

Muhlenberg

Magazine



SPRING 2022

Strong Roots

Muhlenberg prepares students to succeed at top dental schools

Making Progress

A look at the College's diversity, equity and inclusion work

Student Wellbeing

Muhlenberg offers support and resources for today's campus

Effective Activism

Adrian Shanker '09 advocates for the LGBTQ+ community

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The excitement around *Boundless: The Campaign for Muhlenberg* is building and the list of committed supporters continues to grow.

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B O U N D L E S S
THE CAMPAIGN FOR MUHLENBERG

Muhlenberg

SPRING 2022

Magazine

FEATURES



Passion and Persistence 26

Adrian Shanker '09 continues to work to make the unmet dream of health equity for the LGBTQ community a reality in his new role as executive director of the Bay Area's Spahr Center.



Making Progress 32

The annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report, released in November, showcases the breadth and depth of the work that happened in the last academic year.



Something to Smile About 44

The College has a reputation for producing alumni who go on to attend—and excel at—some of the top dental schools in the country.

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ON THE COVER Photographer Margo Reed met up with (clockwise from back left) Vijay Rao '22, Michelle James '21, Benjamin Chen '22, Lauren Kim '22, Stephanie Ng '20 and Kristin Lee '22 at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.

From the Editor



Muhlenberg students, alumni, faculty and staff do amazing work. Muhlenberg's Office of Communications, which produces this magazine, makes sure that people who aren't directly involved in that work can learn about it as a way of understanding the College today.

In November, the College released its annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Report, a sweeping roundup of Muhlenberg's DEI initiatives that took place in the 2020-2021 academic year. It's available at muhlenberg.edu/DEI2021, and when I read it, I saw a treasure trove of story ideas. I collaborated with the report's authors to select a handful of highlights to explore more deeply through storytelling, and the result was "Making Progress" (page 32). As President Kathleen Harring points out in that feature, without a common understanding of what we've done in terms of DEI and why we've done it, we can't assess where we need to go next. Read the story, read the report and be part of the journey forward.

An alum who has pushed the College, the Lehigh Valley and the state of Pennsylvania forward through his advocacy for the LGBTQ community is (finally) profiled in this issue ("Persistence and Passion," page 26). Adrian Shanker '09 has been the subject of news stories so frequently—most recently, for being appointed to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS last year—that we'd never run a full-length profile of him, until now. We got it written and photographed just before he announced he'd be leaving his role as executive director of Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center for the same role at the Spahr Center, an LGBTQ community center just outside San Francisco. There, he's continuing his work toward the unmet dream of health equity for the LGBTQ community.

Also in this issue, we speak to the standout alumni and current students who chose to pursue the pre dental path at Muhlenberg ("Something to Smile About," page 44). The College's longtime partnership with the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine is one of only about 20 accelerated dental programs in the country. That's one draw for aspiring dentists, but even those who haven't matriculated at Muhlenberg through that program—those who've gone on to Harvard, Columbia and New York University, to name a few—cite the College's strong academics, research opportunities and faculty, staff and peer support as reasons for their success.

Meghan Kita
Managing Editor

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Muhlenberg Magazine is published three times a year by the
Muhlenberg College Office of Communications.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

This publication is meant to be a conversation between Muhlenberg and the alumni, parents and friends of the College who receive this magazine. If you see a story you like (or don't like), take a few

moments to email your thoughts to magazine@muhlenberg.edu. Your feedback helps create a community dialogue. If we publish your letter in a future issue, we'll send you a free Muhlenberg T-shirt. Please, share your thoughts, opinions and suggestions.

Editor's note: The photo-illustrations that accompanied "Better Together" (Fall 2021) utilized a recurring yellow circle element to highlight the Muhlenberg faculty on each page. Readers pointed out that the circles could be interpreted as halos and the faculty as "saviors," a problematic visual given the story's subject matter, community-engaged scholarship. The photo-illustration accompanying the Inside-Out course section used a stock image of incarcerated people that did not reflect the way the course is run. The imagery was updated for the online version of the story to address these concerns.

Correction: Both the Fall and Winter 2021 issues of Muhlenberg Magazine stated that Muhlenberg's overall six-year graduation rate was 82 percent, according to U.S. News. The correct figure is 84 percent.

ONLINE STORIES NOT TO MISS

Check out these features on the Muhlenberg website.



Chemistry Research Course Lights a Spark for First-Year Students

Project Lab, a decades-old, invitation-only course, remains a chemistry department highlight that gives undergraduates an early and holistic view of what it means to explore scientific questions through research. To learn why current students and faculty rave about this experience, visit muhlenberg.edu/projectlab.



Helping Students From Underrepresented Backgrounds Consider Grad School

Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik and Assistant Professor of Biology Giancarlo Cuadra co-founded the new Graduate School Preparatory Program (GSPP) for Students from Underrepresented Backgrounds, which officially launched last fall. The GSPP offers workshops, resources and—most importantly—mentorship for students and recent alumni in all fields of study. To learn more, visit muhlenberg.edu/GSPP.



Student Research Powers Exploration of Black History at Muhlenberg

This Black History Month saw the debut of Toward Diversity, a website that houses archival material pertaining to the experiences of Black students at the College from 1926 to the present. Hailey Petrus '23 and Samantha Brenner '21 combed the archives and collected oral histories as part of an independent study in Spring 2021, and that work formed the foundation for the site that debuted this February. To learn more about this project and find a link to the site, visit muhlenberg.edu/towarddiversity.

How Muhlenberg Is Supporting Student Wellbeing

The College is meeting the moment by shoring up the resources for students who are transitioning to life on campus and finding a variety of ways to connect students with the help they need.

The students who are at Muhlenberg today, as well as the high school juniors and seniors considering the College, have spent nearly two years missing out—on socializing, on activities and milestones, on in-person learning. (In fact, 30 percent of the College’s current first-year students had not been in a traditional classroom setting for 18 months before arriving on campus.)

The circumstances are taking a toll: Last October, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children’s Hospital Association declared a state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health. In December, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory “to highlight the urgent need to address the nation’s youth mental health crisis.” Both statements cited the pandemic as accelerating already worri-

some trends in mental health challenges in young people.

Even before the pandemic, the College recognized the critical nature of supporting students’ wellbeing. Now, it wants to ensure that it’s meeting this moment with resources tailored to the circumstances: “A lot of challenges related to resiliency and stress and burnout aren’t necessarily diagnoses

that a therapist is going to solely be able to support students with,” says Vice President for College Life and Dean of Students Allison Williams. “It needs to be in the fabric of all the educational opportunities that we offer ... both curricular and co-curricular.”

Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student Transitions Steve Dutton has been instrumental in facilitating such opportunities. He already planned to overhaul the transition-to-college experience prior to the pandemic by ensuring first-year students were supported well beyond Orientation Weekend and also helping sophomores with the challenges they’ve always faced (declaring a major, moving into leadership roles and so on). The pandemic changed the nature of Dutton’s work: This year’s sophomores entered college in the fall of 2020 as the only class permitted on campus, with most courses held remotely and social opportunities limited.

Since 2017, Muhlenberg has required first-year students to take a course called Foundations of Student Success. Instructors are often student life staff, and the course builds upon what students learn during Orientation. It begins by asking students to define what success looks like for them and ends with students creating a success plan for the next semester. In between, facilitators cover what resources the College offers and how to access them, an introduction to student organizations and an overview of campus offices.

This year was the first time the entire first-year class took this course in the fall—a critical change, Dutton says, since spring always felt too late to be delivering this information to half the class. To make this work, the course changed from a twice-weekly format to meeting once a week and adding an “experiential learning component,” in which students choose something to do (attend a lecture, see a show, join a club meeting) and complete a reflection assignment.

“This is helping us reach the objectives of this course by getting students connected to the community to experience something and learn from it,” Dutton says.

“A lot of challenges related to resiliency and stress and burnout aren’t necessarily diagnoses that a therapist is going to solely be able to support students with. It needs to be in the fabric of all the educational opportunities that we offer.”

— ALLISON WILLIAMS, VICE PRESIDENT FOR COLLEGE LIFE AND DEAN OF STUDENTS



This semester, Dutton has organized weekly info-sessions on topics like summer jobs and the housing lottery to continue offering resources to members of the Class of 2025 through their second semester. For sophomores, who began the year with an in-person re-orientation experience called SOAR (Sophomore Orientation and Reconnection), Dutton has organized weekly SOAR Success Series sessions targeted to their needs.

“It’s important that students know that we understand that their transition is constantly evolving, new challenges are constantly rising to the surface, and that’s in non-pandemic times,” Dutton says.

Foundations of Student Success introduces students to the mental health resources available on campus. The hub for such resources, Counseling Services, continues to excel. Wait times for students seeking counseling continue to be low—under five days, according to Director of Counseling Services Tim Silvestri ’91—and students report liking the counselors on staff. Additionally, there has been an intentional effort to bring on counselors that reflect the student population: “We have a very diverse staff compared to other institutions,” Silvestri says. “We have that because it’s a priority—we know it’s important.”

The College has also recently partnered with the Jed Foundation, a nonprofit that has worked with more than 9,000 high schools and colleges with the goal of preventing death by suicide. It’s a national problem that preceded the onset

of COVID: According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, suicide rates within the 10 to 24 age group increased by 57 percent between 2007 and 2018.

Last year, partners from the Jed Foundation completed an assessment of campus and made recommendations in a strategic plan. The first priority, according to Director of Student Support Services Michele Paules, is “gatekeeper training” for faculty and staff—helping them learn to identify and assist students in distress.

Students are also increasingly aware of the College’s CARE (Campus Assessment, Response and Evaluation) Team, which Paules describes as “a wraparound support system for students,” and are more likely to reach out to one of its members on behalf of themselves or a peer. Knowledge of the team has grown especially in first- and second-year students, which she attributes to Dutton’s work during Orientation, Foundations of Student Success and beyond.

At the center of all the ways in which Muhlenberg is supporting student wellbeing is a recognition that what students need the most is in-person connection, Williams says: “There’s been so much change and challenge and loss and trauma, not just from the pandemic, but from all the things that have happened over the past couple of years. For every student, I think the challenges are slightly different, but [the solutions] all start with us bringing students back together in community and rebuilding a sense of connection and hope for them.” —*Meghan Kita*

Director of Counseling Services Tim Silvestri ’91 (above left) and students at the Welcome Back BBQ held before the start of the Fall 2021 semester

Kevan Shah '22 Named Schwarzman Scholar; Rhodes, Marshall Scholar Finalist

The Schwarzman Scholarship is given to exceptional student scholars from around the world and includes a one-year master's program at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The scholarly and cultural immersion program is among the world's most selective graduate fellowship programs and is focused on the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century.

The 2021 Schwarzman Scholar class includes 151 students from more than 100 universities worldwide; the applicant pool numbered nearly

3,000 students. More than 700 Schwarzman Scholars and alumni form a network that represents more than 35 countries and nearly 150 colleges and universities around the globe.

This year's Schwarzman Scholars cohort will pursue a one-year master's

degree in global affairs, with a focus on leadership, China and geopolitics. The program is updated annually to include the study of current and future global affairs priorities. Scholars will be immersed in Chinese culture, complete internships, hear from thought leaders, learn alongside world-class faculty and experience hands-on mentorship opportunities, helping prepare them for a variety of leadership roles after graduation.

At Muhlenberg, Shah, a public health major on the premedical track, founded the nonprofit End Overdose Together. With his mentor Chrysan Cronin, associate professor and director of public health, Shah secured a \$100,000 grant to train Muhlenberg students and community members to administer naloxone, an emergency nasal spray that can reverse the life-threatening symptoms of an opioid overdose. The grant was the largest of its kind awarded to a single institution.

"This opportunity says far more about the Muhlenberg family—including invaluable mentors like President Kathy Harring; Dean of Academic Life Michele Deegan; Provost Laura Furge; Professors Chrysan Cronin, Mohsin Hashim, Christopher Herrick and Kammie Takahashi; and Health Professions Advisor Cailín Pachter—than it does about me," Shah says. "I am incredibly grateful to be part of this community."

"I have been impressed not only with Kevan's obvious talents but also his authentic interactions with others, and cheerful smile and warm greetings every time I see him around campus," Furge says. "We are very proud of his accomplishments, of the faculty and staff who have supported him and his peers on campus who have joined his work to reduce opioid overdose deaths."

In November, Shah was named a finalist for the Rhodes Scholar and Marshall Scholar fellowships. Earlier in 2021, Shah was named a Goldwater Scholar, a Newman Civic Fellow and a Truman Scholar finalist. —Bill Keller

"We are very proud of his accomplishments, of the faculty and staff who have supported him and his peers on campus who have joined his work to reduce opioid overdose deaths."

—PROVOST LAURA FURGE



Professor Honored for Role in Notable Women in Math Project

In the summer of 2019, with a little extra time on her hands, the Truman L. Koehler '24 Professor in Mathematics Linda McGuire signed up to help the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) with an unusual project. She's passionate about the nonprofit organization, which supports and encourages all people with an interest in mathematics to participate in the profession, and wanted to help celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021 in a meaningful way. Over the next 22 months, and with an exponential amount of time invested, McGuire and hundreds of other volunteers built a winning hand: the Notable Women in Math Playing Cards.



Also called EvenQuads, the cards are not just for playing, according to the game's website—though five different games can be played, three using one side of the cards and two using the other. One side of each of the 64 cards in the deck also features a profile of a woman mathematician who has made significant contributions to the field.

Along the way, McGuire and her fellow project management committee members (Chair Sarah-Marie Belcastro, Sherli Koshy-Chenthittayil, Monica Morales Hernandez, Denise A. Rangel Tracy and Oscar Vega) were named 2022 AWM Service Award recipients for their outsized contributions to the project. They will receive the award at the Joint Mathematics Meetings that will be held virtually in April.

The project began with an effort to compile a list of outstanding women mathematicians to feature on the cards. Volunteers stepped in to assist, resulting in an enormous list of 1,400 candidates.

More than 200 volunteers eventually assisted in the effort—researching the candidates and then winnowing down their number to 64, writing and editing biographies for each featured woman, creating unique artwork for each card, developing the games, collecting data, fact-checking and more.

“From its inception, AWM has been an inclusive and grassroots organization and this project is as well,” says McGuire. “I really love that it has been an immensely collaborative and entirely volunteer effort.” —*Kristine Yahna Todaro '84*

Emily Ledesma '20 Is Awarded Prestigious Teaching Fellowship

Ledesma, a mathematics major, is part of the Institute for Citizens and Scholars' 2021 class of Pennsylvania Woodrow Wilson (WW) Teaching Fellows. According to the Institute's press release, the program “recruits both recent graduates and career changers with strong backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and math—the STEM fields—and prepares them specifically to teach in high-need secondary schools in Pennsylvania. Each WW Pennsylvania Teaching Fellow receives \$32,000 to complete a specially designed, cutting-edge master's degree program based on a yearlong classroom experience. In return, Fellows commit to teach for three years in high-need Pennsylvania schools.” Ledesma, a native of Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, is student-teaching at the George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science in Philadelphia.

Muhlenberg Names Michael Miller Dean of Continuing Studies and Summer Study



Miller, who begins the role on July 1, has been with the College since October 2019 and is currently the associate dean of accelerated programs in the Division

of Graduate & Continuing Education. Previously, Miller served as dean of the business, technologies and health sciences division at Surry Community College in Dobson, North Carolina, for 10 years. Miller earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from DeSales University and a doctorate in educational leadership and higher education from the University of Nebraska. Miller replaces Dean of Continuing Studies Jane Hudak, who is retiring after 23 years with the College.

Lights, Camera, Action

Assistant Professor of Film Studies David Romberg takes a hands-on, team-focused approach to teaching students about the art of cinema.

Last fall, Assistant Professor of Film Studies David Romberg was teaching a special topics course, Cinematography, as well as Advanced Video Production for senior film studies majors. He'd taught each course separately in the past; this time, he brought the two classes together. The idea was "to get the students to experience the making of cinema in a way that mirrors the way films are actually made outside of school, in the real world."

In the real world, it takes a crew to make a movie, so Romberg divided the students into four teams. Each team had one or two Advanced Video Production students filling a producer/director role plus a "crew" of four or five Cinematography

students. The producer/directors had taken Romberg's other courses (in subjects like screenwriting and pre-production) so they already had polished scripts for their teams to consider and some understanding of what such a project would need. Those students led their teams and handled tasks like fundraising, location scouting, securing releases for actors and editing.

The Cinematography students were responsible for creating shot lists and storyboards, going to locations to test the lighting and actually shooting the films. In the process, they learned how to use the state-of-the-art cameras, lights and other tools the Department of Media & Communication provides for its students.

Assistant Professor of Film Studies David Romberg (center) teaching Cinematography in Fall 2019



PHOTOS BY RYAN HULVAT

“Building their own communities, working together outside of class ... that’s a big part of what filmmaking is about,” Romberg says. “Throughout this kind of collaboration, the students are also learning about film terms and film theory. They’re not just studying film theory—they’re practicing it.”

Romberg joined Muhlenberg in 2019 after teaching at his alma mater, Temple University. Temple offers an entirely production-focused major, so he was accustomed to working with student teams on the hands-on process of filmmaking. Working as a crew can increase the production value of a film, he says. So can approaching it with the intention of creating something that can be submitted to film festivals and screened for the public.

“When you’re making films you know are going to be distributed or seen by other people, there’s more accountability to it,” he says. “One thing I wanted to do at Muhlenberg was to get students to start thinking about their work not just within the institution or their classes, but how does it relate to the world?”

And in 2021, he was able to mentor two of his students as they successfully submitted their work to festivals. Amira F. Jackson ’24 won the Pittsburgh Youth Anti-Racism Film Festival with her short film *Pittsburgh: The People*, and Joe Romano ’23 had his short film *Emetophobia* screened at the 33 Girona Film Festival in Girona, Spain, and the BJX Bajío International Film Festival in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Both Jackson and Romano took Romberg’s special topics course on documentary/fiction hybrids in Spring 2021, and both submitted “docu-fiction” films to their respective festivals. A docu-fiction film is one that blends elements of both genres, and Romberg is partial to such blending in his own work. He makes films that tell “stories that meditate on the meaning of home or refuge in the context of immigration, political turmoil and displacement.” His most recent feature-length docu-fiction film, *Man of the Monkey*, which he completed in 2020, takes place on a remote island in Brazil, Ilha Grande. His father was an artist who had to flee Argentina in the 1970s because of the dictatorship, so Rom-

berg’s family split their time between Israel and Ilha Grande, where they lived in a house without electricity or running water. The home in Brazil was a “refuge—a house on an island that was very isolated and in the rainforest,” Romberg says. “[In *Man of the Monkey*], I was exploring why my family built that place and why other people ended up on the same island.”

Man of the Monkey has been making its way through film festivals, including a win for Best Feature-Length Documentary at NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, and Romberg is currently pursuing avenues for distribution.

This semester, he’s teaching Site-Specific Documentary Practice in Dublin, Ireland, where 16 media & communication and film studies students are studying abroad. His students are making documentaries about historic sites in the city that have contemporary significance, exploring not only the sites but what it means for the students, as visitors, to be making films about the community. Romberg has taught similar courses at Muhlenberg as part of the documentary storymaking minor, a collaboration between the College, Lehigh University and Lafayette College.

While abroad, he’s also finishing up a short documentary about his father (who passed away recently), his art and his legacy, in collaboration with an editor who lives in Spain. Romberg, who has been teaching for nearly a decade now, says that the work he does in the classroom shapes the films he makes outside of it.

“I actually feel like I need to teach,” he says. “It feels like it’s part of my process. My own personal work is informed by the work I do with my students.” —MK



“I actually feel like I need to teach. It feels like it’s part of my process. My own personal work is informed by the work I do with my students.”

—DAVID ROMBERG
(FILM STUDIES)



Sam Calagione '92
The Dogfish Head Book: 26 Years of Off-Centered Adventures
Wiley, 368 pages

Calagione co-founded Delaware's Dogfish Head Craft Brewery in 1995 with his wife, Mariah. The duo co-authored this chronology (with longtime co-worker and general manager of the Dogfish Inn, Andrew C. Greeley) of Dogfish Head's exponential growth.



The Rev. Christopher Moore '65
Soul Stages: Surviving and Thriving in the Second Half of Life
Morehouse Publishing, 128 pages

In his fourth book, Moore, who is an Episcopal priest, encourages readers to see life transitions as opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth.



Chelsea Montgomery-Duban Wächter '15
Worthiness Warriors

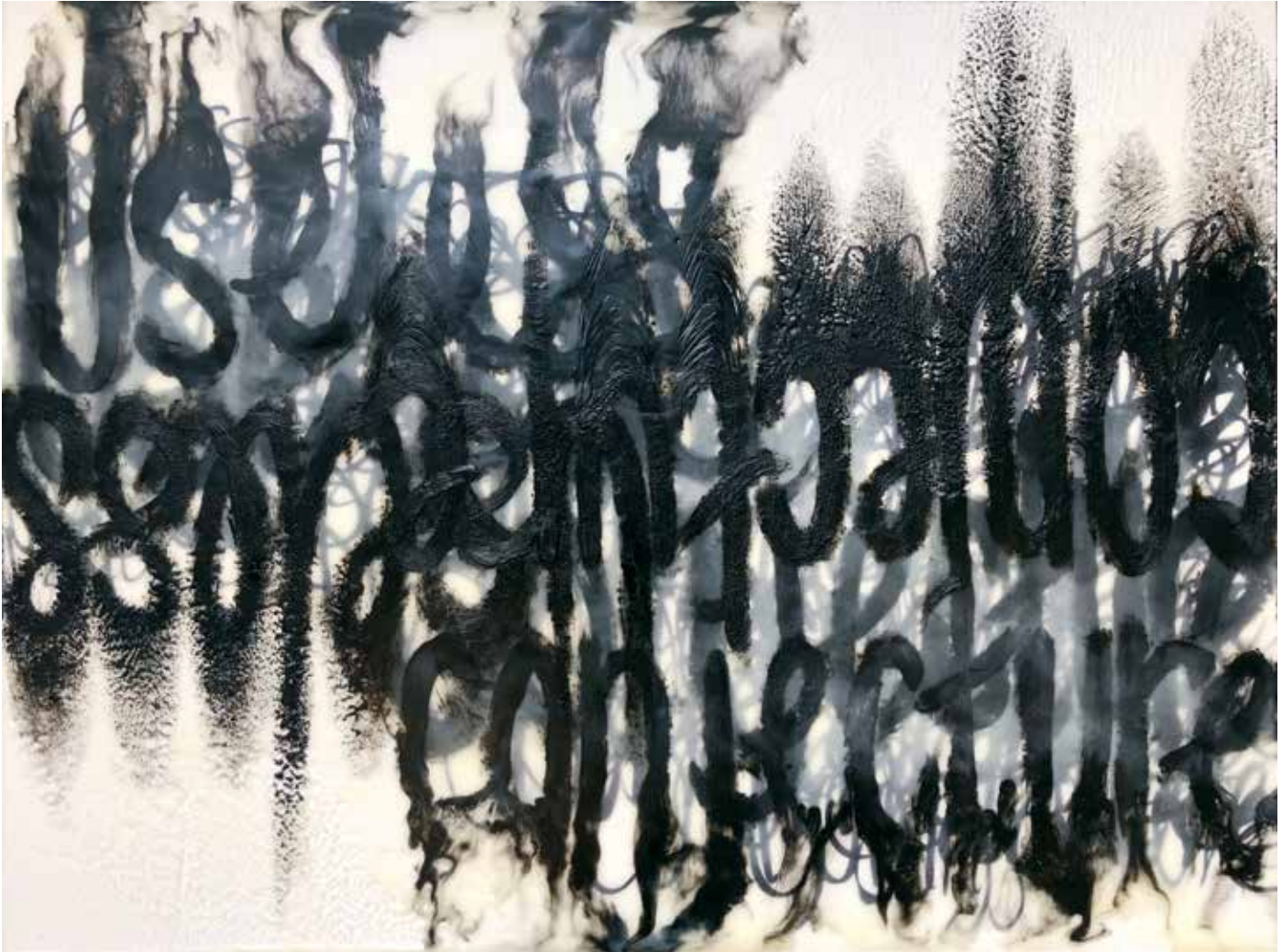
Podcast, new episodes weekly

Now in its second season, *Worthiness Warriors* aims to help listeners define self-worth, love and acceptance with the goal of connecting guests (which, in the past, have included fellow alumni Juliette Reilly '16 and Alexandria Rust '15) and listeners through storytelling.

Artful Words



Dawn Kramlich '09 studied both art and English at Muhlenberg. Now, she is an artist who uses text as the basis for her sculptures, installations and 2D works. At Muhlenberg, she completed the first cross-major creative honors thesis in the history of the departments (painting/poem pairs plus a written thesis). She went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts from Philadelphia's Moore College of Art & Design, and she now teaches at Muhlenberg and Penn State University's Abington College. Last year, her work was part of *Capitolism: The Normalization of Political Violence in the United States*, an exhibition at Birmingham, Alabama's Maus Contemporary gallery, as well as *Only If We Wish To*, an exhibition at New York City's Equity Gallery.



Muhlenberg Magazine Why do you use text in your works of art?

Dawn Kramlich '09 I do this for many reasons, some of which include my generally being a logophile [a lover of words], my interest in ekphrasis [the use of a detailed description of a work of visual art as a literary device] and my ever-expanding fascination with the text and image relationship, especially in today's Information Age, which is so inundated with text-and-image and text-as-image combinations thanks to the internet, social media and our surplus of screens.

MM How did you come to create "Language of the Oppressor," the piece shown in the *Capitolism* exhibit?

DK "Language of the Oppressor" is a product of my contemplating the state of America in 2020. Within my work, I often use phrases that were spoken to me, and the one I chose to use in this

piece—"useless conjecture"—is indicative of those who uphold the enduring racist, heteronormative, patriarchal, sexist systems that prevent our country's progress. This piece was my response to the flippant neglect of those in power who live in denial that white supremacy has long existed and is homegrown terrorism.

MM What's the story behind "American Palimpsest 2: Imposition Paradox," the piece that was part of the *Only If We Wish To* exhibit?

DK This piece incorporates the phrase "you are too sensitive." What I find most interesting about my experiencing this phrase is that when those who voice it do so, it tends to be when they are experiencing but avoiding intense emotions. This imposition of projection was the inspiration behind the piece, which navigates the phrase as simultaneously confined, confining, concrete and a smoke screen.

"Language of the Oppressor" (above) turns the words "useless conjecture" into art.

ACLU's Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Amber Hikes Visits Muhlenberg



PHOTO BY KRISTI MORRIS/LITTLEWING

The American Civil Liberties Union's first Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Amber Hikes

What does it look like to put intersectional advocacy into action? A story shared by Amber Hikes, the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU's) first chief equity and inclusion officer, in the Seegers Union Event Space and via Zoom the evening of November 17, provided an example.

Several years ago, Hikes was working with a student group planning a march to draw attention to catcalling on a college campus. In the planning meetings, the women of color in the group expressed concerns about their physical safety and requested additional lighting on pathways. Women of color typically experience higher rates of catcalling and heckling, according to Hikes, and so are put in more danger when this type of behavior goes unchecked.

"What this conversation made clear is that if we're using an intersectional lens—where as a group, we're prioritizing the needs of those most impacted by an issue—we realized we needed to shift both the focus and the approach to the problem," Hikes said. "So instead of just doing a march as originally planned, the group also successfully advocated for safer campus lighting."

Hikes, who comes from an activist organizing background, said it's important to connect people to spaces so "there's no decision about us without us." She added, "Whether it's a classroom, dining room or Zoom room, examine who's there and who's not. Then ask, *how can I use my privilege to open up opportunities for change and progress?* There is nothing we accomplish alone that is better, stronger or more sustainable than what we can do together."

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During her interactive presentation at Muhlenberg, "Discussing Intersectional Advocacy and Activism," which was hosted by the Africana Studies Program, Hikes asked students, faculty and staff to think about an advocacy issue that needed addressing. Attendees scrawled their ideas on pieces of paper, crumpled them up and then had a "snowball fight," batting the scraps around until

"Whether it's a classroom, dining room or Zoom room, examine who's there and who's not. Then ask, how can I use my privilege to open up opportunities for change and progress? There is nothing we accomplish alone that is better, stronger or more sustainable than what we can do together."

—AMBER HIKES

they were thoroughly mixed. Everyone grabbed a paper, sorted themselves into teams of four and read the ideas to each other, looking for themes and offering up advice and resources to address the issues.

Hikes then led the group in a self-reflection exercise called KISS, which focused on individual responsibility and accountability. Participants wrote down their intentions in four categories: those they wanted to keep (one example, "reaching out to people who are different than me"), increase ("environmental justice work"), start ("being more assertive and really speaking my truth") and stop ("saying that I can't do something or don't belong because of my Blackness").

"Start with empathy," Hikes said. "Just starting, just doing one thing, is powerful." —KYT

RECENT SPEAKERS & EVENTS

5B Screening and Discussion (Center for Ethics)

The documentary *5B* tells the story of the nurses and caregivers who opened the first AIDS ward unit in the United States at San Francisco General Hospital in 1983 and cared for the patients there. The screening and discussion with the film's producers were part of the 2021-2022 Center for Ethics (CFE) series, which has the theme "Pandemic: Response, Resilience, Reflection."



50 Years of Title IX

Genna Cicchetti '22 presented her research into Muhlenberg's archives and convened a panel that discussed their own experiences with equity in women's sports. Joining Cicchetti for the panel were Ruth Gibbs, who served as

Muhlenberg's softball coach for 12 years before retiring in 2008, and Lynn Tubman, Muhlenberg's athletic director and the first woman to permanently fill that role.

Art Caplan (CFE)

Caplan is the Drs. William F. and Virginia Connolly Mitty Professor and founding head of the Division of Medical Ethics at NYU Grossman School of Medicine in New York City. During the pandemic, he created a working group on coronavirus vaccine challenge studies, developed an ethical framework for distributing drugs and vaccines for Johnson & Johnson and helped develop rationing policies for NYU Langone Health and other health systems.

Dr. Shelley Hershner

Sleep to Stay Awake

Hershner, an associate professor of neurology and the director of the Collegiate Sleep Disorders Clinic at the University of Michigan, explored why college students are often sleepy, how this can affect their academic performance and mental health and strategies for improving sleep hygiene. Her talk was the second annual Shankweiler Scholars Lecture.

Hunger-Free Campus Symposium

This program, sponsored by the College's Challah for Hunger (CfH) chapter, highlighted the issue of hunger on college campuses and the legislation that can help. After opening remarks from CfH President Natalie David '22, Congresswoman Susan Wild, Pennsylvania State Representative Mike Schlossberg '05 and CEO of Hunger Free America Joel Berg were among the speakers that followed.

The International Crisis in Ukraine: How and Why It Matters

The Department of Political Science organized this March 1 webinar on the troubling international crisis in Ukraine.

Panelists included Geneva Centre for Security Policy Fellow Lauren Anderson '79, Professor of Political Science and Director of Russian Studies Mohsin Hashim, Professor of Political Science Brian Mello and Visiting Lecturer in German and Women's & Gender Studies Julie Shoults.

***Judas and the Black Messiah* Screening and Discussion (Black History Month)**

Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik opened the event, which was part of a series of Black History Month (BHM) programming, with background context on the Black Panther Party. After the film, Kucik facilitated a discussion.

Ryan Lei

The Development of Black Female Invisibility

Lei is an assistant professor of psychology at Haverford College and the 2022 John B. Rosenberg '63 and Stephanie Lambert Speaker Series speaker. Black women face "intersectional invisibility," a form of racial bias unique to those who have multiple subordinated identities. Lei presents work investigating when and how Black female invisibility might emerge and discusses the importance of an intersectional perspective in developmental science.



Lester Mayers (BHM)

Love Letters with Lester Mayers

The Black Students Association brought Mayers, a poet, to campus for a multifaceted performance exploring Lester's personal experiences with love—and the varied ways love impacts us all.

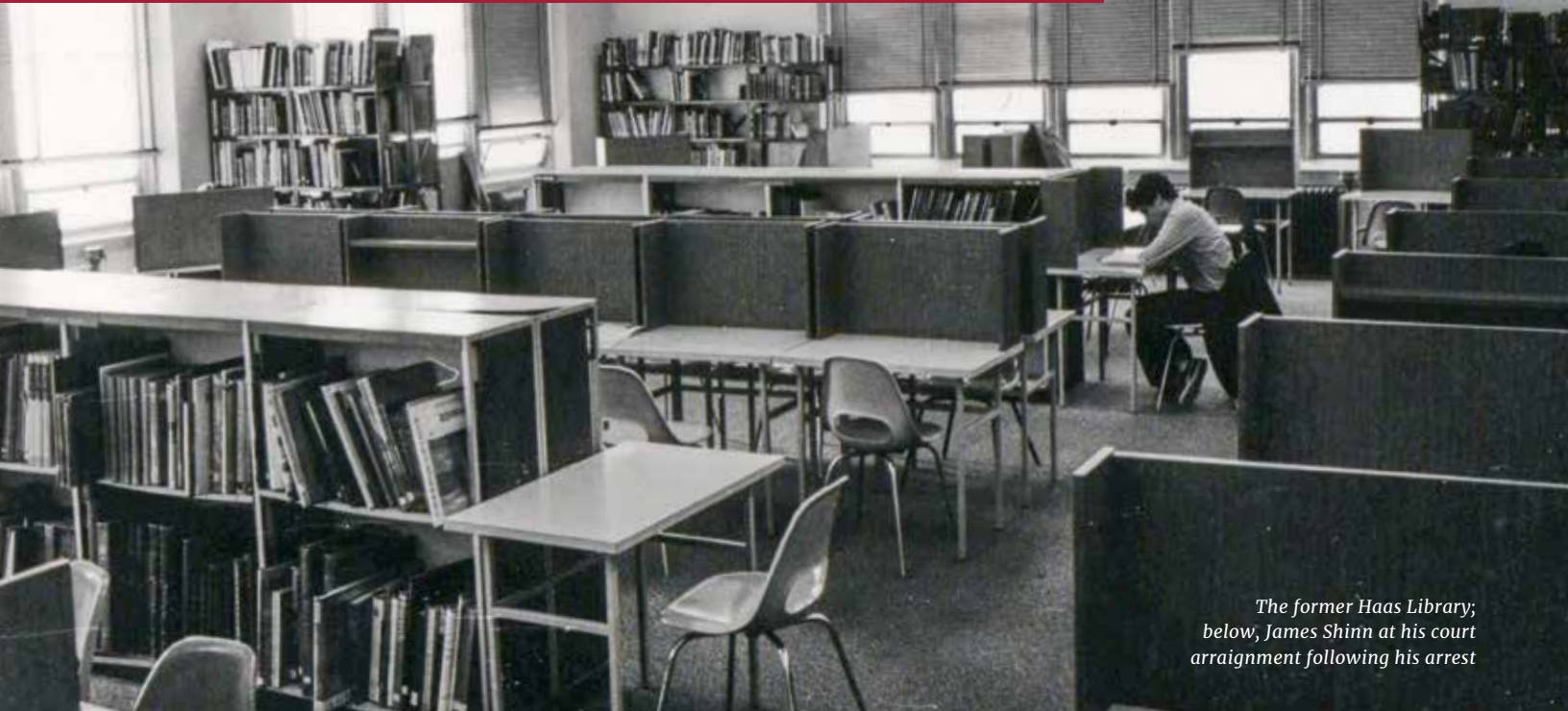
A Love Letter to Blackness Gala (BHM)

The Office of Multicultural Life's annual celebration of the Black community on campus was the culminating Black History Month event. The keynote speech was delivered by Hasshan Batts, the executive director of Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley.

Rebecca Walker

Walker is a best-selling writer, producer and cultural critic who has contributed to the global conversation about race, gender, sexuality and power for more than two decades. Her books include *Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self*; *Baby Love: Choosing Motherhood After a Lifetime of Ambivalence*; and *Black Cool: One Thousand Streams of Blackness*. Her visit was part of the From the Ashes of Relentless Racial Crises: Creating a New United States of America event series.

Crime and Punishment

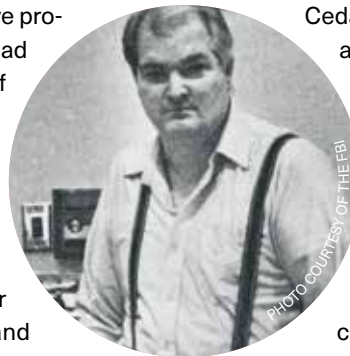


The former Haas Library; below, James Shinn at his court arraignment following his arrest

On December 16, 1981, College security officers, waiting for the FBI to arrive, questioned a man they had detained in Haas Library. Recognized by a librarian from his photo in *Library Journal*, James Richard Shinn, later called “the most active professional book thief in the history of America,” had returned to Haas for the second time in search of valuable volumes. Shinn escaped, but his fake ID and a motel receipt fell out of his pocket.

Police and FBI agents staked out the Park Manor Motel in Bethlehem and arrested Shinn upon his arrival at 11 p.m. Shinn’s room contained 26 stolen books, inventory cards for another 154 volumes, color-stained cloths and Q-tips with jars of shoe polish (to remove libraries’ marks so he could sell the books), manuals for safecracking and a gun.

A month after Shinn’s arrest, the FBI received a call from a local man who rented storage lockers; he had spotted Shinn’s



face on the news and recognized him as a customer. On January 15, 1982, more than 400 books were seized from the Bethlehem storage unit. Patricia Sacks, director of the Muhlenberg and Cedar Crest College libraries, was asked to help; she and her staff dedicated more than 500 hours to the identification and return of the stolen materials—including 12 volumes stolen from Muhlenberg.

Shinn was indicted on two criminal counts of interstate transportation and receipt of stolen property. He pled guilty and was sentenced to two 10-year terms to be served consecutively. After a promise of immunity, he revealed another cache of books stored near St. Louis.

Thanks to Shinn, the crime of library theft gained the attention needed to raise the severity of the punishment. In April 1982, Pennsylvania Governor Dick Thornburgh signed into law the Archives, Library and Museum Protection Act, which made library theft a criminal offense.

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

Kate Sprance '08 Wins Emmy for Work on *The Queen's Gambit*

Kate Sprance '08, a theatre major and music minor at Muhlenberg, pursued casting as a career after graduation and began working with casting director Ellen Lewis in 2011. Last year, Lewis, Sprance, Olivia Scott-Webb, Anna-Lena Slater and their teams earned an Emmy for outstanding casting for their work on the Netflix miniseries *The Queen's Gambit*.

What casting looks like varies from project to project, Sprance says, but what generally happens is that Sprance and her team will receive a script (or a series of scripts). They'll list all the characters who speak, and those will be the primary roles they'll seek to fill. The team brainstorms the actors they know who might be good for a given role and also writes up a description of each character and their role in the story to send to managers and agents. Once they have resumes and headshots, the casting team decides who will read. The casting team then approaches the director with a handful of suggestions for each role, and the director ultimately makes the call.

The casting team for *The Queen's Gambit* completed their work and the show filmed in 2019, and it premiered on Netflix in 2020. By the time Sprance and her team learned they had been nominated for the Emmy last July, they'd already started and finished work on Martin Scorsese's latest film *Killers of the Flower Moon* (Lewis has been the casting director on Scorsese's films since 1989, and Sprance joined as her associate in 2016). Sprance and Lewis Zoomed into the Creative Arts Emmy Awards, which took place the week before the televised Emmys in mid-September, to learn they'd won and give their acceptance speech.

"I'm very proud of the project and very grateful to the entire casting team," Sprance says. —MK



A still from *The Queen's Gambit*

Why I Study ... the international diamond industry Associate Professor of Business & Economics Donna Bergenstock

PHOTO BY TOM AMICO



As a Ph.D. student in economics, I was looking for a topic for my dissertation. One day I was watching a PBS *Frontline*

documentary on De Beers, which described how De Beers is in a unique position where they control the global supply of diamonds and create worldwide demand for diamonds with their marketing and advertising, which in turn gives the company total control over prices in the international market. It was the perfect topic for what I was interested in researching—economics and marketing.

At that point, Russia had been dumping diamonds onto the market in violation of an agreement they had signed with De Beers. De Beers had been stockpiling diamonds to keep

them scarce and keep prices high. I thought perhaps the Russians flooding the market would force De Beers to lower their prices.

I had to try to find information on Russia, which was not exactly forthcoming. And at the time, De Beers was under investigation by our Department of Justice and they weren't allowed to operate in the United States. It was challenging to find everything I needed to, but I did. I was able to show that what the Russians did, which should have had a pricing effect, was counteracted by all the marketing De Beers did.

I had a couple papers published on the industry—in one, I got into the blood diamond issue that was all over the news. There were horrific stories of genocide and civil wars and groups using diamonds to fund their paramilitary organizations. I researched that as well as the industry's response: the Kimberley Process, a certification process where a

diamond would have a certificate accompanying it from the moment it was dug out of the ground all the way to the jewelry store saying it's a "clean" diamond. My latest research looked at: Did consumers care? I found that even a lot of retailers didn't know about the Kimberley Process and they weren't talking it up to their customers, and the customers didn't know much about it either.

Since then, there have been advances in artificial diamonds. Now, people can buy lab-created diamonds with the same chemical properties of a real diamond but none of the baggage. The industry is making the claim that natural is still preferable, saying, "This diamond's been here forever; your love is forever." Meanwhile, millennials and Gen Z aren't bound by tradition and may not go the diamond route at all. That's what I'm following now.

Personally Speaking...



Joel Hark '22

Neuroscience and psychology double major, Voorhees, New Jersey

He knew he wanted to golf at Muhlenberg ...

"I've played golf since I was 7 years old—it stemmed from me watching Tiger [Woods] with my grandparents. I was a strong golfer in high school and I wanted to play in college. I started by looking at Division I schools, but it was difficult to get in touch with coaches and it seemed like it wasn't meant to be. My mom was like, 'Let's check out Muhlenberg—Poppy [Hark's grandfather, Dr. Marvin Roth '58] went there.' I don't remember much about the actual campus tour, but I got to meet the golf coach and some teammates and I saw the course I'd be playing at. I got a really good feeling and I applied early decision. At Muhlenberg, I knew I'd be able to play at a high level and have a balance between sport and academics."

... but finding his academic passion took time and mentorship.

"I intended to do prelaw or political science coming in, but it wasn't for me. I switched to bio to be pre-physical therapy, and that wasn't it either. I've always been interested in stress, and I wanted a deeper understanding beyond a behavioral understanding, so I declared a neuroscience major. Sophomore year, I took Psychopharmacology, a neuroscience elective, with [Professor of Psychology Jeff] Rudski. At the end of the semester, he reached out asking to meet. He said, 'You should really look into sports psychology,' and he sent me a bunch of books and articles to read. And I did, and everything clicked. I declared psych as my second major and he's my advisor. My grades have progressively increased. It was the first time a professor reached out to me and saw potential. After undergrad, I want to study sport and performance psychology."

He applies what he's learned from sports psychology to his own athletic pursuits ...

"Mindfulness is the idea of being present. That's something athletes have a tendency to struggle with—sometimes there's so much going on that they can't be 'in the zone.' Meditation is practicing accepting your thoughts. It's not getting rid of thoughts. It's saying, 'It's okay. I have these thoughts. I'm just going to recenter myself.' And you do that by paying attention to your breathing and your five senses. Once I dove into practicing mindfulness, especially during the walks between shots or if I were to become stressed, I've definitely noticed a significant increase in my ability to focus for four-and-a-half or five hours."

... and he co-founded a mental health organization to support other student-athletes.

"My friend [Natalie Smith '22, a softball player] and I surveyed a bunch of athletes and came up with Head in the Game, a support group for student-athletes. It's a space where we can share the similarities we have—experiences with coaches, with teammates, with performance issues. We wanted to create something to give student-athletes the opportunity to practice mental health. We lead each meeting with a short meditation and then we have open discussions. In the fall, we worked with Body Positive, another student mental health organization that revolves around viewing our bodies positively, as well as Mental Health Peer Advocates, which helps find resources for students. This semester, I want to work with [Associate Director of Prevention Education] Jules Purnell to have more speakers and educational sessions in addition to support sessions."

Helping to found Alpha Epsilon Pi [AEPi] at Muhlenberg built his leadership and communication skills.

"When I was a sophomore, I was part of a group that wanted to find another community at Muhlenberg. Something Muhlenberg prides itself on is 'if we don't have it, you can create it,' so we took that initiative. AEPi is considered the Jewish fraternity, and out of the 25 founding fathers, I would say 22 of us were Jewish. We reached out to AEPi headquarters and then started working toward the end goal: to become chartered, which happened last fall. That was a two-and-a-half-year process of raising philanthropy money, supporting the community and growing continuously each semester, even during COVID. For the first year-and-a-half, I served as vice president, and last year, I was president. Greek life sometimes gets a bad rap, but those leadership roles, as well as my involvement as an Orientation Leader, are where I have had a lot of my growth and developed a lot of my communication skills."

Q&A

10 Questions With ... Theo Rutherford '08

Whiskey expert and certified sommelier, Washington, D.C.



ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLIE POWELL

1

Describe what you do in five words or less.

Travel and educate about alcohol

2

When did you know you wanted to be a sommelier?

At my first restaurant job, as a bartender at a wine bar with absolutely no experience, the general manager was determined to teach me about wine. Every shift, he would put three wines in front of me and have me taste them and talk about them. One day, one jumped out to me as different when none other had. I still remember that wine [Argiolas Vermentino, from Sardinia], which I've put on every wine list I've ever built.

3

If you weren't a sommelier, what would you be?

Either a sports broadcaster or a documentary-style series host, though no one can ever hold a candle to Anthony Bourdain

4

What three songs best describe you?

"Record Year"
by Eric Church
"Out on the Weekend"
by Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats
"Human" by Rag'n'Bone Man

5

What is your favorite place?

Either my family's farm in central Kentucky or Healdsburg, California

6

What are you secretly good at?

Gardening, especially indoor plants—I have way too many

7

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

"Asking for help is a sign of strength and trust, not of weakness."
—My dad

8

What is your most treasured possession?

Either the flag from my grandfather's funeral or my stuffed Ernie that I came home from the hospital with—it was my first gift and I still have it.

9

What question should we have asked you?

This feels very much like *Inside the Actor's Studio*. I always loved some of James Lipton's questions, so maybe his famous one: "If heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the pearly gates?"

10

What's the answer?

They are all here ... and the bar is open.

Muhlenberg in the Media

The research of Kathleen Bachynski (public health) was included in an NPR segment.

The 22-minute-long investigative piece was titled “Everyday people fear they have [chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE]. A dubious market has sprung up to treat them.”

Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives Brooke Vick published an op-ed in *Inside Higher Ed*.

Vick, who is also an associate professor of psychology, wrote “Black and Brown Students Want Black and Brown Mentors. What’s a Primarily White Institution to Do?” The piece shared three ways that mentoring efforts support Muhlenberg’s students of color.

Chris Borick (political science, director of the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion) was prominently quoted in an Associated Press article.

The article, “Biden’s big test: Proving he can rally allies against Putin,” was picked up by more than 400 media outlets nationally and internationally, including Great Britain’s *The Independent* and *The Daily Mail*, *Japan Today* and *The Economic Times* of India.

Jefferson Pooley (media & communication) wrote an article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Pooley’s article, about the online course platform edX, was quoted in *The Washington Post* in November.

Professor of Ornithology and Conservation Biology Daniel Klem was the featured guest on an Audubon Society webinar.

The November webinar covered bird-window collisions, Klem’s area of expertise, and the best solutions to address the issue.

An alumni wedding was covered in a Mini-Vows column in *The New York Times*.

The article, “Just in the Nick of Time, a Connection,” detailed how Samantha Fleischman ’11 and Allison Saltstein ’10 met during Saltstein’s final semester at Muhlenberg.

Executive Director of Career Services Sean Schofield contributed his expertise to *Forbes*.

Schofield offered four valuable search strategies for jobs and internships in the article “Creative Ways for Students to Optimize Their Internship and Job Search.”

Research conducted by Mark Sciutto (psychology) and his students was featured in *The Morning Call*.

The study on the effectiveness of mindfulness projects at a local school was also covered in several education journals, including *District Administration Magazine* and *eSchoolNews.com*.

The College Earns Accolades for Student Voter Participation

In November, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge hosted an awards ceremony to recognize higher education institutions, educators and students for extraordinary work in student voter engagement during the 2020 presidential election. Muhlenberg received the 2021 Platinum Seal for an 80–89 percent student voting rate during the 2020 elections. The College was also recognized in a report last fall from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement. The student voting rate at Muhlenberg rose to 82.6 percent in the 2020 presidential election, far exceeding the 2020 national college–student voting rate of 69 percent for private institutions and 66 percent for all institutions. The College’s non-partisan student organization BergVotes, the Office of Community Engagement and other volunteers helped ensure students were registered and able to vote in the fall 2020 election, whether they were on campus or taking courses remotely due to the pandemic.

Muhlenberg Recognized for Sustainability Achievements

For the third year in a row, Muhlenberg received a STARS Gold Rating for Sustainability Achievements from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Sustainable Campus Index. The rating is based on campus sustainability efforts in five areas: academics, engagement, operations, planning and administration and innovation and leadership. In the same report, the College was again recognized for best practices in the area of water use, receiving a score of 100 percent. The College tied for the sixth spot among all higher education institutions nationally for water conservation and reuse as well as effective rainwater management practices.



PHOTOS BY MARCO CALDERON

Happily Ever After

Nisha Sharma '07 writes award-winning romance novels with South Asian characters, a career she began pursuing with passion at Muhlenberg.

Sometimes, when author Nisha Sharma '07 does a book-signing, she'll meet a super-fan. A South Asian teenager will approach her in awe, hands shaking, holding out one of the two young-adult (YA) novels Sharma has published, asking for an autograph. The fan might say something like, "I've never read anything else that has characters who are like me."

"After signing and taking pictures and smiling, I will go into the bathroom and just cry, because that's what I've always wanted to do," Sharma says. "That's been my goal—to make sure I reach and support those readers."

Sharma writes both YA and adult romance novels featuring South Asian characters. Her first book, *My So-Called Bollywood Life*, was

published in 2018; she's published three more since, with another, *Dating Dr. Dil*, on the way this month. She thinks she gravitated toward romance because that's what she saw in the Bollywood movies she watched as a child of two immigrants from India growing up in the '90s.

Her upbringing also inspired her to start on the premedical track at Muhlenberg: Her father came from a long line of physicians, and "I felt this unspoken need to succeed in a professional field that had a history of success, which is, generally speaking, for South Asians, law, medicine or engineering," she says. After a year of being unhappy and doing poorly in her classes, she switched to an English major with a minor in political science (and a concentration in prelaw).

“I ended up just having to suck it up and tell my parents that I couldn’t do it anymore. [Premed] was just not working for me,” she says. “My father has this mentality of, ‘Whatever you choose to pursue, pursue it with so much intention that there is no chance for failure.’ So that’s what I did next.”

She chose to follow her dreams of being a romance novelist with law as her backup profession. In addition to loading up on classes in order to graduate a semester early, she went to weekly romance writer meetings of the local chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA) in Easton. She completed her first novel while she was a Muhlenberg student.

After graduating, she worked as a paralegal, took the LSATs and went to law school at Hofstra University. She continued writing and attending RWA meetings. She hired an agent to shop around the book she wrote at Muhlenberg. The agent told her, “Your book will sell better if you change one of the characters to be white.”

“Racism is a little bit more in-your-face in publishing than people realize,” Sharma says. “That was a terrible experience, but it was a learning experience.”

She left that agent and put pitching on pause as she prepared to take the bar exam. She passed and began a career in corporate contracts in New York City. She would write on the train into the city before work and edit what she’d written on the return trip, but her legal career left her feeling unfulfilled.

“I felt so disconnected from my initial goal that I set at Muhlenberg,” she recalls. “I had started this journey with the intention of publishing. Law would be my backup plan, not my primary purpose. So, I did the only thing I knew how to do at the time and I went back to school.”

Over the course of two-and-a-half years, she completed a Master of Fine Arts program through Wilkes University while holding down her day job. *My So-Called Bollywood Life* was her master’s thesis. She found a new agent at an RWA conference who sold the book to Random House. It would go on to win a RITA Award (“the Oscars of the romance genre at the time,” Sharma says) and to be named an NPR Book of the Year for 2018.

“I’m so grateful and appreciative to every single person who connects with my stories. When I see myself in them and they see themselves in my stories, that feels like magic.”

—NISHA SHARMA '07

She’s published a novel every year since. Her writing process varies from book to book—sometimes she has the entire story planned before she starts, and sometimes it unfolds as she writes—but what remains consistent is an openness to inspiration.

“If I see something that sparks my interest, I’ll often ask ‘why’ or ‘why not’ or ‘what if.’ That’s my favorite one, the what-if question,” she says. “I’ll then continue to ask ‘what if,’ and I won’t curb my imagination from running wild.”

Sharma also teaches a course at Muhlenberg, Writing the Young Adult Novel, every other year. Writing is the part of her career that she enjoys—publishing, she says, is exhausting. The industry still struggles to support diverse authors and diverse books; for example, she’s noticed that publishing houses don’t understand how to market to non-white audiences. Sharma uses TikTok to reach the audience she’s always wanted to write for: South Asian readers who want to read a happily-ever-after story with characters who look like they do.

“I’m so grateful and appreciative to every single person who connects with my stories,” Sharma says. “When I see myself in them and they see themselves in my stories, that feels like magic.” —MK



Author Nisha Sharma '07 at The Lahaska Bookshop in Lahaska, Pennsylvania

From Mules to Giants

Two young alumni, who studied computer science and mathematics as student-athletes at Muhlenberg, are applying their analytical skills behind the scenes with an NFL team.



For Luke Wiley '19, REU at Muhlenberg led to the NFL.

In the summer of 2018, Wiley participated in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science's Research Experiences for Undergraduates program, using statistical data from the football team's 2017 season to create a fourth-down model designed to help a coach decide whether to go for it, kick a field goal or punt the ball.

It's something football coaches at all levels need to decide, and in 2021, Wiley and Max Kirin '20 worked with football coaches at the highest level, serving as data analytics and video interns for the New York Giants.

Kirin, a two-time all-conference wide receiver for the Mules, computer science major and mathematics minor, was on the scene first. The Giants hired him soon after he graduated, and he spent the whole 2020 season with the team. Wiley, a two-time all-conference defensive back, mathematics major and computer science minor, joined Big Blue the following summer after coaching stints at Lycoming College and SUNY Maritime.

Together with three other former college football players, Kirin and Wiley worked on analytical projects in areas ranging from scouting of opponents and coaching strategy to the salary cap and injury risk.

"Probably the coolest thing that I've been able to work on is surveying the landscape of possible free agents and possible draft picks," Kirin says. "I also helped implement a bunch of different things like interactive depth charts, basically digitizing material that the coaches use on a regular basis."

The former Mules dealt directly with the Giants coaching staff, including former Head Coach Joe Judge, who was let go at the end of the 2021 season. On occasion, the coaches ask the interns for specific cutups (for example, a video of all the third-and-long plays another team has run) and lists of plays.

"I worked on one [project] where the coaches wanted to run more heavy formations with more linemen, focusing on running the ball when it was getting colder and we were going to have more games in bad weather," Kirin says. "I didn't necessarily tell the coaches what to do, but seeing what I presented to them come to fruition in the game was kind of cool."

On game days, Kirin and Wiley assisted primarily with video aspects of the game. Kirin would be on the sidelines handing out tablets to players so they could review the video from recent plays. Wiley was up in the coaching booth making sure that the video was ready to upload for the coaches to analyze following the game.

"Being up in the box, really high, having that sky view, is my favorite view of football," Wiley says. "Seeing the whole play develop from above is so cool. I was always up in the box when I was coaching. And you might have bad camera angles at Division III, but in the NFL, it's crystal clear."

Bad camera angles notwithstanding, both Kirin and Wiley drew heavily on their Muhlenberg football experience in their roles with the Giants.

"Our staff at Muhlenberg was incredible," Kirin says. "My football intelligence went off the charts. Just being able to soak in all the knowledge that they were able to give me in meetings, that lingo becomes so natural."

For Wiley, one of the most important lessons he learned at Muhlenberg was less technical: "I learned that hard



"Our staff at Muhlenberg was incredible. My football intelligence went off the charts. Just being able to soak in all the knowledge that they were able to give me in meetings, that lingo becomes so natural."

— MAX KIRIN '20

work is the price of admittance," he says. "You got here because you work hard, and you have to continue working hard. You have to be agile on your feet and continue to look at things from different angles and perspectives and be able to get creative in situations you might not have. The difference between the best NFL teams and the worst ones is very small. That's why coaches spend so much time looking for the smallest difference or the smallest tell."

One of the best parts of the job for the former Mules was that they had Saturdays off, allowing them to follow their alma mater. The current Mules had another banner season in 2021, sharing the Centennial Conference championship with Johns Hopkins and defeating Framingham State and Delaware Valley in the NCAA Tournament to advance to the quarterfinals for the third straight season. Muhlenberg lost an overtime thriller to perennial Division III power Mount Union in the quarterfinals and was ranked seventh in the final national poll. The season was especially rewarding for Kirin, whose younger brother Spencer Kirin '21 was one of the Mules' top players, earning All-America honors at linebacker.

Both Kirin and Wiley are on board with the Giants until June, when they will see what changes, if any, the new coaching leadership will make with their positions. But whether it's with the Giants or somewhere else, they have both found their calling.

"I love football and I love math, and however I can continue to have that intersection of my two passions is really all that matters to me. Finding something that I enjoy doing has been a pretty awesome experience every single day."

— LUKE WILEY '19



"I love football and I love math, and however I can continue to have that intersection of my two passions is really all that matters to me," Wiley says. "Finding something that I enjoy doing has been a pretty awesome experience every single day."

—Mike Falk

Opposite, Luke Wiley '19 and Max Kirin '20, data analytics and video interns for the New York Giants, at the team's practice facility

Ballot Questions

Encouraging participation in a democracy should not be a partisan claim.

By Sarah Niebler '04

In 2021, at least 19 states passed at least 34 laws making it more difficult for voters to cast their ballots. One bill that was proposed, but has not yet passed, would revise Act 77 in Pennsylvania. Act 77, the most significant overhaul to the state's election rules in more than 80 years, passed the Republican-controlled state legislature and was signed by Democratic Governor Tom Wolf in October 2019. The law created the opportunity for voters to vote by mail without providing an excuse. Its passage looked prescient, as less than six months later, COVID-19 made its way to the United States. The pandemic caused nearly half the states to modify their election laws making it easier for voters to cast ballots without going to the polls in person.

While the votes cast by mail in Pennsylvania's 2020 presidential general election were disproportionately cast by Democrats, this partisan difference in vote-by-mail rates was not always present. Prior to COVID-19 and the expansion of vote-by-mail, there were only minor differences between the percentages of Democratic and Republican voters who chose to vote by mail. Some of my own research examining voting patterns in the 2020 presidential primary shows that individuals' choice of how to cast their ballot was affected not only by their partisanship, with Republicans much more likely to vote in person, but also by their levels of support for Donald Trump. Trump's tweets claiming that mail-in voting would lead to fraud, combined with Republicans' reduced concern about the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, appear to have contributed to the disparity in voting methods between members of the two political parties.

Misleading comments about mail-in voting leading to fraud continued into the general election campaign season. Differences in Democrats' and Republicans' confidence in the election process resulted. An NPR poll found that nationally, only 58 percent of Americans said they trust that elections in the U.S. are fair, but that figure

includes nearly 90 percent of Democrats and just 36 percent of Republicans. Despite these concerns, however, the FBI and the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security have all issued statements saying there is no evidence of significant voter fraud in American elections and that the 2020 election was secure.

Historically, tensions over voting rights haven't always been this polarized. The initial Voting Rights Act (VRA) in 1965 passed with bipartisan support in the House and Senate and bipartisan groups of legislators amended and reauthorized aspects of the VRA five times between 1970 and 2006. The 1965 VRA explicitly prohibited racial discrimination in voting and required states with histories of discrimination to get permission from the federal government (called preclearance) before altering their voting rules. However, after the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby v. Holder* removed the preclearance provision, states across the country began introducing and passing more restrictive voting laws. These laws required more (or more stringent forms) of voter identification, reduced access to early voting, consolidated polling places and made it easier to remove voters from voter rolls, among other things.

States introducing bills limiting access to voting often couch the need for such legislation in the desire to reduce fraud, but the number of cases of voter fraud that have been prosecuted in the U.S. is exceedingly small. Additionally, while many of the changes to voting laws are seemingly race-neutral, the balance of evidence suggests they disproportionately disenfranchise people of color, specifically those who are the least educated and least wealthy. There is still no mention of a positive right to vote in the U.S. Constitution and it has taken multiple Constitutional amendments and federal laws like the VRA to approach anything that even looks close to universal suffrage.

So, where does all this leave us headed into the 2022 midterms? Partisan differences with

The Brennan Center for Justice tracks restrictive voting bills introduced at the state level and found that at least 150 bills have been carried over from 2021 to 2022.



respect to voting rights persist, but slightly less so than those related to the 2020 presidential election. Seventy percent of Americans, including 60 percent of Republicans, say they are confident in their state and local governments to conduct elections fairly and accurately in 2022. Confidence drops among Republicans, however, if asked if they would trust the results if their candidate for Congress did not win, with just 53 percent acceding that point.

Statewide efforts to restrict voting persist. In Pennsylvania, efforts are being made to repeal Act 77 or have it declared unconstitutional. Across the country, The Brennan Center for Justice tracks restrictive voting bills introduced at the state level and found that at least 150 bills have been carried over from 2021 to 2022. The majority of these bills aim to restrict access to mail-in voting, including shortening deadlines and limiting voters' ability to receive assistance with returning a mail-in ballot. Other bills establish or expand voter ID requirements or require proof of citizenship in order to register to vote.

At the federal level, there was the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which would have reestab-

lished preclearance and created new national standards about which jurisdictions must do so before changing their voting laws. The law passed the U.S. House in August 2021 with all Democrats voting in favor and all Republicans voting against, but two months later, the bill failed in the Senate.

On my own campus, I work with a nonpartisan group of students, faculty and staff who educate and empower students about how to participate in Pennsylvania elections. Muhlenberg has a similar group, BergVotes (see page 19 to learn more). On both campuses, these groups help students register to vote, provide them with information about who the candidates are and facilitate their voting either by mail or in person on Election Day. We don't care what party students register with or which candidates they vote for, but without their participation—and all our participation—in elections, our democracy is not living up to its promise to be a government of “we the People.”

Sarah Niebler '04 is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Dickinson College.



PASSION PERSIST

BY MEGHAN KITA

AND EXPERIENCE

The founder of Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, Adrian Shanker '09, continues to work to make the unmet dream of health equity for the LGBTQ community a reality in his new role at the Bay Area's Spahr Center.

T

he vision for Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center became public in June 2014. At that time, its founder, Adrian Shanker '09, had been living in the Lehigh Valley, home to Pennsylvania's third largest LGBTQ population, for almost 10 years. He identified a need for a space dedicated to the LGBTQ community year-round and assembled a group of fellow activists to imagine what such a space might look like.

The campaign to launch Bradbury-Sullivan Center, named after local LGBTQ activists Liz Bradbury and Patricia Sullivan, sought to raise \$75,000 in three months. Instead, it raised \$115,000, mostly from small to mid-sized donations—the average individual contribution was \$400. It was evidence that the local LGBTQ community supported the vision Shanker's group had presented. In late 2015, Bradbury-Sullivan Center found a physical home, a three-story building in downtown Allentown just off of Hamilton Street. Six months later, the space opened to the public.

Today, Bradbury-Sullivan Center has nearly two dozen staff and a \$1.6 million annual operating budget. It has a large community room, a youth lounge, two art galleries and a community library. It offers free programming to the local community in four areas (arts, health, youth and Pride); coordinates support groups and other supportive services; conducts organizational training and health-related research; and advocates on behalf of the LGBTQ community at the local, state and federal levels. For example, in 2020, Bradbury-Sullivan Center's advocacy ensured that people living with HIV were prioritized to receive the COVID vaccine in Pennsylvania, and the center filed a successful lawsuit to block an executive order prohibiting diversity training for federal agencies and contractors.

In February, Shanker announced he would be stepping down as executive director of Bradbury-Sullivan Center and relocating to the Bay Area to fulfill the same role at the Spahr Center in Marin County, just north of San Francisco. Per its website, the Spahr Center "is Marin County's only nonprofit community agency devoted to serving, supporting and empowering the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and everyone in the county living with and affected by HIV."



PHOTO BY RYAN HULVAT / MERIS INC.

It's similar in size to Bradbury-Sullivan Center but is older (founded in 1984) and is also an AIDS Service Organization. That means it offers treatment as well as harm-reduction programs, including syringe services that aren't legal in Pennsylvania outside Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

"As a passionate advocate for the health and wellness of LGBTQ+ and HIV communities, I am deeply motivated and beyond excited to join the team at the Spahr Center as their next executive director," Shanker says. "The Spahr Center has a strong history of providing critical programs for Marin County's LGBTQ+ and HIV communities, and I'm thrilled to become part of the next chapter for the Spahr Center."

"I'm so happy to see Adrian taking on the executive director role at the Spahr Center. It's always exciting to see a leader in the LGBTQ community center movement who has demonstrated such talent, skills and growth in their current position stay in the movement and take those attributes to another center," says Denise Spivak, CEO of CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers. "Adrian has accomplished so much at Bradbury-Sullivan

“

At first, every issue was important. Everything felt urgent. At Muhlenberg, I learned how to consolidate my activism and be a more effective activist.”

—ADRIAN SHANKER '09

Since 2018, Shanker has served as commissioner on the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (the state’s civil rights enforcement agency) and as commissioner and health committee co-chair of the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs, which advises Governor Tom Wolf’s administration, roles he will relinquish as he moves out of state. Last year, he was appointed to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS—which “provides advice, information and recommendations to the Secretary of Health & Human Services regarding programs, policies and research to promote effective treatment, prevention and cure of

LGBT Community Center in Pennsylvania, and I’m really looking forward to seeing the Spahr Center continue to thrive under his leadership.”

HIV disease and AIDS,” according to its website—in the Biden-Harris administration.

Shanker—who edited 2020’s *Bodies and Barriers: Queer Activists on Health* as well as *Crisis and Care: Queer Activist Responses to a Global Pandemic*, out this June—has a particular passion for health equity, “the attainment of the highest quality of health for all people.”

“Without our health we don’t have our lives,” Shanker says. “Health is broad, and LGBTQ+ community centers like both Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center and the Spahr Center are perfectly situated to provide the programs and services that lead us toward the unmet dream of health equity. There are significant barriers that prevent LGBTQ+ people from accessing the care our bodies need, and community centers are simultaneously service providers and advocates for the health and wellness of LGBTQ+ people.”

ACTIVIST ROOTS

Shanker, who was a political science and religion studies double major at Muhlenberg, arrived at the College already an activist. His mother came out when he was 7 and when his parents divorced, his father was able to legally remarry while his mother could not. In fact, in 2004, then-President George W. Bush expressed support during the State of the Union address for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. As a high-school student in Westchester County, New York, Shanker felt inspired to take action.

“That year really sparked my interest in activism—in anti-war activism, in LGBTQ activism—and it was a really pivotal moment for me to consider the role that humans can play in our society if we can get involved as activists and advocates for ourselves and for others,” Shanker says. “At first, every issue was important. Everything felt urgent. At Muhlenberg, I learned how to consolidate my activism and be a more effective activist.”

He chose to focus on LGBTQ equity because of his own identity as part of that community. Within six weeks of coming to Muhlenberg in the fall of



PHOTO BY RYAN HULVATI / MIERIS INC.

2005, Shanker was in then-President Randy Helm’s office asking Muhlenberg to add gender identity to its nondiscrimination policy, a change that happened six weeks later. He also led the affinity group now known as Students for Queer Advocacy in a campaign to secure gender-neutral housing on campus that lasted beyond his time at Muhlenberg. (The College began offering it in the fall of 2011 and was the first institution in the Lehigh Valley to do so.)

“Adrian was, from my first encounter with him, the very best kind of activist,” Helm says. “Well

Above, Shanker (center) meets with Christina Graham (data and evaluation manager) and Katie Suppes (director of programs, research and evaluation) in his Bradbury-Sullivan Center office

informed, reasonable, articulate, committed to his values and willing to consider questions without becoming impatient or losing his temper, he was an impressive advocate for and educator about issues that were not always clearly understood by the community.”

As a student, Shanker lobbied at the state level to oppose a constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage. Now that gay marriage is legal federally, he says, it’s hard to remember how different things were when he was a college student, “when same-sex marriage was on the ballot and we were losing in almost every state. It was emotionally trau-

matic to know how many people in America were voting against our basic civil rights.” This particular battle felt “propulsive” to him, so that’s where he focused his activist energy beyond campus.

He also got involved with the Office of Community Engagement (OCE), primarily as an escort for patients seeking care at the Allentown Women’s Center: “When students are connected to the community, they not only have a better college experience, that’s when they might consider staying in that city after they graduate,” he says. “I credit that office a lot for helping to make Allentown a place where I wanted to live.”

Below, left to right: Shanker receiving a flu vaccine at one of the center’s free clinics, center staff standing in solidarity with advocates for safety from gun violence, in conversation with ACT UP leader Peter Staley



BUILDING SKILLS AND MOMENTUM

Shanker stayed in Allentown after graduation, working in development for the Civic Theatre. He learned how to raise money there, a critical skill-set for anyone interested in nonprofit work, but he missed activism. Then, he worked as a union organizer, and while he found it rewarding, he realized he missed LGBTQ activism, specifically.

That’s when he became president of Equality Pennsylvania, a nonprofit dedicated to securing LGBTQ rights in the state. During his three years with the organization, it advocated for (and won) a number of municipal nondiscrimination protections across the state and helped change the conversation about political support for LGBTQ people.

“It went from this thing where people running for office wouldn’t talk about us to non-LGBTQ audiences to a place where they would embrace the LGBTQ community,” he says.

After his three years with Equality Pennsylvania, Shanker had a strong network of LGBTQ activists and allies locally and at the state level as well as experience with organizing and fundraising. He had long seen the need for a community center for the LGBTQ population in the Lehigh Valley. Other Pennsylvania regions, including some with smaller LGBTQ communities, had them, and while the area had Pride and other one-off events, there wasn’t a central hub for year-round programming.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN WORK

That's what Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center became, and more. In 2021, it served more than 10,000 community members. It offered three monthly arts and culture groups and 22 free arts and culture programs, a mix of in-person, virtual and hybrid. (A lesson from the pandemic, Shanker says, is the importance, from an accessibility standpoint, of offering virtual and hybrid programming.) It hosted flu and COVID-19 vaccine clinics; provided free testing for COVID-19, HIV and hepatitis C; and supported individuals seeking to access health-care and legal services. It offered approximately

“

Adrian was, from my first encounter with him, the very best kind of activist. Well informed, reasonable, articulate, committed to his values and willing to consider questions without becoming impatient or losing his temper, he was an impressive advocate for and educator about issues that were not always clearly understood by the community.”

—FORMER MUHLENBERG PRESIDENT RANDY HELM

15 monthly community and support groups and served 233 LGBTQ youth through Project Silk Lehigh Valley, a collaboration with the nonprofit Valley Youth House, which provides shelter and programming for young people in the region. It hosted the 2021 Lehigh Valley Pride celebration on the grounds of the Jewish Community Center of the Lehigh Valley, an outdoor event that drew about 4,000 people.

Bradbury-Sullivan Center's reach extends beyond the local community as well. The center administers Pennsylvania's biannual LGBTQ Health Needs Assessment, which collects data on diet and exercise, substance use, mental and sexual health and health-care experiences. In spring of 2021, it also administered a state-wide survey on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among LGBTQ Pennsylvanians. The Training Institute at Bradbury-Sullivan Center offers cultural competency training, policy development assistance and other services for a variety of organizations including health-care providers, schools and government agencies.


Shanker has also remained connected to his alma mater. He has co-instructed an integrative learning course, Media Advocacy, with Professor of Media & Communication Susan Kahlenberg three



PHOTO BY RYAN HULVAT / MERISI INC.

times. In one past iteration of the course, teams of students produced radio PSAs to promote the free HIV/STI testing offered at the center. Bradbury-Sullivan Center partners with the OCE to engage student interns and volunteers, and with Trexler Library to maintain the Lehigh Valley LGBT Community Archive, a repository of material documenting the history of LGBTQ+ activism in the region.

Shanker is proud of his time at Bradbury-Sullivan Center and has confidence in its board and staff to carry its mission forward in his absence. He looks forward to joining the Spahr Center and working toward preventing new cases of HIV, eliminating the health disparities that shorten LGBTQ+ lives and providing the cultural support that ensures LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV can thrive. The new community comes with new opportunities and new challenges, but Shanker's work will still happen in service of the LGBTQ+ community and the unmet dream of health equity.

“There's something really powerful about purpose-driven work,” Shanker says. “It's different from working for a paycheck. You're working for a mission.” 

Shanker outside Bradbury-Sullivan Center in downtown Allentown

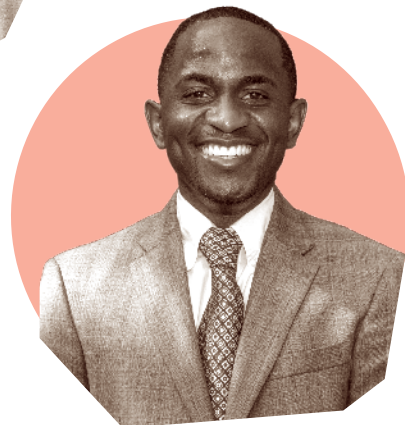
BY MEGHAN KITA



Making *Progress*



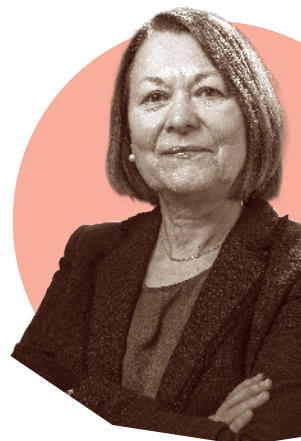
Clockwise from above the headline: Assistant Professor of Religion Studies Purvi Parikh, Associate Director of Prevention Education Jules Purnell, Professor and Chair of English Literatures & Writing Francesca Coppa, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Student Diversity Initiatives Robin Riley-Casey, Senior Assistant Director of Admissions and Coordinator of Multicultural Recruitment RaeVaughn Gardner-Williams, President Kathleen Harring, Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik, Professor and Chair of Music Ted Conner, Vice President for Enrollment Management Meg Ryan, Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives Brooke Vick, Provost Laura Furge



THE COLLEGE HAS BEEN WORKING
ON KEY INITIATIVES RELATED TO

diversity, equity and inclusion

(DEI) SINCE ITS FIRST DIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLAN WAS ENACTED IN 2014.
THE ANNUAL DEI REPORT, RELEASED IN
NOVEMBER, SHOWCASES THE BREADTH AND
DEPTH OF THE WORK THAT HAPPENED IN
THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR.



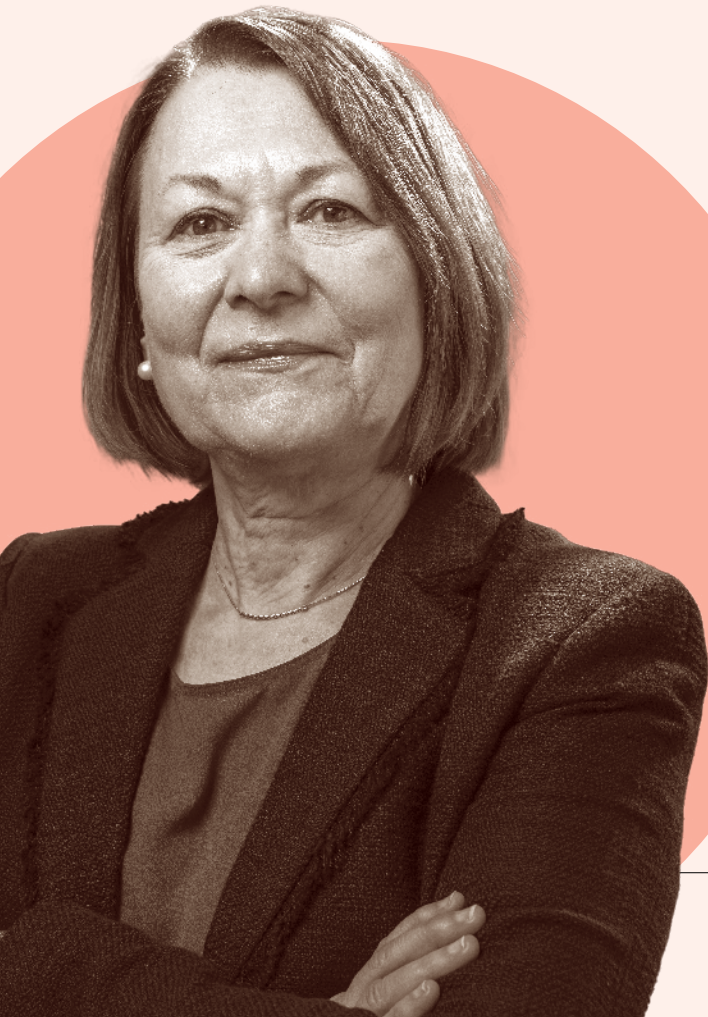
Last November, President Kathleen Harring shared the College's annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Report. The report collects in one document much of the DEI work that took place within the Muhlenberg community during the 2020-2021 academic year in five major areas: recruitment & retention, cultural awareness, student outcomes, campus climate & student support and institutional commitments & activities.

Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives and Chair of the President's Diversity Advisory Council (PDAC) Brooke Vick authored the report. In its opening statement, Vick shared that the report's purpose was to highlight "the breadth and depth of work we are advancing to promote a more diverse and inclusive community." And the 19-page document does that, delivering the information in a series of bullet points.

The report serves to communicate what the College has done to create "a common understanding of our progress and the areas we need

to strengthen," as Harring said in her email to the Muhlenberg community announcing its publication. From that report, Vick, Harring and other key players in the College's DEI efforts helped *Muhlenberg Magazine* select a handful of initiatives to explore more fully to give readers a better understanding of the College's work in this space. (Those interested in reading the full report can visit muhlenberg.edu/DEI2021.)

"Unless we make visible what work we've done, and we are sharing that not just to the immediate campus community but to the greater Muhlenberg community and to the greater community in higher education, we can't really enter into conversations about where we need to go next," says Harring, who notes that PDAC is hosting two discussions this semester about the report and what the College's next DEI priorities should be. "All those stakeholders need to have a deeper understanding of our goals, how DEI work relates to our mission and what efforts we really need to strengthen."



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“UNLESS WE MAKE VISIBLE WHAT WORK WE’VE DONE, AND WE ARE SHARING THAT NOT JUST TO THE IMMEDIATE CAMPUS COMMUNITY BUT TO THE GREATER MUHLENBERG COMMUNITY AND TO THE GREATER COMMUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION, WE CAN’T REALLY ENTER INTO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHERE WE NEED TO GO NEXT.”

—*Kathleen Harring*

PRESIDENT



Hiring the College's Most *Diverse Faculty Cohort Ever*

Last fall, 27 new full-time faculty members started at Muhlenberg, and 13 of them identified as people of color. Ten years earlier, only nine full-time faculty members *total* identified as such. Vick says that changes the College has made to every step of the process—from recruitment to evaluation to the campus visit—have made this progress possible.

“You don’t increase diversity in your faculty by accident. You don’t luck into it,” Vick says. “It does have to be intentional.”

Changes to how Muhlenberg recruits began under former Provost John Ramsay more than a decade ago, when the College joined the Consortium for Faculty Diversity (CFD), a group of liberal arts colleges that are interested in diversifying the professoriate. Member institutions have access to a pool of doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from underrepresented groups who can be hired for one- or two-year fellowship positions. Those who secure fellowships gain teaching and mentoring experience and exposure to the environment

of a liberal arts college; the institutions gain the scholars’ knowledge and expertise. The College has had CFD fellows in the past but never more than one or two at a time, Vick says. This year’s new faculty cohort has five. The College has also begun targeting job postings to places where scholars of color are more likely to be reached (for example, the Black Doctoral Network and Latinos in Higher Education).

Every search committee on campus must include an equity advocate (EA), a faculty or staff member who has undergone four two-hour-long training sessions on inclusive and equitable hiring practices. That training has been available since 2016 and, as of this spring, more than 100 individuals will have completed it. Additionally, Vick provides training for every faculty search committee to go over some of the key takeaways from the EA training—for example, how biases can manifest in the search process and disadvantage certain candidates. During each search, Vick and Provost

New Muhlenberg faculty members participated in an orientation program on campus in August 2021.



Laura Furge check in to make sure “we’re maintaining the diversity of the pool at each stage.”

The faculty finalists who are asked to visit campus receive an email from Vick inviting them to share accessibility needs or other accommodations, “anything we can do to help you be your best self throughout the interview process.” Vick produced a Lehigh Valley Cultural Resource Guide, which includes sections on diverse food markets, restaurants, beauty salons & barber shops, places of worship, education & family resources, community organizations and outdoor recreation, that’s included as an attachment in the email to finalists.

“It’s meant to inject some humanity into the process,” Vick says. “When [prospective faculty] visit our campus, we want to make sure they have time to consider not just if they want to work here but if they can imagine themselves having a life here.”

Vick also offers to connect candidates to a campus ambassador, a faculty member completely independent from the review process, for a confidential conversation about whatever the candidate wants to know. Originally, the program was informal and offered to only some candidates, but it was so popular, Vick expanded it. She sent a survey to faculty asking interested parties to volunteer and to share which kinds of topics they’d feel comfortable speaking to (for example, being a person of color at Muhlenberg, or being the parent of small children while on the tenure track). So far, around 60 faculty have volunteered to be part of the program.

In the most recent hiring cycle, Vick paired ambassador Assistant Professor of Neuroscience Leah Wilson with then-candidate Assistant Professor of Photography Kim Hoeckele. Hoeckele had requested a newer faculty member who hadn’t yet been through the third-year review process, and as Wilson answered her questions about campus culture and life in the Lehigh Valley, it became clear that, if Hoeckele was hired, the two would become friends. Now, Hoeckele has met several of Wilson’s neuroscience colleagues through their

connection and has begun to imagine possible future integrative learning courses that could pair art with neuroscience.

“I had about six on-campus interviews over the series of years that I was on the market, and I was never welcomed into the interview process in the same way that Brooke welcomed me as a candidate,” Wilson says. “There are components of being on the market that are a bit dehumanizing. The campus ambassador program, given that it’s designed to center identity and experience, really stands out as important.”

Vick says that, to retain faculty once they’re hired, they need to feel a sense of belonging and community and to feel that the College is supporting them as they work to advance in their careers. In the fall, she organized biweekly lunches for faculty and staff of color as well as an end-of-semester cocktail reception to facilitate connections across campus. And last spring, she announced that the College had joined the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD), “a really well known national faculty development center with all sorts of professional development resources for faculty ... presented through a specific lens of equity, diversity and inclusion.” Faculty were excited the College was joining NCFDD, Vick says, and 124 faculty have activated their memberships, including 14 of the new hires.

The College’s next steps include a campus workshop on retention best practices that Vick will conduct this spring and collaboration with colleagues in Human Resources to expand more best practices from faculty searches into staff searches as well.

“We are definitely encouraged by the progress we’ve made and are grateful to have so many new colleagues who embody a diversity of identities, cultures and lived experiences,” Vick says. “We also recognize that there is more work to do, not just to continue diversifying our faculty and staff, but to be sure Muhlenberg is a place where our new colleagues want to stay for a long time.”

“WHEN [PROSPECTIVE FACULTY] VISIT OUR CAMPUS, WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THEY HAVE TIME TO CONSIDER NOT JUST IF THEY WANT TO WORK HERE BUT IF THEY CAN IMAGINE THEMSELVES HAVING A LIFE HERE.”

— *Brooke Vick*

ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR FACULTY AND DIVERSITY INITIATIVES AND
CHAIR OF THE PRESIDENT’S DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL





Recruiting the College's *Most Diverse Class Ever*



The Class of 2025 during Orientation Weekend

The Class of 2025 is Muhlenberg's most diverse ever, in a variety of ways: 23 percent identify as students of color, 17 percent are first-generation students and 21 percent qualify for Pell grants, the largest federal assistance program for undergraduates.

"We define diversity in a lot of ways. We're looking to grow all underrepresented populations," says Vice President for Enrollment Management Meg Ryan. "Having a student body that is reflective of a real-world experience is important for all students. It's mission critical. The campus community has really come together around this effort."

Since before 2000, the College has fostered connections with community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve students from underrepresented backgrounds as a key way of reaching diverse applicants. Many CBO partners are in the northeast, says Senior Assistant Director of Admissions and Coordinator of

Multicultural Recruitment RaeVaughn Gardner-Williams, but the College also partners with CBOs in Chicago, California and Florida.

Muhlenberg nurtures these partnerships by offering resources (such as presentations on navigating financial aid and the college application process). Deeper relationships are possible with CBOs that are geographically nearby. For example, prior to COVID-19, a busload of high-school juniors from New York City's Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO) organization would visit campus each year. Since 2020, the Office of Admissions has replicated the campus-visit experience for SEO students virtually, with a campus tour and the opportunity to connect with students, faculty and staff.

Admissions offers two specialized programs for students from underrepresented backgrounds: the MULE (Muhlenberg's Undergraduate Leadership Exposure) Program, for prospective stu-

dents, and Behind the Red Doors: A Closer Look at Diversity and Multicultural Life at Muhlenberg, for admitted students. The MULE Program is promoted as a behind-the-scenes look at Muhlenberg to students from partner CBOs and students who've applied who identify as being from an underrepresented group.

"When it was first brainstormed, we realized that Muhlenberg's best asset is the ability to get students to campus so we can showcase everything the community has to offer," Gardner-Williams says. "The plan for the program when I first rolled it out was always for it to be in person."

Unfortunately, the pandemic forced the MULE Program into a virtual space, where it's now been held four times: Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. The program includes a financial aid presentation, a virtual tour hosted by tour guides and campus delegates, a mock class with a faculty member and a Q&A panel with faculty, staff and students. It finishes with a game night to allow

the participating students, 20 to 30 per session, to get to know each other.

"We've walked away from each of those sessions with students saying, 'This was phenomenal. I loved it,' and some of those students committed to Muhlenberg following the session," Gardner-Williams says.

Behind the Red Doors took place for the first time last spring, right before Through the Red Doors, Muhlenberg's admitted students' day, both of which were held in a hybrid fashion (with multiple in-person visit days offered) in 2021. Admissions invited students from underrepresented backgrounds who would be great fits for the College to Behind the Red Doors, which included an icebreaker so the prospective students could connect with one another; virtual tours of campus, downtown Allentown and local shopping centers; and a panel to allow guests to connect with current students (including members of the Emerging Leaders Program for students from underrepresented groups) and faculty.

*Associate Dean
of Students and
Director of Student
Diversity Initiatives
Robin Riley-Casey
(center) co-directs
the Emerging
Leaders Program.*



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“IN ORDER FOR US TO CONTINUE TO WORK ON DIVERSITY INITIATIVES, MORE STUDENTS WHO COME FROM THESE DIFFERENT POPULATIONS [FROM UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES] NEED TO SHARE IN THIS NARRATIVE, ‘HEY, THIS IS A SAFE PLACE. YOU’LL FEEL COMFORTABLE HERE AND HAVE THE RESOURCES YOU NEED.’”

— *RaeVaughn Gardner-Williams*

SENIOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS AND COORDINATOR OF MULTICULTURAL RECRUITMENT



The format models the MULE Program in some ways, but “we’re being more intentional with the way we work with this population of students,” Gardner-Williams says. “They’ve bought into Muhlenberg by applying and interviewing. We’re trying to re-sell them on Muhlenberg so they get to the point where they say, ‘I want to be there.’”

Behind the Red Doors attendees were impressed by what the city of Allentown had to offer and also by the availability of programs like Emerging Leaders on campus. Parents were also invited (they’re invited to the MULE Program, as well) because of their roles as key stakeholders in their students’ decisions surrounding college. This year, the College will bring Behind the Red Doors participants and their parents to campus for a full day of programming in advance of Through the Red Doors, which will be held in person on Saturday, April 9.

“We want to address the stigma that, ‘I’m going to be one of four or five people, a really small number of people, like me on campus.’ Instead, we’d like to highlight the growing diversity on campus and how, as admitted students, they can contribute to the work that has continued to take place over the last couple of decades on campus,” Gardner-

Williams says. “In order for us to continue to work on diversity initiatives, more students who come from these different populations [from underrepresented communities] need to share in this narrative, ‘Hey, this is a safe place. You’ll feel comfortable here and have the resources you need.’”

The Office of Admissions knows that it has been successful in reaching students from underrepresented backgrounds when even those who ultimately decide to matriculate elsewhere email their counselor to let them know and thank them for their help throughout the process. For the students who do come to Muhlenberg, the counselors’ work continues.

“Our office, we’re an admission and retention office,” Gardner-Williams says. “There are times when students I’ve connected with through their admissions process, they’ll come into my office and I’ll look at them and be able to tell, ‘You need a moment. Let’s just talk.’ The same goes for all of us. If you walk through our office on any random day, our doors are always open. That’s part of the College philosophy, but for our office, yes, we encourage students to enroll, but we also continue to provide them the support they need throughout their four-year journey.”



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“STUDYING THE LITERATURES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A REALLY GOOD COMPLEMENT TO AN ARRAY OF CAREERS. INCREASINGLY, SOPHISTICATION ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES IS IMPORTANT IN EVERY WORKPLACE. STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A SKILL THEY NEED TO BE THEIR BEST SELVES IN THE WORLD WE LIVE IN NOW.”

—*Francesca Coppa*

PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF ENGLISH LITERATURES & WRITING

Supporting Anti-Racist Revisions *to Curriculums and Courses*

Last summer, the Muhlenberg Center for Teaching and Learning and the Provost's Office awarded more than 20 grants to faculty interested in examining their teaching practices and/or course content through an anti-racist lens. Some of these grants supported major changes to long-established curriculums.

Ahead of this academic year, the Department of Music revised its entire curriculum to de-center the Western European compositions and composers that music programs have historically prioritized. The department had been considering revising the curriculum, which used to begin with the required courses Western Music Theory and Music History, for years. In the summer of 2020, music faculty formed an anti-racism reading group, and that set the stage for the curricular revision.

The new foundational courses, Engaging with Music I and II, are each broken into thirds: one focused on non-Western music, one on vernacular music (such as jazz, pop and rap) and one on West-

ern European music. After those two courses, students will take Methodologies and Epistemologies in Music, which deals with how ideas and knowledge about music are constructed, and Theory and Practice in Western Tonal Music. Also new are courses on power structures in music, which consider how race, gender, religion and economic structures affect the intersections between music and culture.

Professor and Chair of Music Ted Conner taught Engaging with Music I in the fall. In the course, students learned to play the darbuka, a goblet-shaped drum that Dana Livian '25 recognized immediately (though in her Iranian community on Long Island, it's called a doumbek). The instrument was commonplace at community events and weddings throughout her youth, and in class, she and her classmates used it to learn about rhythm and improvisation.

“Having general music classes that only focus on 100 years of Western European music and one



world music class that covers everything else, that doesn't make any sense logically," Livian says. "Even in a world music class, I'd expect maybe we'd be learning about [the darbuka]. I wouldn't expect to be playing it. It's really cool and really exciting."

The new curriculum was approved at a faculty meeting last March. Typically, changes in curriculum involve a fair amount of faculty discussion, Conner says. No one questioned the music faculty. In fact, he recalls one faculty member saying jokingly, "You realize we're going to plagiarize what you've done here."

The newly named Department of English Literatures & Writing also got a curricular overhaul starting this academic year, and the name change is an important part of it, says Chair and Professor of English and Film Studies Francesca Coppa. For example, literatures (plural) signals the faculty's awareness that there's more to the field than "the canon."

"English is a field that's constantly rejuvenating itself. It's one of the most exciting things about English," she says. "There's a lot going on in English. We felt the name change would, first of all, show the breadth of what we already teach."

Coppa also directs the College's Women's & Gender Studies Program, and her colleague, Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik, is co-director of the Africana

Studies Program. Both programs center diverse perspectives and offer courses that focus on social justice (the view that everyone deserves equitable economic, political and social rights and opportunities). For more than 10 years, Associate Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing Linda Miller has taught at Lehigh County Corrections Center, where Muhlenberg students and incarcerated students take creative writing courses together. Prior to the curricular revision, "English had those social justice commitments, but we weren't foregrounding them," Coppa says. "We wanted to foreground them and make them essential."

Now, majors must take three social justice courses (including one course specifically centering BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, people of color] voices). Some popular courses that fulfill the social justice requirement include Black Comedy, Gay and Lesbian Theatre & Film and African American Literature. Another new requirement involves taking courses in different literary forms, including prose, poetry and "transmedia" (stories that move from the page to other media like visual art, theatre, film or TV).

Even before the department changed its name and unveiled its new requirements last fall, students understood the importance of diverse perspectives, as demonstrated by the wait lists for some of the courses that now fulfill the major's social justice requirement. Not only does the curricular revision better reflect what the Department of English Literatures & Writing stands for, Coppa says, there is a practical element to the shift as well.

"Studying the literatures of social justice is a really good complement to an array of careers. Increasingly, sophistication about social justice issues is important in every workplace," she says. "Students understand that this is a skill they need to be their best selves in the world we live in now."

*Lily Knowles '23
with Assistant
Professor of English
and Africana Studies
and Co-Director
of Africana Studies
Emanuela Kucik in
class in Fall 2021*



Fostering *Cultural Awareness*



The Mayhem Step Team performs at the 2022 Love Letter to Blackness Gala, the final Black History Month event

A skill Muhlenberg hopes to build in all its community members—including students, faculty, staff and alumni—is the ability to communicate across difference. This requires exposure to diverse communities, says Associate Dean of Students and Director of Student Diversity Initiatives Robin Riley-Casey: “It’s important to understand how communities diverge in their perspectives and how they experience the world and how different cultural histories and traditions inform those viewpoints. And sometimes those viewpoints are at odds with the majority.”

One way to encourage this understanding is through training. When Riley-Casey started in 2010, she was the primary staff member conducting such training. Since then, multiple positions have been created or expanded to aid in the work. Now, Vick, Assistant Director of Multicultural Life Criss Braynen, Associate Director of Prevention Education Jules Purnell and Director of Equity & Title IX Jennifer Storm are among those who also facilitate training and education opportunities for students, faculty, staff and administrators. Resident advisors and orientation leaders undergo training annually; College offices and academic departments can request training to suit their needs.

Under Riley-Casey’s leadership, the Office of Multicultural Life (OML) encouraged student groups to each name a DEI chair to be cognizant of how the group’s policies and practices relate to DEI issues and to facilitate training for their groups. Now, every sorority has such a chair, as does the Student Government Association, the Muhlenberg Theatre Association and the Department of Athletics (which provides student-led DEI workshops), among others. These chairs will undergo training and regular discussions with

Riley-Casey. They also collaborate with peers from Student Advocates for Inclusion and Diversity (SAID), whom OML trained to facilitate peer dialogues on issues of identity and difference, to bring discussions on specific topics to their groups.

“It’s important for students to see themselves in this work and work together to get to where they want to be,” Riley-Casey says. “It’s different when I do the training. I’m from a different generation. I can’t always see what the students experience. Students are part of that experience. That’s what the SAID group is about.”

Diverse extracurricular programming is another way to generate stronger cultural awareness, and Kucik—who considers it a crucial complement to her teaching—has been a key player in planning and promoting such programming. While the pandemic forced 2020-2021 programming to take place over Zoom, Kucik says that format often allowed for broader engagement (allowing guests from across the country to attend) as well as greater openness and affirmation (students might share something they wouldn’t in person; peers might offer written support in the chat box).

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Africana Studies Program and OML co-created a four-event




series called *From the Ashes of Relentless Racial Crises Amid COVID-19: Creating a New United States of America*. Kucik (the faculty advisor for the Black Students Association [BSA]), Assistant Professor of Religion Studies Purvi Parikh (the faculty advisor for the Asian Students Association and Top Naach) and Riley-Casey conceived of the series in response to students who were struggling with the news: of police brutality targeting Black people, of anti-Asian violence and of the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on marginalized communities. While each event focused on a separate community (Black, Asian, Latinx and Indigenous), “one of the things I liked the most was how students from each of the affinity groups and the larger campus showed up for each other at these events,” Kucik says. Because of that, Kucik and Parikh will continue the *From the Ashes* series, without the COVID focus, with an event each year (or each semester, if schedules permit) focused on interracial solidarity and cross-cultural understanding.

Last year, Africana Studies also co-created a pair of events on Blackness and disability (with the Office of Prevention Education and the BSA) and a pair of events on the experiences of Black trans communities (with the same partners plus the Muhlenberg Trans Advocacy Coalition). Working with College offices, student groups and sometimes other academic departments and programs on events that center intersectional marginalized identities helps bring broader expertise to the table and a broader audience to the discussion, Kucik

says. Plus, collaborations like these show students the breadth of faculty and staff who are invested in centering and amplifying diverse voices.

Kucik says that she has noticed that, at some institutions and conferences, attendance at events focused on diversity is often limited to members of the marginalized group being discussed. At Muhlenberg, she immediately noticed that was not the case. The programming is supported financially by all the collaborators who co-sponsor each event and socially by the participation of a wide swath of the College community, right up to senior leadership. (She’s noticed that the president and provost attended all this year’s Black History Month events, for example, which is something she does not take for granted as that is not the case everywhere.) It’s this kind of broad support that is needed not just to promote cultural awareness at Muhlenberg but to produce graduates with an understanding of how to make change.

“In today’s world, there’s so much violence and hatred and discrimination. In the *From the Ashes* series, we say that solidarity is truly one of the key tools we have for dismantling these oppressive systems,” Kucik says. “Oppressive systems don’t want people to be in solidarity with each other. People in power often try to keep marginalized groups separate. Creating events in collaboration with a wide variety of people and groups—and making sure those events focus on a wide variety of people and groups—is a form of activism. It’s a way of coming together and fighting these systems.” 



“OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS DON’T WANT PEOPLE TO BE IN SOLIDARITY WITH EACH OTHER. PEOPLE IN POWER OFTEN TRY TO KEEP MARGINALIZED GROUPS SEPARATE. CREATING EVENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF PEOPLE AND GROUPS ... IS A FORM OF ACTIVISM.”

—*Emanuela Kucik*

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND AFRICANA STUDIES
AND CO-DIRECTOR OF AFRICANA STUDIES



The College has a reputation for producing alumni who go on to attend—and excel at—some of the top dental schools in the country.

By Meghan Kita

Something to

Smile

About



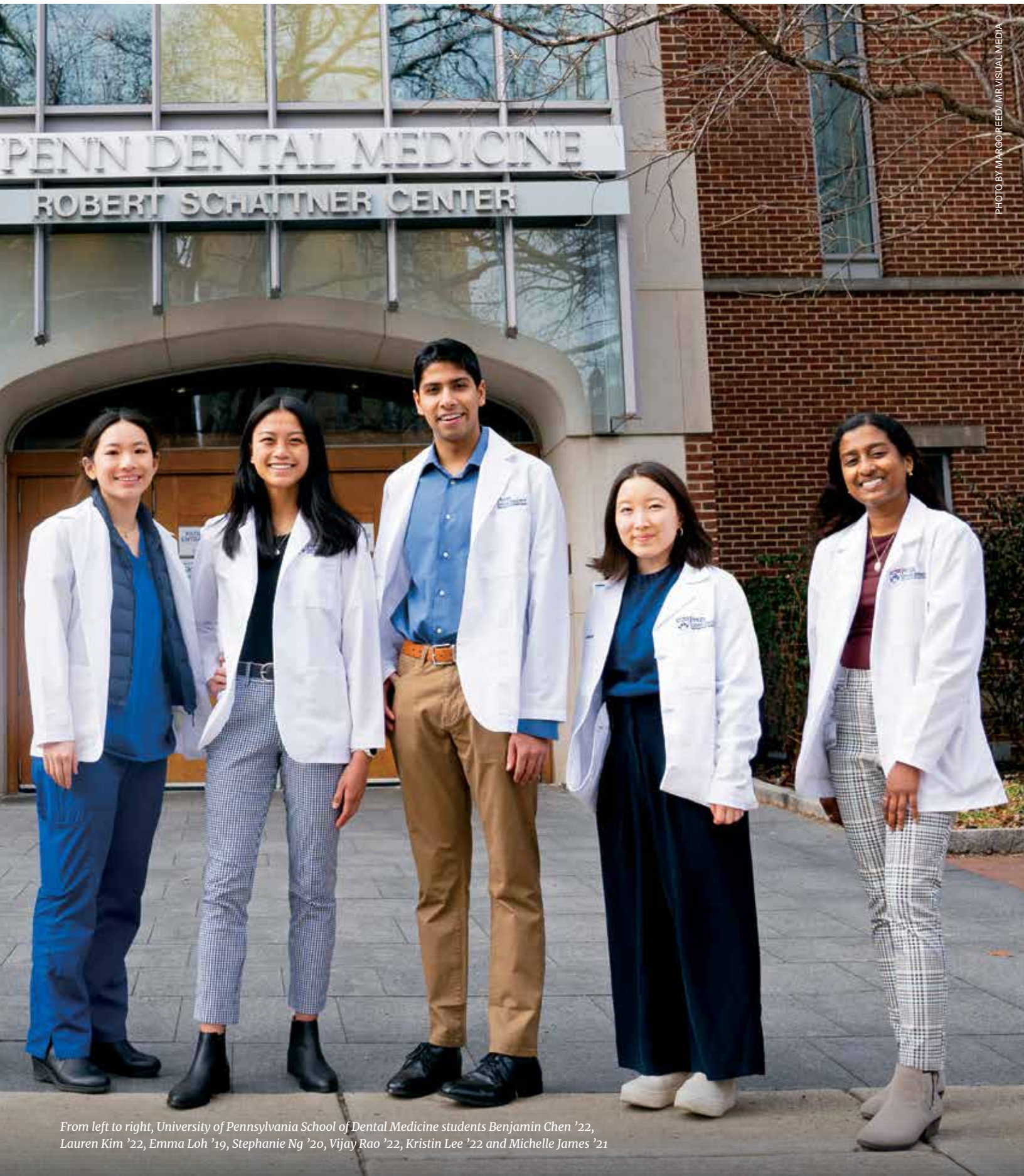


PHOTO BY MARGO REED/MR VISUAL MEDIA

From left to right, University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine students Benjamin Chen '22, Lauren Kim '22, Emma Loh '19, Stephanie Ng '20, Vijay Rao '22, Kristin Lee '22 and Michelle James '21



he Harvard School of Dental Medicine is the oldest

university-based dental school in the country and has one of the smallest classes. Just 35 students matriculate each year. Vivian Ha '20 is part of Harvard Dental's Class of 2024 and the first—but not the last—recent alum to go there. Betty Ben Dor '21 started at Harvard Dental the year after Ha, and Christina Xu '22 will be starting there this fall.

"It's really exciting that students are getting into Harvard," says Director of Health Professions Advising Cailín Pachter. "With a lot of the schools our students tend to go to, a Muhlenberg student will go and be very successful and do very well. Then, the admissions folks are like, 'We want more of them. Send us more.' We make inroads."

The College's reputation precedes its alumni at other prestigious dental schools as well. Muhlenberg has had a partnership with the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine since 1987 that allows students to earn a bachelor's degree in biology from Muhlenberg and a Doctor of Dental Surgery from Penn in seven years instead of eight. This program is one of only about 20 accelerated dental programs in the country, which helps attract strong high school students who know they want to pursue dentistry—even some who don't end up pursuing the program itself. (For example, Alyssa Hanel '18, who is finishing up at the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine, learned about Muhlenberg after searching for accelerated programs but ultimately decided to matriculate as a traditional student.) The College gets up to six slots for the Penn program annually and in recent years, we've filled them all, Pachter says.



PHOTO BY RYAN HULVAT/MERIS INC

Pre-dental alumni tend to remain in the northeast, Pachter says, and other recent grads have gone onto the NYU College of Dentistry (including Dr. Elizabeth Garrison '17, who graduated at the top of her class at Muhlenberg and again at NYU, which had a class of more than 360 students), the Temple University Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry and Touro College of Dental Medicine at New York Medical College. Muhlenberg has a 92 percent acceptance rate to dental school for its graduates.

The reason Muhlenberg's pre-dental students become such successful dental students—according to Ha, Hanel and others who spoke about their experiences—is a combination of the curricular and co-curricular opportunities the College provides to help these students prepare for the challenges ahead.

"Muhlenberg in general provided me with the skills and foundational knowledge not just to survive in dental school but to really thrive."



**Alyssa
Hanel
'18**

Outstanding Academics

All the students who participate in the seven-year partnership program with Penn Dental are biology majors, and many other pre-dental students are as well. Assistant Professor of Biology Giancarlo Cuadra, who serves as the faculty advisor for the Penn Dental students, says Muhlenberg's strong biology curriculum is an excellent foundation for those bound for dental school.

"For the first few courses, the intro courses in biology, we expose the students to quite a breadth and depth of biology not typical of most other schools. We have three courses introducing bio to students while most other schools only have two,"

he says. "We want to be a little bit more broad and we want to go a little bit deeper into biology so that when the students begin to take upper-level courses, we don't have to introduce them to 'what is DNA' and 'what is RNA' and 'what are proteins.' We know these students got so much information in these intro courses that we can move right along and talk about the more relevant content in the upper-level courses."

Michelle James '21, who's



currently at Penn as part of the partnership program, remembers taking a required course in biochemistry with Professor of Biology and Co-Director of Biochemistry Amy Hark during her final semester at Muhlenberg. That fall, she took a biochemistry course at Penn.

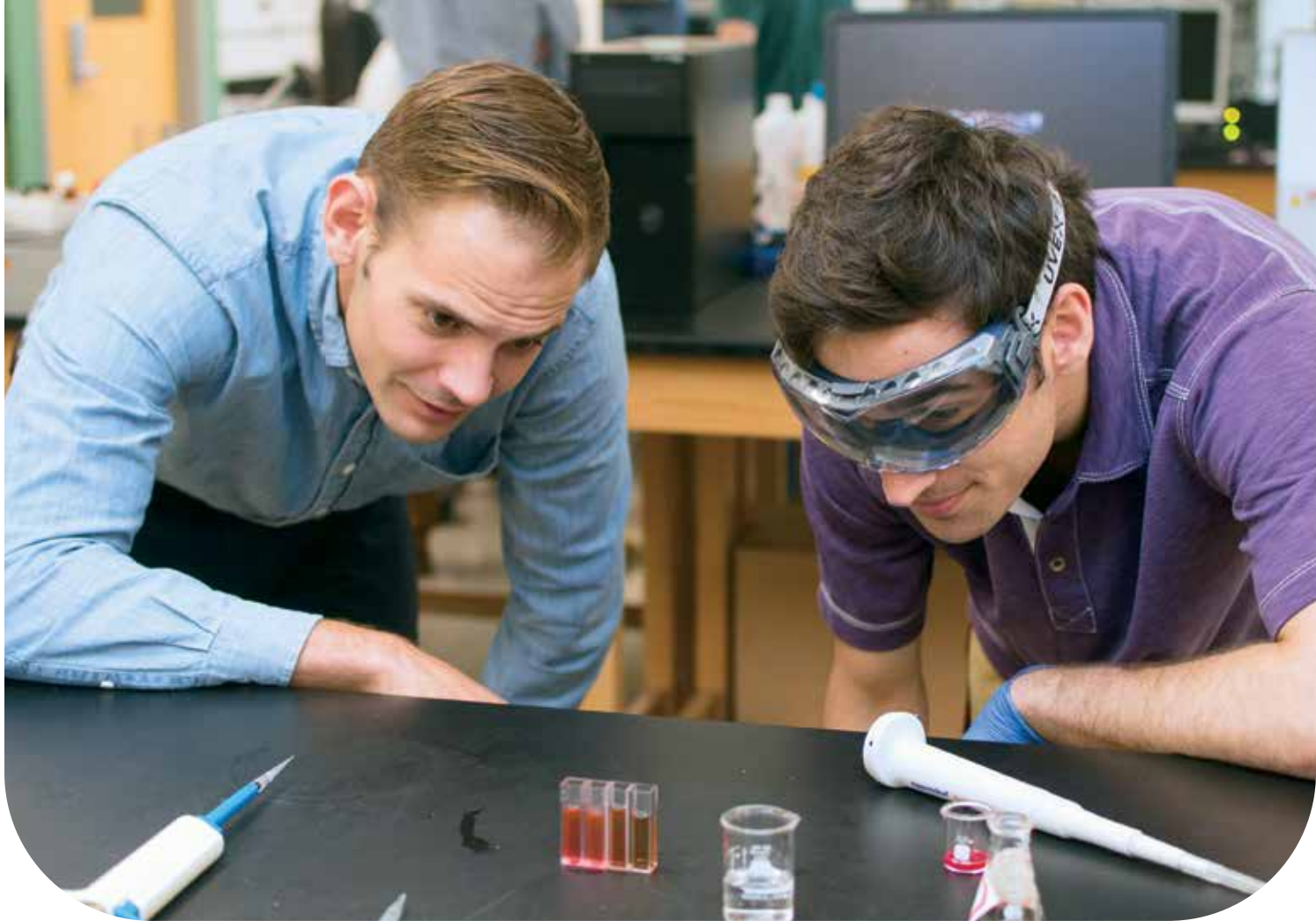
"I felt much more prepared for that than my other peers, who were stressed about it," she says. "Obviously, in dental school you go into a little more depth, and it's more focused on the mouth and on oral health, but there's been nothing in my dental school classes where I've said, 'I've never heard of this before.'"

Other aspiring dentists choose other majors while fulfilling the requirements of the prehealth track. For example, Ha and Hanel were neuroscience majors, while Garrison was a chemistry major. Still, all of them speak highly of the intensity of their Muhlenberg education. Ha specifically recalls the neuroscience course *Receptors and Channels*, in which students read almost exclusively scientific articles, as being on par with her Harvard courses in terms of difficulty.

As Hanel says, "Muhlenberg in general provided me with the skills and foundational knowledge not just to survive in dental school but to really thrive. I was really prepared in terms of workload and the foundation of knowledge I had. Obviously, the classes were challenging and it was an adjustment, but it didn't feel like a really difficult adjustment. It was a smooth transition."

Left, Christina Xu '22 conducts research with Assistant Professor of Biology Giancarlo Cuadra. Below, students in one of Cuadra's classes in Fall 2018. Right, Vivian Ha '20 conducts research in the lab of Professor of Chemistry Christine Ingersoll.





Above, pre dental student Noah Lebovitz '20 (right) conducts research with Lecturer of Chemistry Jonathan Gooch in 2017. Opposite, pre dental student Simi Shah '19 conducts research in Professor of Chemistry Bruce Anderson's lab in 2016.

Research Opportunities

Muhlenberg prides itself on the wealth of undergraduate research opportunities it offers for students of all disciplines. Pre-dental students often find a natural fit in Cuadra's lab, which is focused on the oral microbiome. Cuadra has been with the College for five years and in that time has published five papers with student co-authors, one featuring Hanel as the lead author. Hanel, who minored in public health, also conducted social/behavioral research with Professor of Psychology Laura Edelman and now-President Kathleen Harring. She credits both experiences for preparing her for a postgraduate research partnership with colleagues in social work and public health that focused on patient-provider communication in clinics.

"Working closely with research faculty at Muhlenberg helped me develop skills I could use to pursue meaningful research when I was in dental school," Hanel says.

While many pre dental students conduct research with Cuadra, they're just as likely

to find a home in another lab. Ha found hers in the lab of Professor of Chemistry Christine Ingersoll, who collaborates with Stanley Road Associate Professor of Neuroscience Jeremy Teissere on research exploring plant compounds' effects on the brain. Vijay Rao '22, who's currently at Penn as part of the partnership program, was drawn toward Associate Professor of Neuroscience Jordanna Sprayberry's lab, where he researched how bumblebees integrate visual and olfactory cues.

"When I was looking at labs, I wanted something I wasn't going to study for the rest of my life. All my classes, other than the general academic requirements, were within bio and the prereqs for dental school. I didn't get to dip my feet into neuroscience except for this research," Rao says. And even though he knew he wanted to be a dentist since he was in middle school, he adds: "Looking at bees is a lot more interesting than looking at dental plaque."

“Like my experience at Muhlenberg, where it was easy to build relationships with my peers and mentors, I get that same experience at Harvard. I value that one-on-one time.”

**Vivian
Ha
'20**



On-Campus Support

Pachter advises all prehealth students, all of whom have a faculty advisor as well. While the faculty advisor approves the students' courses each semester, Pachter helps with a bigger-picture map: What classes do particular dental schools want to see on students' transcripts? How should a student organize their time at Muhlenberg if they want to study abroad? What can a student do, inside the classroom and beyond it, to make themselves a stronger applicant? The goal is to have these conversations as early as possible—if a student wants to go straight from Muhlenberg to dental school, they need to apply in the summer after their junior year.

“The advice I give them all is to apply when you're the best applicant you can be,” Pachter says. For a few students, senior year provides an extra opportunity to raise grades or gain research or shadowing experience, though Pachter notes that almost all our pre dental students apply before senior year. She also walks students through the application process, from helping

them narrow down a list of schools to target to collaborating with the Career Center to conduct mock interviews.

In addition to his role as faculty advisor for the students in the accelerated Penn program and other bio majors interested in dental school, Cuadra is also advisor to the Predental Club. Several alumni mentioned the peer-to-peer support this group offers as critical to their successful acceptance to dental school.

“It gave me a community to lean on when things got a little stressful in the predental application process,” Ha says. “I had a lot of impostor syndrome as well as not being sure what the next steps were because I was a first-generation student. I found that family within the predental community.”

Small classes, and the ability to get to know faculty, are major contributors to the success of Muhlenberg's dental alumni. Rao says he chose Muhlenberg over other institutions offering accelerated programs because, even at the smaller schools, he would have been in intro lectures with hundreds of other students. He wasn't interested in being “a little fish in a big pond,” he says: “Once or twice [at Muhlenberg], when I didn't perform as well as I usually did on an exam, a professor would send me an email and be like, ‘What happened?’ At literally any other school, I wouldn't get that email.”

When Ha went looking for dental schools, one of the appealing parts about Harvard was its incredibly small class size. She knew that she had already thrived in such an environment.

“Like my experience at Muhlenberg, where it was easy to build relationships with my peers and mentors, I get that same experience at Harvard,” she says. “I value that one-on-one time.”



Alumni Board Prioritizes Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Each board committee will implement its own goals as the group works to support the College's mission and values.

Alumni Board members are meant to be ambassadors for the College—to fellow alumni, prospective students, families and the general public. In order to fulfill that role effectively, says Alumni Board President Carol Papazian '79, board members need to understand what the

“The College community’s work in advancing inclusion will never be complete. We will always keep learning, and our actions will always speak louder than our words.”

—CAROL PAPAZIAN '79,
ALUMNI BOARD PRESIDENT

Alumni Board Treasurer Bret Kobler '94, who serves as a liaison to the College for DEI initiatives specific to the board. “It’s important for people who may not have felt—or do not feel—valued, seen or heard to know that they have a place and a voice at Muhlenberg. For the Muhlenberg community to truly be inclusive, we all must do the work necessary to learn more, listen more and act in a way that makes this College’s mission a reality.”

institutional priorities are and how they are being implemented on campus. That’s one reason the Alumni Board has sharpened its focus and its operations with an eye toward diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI): What’s a priority for the College is a priority for its stewards.

“The College and our board are on a shared journey,” says

The Alumni Board began focusing its DEI efforts in earnest in 2020 with a special session with Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives Brooke Vick and Associate Dean of Students and Director of Student Diversity Initiatives Robin Riley-Casey. They led the Alumni Board in a community conversation in which members shared their experiences with issues of inclusion as students and alumni. Papazian remembers the session as valuable: “Alumni board members we’ve known for years and newer members really opened up ... It was more information about how I can relate to my fellow board members.”

Next, Assistant Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Career Services Natalie Hand '78 P'07 and Papazian worked with each of the board’s four committees to identify DEI initiatives they could incorporate into their processes.

Since then, each of the four annual Alumni Board meetings has included a DEI-related speaker to bring members up to speed on what’s happening on campus. For example, the most recent speaker was Director of Equity & Title IX Jennifer Storm, and subsequent meetings will include other thought leaders from Muhlenberg and outside organizations.

Each of the committees will set DEI goals and initiatives that are relevant to the committee’s purpose. For example, the Nominations and Governance Committee is working with the Office of Multicultural Life to identify alumni who were in leadership roles in affinity groups to ensure they’re aware when the board is seeking

new applicants. That committee also updated the application process so that prospective board members must submit a diversity statement, mirroring what the College asks job applicants to do.

Papazian says that recently, board members looked into what alumni boards at other institutions are doing in terms of DEI in search of ideas or best practices to introduce. They discovered that the College's efforts were very similar to those at other institutions. However, the education journey uncovered ideas that the board can take into consideration and determine how to introduce to the Muhlenberg community. President Kathleen Harring, who recently facilitated a session at the Council of Independent Colleges Presidents Institute on ways to engage alumni in institutional DEI work, is proud of the leadership the Alumni Board has shown in supporting the College's initiatives and its diverse student body.

"We are all leaders in this effort," Harring says. "Having more people inside and outside the College, particularly in the alumni community, participating in this important work is critical."

Looking ahead, the Alumni Board plans to continue its DEI-specific programming and continue to work toward further diversifying its membership. As part of the board's continuing education, members are beginning outreach to student affinity groups to learn more about their experiences and campus initiatives, Kobler says, as some of the groups did not exist when Alumni Board members were students. When the board makes it a priority to know what is happening (and what still needs to happen) on campus in terms of DEI, it can be a part of the community effort required to make sustained change.

"The College community's work in advancing inclusion will never be complete," Papazian says. "We will always keep learning, and our actions will always speak louder than our words." —MK



A THAW Toast to Boundlessness

On January 20, 1,125 alumni, students and friends of the College made their ninth annual Toast Heard Around the World (THAW) to honor their connection to Muhlenberg. More than 50 group celebrations took place (70 percent of them virtual) while others toasted on their own. On campus, alumni employees gathered via Zoom and 275 students celebrated. Alumni attendees learned about the College's current campaign, *Boundless*, and hosts were asked to reflect on how *Boundless* speaks to their Muhlenberg experience. Here's what some of them said.



Patti Norek Read '07 ▶

"My Muhlenberg experience taught me to be independent and to not be afraid to stretch out of my comfort zone. Studying abroad in Australia opened my eyes to a much bigger world than I had previously known, making my life truly boundless, something I'm striving to pass on to my boys (pictured at right) everyday!"



▲ Ross Handler '14

"My Muhlenberg experience is boundless because it continues to transform my life in positive ways. The connections I made during my time as a student continue to grow stronger, but the connections I make as an alum of the College enrich my life in ways I could have never imagined. Whether it is spending time with classmates or having conversations with my colleagues on the Alumni Board, Muhlenberg continues to transcend the campus borders and enrich my life."



◀ Mitch Hanna '14 Board of Trustees Weiss Fellow

"I've hosted THAW several times, but something about this experience was special. I think it was a combination of the pent-up demand from social distancing and the excitement surrounding Muhlenberg's capital campaign. The people are what make this community so strong, and together the opportunities are boundless. This year's THAW event was yet another example of our limitless potential."



Paul Silverman '78 (far left) ▶

"I'm reminded almost every day how my Muhlenberg experience has made my life boundless. From my lifelong friendships, including my marriage, to the experience and education I received at Muhlenberg, there's no limit to the benefits I've received from my relationship with my alma mater."

◀ Send us a quote, a testimonial or a short story answering the question, "How did your Muhlenberg experience make your life boundless?" and receive a 'Berg T-shirt. Just email your submission, your T-shirt size and your mailing address to bergalum@muhlenberg.edu.

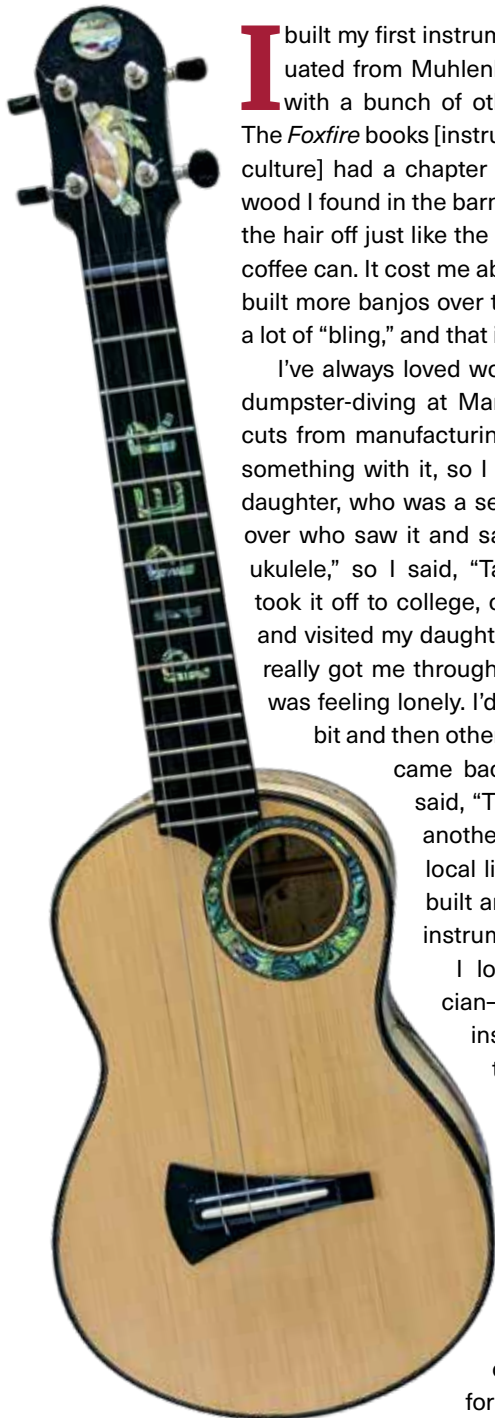


Carroll Marino and Debbie Klinger P'07

Why I Build Ukuleles

Because I love music and I love wood.

BY JON DALE '73, AS TOLD TO MEGHAN KITA



I built my first instrument a long time ago. After I graduated from Muhlenberg, I was living in a farmhouse with a bunch of other people in a semi-commune. The *Foxfire* books [instructional books about Appalachian culture] had a chapter on banjos. I built a banjo out of wood I found in the barn. I skinned a groundhog and took the hair off just like the book said and stretched it over a coffee can. It cost me about 75 cents to build this banjo. I built more banjos over the years—they traditionally have a lot of “bling,” and that is how I learned to do pearl inlay.

I've always loved wood, and I amassed a stash from dumpster-diving at Martin Guitar back in the '70s, off-cuts from manufacturing guitars. I finally decided to do something with it, so I built a little soprano ukulele. My daughter, who was a senior in high school, had a friend over who saw it and said, “I always wanted to play the ukulele,” so I said, “Take this one—I don't play.” She took it off to college, came back over Christmas break and visited my daughter. She told me, “This instrument really got me through some tough times. I was new. I was feeling lonely. I'd go into my room and play a little bit and then other people would come in.” And she came back playing these blues chords. I said, “That's really cool. I'll have to build another one.” So I did, and I sold it at the local library fundraising auction. Then I built another, and another. I've built 92 instruments so far.

I love music, but I'm not a musician—I'm an engineer. In building instruments, there are two questions, “How do you engineer this thing to make it sound better?” and, “What do I do, engineering-wise, to make building these easier, faster, more accurate, more repeatable?” Now, I work in sets of three or four, and it takes me a few months each time. I build a fair amount of custom instruments, plus some for inventory and some to give as

gifts. Of the four instruments on the bench right now, one is a commission, one is an experiment and two are wedding presents for my niece. Her future husband is a guitar player, so I'm building a small parlor guitar and a tenor ukulele out of exactly the same wood. They'll have some inlay, and it will be a matching set.

I mostly use local woods. In the eastern United States, the Appalachian chain has more species of hardwood than any other place in the world. Now that I spend time in Florida, there's a whole other set of woods here. One of my favorite Florida woods is casuarina, and it's an invasive species. I'm making instruments out of stuff that was taken down because it's invasive. Redwood is one of my favorite top woods, and the redwood I have used to be part of water tanks on top of New York City apartment buildings. I made a wedding present for a neighbor's daughter out of an ash tree he'd taken down. Musical instruments, to me, are a way of showing the beauty of this wood. I show off what Mother Nature created.

I've never liked a full-sized guitar. If you put it in your lap, you have to reach way around to play it. A ukulele, it's like a baby: It's this beautiful thing that fits in your lap. You can hold it closely. It feels delicate, but it's actually tougher than it looks. The other thing is, if you take a ukulele and just hand it to somebody, they always smile. It's universal. How cool is that? 🎸

Jon Dale '73 retired from the computer software industry in 2017 and splits his time between Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Jupiter, Florida. His creations can be found at jupiteruke.com.

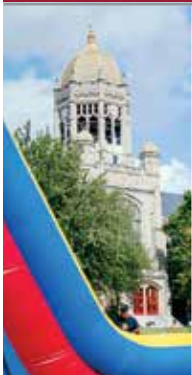
Bottom left, one of Dale's tenor ukuleles; below, Dale scraping bindings level under his backyard coconut trees



— SAVE THE DATE —

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SEPTEMBER 23-25



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'82,
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AND
'22



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PHOTO BY RYAN HULVATY/MERIS INC.

Continuing Activism

Adrian Shanker '09, founder of Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, just began a new role at the Spahr Center outside San Francisco. To read Shanker's story, see **p. 26**