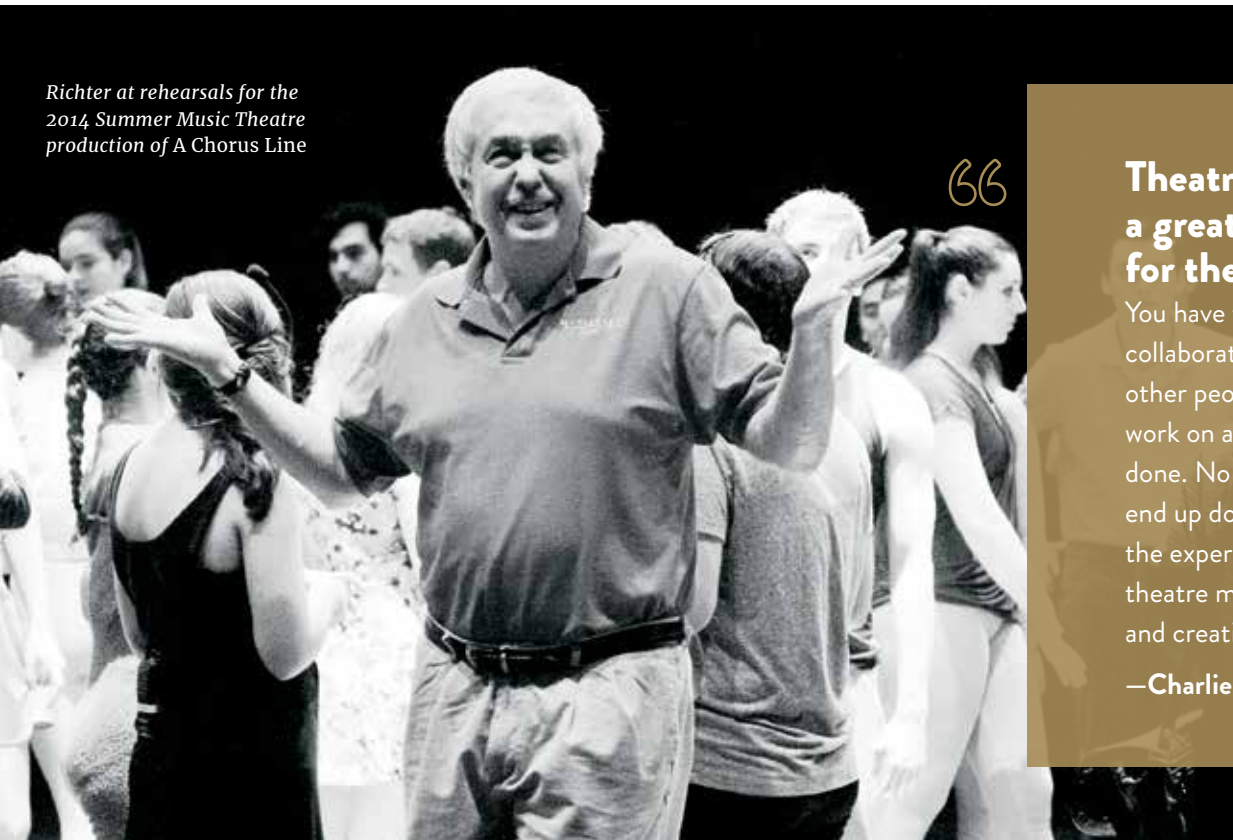
His calm-under-pressure style served him well in administration, says President Kathleen Harring. "In his leadership roles, Curtis really modeled the selfless academic leader, who is driven by a support for and commitment to the institution," she says. "He was in academic affairs at a time when there was a lot of transformation and always worked to make sure the strength of the academic programs was reinforced."

In addition, Dretsch stayed highly involved in campus planning and design. "I was an agent of the College who spoke design, so I could sit in a room with architects and speak with them about the institution's priorities, goals and programs in ways they under-



The Dorothy Hess Baker Theatre, located in the Trexler Pavilion

Richter at rehearsals for the 2014 Summer Music Theatre production of A Chorus Line



66

Theatre production is a great training ground for the working world.

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—Charlie Richter

stood," he says. He worked on the renovation of the Haas College Center, the Ettinger Building and the General's Quarters in Seegers Union and played a part in the design and construction of Moyer Hall and Robertson and South Halls.

And of course, one of the most important projects he oversaw was the Trexler Pavilion for Theatre & Dance, built in 1999 to accommodate a department bursting at the seams. The striking "fishbowl" effect of curved glass—along with the Baker Theatre's state-of-the-art stage sound and lighting systems, orchestra pit and fly system, not to mention the scene shop, costume shop and other production facilities—further secured Muhlenberg's spot on the national scene.

"I'll never forget when prospective students were coming in while that building was being built, and

them saying they decided to come to Muhlenberg because they could see the College cared about the arts," Dearborn says. "That was a very significant change in the trajectory of the program."

A WIDER IMPACT

The faculty, productions and space have continued to draw exactly the types of students Richter and Dretsch say they hope to teach—passionate individuals who come to theatre not to feed their egos, but to learn and make an impact. "We've always been committed to the idea that theatre should have a significance beyond just entertainment; it should be an institution that reflects the

truth of the world," Richter says. "Students come to Muhlenberg because they get an excellent theatre education, but they also get an excellent liberal arts education."

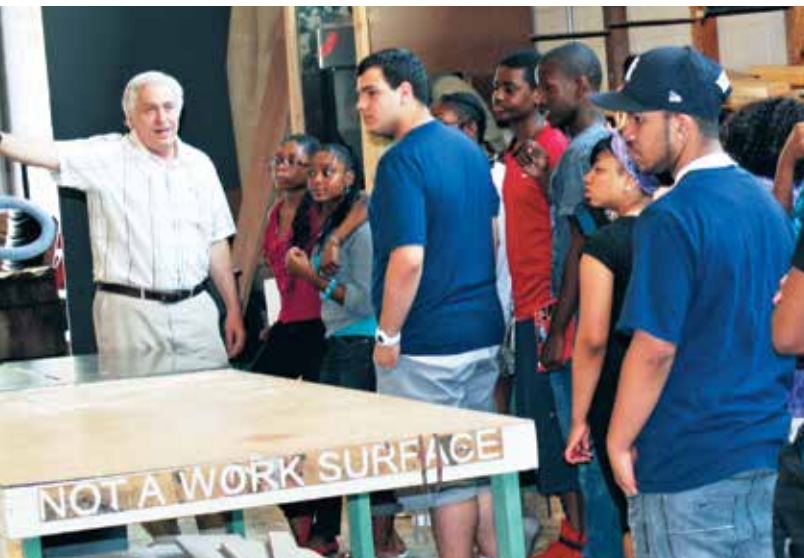
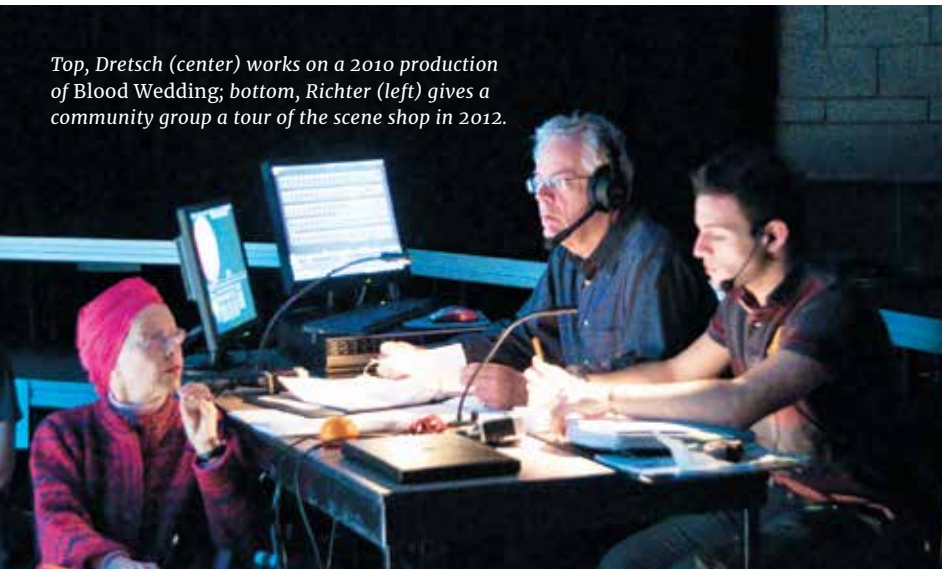
At Muhlenberg, unlike in some bachelor of fine arts programs, students can double-major in a second field, whether that's music or math, political science or sustainability studies. Grande, for instance, double-majored in theatre and biology, with a minor in dance. "I have two sides of my brain and they're both firing at full cylinders," he says. A college advisor at Pine Crest School, the preparatory school he attended in Florida, suggested Muhlenberg. For Grande, it

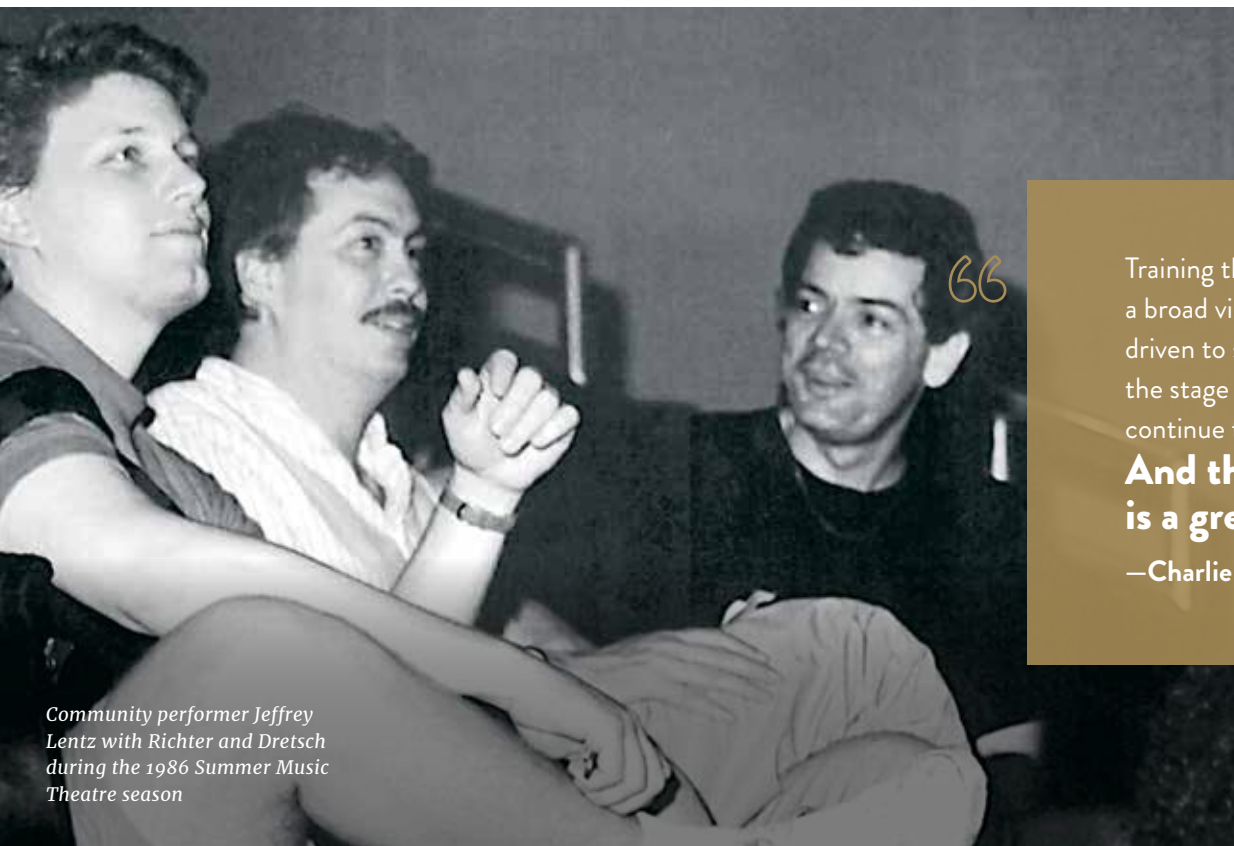
was love at first visit. And the nurturing he received in both sciences and the arts has been crucial to his success—for instance, as an on-air host, he can speak extemporaneously on a breadth of topics.

Harring knows that, thanks to the department's reputation, those types of conversations are happening in counselors' offices across the nation. "Theatre and dance strengthens our name recognition; it strengthens our national reputation," she says. What's more, the department's characteristic creativity and innovation add to the intellectual depth of the entire institution. And no matter where graduates wind up, they take those gifts with them.

"I have worked with many Muhlenberg College graduates over the years on Broadway and across the country," Holder, the Broadway lighting designer, says. "Without exception, they have con-

Top, Dretsch (center) works on a 2010 production of *Blood Wedding*; bottom, Richter (left) gives a community group a tour of the scene shop in 2012.





Community performer Jeffrey Lentz with Richter and Dretsch during the 1986 Summer Music Theatre season

Training theatre people who have a broad vision of the world and are driven to say important things from the stage is something I know will continue to happen.

And that, I think, is a great legacy.”

—Charlie Richter

sistently been experts in their chosen disciplines, but also thoughtful, inquisitive, articulate thinkers and communicators—a real credit to the world-class and well-rounded education they received from their alma mater.”

FUTURE ROLES

Neither Richter nor Dretsch, both 70, knows for sure what will come next for them. As COVID-19 restrictions allow, Richter hopes to visit family in Chicago and Texas; Dretsch, for his part, plans to garden, return to his musical roots and deepen his relationships to community organizations in Allentown. After four decades of long hours, large course loads and multiple productions, they each plan to relish a bit of rest.

The pandemic upended what they thought their final year might look like, but it also highlighted the resilience of what they’ve built, offering assurances it will endure. Through the turmoil, students and faculty have been incredibly creative in both process and product—creating theatre that lives outside of traditional indoor spaces and addresses issues of politics, culture and justice.



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

Even as they make their exit, Haring says, Richter and Dretsch have built strong scaffolding for the department. They’ve combined their unique skills to envision a bigger future—and put in the work to make it reality. And even those who arrive generations from now will benefit. “Training theatre people who have a broad vision of the world and are driven to say important things from the stage is something I know will continue to happen,” Richter says. “And that, I think, is a great legacy.”

BUILDING BONDS THAT LAST

Friends who meet at Muhlenberg establish their own traditions that keep them close for decades after graduation.



Above and above right, the Class of 1983's "Key Women" and a cake to celebrate their friendship. Below right, clockwise, from left: Walz Hall dormmates from the Class of 1972, Strohmathon, Class of 1980 "Hen House" friends, TKE brothers from the Classes of 1978 and 1979 on a golf outing

Atending reunions is a great way to stay connected to fellow alumni—but for some groups of friends who met at the 'Berg, reunions simply don't happen often enough.

Natalie Hand '78 P'07, assistant vice president for alumni affairs and career services, often hears from alumni excited to share their unique traditions, from recent and not-so-recent graduates alike.

Though there are certainly many groups of younger alumni who stay connected, she says, "what amazes me are those whose connections span decades, those which endured before the ease of keep-

ing in touch through email and social media."

While different groups have their own traditions, what connects them all are the lasting relationships that began at Muhlenberg.

Revisiting Muhlenberg

In June of 1980, a group of about 30 Phi Kappa Tau brothers from the Classes of 1970 to 1974 gathered to play softball in the field next to their chapter house in Allentown. Their fraternity cook, Gil Strohm, joined and cooked hot dogs and burgers for the group. Soon the event was dubbed "Strohmathon" in his honor, and it has continued every year since (in 2020, it was a Zoom call).

Bruce Reitz '70, one of the brothers, recalls Strohm as much more than a cook—he was a friend, mentor and teacher to many brothers and was even made a brother himself in 1969. "He

knew everyone's name when we came back, until the day he died," Reitz says. For many years, brothers who lived in the Allentown area helped Strohm with his medical care.

About 30 to 40 men still gather each June in memory of Strohm to spend the weekend playing softball and golf, getting Yocco's hot dogs and having dinner at Ringers Roost. The best part, Reitz says, is simply seeing one another and reminiscing about their college days.

Reuniting Off-Campus

About 15 Tau Kappa Epsilon brothers from the Classes of 1978 and 1979 have stayed close since graduation. They've attended each other's weddings, been there for the birth of children and supported each other through loss. Three have sent children to Muhlenberg. Eight meet annually for a golf outing in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The brothers' wives became so close that they began planning their own outings.

For the last 20 years, the brothers have taken turns planning an annual dinner in March, which has expanded to include non-TKE friends from Muhlenberg. Normally between 30 and 40 alumni attend these dinners, which often include a surprise guest from the College. During the pandemic, the group held weekly Zoom calls.

"One of the reasons my daughter went to Muhlenberg is she wanted what I had—to find a group of lifelong friends, and she has," Rudy Favocci '79 P'12 says.

The TKE group is also very involved with the College—three are trustees, while several others have served on the Alumni Board and Parents Council and as reunion and class fund chairs. As Favocci notes, "Muhlenberg brought us together and our friendship has kept us together."

When Beth Ann Spanninger '72 started college in 1968, she and her first-year dormmates in Walz Hall lived under strict rules: curfews, dress codes, no boys and the watchful eye of a house mother.

"The College was like your parents still taking care of you," Spanninger says. "We really got close during that period."

The group of about 15 women stayed in touch throughout their 20s and 30s. Life pulled them in different directions for a while, until 2010.

“One of our gang decided to have a reunion the year we all turned 60, in New Hope, Pennsylvania,” Spaninger says. “We recognized each other’s personalities from those two years we got close in the dorm. Our hearts and souls were the same.”

The group has been meeting regularly since. In 2020, their plans to go hiking in England were grounded by the pandemic. Instead, they started a virtual book club that meets via Zoom.

Commemorating Special Events

When Melanie Mason '83 was a first-year student, she and nine friends formed their own “spontaneous sorority” (the College had only fraternities at the time). They called themselves the Key Women, based on a popular slang term at the time—“key” meant “cool.”

On graduation day, they got a group photo taken at a luncheon they threw for themselves and their families in Seegers Union. Later, Mason had the photo blown up and framed and brought it to the wedding of the first woman to get married. Someone else brought a big brass skeleton key and presented it to the bride, and a tradition was born. At each wedding, the holder of the key would pass it to the bride, and the bride would cross out her face on the poster with red lipstick.

“It’s been an awesome way to keep ourselves connected all these years,” Mason says. Now that everyone is married—the last woman to wed did so in 1996—they still get together every year, and “it’s like no time has passed. Our sides usually hurt from all the laughing.”

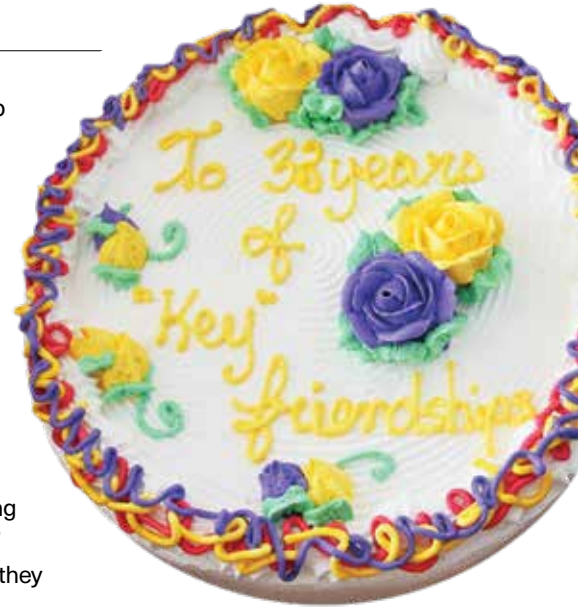
In his junior year, Dr. Stu Schnall '80 P'08 and his friends gathered at one of their parents’ homes for a New Year’s Eve party.

“Without exception, without missing a year, we’ve been doing it ever since,” Schnall says. Even at the end of 2020, they toasted at midnight on Zoom.

The group lived at what was then the Margaret Henrietta House at 2223 Chew Street, nicknamed “the Hen House.” Members still use the name for their group, which, over the years, has extended to spouses, children and grandchildren, some of whom have formed their own friendships.

This year, Schnall and his wife, Wendy Schwab Schnall '78 P'08, hosted a Memorial Day party for the Hens at their home. They ended up with 36 people.

“There was no better way for me to break that COVID fast of not having human contact than to have done it with our best friends,” Schnall says.
—Megan Bungeroth '07



We’d love to hear about your alumni traditions and help you celebrate them! Reach out to us at bergalum@muhlenberg.edu.



Celebration of Life

Vermont-based nonprofit EDD Adaptive Sports spreads joy and community through sports, all to honor the life of Eric Dettenrieder '96.

BY GRETCHEN OWENS, AS TOLD TO CINDY KUZMA



Eric Dettenrieder '96 (top, center) with, left to right, Mike Levin '97, Jeff Silsbee '96, Chris Wichterman '96 and Paul Anderson '96. Below, skiers participate in the 2021 Eric D. Dettenrieder Race Camp, a competitive training program for skiers and snowboarders at the Adaptive Sports Foundation in Windham, New York.

Eric had a special vivacity, an ability to connect. I'm his little sister, so he's the guy I looked up to. Skiing was his passion, but he also played soccer, volleyball and many different intramural sports at Muhlenberg. He loved competition but also connection and being in nature.

Eric died in 1997 doing what he loved best: skiing. He was taking an early-morning run, looking for the best patch of snow and had a tragic accident. He disappeared so fast. But his Muhlenberg family wrapped its arms around us.

In the first few years, we got together on holidays and summers at my family's camp in the Adirondacks. A bunch of us sat around the campfire, trying to figure out how to carry his light forward.

Eric's fraternity brother Jeff Silsbee '96 first had the idea for an organization to share Eric's love of sports. In 1998, we created the Eric Douglas Dettenrieder Memorial Fund. We started with small grants to the local high school ski club. Soon, we put our focus on access for kids with disabilities.

We connected with other local groups, including the Adaptive Sports Foundation. We still partner with them on the Eric D. Dettenrieder Race Camp, a three-day camp for intermediate and advanced skiers with disabilities. We also began offering skill-building clinics in adaptive sports like soccer, basketball and baseball.

At first, we were all volunteer. I started on staff in 2004, part-time. It's grown slowly; I'm now running the organization, 35 hours a week.

Many Muhlenberg connections helped from the beginning. Most are still involved. Amy Thornton Wichterman '94 is still on our board and a wonderful asset. She's so creative; any time I'm stuck on an idea I can call her and she'll have another way to think about it. Jeff served as president for many years. We've had Muhlenberg people circle back and say, "I want to reconnect with you. What can I do?" A year or so ago, someone who lived in the

dorm where Eric was a resident assistant reached out to us and volunteered to help with marketing.


There's a special feeling at Muhlenberg that formed a deep connection between Eric and his friends—a lasting bond, because all these years later, it's still important to all of those people to stay connected to Eric. It's a testament to the Muhlenberg experience, how many folks still care. This year, Eric's class is celebrating its 25th reunion.

In 2020, we renamed ourselves EDD Adaptive Sports to more clearly describe what we do. We've now served more than 4,200 individuals. In the last few years, we've gone from two communities to five locations, from monthly events to having more than 30 programs on the calendar each year. We had to go virtual during the pandemic, but we've weathered the storm, thanks to generous support.

Now, we're expanding to reach athletes where they are throughout their lives. We've added activities you can do at any stage, including biking, yoga, rowing and pickleball.

A big part of our work is connecting with college volunteers and engaging them in what we do. In fall 2019, we started a new partnership with SUNY Morrisville in upstate New York. Its field hockey team and men's soccer team led a kickball program. Our athletes named the group Team Best Friends, and they had so much fun.

To see young people with and without disabilities connecting over sports is beautiful. I know it impacts our volunteers. These student-athletes might not think of themselves as coaches or teachers, but when you break down what you're doing into basic steps, you realize you have a gift to share.

Some of these young people will go on to athletic careers or to coach their kids' sports teams. Our hope is this experience sticks with them and they remember that it's easy to be inclusive. 

Gretchen Owens is executive director of EDD Adaptive Sports and Eric's sister.

Here or there, near or far...



...it's wherever you are.

ALUMNI WEEKEND

SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2021

This year's hybrid event welcomes you back to campus and includes virtual offerings.

REUNION

Calling classes ending in 0, 1, 5 and 6—it's your year!

Friday, September 17

LIFELONG LEARNING

The classroom comes to you with Lifelong Learning. Sign up for your favorites and some new offerings.

STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS

Hear the latest advances and updates from President Kathleen Harring via livestream.

Saturday, September 18

ALUMNI TAILGATE

Reunion time for classes ending in 0, 1, 5 and 6. To reunite with an affinity group like a sports team, fraternity/sorority or club, email bergalum@muhlenberg.edu to reserve your space.

HOMECOMING

Bring your mini-Mules to the Homecoming Fair, check out the Alumni Art Exhibit and experience more of your annual favorites both online and on campus.

For the latest information, visit muhlenberg.edu/alumniweekend and watch your email.



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**Celebrating the
Class of 2021**

Michelle Rajan '21, a neuroscience major with a creative writing minor, addresses fellow graduates at Commencement on May 24. To learn more about how the College conducted the event amid the COVID-19 pandemic, see **p. 4**.