

Muhlenberg

Magazine

SPRING 2021

Pandemic Pioneer

Samantha Jonson '09 is
part of the NIH response



Good Neighbors

Community engagement
generates mutual benefits

A Historic Gift

Muhlenberg receives \$7.5M in
support of capital projects

Behind the Music

Rock journalist David Fricke '73
shares stories and lessons

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Class Leadership Committee Chairs (CLCC) play a pivotal role in helping to further connect you with your Muhlenberg family.

Members volunteer to assist with fundraising, to share class communications, to encourage in-person and virtual events and to gather their classmates for reunions.

Meet some CLCC members and follow their example by joining them today.

JOHN TRAINER '65



"I remember being surprised when asked to become a leader in the spring of our senior year. I had little understanding of what would be involved over the next 55 years, but I also had little understanding of how much I would owe to Muhlenberg for my career. Muhlenberg prepared me to be a leader in all aspects of life and it is an honor to be a class leader and to give back to my classmates and future generations of Mules."

ELLEN POLAKOFF GESNER '82



"I am honored to be a class leader. It allows me to give back, connect with classmates and help to support the advancement efforts for current and future students."

BRUCE ALBRIGHT '74



"Serving as a CLCC for the Class of 1974 is how I contribute in a personal way to ensure, 47 years later, that '74 Means More. This was our slogan for our Class Gift Fund, the first in Muhlenberg's history. Volunteering in this role helps to make our class year remain an integral part of our alma mater."

JAMES HAHN '18



"I choose to serve Muhlenberg College and my memorable Class of 2018 because this institution and my class provided so many opportunities and memories for me. Not only was I prepared to enter the 'grown-up' world upon graduation, but I also have so many special memories to cherish. The community feeling at Muhlenberg is something I miss and would like to recreate in all of my involvements in the future."

To learn more about your Class Leadership Committee Chair or about becoming a CLCC, go to

muhlenberg.edu/alumni/classvolunteer

or contact Brandon Marth, assistant director of class giving, at brandonmarth@muhlenberg.edu.

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Award-winning rock journalist David Fricke '73 reflects on the journey that took him from WMUH to SiriusXM, including the more than 40 years he spent writing for *Rolling Stone*.



Writing the Pandemic Playbook 38

Through her involvement with a National Institutes of Health working group, Samantha Jonson '09 has had a front-row seat to the scientific revolution that COVID-19 inspired.



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At the heart of Muhlenberg's community engagement work is a commitment to forming deep, meaningful relationships between the College and those who live around it.

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ON THE COVER Photographer Joshua Fernandez captures Samantha Jonson '09, who works for the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, near her office in Bethesda, Maryland.

From the Editor



To say I have been following the news about COVID-19 would be an understatement. In addition to updates from my favorite local and national outlets, I subscribe to two podcasts and two email newsletters about the virus, and I've started following dozens of public health experts on Twitter. Still, when I spoke with Samantha Jonson '09 in early December about her work with the National Institutes of Health's Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) initiative, she mentioned something that wasn't on my radar—mutations.

Jonson fills an organizing and dot-connecting role on ACTIV's Preclinical Working Group, which, at the time, was thinking about the best ways to track mutations and ensure related data was easily accessible to scientists. What the group came up with was not yet publicly available at press time. But, in the two months between our interview and this issue's completion, the mutation discussion took over my Twitter feed (and my inbox, and my podcast queue).

If the pandemic were a roller coaster, Jonson's role would put her in the front row, among the first to see the next twist or turn this virus has in store for us. In "Writing the Pandemic Playbook" (page 38), she describes what it's been like to be part of the scientific community's response to this catastrophe as it has unfolded.

Meanwhile, speaking with award-winning rock journalist David Fricke '73 allowed me to escape the current moment and recall the joy of crowding into a venue to see a favorite band. Fricke, whose career is among the most respected in his field, has interviewed dozens of iconic musicians; "Behind the Music," page 28, details highlights from his decades-long career.

The final feature in this issue ("Looking Beyond Campus," page 44) takes a deep dive into Muhlenberg's community engagement work, which revolves around a commitment to forming deep, meaningful relationships between the College and those who live around it. As I learned from the students involved in this work, it has the power to alter their professional trajectories and to help them build skills they'll use even after they've left Allentown.

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To read “A Community Effort” online, visit muhlenberg.edu/communityeffort.

Shedding Light on a Hard Topic

Bravo on the diversity feature in the Fall 2020 *Muhlenberg Magazine* (“A Community Effort”). As a diversity and inclusion practitioner, I thought you really captured the impact of microaggressions and how a small group of individuals can facilitate change. As an alum, I am proud that you did not shy away from such a hard topic or from painting the College in a realistic light.

Brian Fishbone '98

This article came together very nicely. Thank you for limiting my voice and for providing the students with the platform they truly deserved. Also, kudos for not writing a “kumbaya, we are now a perfect institution because of this moment” type of article. I was impressed with the story’s candor. Finally, thank you for drawing attention to this moment in Muhlenberg College’s history and for allowing me to play a role in your remembrance. It’s truly an honor.

Justin Rose, former visiting professor of political science and Africana studies at Muhlenberg College and current dean for faculty recruitment, development and diversity at Rhodes College

A Professor, Remembered

The Summer 2020 edition of *Muhlenberg Magazine* was really a rich and full publication, with lots of sad news in the In Memoriam section. I had the great pleasure of taking Professor Roland Dedekind’s math and statistics courses from 1959 to 1963. He was ahead of his time with computers and the best math teacher I ever had—and a wonderful, kind human being.

Fred Truitt '63

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

ONLINE STORIES NOT TO MISS

Check out these features on the Muhlenberg website.

The Complicated Road to Election Day

BergVotes, an award-winning nonpartisan student organization focused on increasing voter registration and turnout, faced unprecedented challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic. To read about what the group did to ensure as many students as possible, on campus and off, could cast a vote last fall, visit muhlenberg.edu/bergvotes2020.

Putting Sustainability Into Practice

Last semester, Sam Borick '21 and Hannah Chiesa '21 got the kind of hands-on work experience any climate-minded senior would love to have on their resume: Each worked with a community partner (Borick in Easton, Chiesa in Allentown) to compile a greenhouse gas inventory for their city. To learn more about their internships, visit muhlenberg.edu/climateinterns2020.

Why You Shouldn't Defer the COVID Vaccine

Assistant Professor and Director of Public Health Chrysan Cronin explains why it’s important to get your shot whenever it becomes available to you, even if you feel like you’re lower risk than some of the groups who haven’t yet been offered the vaccine. To better understand the urgency of this moment, visit muhlenberg.edu/covidvax.



Muhlenberg Receives \$7.5M Gift in Support of Capital Projects

The pledge, made by a Muhlenberg graduate and his wife, is the largest personal gift in the history of the 172-year-old institution. It will provide significant support of two capital projects at the College: the addition of a new building on the south side of Muhlenberg's campus and the expansion and enhancement of The J. Conrad and Hazel J. Seegers Union.

The donors, who wish to remain anonymous at this time, are a Muhlenberg alum who graduated during the 1970s and his wife. The alum graduated from Muhlenberg with a degree in business administration. He credits his education and the leadership opportunities he received at the College with helping him create and operate a successful business enterprise with approximately 200 employees. He and his wife dedicate this gift in celebration of Muhlenberg's past, present and future.

The building on the south side of campus will consist of three floors and more than 20,000 square feet of student programming and academic space. It will reside on the hillside between Chew Street and Parkway Boulevard and serve as a new home for the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Program, the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion, the Division of Graduate and Continuing Studies and the Office of Community Engagement. The building will also house art studio space.

"Gifts that support Muhlenberg's academic program go to the heart of our College mission—to provide a quality educational experience for all of our students," says Bruce Anderson, interim provost and professor of chemistry. "This gift not only provides new classroom, community engagement, entrepreneurship, studio and office spaces that directly support faculty and student

work, but frees additional space on campus as well that will help other areas of the College."

The Seegers Union expansion will consist of an additional 42,000 square feet for classrooms and will provide necessary space for career and professional development programs and advising. The three-story addition will provide a home for the College's Career Center, which has, over the last five years, been at the center of a number of initiatives that support student and alumni outcomes. Experiential programs like Career

A rendering of the J. Conrad and Hazel J. Seegers Union expansion, as viewed from Chew Street. Image by RLPS Architects





Road Trips help introduce students to alumni-connected organizations in diverse career fields such as media, finance, sciences and the arts; expanded networking opportunities like Alumni Week connect students and alumni who pursued the same majors through classroom visits; and systems like Handshake, which brought an increase in the number and scope of available job and internship postings, have greatly increased community resources. The new space in Seegers will allow the Career Center to provide more robust programs and ongoing assistance for alumni to help them through career transitions at any stage in life.

In addition, the Seegers Union expansion will feature dedicated offices for preprofessional advising, seminar and conference rooms, an event area with seating for several hundred guests and an alumni lounge. Seegers Union has long served as a hub of campus activity, and the debut of additional community spaces and flexible classroom spaces will continue to facilitate academic, professional and social partnerships between students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the College. The expansion's location, adjacent to Chew Street, will serve as a prominent "front door" to campus.

In recognition of the gift, the College will dedicate and name the Seegers Union expansion and the new south campus building in honor of the donors' commitment and generosity. The College will continue fundraising for both projects in order to fully support its vision for the spaces.

"This gift is truly transformative and provides a strong statement about the enduring power of

Muhlenberg's residential liberal arts education," says President Kathleen E. Harring. "Through their vision and generosity, our alum and his spouse have shown that our campus, buildings and spaces are inherently linked to a strong student experience and our College mission. We are grateful for the leadership example and the legacy that this gift will provide Muhlenberg."

"Of course a \$7.5 million gift has a significant financial impact on the College, but the timing of this extraordinary support, in the midst of

A rendering of the new building, which will reside on the south side of Muhlenberg's campus, located in the proximity of Trexler Library. Image by Re:Vision Architecture

"Gifts that support Muhlenberg's academic program go to the heart of our College mission—to provide a quality educational experience for all of our students. This gift not only provides new classroom, community engagement, entrepreneurship, studio and office spaces that directly support faculty and student work, but frees additional space on campus as well that will help other areas of the College."

—BRUCE ANDERSON, INTERIM PROVOST AND PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY

some of the most challenging times ever faced by higher education, may be even more important," says Richard C. Crist Jr. '77 P'05 P'09, chair of the College's Board of Trustees. "This gift has provided our community additional confidence in the value Muhlenberg provides, both today and well into the future." —*Bill Keller*

Muhlenberg Celebrates 172nd Commencement Virtually



On Sunday, October 18, 2020, Muhlenberg College aired a virtual Commencement ceremony for the more than 600 graduates (including approximately 54 who earned degrees from the recently renamed Muhlenberg College School of Continuing Studies) who earned bachelor's degrees from Muhlenberg in May and October of last year.

The College also awarded honorary degrees to author and Director of College Autism Spectrum Jane

In his speech, Jack discussed his self-appointed role as university agitator, pushing administrators, staff and faculty in higher education to seek understanding of the different experiences and challenges facing their student bodies and to effect change in policies and procedures so that students from all backgrounds can make the most of their college experiences. He also challenged the College's Class of 2020 to take the passions that inspired them and the causes that motivated them at Muhlenberg into the larger world.

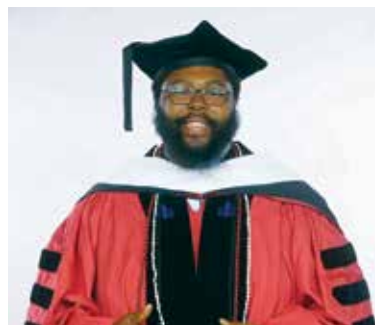
Other speakers included Michael Bonaddio '20, a finance and business administration major; School of Continuing Studies graduate Nerfis Nieves '20, a psychology major; and President Kathleen E. Harring.

During the ceremony, Harring presented two faculty awards: Jessica Cooperman, associate professor of religion studies and director of the Jewish Studies Program, received the Paul C. Empie '29 Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Cathy Marie Ouellette, associate professor of history and director of the Latin American & Caribbean Studies Program, received the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award.

Student honors went to Bonaddio and Mary Katherine Baumel '20 (biology and political science), who were each named Muhlenberg Alumni Association Future Leaders. Gabriela Solomon '20, an accounting and finance major and the Class of 2020 salutatorian, was noted for her 3.992 grade point average, and Brooke Weber '20, an English and media & communication major and the Class of 2020 valedictorian, was celebrated for her perfect 4.0 GPA. —BK

Above, President Kathleen E. Harring addresses the Class of 2020. Below, other participants included (left to right) Michael Bonaddio '20, Nerfis Nieves '20, Harvard University Assistant Professor of Education Anthony Abraham Jack, author of *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Poor Students*, which explores the differences in the college experience between low-income students from under-resourced school districts and those who received scholarships to wealthy private high schools. Following the conferment of his honorary degree, Jack addressed the Class of 2020 and their guests.

Thierfeld Brown P'10, Pastor of New City Parish and former Coordinator of its Urban Training Center Brian Eklund '66, former President of HSBC Business Credit (USA) Inc. John Heffer P'96 and Harvard University Assistant Professor of Education Anthony Abraham Jack. Jack is the author of *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Poor Students*, which explores the differences in the college experience between low-income students from under-resourced school districts and those who received scholarships to wealthy private high schools. Following the conferment of his honorary degree, Jack addressed the Class of 2020 and their guests.



Muhlenberg Selects New Provost, Laura Furge

Following a national search, Muhlenberg has named Laura Furge as the institution's next chief academic officer. She is currently the Dorothy H. Heyl Professor of Chemistry at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. She will succeed Interim Provost Bruce Anderson, a professor of chemistry at Muhlenberg, and will begin at the College on June 1.

Furge earned her bachelor's in biochemistry from Oberlin College. She completed her Ph.D. and a postdoctoral fellowship in biochemistry from Vanderbilt University, where she was advised by Nobel Laureate Stanley Cohen.

In addition to her roles in the classroom and laboratory, Furge has held a number of administrative appointments at Kalamazoo, including terms as interim provost and associate provost. She was involved in the development and deployment of aspects of Kalamazoo's strategic plan, contributed to the oversight of academic centers and institutes and assisted with apportionment and allocation of national research grant funds.

Since 1999, Furge has served as a professor in the Department of Chemistry at Kalamazoo. She has taught classes in biochemistry, organic chemistry and first-year writing. Furge is an accomplished scholar and has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals in biochemistry and teaching and learning in biochemistry. She maintains an active research laboratory, where she has mentored dozens of student researchers over her time in academia with support from several granting agencies, including the National Institutes of Health.

"We had a strong pool of applicants in this search and Laura rose to the top among outstanding academic leaders," says President Kathleen E. Haring. "Laura's passion for teaching, scholarly accomplishments and leadership experience are impressive. She is a strong advocate for the liberal arts and a thoughtful and collaborative decision-maker."

"Muhlenberg offers the best of the liberal arts experience—skills of critical thinking, collaboration, intercultural understanding and humility, and I look forward to partnering with members of the campus to advance the mission of Muhlenberg," says Furge. —BK

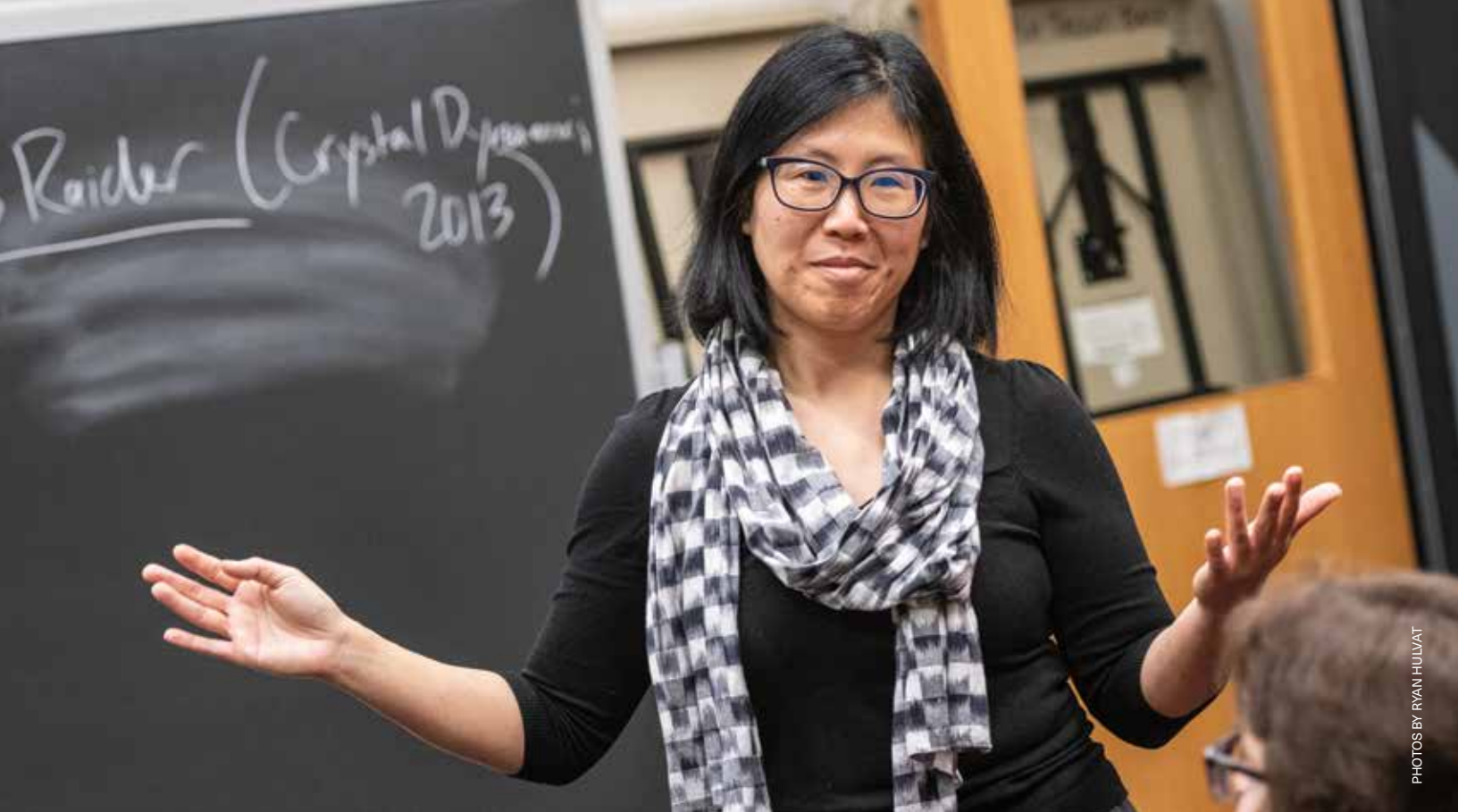


Institute for Religious and Cultural Understanding Honors Journalist Krista Tippett

For 36 years, the Muhlenberg College Institute for Religious and Cultural Understanding (formerly the Institute of Jewish-Christian Understanding) has remembered the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat in Hungary who saved 100,000 Jews from deportation to death camps during World War II, with the Wallenberg Tribute. The 2020 event was held virtually on October 25. The Institute's director, Professor of Religion Studies William "Chip" Gruen, and his team selected Krista Tippett, a Peabody Award-winning broadcaster, a *New York Times* bestselling author and a National Humanities medalist, to be recognized at the event and to present the Raoul Wallenberg Tribute Lecture. Tippett's work (including a radio program, *On Being*) embodies the idea of moral courage and working on behalf of others—like Wallenberg did, Gruen says.

Muhlenberg Hosts First-Generation Panel During Family Weekend

On November 8, 2020, the College held an inaugural event to honor its first-generation students. It was part of Virtual Family Weekend and was conducted via Zoom. After President Kathleen E. Haring welcomed the attendees, first-generation students shared their experiences and had a chance to meet one another. The College's First-Generation Advocacy and Support Group, which provides faculty and staff mentoring and institutional and peer support to first-gen students, organized the event. Dawn Lonsinger, associate professor of English and herself a first-generation student, initiated the advocacy and support group in 2019 and co-directs it with Gregg Scully, associate dean of the School of Continuing Studies. Muhlenberg is also the country's Delta, or fourth, chapter of Tri-Alpha, a first-generation college student honor society that was founded in 2018 at nearby Moravian College.



PHOTOS BY RYAN HULVAT

The Study of Play

Assistant Professor of Media & Communication Irene Chien helps students understand the prominent role of video games in the broader media landscape.

Play and Interactive Media, an advanced seminar taught by Assistant Professor of Media & Communication Irene Chien, requires students to attend an hour-long lab session each week. In that lab, the classmates do something together that they might have otherwise been doing on their own in their residence halls: They play video games.

"I have to spend a lot of time helping students justify for their parents why they wouldn't be wasting their time taking a class on video games," says Chien, a digital media scholar whose primary focus is on games.

One key justification: Video games have outperformed Hollywood films—which have entire academic programs devoted to their study, including at Muhlenberg—for more than a decade. Even before the pandemic, the average person spent more time playing video games than at the movie theater. (Remember that games are more than just *Fortnite* and *Call of Duty*—*Candy Crush*, *Words with Friends* and *Solitaire* all count.) And because modern gameplay takes place online, players are constantly con-

nected with both friends and with strangers in a way they weren't in the era of arcades and Ataris.

"Video games are a site in which people make meaning in their lives," says Chien, who tries to draw a mix of students (some who are interested in video games and some who aren't) to her classes. "If we are to dismiss [games], we have to know what, exactly, we are dismissing. If we have committed full-on to them, we need to consider what is attractive and interesting about video games that is shaping how people think about themselves and society."

Chien became interested in studying video games after her younger brother, who was away at college, became so deeply immersed in the online role-playing game *Dark Age of Camelot* that he fell out of touch with his family. She saw firsthand how some players constructed their lives around games and wanted to better understand that universe.

For her dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley, Chien chose to focus on two genres—martial arts games and dance games—that highlight the actions of characters' and/or players' bodies. In

martial arts games, it's not about how many weapons a player can collect but how skillfully the player can move the character on the screen. (Chien, who also teaches Asian American Media, notes that martial arts games were the first to prominently feature Asian people.) Dance games, such as *Dance Dance Revolution* and *Just Dance*, invite spectators to watch the players themselves rather than watching the screen.

"Another really interesting thing about dance games is the way they have emerged at different points to train people into new technological interfaces," Chien says. For example, one of the most popular games in the App Store when the iPhone debuted in 2007 was called *Tap Tap Revenge*, which had players swiping and tapping—novel movements at the time—to the beat.

"Music and dance are actually really programmed ... They're codified movements and patterns and repetitions, but we experience them as being expressive and freeing," Chien says, adding that the iPhone's predecessors had been marketed as tools of productivity. "It was a really interesting trick Apple played to create a device with the functionality of a Blackberry but with this sense of breaking norms and expressing your true identity."

Chien's focus on dance and martial arts games in her research dovetails with how she teaches her classes, which entails "pushing back against this association of video games with a type of masculinity that is heavily policed and that keeps women, people of color and queer people out," she says. One way she does this is by introducing her students to games whose primary goals for players are experimenting and taking risks rather than attaining power

and mastery. She also tries to prioritize games students wouldn't have encountered on their own, such as *Katamari Damacy*, originally produced for the PlayStation 2.

"You're just a creature rolling a giant ball that becomes larger and larger as it sticks to all the things you pick up," she says. "It's disorienting and silly. Failing in the game is just as interesting and fun as winning in it."

To support the lab components of her classes as well as students interested in doing independent research on video games, Chien began a collaboration with Digital Cultures Technologist Tony Dalton. In 2014, Dalton built a mobile video game lab—a cart that can now be used to play games designed for 16 different systems—and established a video game library that has accumulated nearly 100 donated titles.

The two hope to find a prominent place in Walson Hall to display the lab and library, Chien says, "in the hopes that it both makes the media-comm space more welcoming, because play is always an important way to enter into learning, and reminds us to take video games seriously as a mode through which we experience the world and a central part of media & communication studies." —*Meghan Kita*

"If we are to dismiss [games], we have to know what, exactly, we are dismissing. If we have committed full-on to them, we need to consider what is attractive and interesting about video games that is shaping how people think about themselves and society."

—IRENE CHIEN (MEDIA & COMMUNICATION)



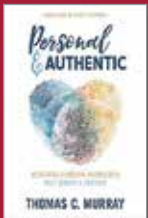
Opposite, Assistant Professor of Media & Communication Irene Chien teaches Play and Interactive Media in Fall 2019. At left, students in Chien's class react as they play a game during the course's lab component.



David Joachim '89
Mastering Bread: The Art and Practice of Handmade Sourdough, Yeast Bread and Pastry

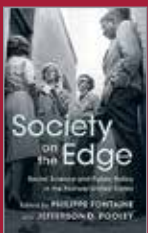
Ten Speed Press, 304 pages

Joachim partnered with renowned Philly-based chef Marc Vetri and his former head baker, Claire Kopp McWilliams, to co-author this book. *Mastering Bread* is the 50th cookbook Joachim has worked on.



Tom Murray '00
Personal & Authentic: Designing Learning Experiences That Impact a Lifetime
 Impress, 216 pages

Murray, one of the top influencers in school leadership and educational technology, offers guidance for educators on designing memorable student experiences that are grounded in relationships and learner-centered.



Jefferson Pooley (media & communication)
Society on the Edge: Social Science and Public Policy in the Postwar United States

Cambridge University Press, 280 pages

Pooley serves as co-editor of this text, which explores the rapid development the social sciences underwent in postwar America.

A Rom-Com for the Pandemic Era



For years, Eirinn Disbrow '10, Christina Garofalo '10 and Anna Jaller '10 had been collaborating on a project about dating in Los Angeles, “but it never felt quite right or finished,” Disbrow says. California’s first COVID-19 lockdown last March provided both inspiration and time. The trio pivoted to a storyline about dating during the pandemic, and Garofalo wrote a script for a web series. *Love in 2020* (directed by Disbrow) follows 28-year-old Kenna Benjamin (played by Jaller) as she endures FaceTime dates, job-related struggles and the isolation of lockdown as a single person. The rom-com series filmed over four days in August. During post-production, a fourth Muhlenberg alum, Nick LaFalce '10, joined the team as its composer. At press time, Disbrow, Garofalo, Jaller and producer Brandi Craig were waiting to hear from film festivals.

In the web series Love in 2020, Anna Jaller '10 (above) plays Kenna Benjamin, who “learns that the only way to get through quarantine is to get comfortable with who she is. Kenna discovers it’s possible to find connection amid this newfound isolation, if first she can connect with herself.”

Muhlenberg Magazine How did you address the challenges of filming during a pandemic?

Anna Jaller '10 Our producer Brandi Craig took on the role of health and safety manager, and we had a COVID safety officer [Garofalo’s husband] to ensure that all protocols [including mandatory masking of all cast and crew except actors shooting scenes, limiting the number of people on set and using fans and opening windows between

takes of indoor scenes] were being followed. Ultimately, through advance planning and prep, ground rules and people specifically designated to enforcing those rules, the rest of the team was able to come to set and focus on their artistry.

MM Why is it significant that your production team is all women?

Eirinn Disbrow '10 In 2019, women comprised 37 percent of lead characters, 26 percent of producers, 23 percent of editors, 20 percent of writers, 12 percent of directors and 2 percent of cinematographers in Hollywood. Women's experiences are important; our perspectives should shape the conversation. Things have been changing for the better, but there is still a lot of progress to be made, particularly for women of color. That is why diversity on set was non-negotiable for us and we made it a priority to give each person a voice in shaping the narrative.

MM What was it like to create a project that's a snapshot of such a specific moment?

Christina Garofalo '10 Rather than try to say something profound about a time we're still living through, we focused on the ongoing, universal challenge: What happens when you're trapped at home and you can't escape yourself?

A couple weeks after the script was finished, George Floyd was murdered. We felt it was important to address race and privilege but didn't want to wedge it into our storyline just to check a box, or to approach it in bad faith by speaking for an experience that, as three white women, isn't our own. We decided to have honest, sometimes difficult, conversations with our diverse cast of actors and Brandi and to invite each person to challenge the script and shape the dialogue to what felt true to them.

In the end, we stuck to our original timeline: The six episodes take place over the first two months of quarantine, prior to the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests. We worked with our male lead, James Tang, to call out the anti-Chinese racism that plagued the early pandemic, and we included subtle nods to the ways we have been complicit and complacent in racism, privilege and neglecting our responsibility to one another.

Kenna's story is a "light" version of all of that, of course—it is a rom-com. When we look back on 2020, no one will forget the strife; it was important to us to give people permission to find joy and laugh during this time, too.

Visit lovein2020tv.com and follow [@lovein2020tv](https://www.instagram.com/lovein2020tv) on Instagram for more information and updates.

Below left, James Tang plays the male lead in Love in 2020. Below right, producers Brandi Craig, Eirinn Disbrow '10, Christina Garofalo '10 and Anna Jaller '10 pose on set.



Muhlenberg Adds Winter Term

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College adjusted its academic calendar to include a four-week winter term (which ran from January 4-29) and to begin the spring semester on February 8. All 67 winter term courses were offered remotely, with 867 students electing to participate. To learn more about what's happening at the College this spring, see the opposite page or, for more detail, visit muhlenberg.edu/spring2021semester.

Muhlenberg Named Recipient of Air Products Foundation Scholarships

In December, the College announced that it would receive four scholarships from the Air Products Foundation for minority or women accounting majors over the course of the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters. Muhlenberg is one of three Lehigh Valley higher education institutions (including DeSales and Kutztown Universities) to receive the new scholarship funds. The total \$50,000 grant award will provide 10 scholarships for minority or women students at the local colleges.

Additionally, these students may also benefit from paid internships that Air Products regularly provides. In the event that COVID-19 challenges keep students from working at a physical Air Products location, the company is prepared to continue to make internship opportunities virtual. Air Products has provided 75 virtual internships since the early onset of the pandemic in March 2020.

"Muhlenberg's Accounting Program combines a comprehensive preprofessional education with the best that the liberal arts has to offer," says Trevor Knox, associate professor of accounting and director of the program. "The Air Products scholarships and internship opportunities will ensure that we continue to make that combination available to students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the accounting profession."

Ira Blum '10 Named Director of Leffell Center for Jewish Student Life



In his new role, Ira Blum '10 will oversee all aspects of Jewish religious and cultural life at Muhlenberg and build a strategy for engaging Muhlenberg's Jewish students. He will work closely with the College's admissions team to recruit incoming students and work with

other College offices to connect and nurture relationships with parents, alumni and external partners. He will also serve as a member of the College chaplain's senior team.

Blum joined the College full-time in January. He previously served as director of Jewish student life and later as assistant director at Penn Hillel at the University of Pennsylvania. There, he worked with hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members each semester. His responsibilities included the supervision and development of student leadership opportunities, interfaith fellowship programs, international educational travel and social justice and engagement efforts.

After graduating magna cum laude from Muhlenberg with a degree in religion studies, Blum earned master's degrees in Jewish professional leadership and Near Eastern and Judaic studies from Brandeis University. Blum has completed several fellowships, including the Hillel Fundraising Intensive: The Art & Science of Individual Giving; the Hillel Debra S. and Joseph S. Weinberg ACCELERATE Executive Training Program; and the Shalom Hartman Institute Fellowship for Campus Professionals.

"I believe that the spark [in Jewish student life] really comes from students—their motivations, their passions, their interests, what they're struggling with, what they're thinking deeply about. I believe that students must be empowered to pursue their own Jewish experiences and to build their Jewish identities," says Blum. —BK

Spring Semester Begins With Most Students Back on Campus

In November, the College announced its plans for the Spring 2021 semester: It would begin later than usual, on February 8, and any student who wished to return to campus would be allowed back. The majority of the student body took up this offer: Approximately 1,250 students are living on campus, while another 270 are living off campus or commuting. The College developed extensive health and safety measures to allow this number of students to return to campus, which housed only 590 students, most of them first-years, during the Fall 2020 semester.

Prior to arrival, students underwent a virtual COVID-19 re-orientation program and had to receive a negative at-home COVID test result. (More than 10 students had to delay their returns

to campus due to positive results.) The semester began with a buffer period in which students had to limit contact with others to allow the College to conduct on-campus testing of all students the week of February 8, a process that detected just one COVID case.

Face coverings that fit snugly over the mouth and nose are required both inside and outside on campus, for students, faculty, staff, neighbors and visitors. Classroom spaces have been modified to allow for six feet of physical distancing between each person, and campus buildings are marked to encourage one-way traffic through doorways, in stairwells and in hallways. In indoor spaces, the College has increased circulation of outdoor air as much as possible and changed all HVAC filters before students returned to campus. Campus has undergone enhanced cleaning protocols since COVID began that are continuing throughout the spring. The College installed no-touch toilets, sinks and soap and paper-towel dispensers throughout campus, and hand sanitizer flows freely in all campus buildings.

Students are undergoing regular surveillance testing. Symptomatic testing of individuals is available through the Health Center, which also provides post-exposure testing for contacts of students who test positive. Staff have been trained to assist with contact tracing on campus.

The College's COVID-19 Dashboard updates weekly with information about case counts, the number of tests performed and the current "campus alert level." There are four levels, ranging from "new normal" to "very high," with different restrictions planned for each level. Changes in alert levels (and, therefore, restrictions) are also communicated to the campus community via email. To view the dashboard, visit muhlenberg.edu/coviddashboard.

Spring 2021 move-in took place over four days in two-hour shifts to limit the number of people in the residence halls at any given time. Students needed to receive a negative test result before coming to campus, and they were tested again during the first week of classes.



A Revelation About the College's History

A few summers ago, a panoramic photograph entitled "Muhlenberg College Summer School 1927" popped up on eBay. Trexler Library purchased it, happy to add to the archives for the Extension School (now the Muhlenberg College School of Continuing Studies). When the photograph arrived and archivist Susan Falciani Maldonado unrolled it, she found, right in the middle, the image of a Black woman. This was a revelation because, according to College records, the first Black students at Muhlenberg were five men who joined the residential College in 1947.

Unfortunately, the 1927 photograph is not labeled with names, and the registrar's office has no records relating to the Extension School enrollment then. A search of *The Morning Call* from 1927 revealed a reprint of the photograph with a list of students in the Summer School (180 women, 201 men) and their towns of residence. Falciani Maldonado then cross-referenced that list with the United States census. In addition to names, occupations and addresses, the census records race. Working through the women's names alphabetically, she had checked about 100 before she was able to identify the woman as Clara Lane of Bethlehem.

What the archivist discovered about her life and death can be found at muhlenberg.edu/claralane. While Falciani Maldonado intends to search for more information, for now, she can assert that Clara Lane was Muhlenberg College's first known Black student.



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

Solar Partnership Wins Global Sustainability Award

On December 3, 2020, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) announced that a collaborative renewable energy project involving Muhlenberg and three other Pennsylvania institutions won a 2020 AASHE Sustainability Award.

In February 2020, Muhlenberg, Dickinson College, Lafayette College and Lehigh University signed a 15-year virtual power-purchase agreement to buy renewable energy that will be generated by a 200+ acre solar farm in Texas. Together, they plan to purchase the largest amount of solar power of any group of independent higher education institutions in the nation. Combined with other carbon neutrality efforts, the partnership enables all four institutions to mitigate 100 percent of their emissions associated with electricity usage.

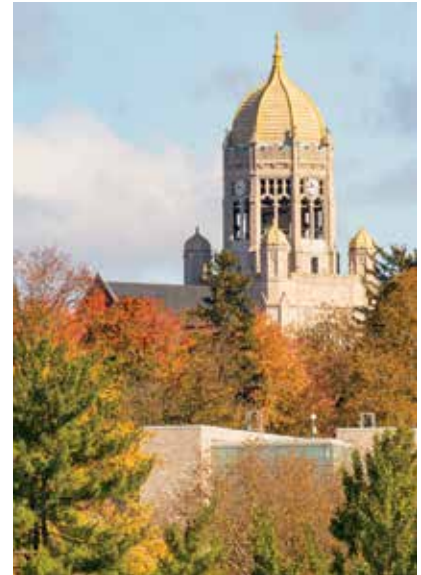
AASHE's annual Sustainability Awards recognize outstanding achievements and progress toward environmental, social and economic health. AASHE named 11 winners, and one honorable mention, from 450 submissions across four award categories last year.

"Climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time," says President Kathleen E. Haring. "This collaborative solar energy project illustrates how institutions can work together to create an important and extraordinary environmental impact. I'm proud that Muhlenberg's committed staff, faculty and students took the lead in this initiative."

"This groundbreaking project will eliminate our carbon emissions from electricity, which is a significant portion of our overall carbon footprint," says Kalyna Procyk, who heads up the College's sustainability efforts.

In addition, for the second year in a row, Muhlenberg received a STARS Gold Rating for Sustainability Achievements from AASHE. The College was also recognized as a top performer in AASHE's 2020 Sustainable Campus Index for water conservation.

—Kristine Yahna Todaro '84



Why I Study ... auction theory Associate Professor of Mathematics Will Gryc

PHOTO BY TOM AMICO



I was trained in something called Yang–Mills theory—that was the subject of my Ph.D. thesis. When I started teaching, I

wanted to have something I could work with undergraduates on, and Yang–Mills theory was not that subject. It took me into my third year of graduate school to even understand the question I was trying to solve.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to go to a week-long workshop on financial mathematics, and part of the assigned reading was a book about eBay. All my life, I've been a collector, and eBay first came on

my radar in like 1998. I've used it to fuel my collections—old *Star Wars* toys, baseball and hockey cards. The book talked about applying math not just to eBay but to different types of auctions. The workshop itself dedicated only one day to auction theory, but I was hooked after that.

I read more on my own and started doing projects with students, including one on strategies for making best offers on eBay. We analyzed, in a setting where you have an auction with a Buy It Now price and an option to make an offer, how should a bidder behave? Should they submit an offer or choose Buy It Now? If they make an offer, how big of an offer should they submit?

This is more complicated than a regular eBay auction, where you just

bid your value. I have to balance the surplus I would get if I won a valuable item with a lower bid against the possibility that I wouldn't get the item because I bid too low. Mathematically, we analyzed: Where's that equilibrium point? We presented our results at a conference in California, and later, we published our results in a journal.

Auction theory is interesting to study because auctions are more ubiquitous than you might think. A lot of big, important transactions—like buying a house or car—involve some kind of negotiation, where the price is not really fixed or it's not clear what an item's price should be. Having a good understanding of auction theory can help you navigate those situations as a consumer.

SNEAKERS & SUPREME

As founder of the online brand SAINT, Matt Steiner '21 shapes the social media conversation surrounding streetwear.



On December 5, 2020, Matt Steiner '21 rolled out of bed and got onto Twitter. One of the biggest sneaker launches of 2020 was about to happen, and his account, @SAINT, needed to be part of the conversation.

For some people, sneakers are no longer a purchase to make once or twice a year. Some have sneaker collections that swell to hundreds or even thousands of pairs, shoes they may or may not ever wear. And Steiner, who has about 30 pairs himself, is there to capitalize on the fervor.

December 5 marked the release of the Yeezy 350 V2 in the “bred” (that is, black and red) colorway. Adidas first

released the collaboration with Kanye West in 2017, and it attracted buyers for its hipness, its classic color scheme and the fact it can resell for hundreds of dollars over its \$220 retail price. Steiner deals in these kinds of releases with his brand SAINT, a catchall hype machine (fueled by Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and a website) for the hottest sneakers and streetwear.

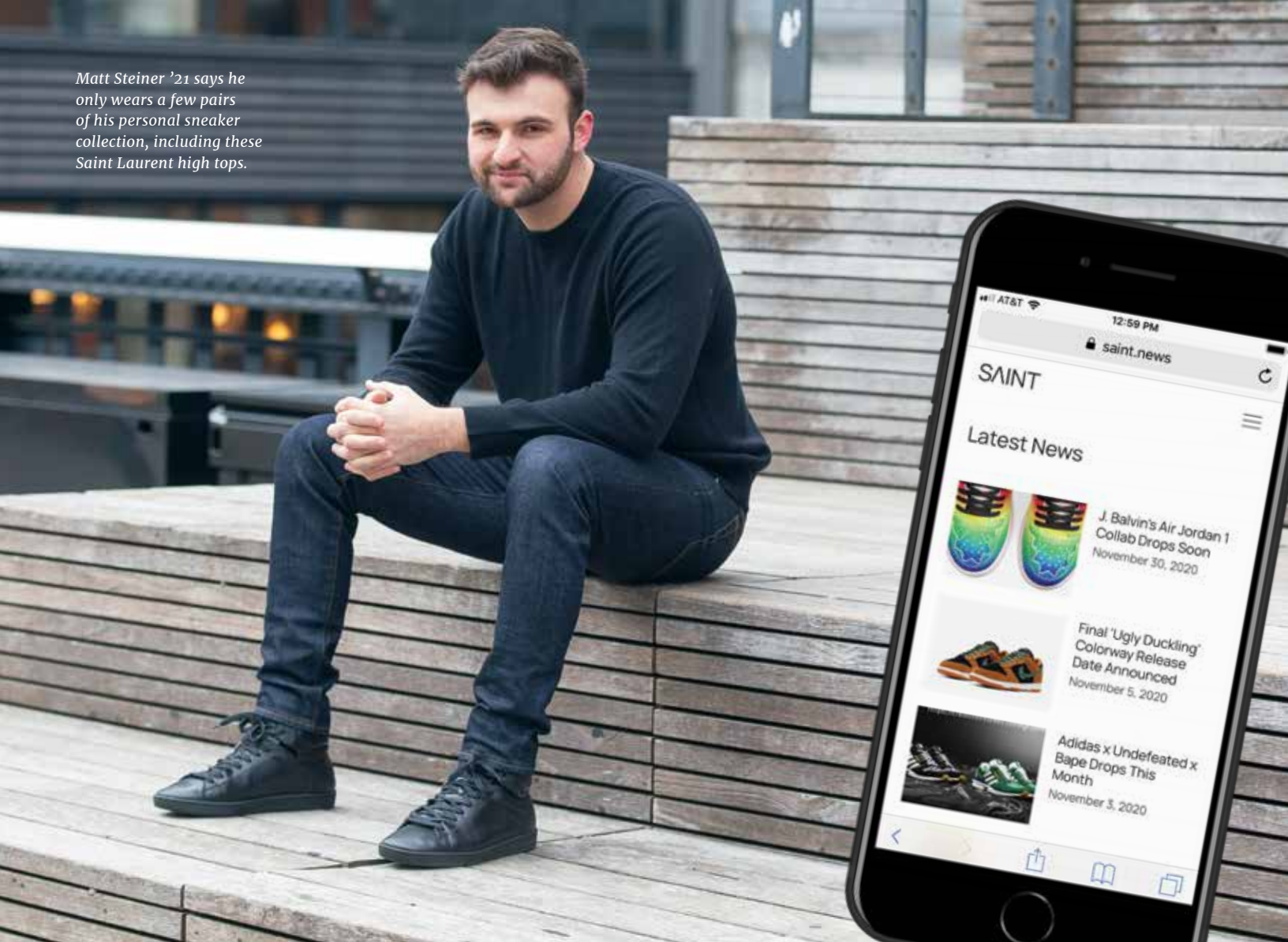
On launch days, Steiner creates what the site calls “moments”—collections of tweets that help users catch up on trending topics. That December morning, he composed his own short tweet about the sneakers (a photo captioned “Who copped?”), added a few other tweets to the moment and published. When users clicked on the Twitter moment, they saw Steiner’s tweet for SAINT at the top.

“That’ll do a couple million views, that moment,” Steiner says. “It’s on the front page of everyone’s Twitter for hours.”

Steiner, a business administration major and innovation & entrepreneurship minor at Muhlenberg, began his foray into the online sneaker sphere with The Supreme Saint in 2015. He and his partner created a website that enabled customers to pay for the ability to purchase limited-edition products from Supreme, a New York City-based skate brand. Customers would give Steiner’s company their addresses and credit card information and a list of which products they wanted. The Supreme Saint (which was not affiliated with Supreme) would then use a bot, a computer program that ensured Steiner and his partner would be first in line, to purchase Supreme products upon their release. Steiner’s company charged a fee for each transaction; one week, when Supreme released a collaboration on a pair of Air Jordan sneakers, Steiner’s company made \$20,000 by facilitating those sales.

But as more and more people got into creating bots, The Supreme Saint lost some market share. In 2018, Steiner bought out his partner and pivoted the business from a focus on Supreme to a focus on hot clothing and sneakers of all brands. SAINT no longer facilitates purchases; instead, it reports on them.

Matt Steiner '21 says he only wears a few pairs of his personal sneaker collection, including these Saint Laurent high tops.



Steiner's SAINT brand is unique in that it is primarily Twitter-based. The account has more than 186,000 followers—about 120,000 more than when he switched its focus away from Supreme. The street-wear brand remains popular, though: One SAINT tweet from early 2020 about Supreme's collaboration with Oreo racked up 8 million impressions (the number of people who saw the tweet) and 4 million engagements (the number who retweeted, liked or otherwise interacted with the tweet).

At this point, Steiner's focus is on continuing to build the brand to make it increasingly appealing to potential buyers. He's already had discussions with individuals interested in purchasing parts of his business. Meanwhile,

he's been working to complete his senior year, including taking all remote courses last fall. (COVID-related changes haven't been entirely bad for SAINT, though: "A lot of people have been on their phones looking for stuff," he says.) He returned to his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at the start of the pandemic, but last fall, he and friends rented a house in the Poconos for two months to get a bit more of the college experience. He ended 2020 living with a friend in New York City.

"It's great to get the experience of living here," he says, though the transition to remote learning has been challenging. Still, he adds, "It's my senior year. It feels good no matter where I am." —Dan McQuade

"It's great to get the experience of living [in New York City] ... It's my senior year. It feels good no matter where I am."

—MATT STEINER '21

Q&A

10 Questions with... Olivier Jean-Pierre '15

Social worker in Stamford, Connecticut

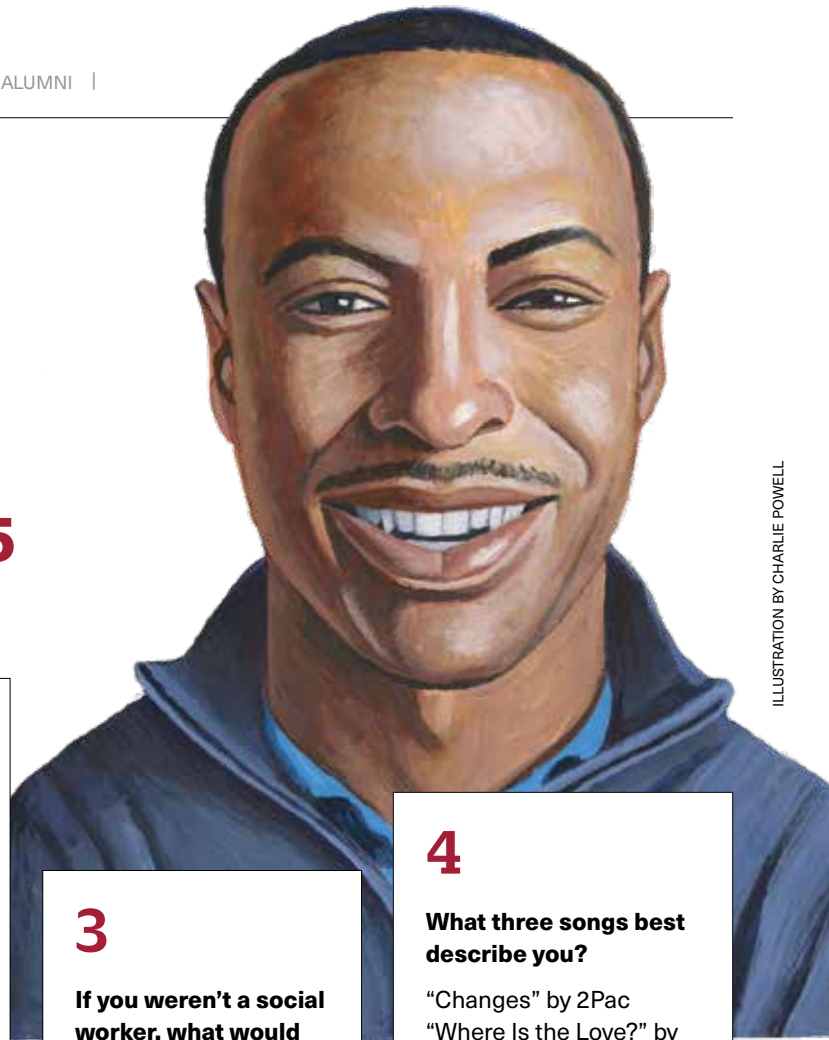


ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLIE POWELL

1

Describe what you do in five words or fewer.

Advocate, support, encourage, build trust

2

When did you know you wanted to be a social worker?

My senior year. As a sociology major, I knew I wanted to help solve the broader issues in society by working with disadvantaged people.

4

What three songs best describe you?

"Changes" by 2Pac
"Where Is the Love?" by Black Eyed Peas
"Oh Happy Day" by the St. Francis Choir (of *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit*)

3

If you weren't a social worker, what would you be?

A firefighter. I'm a volunteer firefighter, and I love the experience.

5

What are you secretly good at?

Singing/rapping. I don't think the world is ready for or deserving of my artistic contributions at this time.

6

What is your greatest fear?

Living life without having the courage to pursue all my dreams

7

What historical figure do you most identify with?

[Former U.S. Representative] John Lewis. His fight for justice at his young age always inspired me. "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble."

8

Which person, living or dead, do you most admire?

My grandmother. She was a Haitian immigrant who raised me and worked low-wage jobs to support her family when she came to the U.S. She knew very little English, and she had to take the citizenship test multiple times. I got to be there with her when she voted for the first time in 2004. Her life showed me the courage of immigrants in our country.

9

What question should we have asked you?

Are you mad that they took *The Office* off of Netflix?

10

What's the answer?

Don't get me started. There's not enough space here for my rant.

Muhlenberg in the Media

Chris Borick (political science) and the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion were featured in a number of outlets' coverage of the U.S. presidential election.

National press coverage included the Associated Press, *Business Insider*, CNN, *Fortune*, *Los Angeles Times*, MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, NBC News, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Politico*, *Time*, Reuters and *The Washington Post*. International coverage included the international news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP), Al Jazeera news network and the BBC.

The *New York Times*, *Sports Illustrated* and *The Atlantic* interviewed Kathleen Bachynski (public health).

The first two articles ("Pandemic Victories for College Sports Have All Come With Caveats" in January and "The Lawyer Who Took on the NFL Over Concussions Has a New Strategy That Could Devastate the NCAA" in October) related to college athletics; the last ("Go Ahead, Share Your Vaccine Selfie" in January) was about the power of photos to overcome skepticism toward inoculation.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, several Pennsylvania NPR stations and Telemundo covered the work of Erika M. Sutherland (Spanish).

For the 2020 election, Sutherland again trained bilingual poll interpreters to serve on Election Day in Lehigh County.

Two Pennsylvania outlets featured comments from Chrysan Cronin (public health) about the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In a December story for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Cronin spoke about a maskless election event held by state Republicans. In a January article in *The Morning Call*, Cronin stressed the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID as soon as you're eligible.

The BBC interviewed Jacqueline Antonovich (history) for a story about Dr. Helen Octavia Dickens.

Dickens was the female physician who popularized the Pap smear. Antonovich was also featured in *The Morning Call* and *Times Union* (NY) after discovering a Nazi flag that had been captured and signed by U.S. Army troops inside her historic home.

Associate Provost Brooke Vick and Assistant Director of Multicultural Life Kiyaana Cox Jones appeared on PBS39's "Courageous Conversations."

Vick and Cox Jones were featured in a December episode about the election of Vice President Kamala Harris.

***Inside Higher Ed* published "A Chair's Life in 3 Stages" by Cathy Marie Ouellette (history).**

Ouellette offered the insights she has gained as a new department chair during the pandemic.

Winter Term Includes MLK Day, Inauguration Virtual Events

On January 18, the Africana Studies Program, the Office of Multicultural Life and the Office of the Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives presented a livestream celebration of the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. titled "In Solidarity: Lift Every Voice" for the campus community. Speakers included Director of Multicultural Life Robin Riley-Casey, President Kathleen E. Haring, Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Africana Studies Emanuela Kucik, Assistant Professor of Dance Randall Smith, Associate Provost for Faculty and Diversity Initiatives Brooke Vick and student leaders from the Black Students Association, the Men of Color Network and the Destiny Women of Color Association.

On January 19, Professor of Political Science Mohsin Hashim moderated a live webinar titled "Inauguration 2021: The Unpeaceful Transfer of Power and the Future of Democracy." The event examined the turbulence that marked the transition to the new U.S. presidential administration. Faculty panelists Assistant Professor of History Jacqueline Antonovich, Assistant Professor of Political Science Ross Dardani, Professor of Political Science Giacomo Gambino, Assistant Professor of Psychology Kenneth Michniewicz and Professor of Psychology Katherine Richmond '00 discussed how systemic racism, populism, neoliberal economic policies and the politics of masculinity have shaped the current polarization.

Trexler Library, Bradbury-Sullivan Launch LGBT Oral History Project

In November, Trexler Library and Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center launched the online portal for the Lehigh Valley LGBT Community Archive Oral History Collections. The first collection, "Stories from LGBT Older Adults in the Lehigh Valley," is a collaboration among faculty and staff from area institutions along with partners from within the community. To view the oral histories, visit trexlerworks.muhlenberg.edu/lgbt_oralhistory.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Pamela Campbell '01, a mechanical engineer at Lockheed Martin, works in the propulsion group on some spacecraft bound for Earth orbit and some for deep space exploration.

When Pamela Campbell '01 was about 10 years old, she read in an issue of her dad's *Discover* magazine that the United States would start sending people to Mars in 2010. Quickly doing the math, she figured that at that stage of her life, she would be the perfect candidate to be on the first manned mission.

Discover's prediction proved to be wrong, so Campbell is doing the next best thing: Instead of sending herself to Mars, she's sending her work to Mars—and beyond.

Campbell is a mechanical engineer at Lockheed Martin Space in Littleton, Colorado, where she works in the propulsion group doing analysis and operations for a variety of missions. She contributes on both the NASA side (spacecraft that are currently in or bound for deep space) and the military side (spacecraft mostly in geosynchronous Earth orbit that provide communication and observation functions for the U.S. Space Force).

At any given time, Campbell is involved in 10 to 15 missions. Among those currently on her plate are Mars Odyssey (in orbit since 2001), MAVEN (Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution, launched in 2013), Juno (orbiting Jupiter since 2016), OSIRIS-REx (asteroid study and sample-return mission, launched in 2016) and Lucy (asteroid study scheduled for launch in late 2021).

"The propulsion system is the part of the vehicle that generates thrust to move about in space," she says. "My particular role allows me to be involved with the entire life cycle of the spacecraft, from analysis early on in the development to ensure the system is sized correctly to achieve the goals of the mission, through launch and mission operations, when we are sending commands and monitoring performance and telemetry for any signs of problems."

It takes about three or four years from the time NASA commits to a mission to the space-



PHOTO BY CATHERINE LARSEN



Far left, top, Campbell in Lockheed Martin's Mission Support Area, awaiting confirmation that MAVEN had successfully fired its thrusters to go into orbit around Mars; far left, bottom, Campbell with the Phoenix spacecraft. At left, Campbell with the launch vehicle payload fairing for MAVEN at Kennedy Space Center in Florida

craft's launch. During that time, Campbell and her propulsion group work closely with other systems groups, chiefly GNC (guidance, navigation and control), which will use the propulsion system to guide the spacecraft, and thermal, which ensures that the liquids in the propulsion system won't freeze or overheat once in space.

"Our role is typically from launch until we get into orbit," Campbell says. "The launch vehicle can only get the spacecraft so far, generally, and then the craft has to do the rest to get itself into its appropriate orbit. We're in contact 24/7 for the two-week period or so while we're getting the spacecraft to orbit."

Launches usually take place at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, with Campbell back at the mission control center in Colorado. One of her career highlights was the first time she got to say "propulsion is go!" on a launch.

Once the spacecraft is in orbit, Campbell monitors the performance and makes necessary adjustments, which isn't as simple as using a joystick in a video game. Depending on the distance, orbit mechanics and configuration of the planets, it can take up to an hour for the commands to reach the craft and Campbell to see the effect.

Campbell, who has always been fascinated with flying and space (she got her pilot's license while she was a Muhlenberg student), launched her career in a non-traditional way.

She came to Muhlenberg intending to be pre-med and wound up with a major in mathematics and a minor in chemistry. One day during her junior year, she says, "I just woke up and decided that I was going to be an aerospace engineer. And here we are."

It wasn't that easy. Campbell earned her master's in aerospace engineering at the University of Virginia, but because Campbell didn't take part in Muhlenberg's engineering partnership program with Columbia University, she had some catching up to do. She audited some undergraduate classes while doing graduate work, finishing in an intense two-and-a-half years.

Part of her graduate work was as a research assistant at the NASA Langley Research Center in conjunction with Ball Aerospace, a spacecraft manufacturer based in Colorado. After completing her master's, Campbell took a job with Ball, but she was laid off in a downsizing just a few months later. She landed at Lockheed Martin in December 2005, and she's been there ever since.

Had she known where she would end up, might she have chosen a college that offered an engineering major? "I'm glad that I didn't," she says. "It was a really great experience. I chose Muhlenberg for the premed but also for the soccer. I really loved soccer at the time and was thrilled that they gave me the opportunity to play for them. And I wouldn't change that." Not for the galaxy. —Mike Falk

Personally Speaking...



Michelle Rajan '21

Neuroscience major (premedical track), creative writing minor, Phillipsburg, New Jersey

She's been interested in the brain since she was young.

"When I was in third grade, my grandmother had a stroke. She lived in India, so when we would visit every summer, we would try to help her walk and eat. I kept thinking, 'How could something in your brain cause all of this?' That got me interested in strokes, and when I was touring colleges, I saw it was possible to major in neuroscience. One thing I liked about Muhlenberg was that I could do a neuroscience major and a creative writing minor—the College seemed to value both."

She channeled a long-time passion for writing into a manuscript for a young-adult novel.

"I've always been reading and writing. I knew I wanted to write a book one day, but in the fall of junior year, I sat down and did it. Every morning, I would wake up at 7, and by 8, I was sitting at Java Joe's, typing away. It became the story of a South Asian teenage girl who has a magical power that gives her talent in playing the guitar. The novel is her trying to figure out how to get control of her magic while also getting into her dream college. In taking Writing Children's Literature last fall [with author and Lecturer of English Nisha Sharma '07], I learned what revisions I need to make. This spring, I hope to start querying literary agents."

One of her many co-curricular roles is as station manager at WMUH ...

"I was born in India, so Malayalam was my first language. Even as English became my more dominant language, I would listen to Bollywood music and watch Bollywood movies. I picked up a lot of Hindi along the way. When I came to Muhlenberg, the radio station was not on my mind at all. But at the fall activities fair my first year, I saw the table for WMUH, and I remember thinking, 'Wouldn't it be so cool if I could play my Bollywood music on the air, along with Malayalam music, along with English music?' I didn't think anyone would want to listen—I was insecure about my racial identity and how that would come across to white audiences. My family and my boyfriend were like, 'You'll have us listening. Go for it.' Once I started my show, *Continental Drift*, I grew more and more interested in what the station was about in general."

... and last summer, she expanded her show to include interviews with students, alumni and faculty.

"When COVID happened, I started sending in virtual shows, but it felt so lonely since I wasn't in the station. So, I started recording interviews to air as part of my show every week. I was trying to bring the Muhlenberg community a bit closer and hear how the virus was affecting everyone. At the beginning, it was just COVID, but then George Floyd was murdered. I would hear a lot about how there are two viruses in this nation, COVID-19 and racism, and I thought, 'We should talk about them both.' I interviewed [Stanley Road Associate Professor of Neuroscience Jeremy] Teissere, and we talked about what white privilege looks like. Another person I talked to was Taj Singh '19, who's in Teach for America. Learning about his experience doing that during COVID was part of it, but we also talked about how the opportunity gap and educational inequity didn't just happen—it's all because of racist educational policies and funding."

After graduation, she'll join the educational nonprofit organization City Year in Philadelphia.

"I've known for some time that I would not start medical school until I'd done something in education and mentorship. What drew me to City Year is that you're a tutor in the classroom—the teacher is there to guide you instead of you becoming the teacher [as in Teach for America]. Since I won't have the weight of the whole classroom on me, I can get closer to the students. Because of the pandemic, teachers need more support than ever, especially in communities with public schools that don't receive the funding they deserve."

Then, she'll move onto medical school—she feels most drawn to family medicine.

"In Fall 2019, I did Muhlenberg's premed shadowing program, which meant going into different departments in Allentown's St. Luke's Hospital. I realized I want close human contact. I want to get to know the patients. I've read so much research about racism in health care. If I could work in family medicine and work with marginalized communities of all kinds—in terms of race, gender, sexuality—and try to provide health care that is inclusive at every step of the way, I'd be pursuing the kind of career I want."

Senior Athletes Face Tough Choices

The NCAA granted an extra year of eligibility due to the pandemic, but deciding whether to use it—and, if so, where to use it—has weighed on members of the Class of 2021.



Ethan Grossman '21 has set several school records on the field for the Muhlenberg men's lacrosse team, and last March he set an off-field record—quickest decision made about future athletic career post-pandemic.

The Mules had just defeated Oneonta in their final game before being sent home, and in the locker room, Grossman told Head Coach Jake Plunket, "I'm coming back [to play another year]!"

Grossman will actually get to play *two* extra years: The NCAA granted waivers for athletes who played spring sports in the 2020 season and for all athletes in the 2020-2021 school year, meaning that competing does not exhaust a season of eligibility.

After earning his undergraduate degree in May, Grossman will enroll in the Master of Organizational Leadership program in Muhlenberg's School of Graduate Studies and be eligible to continue his career as a Mule in the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

"This is such a good opportunity," says Grossman, who expects the master's degree to help him down the road when he's running his own business. "I thought, why not go to a great academic

institution for grad school. I've been working my whole life for [lacrosse], so there was no reason I shouldn't still be playing. It was kind of an easy decision to make."

It wasn't so easy for some other Mules in the wake of announcements that often brought bad news. The Centennial Conference canceled championships for fall and winter sports and, at press time, had not reached a decision on spring sports. In February, Muhlenberg announced it would follow protocols to work toward competition resuming in late March, conditions permitting.

Some of the options for seniors: Forego your last year of athletics participation and graduate on time? Take a gap semester or year and return in 2021-2022 with the hopes of a normal schedule? Transfer and play as an undergraduate or graduate student elsewhere?



Soccer player Mia Mulin '21 turned her dilemma into a senior art thesis, chronicling her decision-making process in *In the Eyes of a Student-Athlete—COVID-19*, a digital storybook that combines photos and digital files with hand-drawn text.



During most of her time at Muhlenberg, Mulin frequently went home to Connecticut to visit her grandparents. She moved into an off-campus house in Allentown last July but was concerned about traveling between states and having contact with both her teammates and her grandparents.

“What do I do?” asks Mulin in her storybook. Later she concludes, “Do what is right. Do what makes you happy.”

Ultimately, she chose her immediate family over her Muhlenberg soccer family. She graduated in January and, after a tearful virtual goodbye to her fellow Mules, plans to finish her soccer career closer to home as a graduate student at Southern Connecticut State University, where she will pursue a master’s in sport and entertainment management.

“I still love Muhlenberg and I wished it could have been different in the end,” she says. “But this is just where I needed to be.”



Peter Taylor '21 felt he needed to be on the football field and called his choice to return for a ninth semester at Muhlenberg “kind of a no-brainer.”

Taylor was a valuable contributor for the Mules as a sophomore in 2018, but he missed the 2019 campaign with a torn knee ligament and was relegated to being a spectator as Muhlenberg advanced to the national semifinals. A sense of unfinished business factored into the decision for Taylor, who plans to enter the sports marketing field.

“We have one more semester left to play football and we can work the rest of our lives,” he says. “So why not?”



Wrestler Mike Cannon '21 also made the decision to extend his academic and athletic career, but unfortunately for him, his fifth year was to have been 2020-2021.

Cannon missed his freshman season with an injury, qualifying for a medical redshirt. But he won’t get the chance to use it—although the NCAA waiver would allow him to compete in 2021-2022, he decided to enter the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at DeSales University, which doesn’t have a wrestling team, in the fall.

“It’s just something I had to mentally prepare myself for, kind of telling myself, ‘Hey, you loved wrestling, but at the end of the day, it’s just a sport and there’s more to do after that,’” he says.



Golfer Katie Chen '21 is mentally prepared for whatever comes in the spring, having already experienced two season cancellations. (Although its championship season is in the spring, golf also competes in the fall.) Chen showed great improvement in Fall 2019 but has not competed since. The

biology major, who plans to take a year off before entering medical school in the fall of 2022, says she’s pondered the idea of playing golf as a graduate student. For now, she

“We have one more semester left to play football and we can work the rest of our lives. So why not?”

—PETER TAYLOR '21

is just waiting to hear the next announcement.

“If I get my season, of course I want to play,” she says. “But if I don’t, I honestly wouldn’t be as heartbroken as I thought I would be if my last senior season was last spring, for example. I’ve already settled with it.” —MF

From left, Ethan Grossman '21, Katie Chen '21, Peter Taylor '21, Mike Cannon '21 and Mia Mulin '21 in action for the Mules before COVID-19 upended collegiate athletics



Facts Over Fear

To end the COVID-19 pandemic, public health leaders need to ensure that enough people are willing to be vaccinated. Reaching the hesitant requires a multi-pronged approach that enlists trusted sources like community leaders and peers.

By Shoshana Fishbein '17

A subset of the population has been skeptical of vaccines since their invention in the late 1700s. The modern anti-vaccination movement largely began in 1998, when a British gastroenterologist named Andrew Wakefield published a paper that claimed the small group of children he had cherry-picked to study had developed autism because of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. In 2010, the paper was retracted for using falsified data and Wakefield was prohibited from practicing medicine, but the misinformation had 12 years to spread around the world.

That period was also when people were starting to look to social media for health information, where it spreads peer to peer. Research shows that the pro-vaccine community is bad at talking to people peer to peer—it tends to make blanket national statements instead. And because anti-vaccine rhetoric preys on people's fears, countering those emotions with numbers and data isn't always effective.

At press time, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had authorized two highly efficacious vaccines (from Pfizer and Moderna) for emergency use. The most optimistic polls suggest more than 70 percent of American adults are willing to be vaccinated, but it's unclear whether that will be sufficient to achieve herd immunity. The public health community needs to be strategic about how it reaches the people who have concerns about the safety of these vaccines.

Part of that involves framing. This isn't about getting the vaccine versus not getting the vaccine. It's about getting the vaccine versus experiencing more preventable deaths or long-term health issues. The choice to not get vaccinated can have major consequences. People who've witnessed family, friends or coworkers getting significantly sick or even dying from COVID understand this, and that may make them

more motivated to get vaccinated. Those without personal experience with the disease, or those who've only seen someone get it and recover quickly, are going to be less likely to feel they're personally susceptible to serious illness or death.

Public health entities need targeted messaging to reach these groups and others, including marginalized communities who've been disproportionately affected by COVID but also by decades of unethical treatment at the hands of medical providers and the U.S. government. An outside entity like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or even a local health department won't necessarily be able to identify each group's unique fears and speak to them. Even if they could, these groups need to hear that vaccines are safe from a trusted source, and levels of trust in scientists and health agencies vary across political and racial lines.

The CDC has launched a Vaccinate With Confidence strategy, which gives money to communities to have these conversations among their people. Public health officials must arm community leaders with correct information. For example, it's important for people to understand that while the vaccines were produced quickly, that doesn't mean they were rushed. The "new" mRNA technology these vaccines use has been studied for decades—it just wasn't a match for other viruses. The trials moved quickly because of ample funding and volunteers, and because COVID was so widespread—it took only months for researchers to observe enough infections in study participants to draw conclusions about the different outcomes between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

The public may also be confused about how well the new vaccines will work. At press time, we only had data on "efficacy"—how well these vaccines prevented symptomatic illness in the controlled environment of clinical trials.

Once community leaders have the information they need, the experts must step back and let those leaders do the communicating. It's not fair to a group that has a good reason to fear the medical community to be told what to do by an outsider, nor is it effective.



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL AUSTIN

“Effectiveness” refers to how well a vaccine works to prevent negative health outcomes, including asymptomatic transmission of illness, in the real world.

Scientists are gathering effectiveness data as the vaccines are deployed, but for comparison’s sake, flu shots have an effectiveness of 40 to 60 percent most years. They’re still a powerful public health intervention: They prevented approximately 7.5 million illnesses, 105,000 hospitalizations and 6,300 deaths in the United States during the 2019–2020 flu season. That’s why the FDA was prepared to consider authorizing COVID vaccines with efficacy levels as low as 50 percent—a vaccine needn’t be perfect to significantly reduce negative health outcomes. Because the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines had such high efficacy (about 95 percent each), we can expect both to have higher effectiveness than the flu vaccine. And, a key takeaway from the clinical trials is that both vaccines should help prevent serious illness that leads to hospitalization and death.

Once community leaders have the information they need, the experts must step back and let those leaders do the communicating. It’s not fair to a group that has a good reason to fear the

medical community to be told what to do by an outsider, nor is it effective.

The hesitant also need to see people who look like them—who have similar exposures, medical histories and family histories—get vaccinated and witness the safety of it. If you get the vaccine and share your experience on social media, that can make a positive difference in your own social network.

It will probably take until late 2021 for the vaccine to allow us to “get back to normal,” because before that, not enough people will be vaccinated. Expedited manufacturing and better deployment of the physical allotment will get us to a better place. But, we need as many people as possible to want to get the vaccine, to feel comfortable enough to choose to be vaccinated. It is the job of public health leaders to figure out how to reach those who don’t. In the meantime, we must rely on individual practices that make a big difference, like wearing high-quality masks and only leaving home for essentials.

Shoshana Fishbein '17 has a master's in public health from George Washington University and works at a global communications agency the CDC has contracted to help with vaccine communications.

BEHIND the MUSIC

Award-winning rock journalist David Fricke '73 reflects on the journey that took him from WMUH to SiriusXM, including the more than 40 years he spent writing for *Rolling Stone*.

By Meghan Kita



Just weeks before entering Muhlenberg as a first-year student, David Fricke '73 subsisted on hot dogs and spaghetti as he camped with friends in Bethel, New York. The town ballooned to more than 100 times its usual occupancy when Fricke and 400,000 others descended upon it for what the event poster called An Aquarian Exposition, drawn by the promise of "3 Days of Peace & Music." You may know the exposition as Woodstock.

"You could experience the music through records, the radio, what I was reading in underground newspapers and the first few issues I was getting of *Rolling Stone*, but to encounter that many like-minded people in a peaceful circumstance that was constantly on the edge of disaster, you saw the kind of binding agent that music could be," Fricke says. "We pulled it off, and we pulled it off in peace, and we took that lesson back to our communities."

The experience set the tone for Fricke's time at the College, where he studied English and added an unofficial "major" in WMUH. He started at the radio station in his first semester and took on leadership roles, as music director and program director, as an upperclassman. The subscriptions arriving in his residence hall mailbox, including *Rolling Stone* and the British weekly *Melody Maker*, helped inform which albums he would solicit from record companies, play on the air and review in *The Muhlenberg Weekly*.

"If I had a waking moment that did not involve schoolwork, I was [at the station] doing shows, doing substitute shifts," he says. "I took the shifts that nobody wanted: midnight to 3 a.m. on Friday nights, Sunday mornings 9 a.m. to noon. Nobody wanted those. So I took them and did what I thought was good, progressive underground radio."

By the time Fricke graduated and moved back to his native Philadelphia, he knew he wanted to interview musicians and write about music for a living. He also knew he had a lot of on-the-job learning to do before he could turn that passion into a career. Fricke first subsisted on earn-

ings from a day job at an Army-Navy Store while writing for underground music papers and hosting an hour-long show on Saturdays at midnight for a local public radio affiliate. He went on to dabble in concert promoting and publicist gigs, all while continuing to write. His first freelance piece appeared in *Rolling Stone* in the fall of 1977; the following year, he moved to New York City, where he's lived ever since.

Staff writing and editing jobs at the now-defunct music publications *Circus*, *Musician* and *Star Hits* led to his

working as a staff writer for *Rolling Stone* for more than 30 years. He's interviewed many artists multiple times over the course of his career, among them members of Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones, plus Paul McCartney and Lou Reed. Fricke built relationships with these musicians and others by bringing a genuine curiosity about music and the people who make it to every interview.

"I'm not going in there just to get stuff from people. I'm there to do a job, definitely, but I'm also there to have an interaction that hopefully will have a benefit on both sides," he says. "I want the other person to feel good about it. They may drop a little guard and actually say things that are actually a little closer to home than they might if they thought they were talking to somebody with a certain agenda. You're there to find out what's going to happen, not make something specific happen."

Today, in addition to freelancing for the U.K. music magazine *Mojo* (for which he's written since 1993) and writing album liner notes, he hosts at least two weekly shows on SiriusXM. For

Sirius, he's interviewed musicians like Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones, Wayne Coyne of The Flaming Lips and Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys.

"It is full circle. I started out wanting to be in radio. I'm at a point where I can bring everything I did as a writer, interview-wise, and my music knowledge, to the radio twice a week if not more," Fricke says. "It's journalism on the air."

Now, decades into his career, Fricke reflects on some of the most memorable moments, relationships and lessons of his life as a music journalist and fan in a conversation with *Muhlenberg Magazine*.

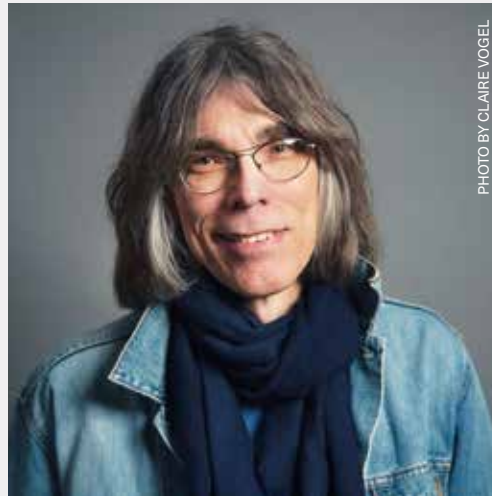


PHOTO BY CLAIRE VOGEL

"I'm not going in there just to get stuff from people. I'm there to do a job, definitely, but I'm also there to have an interaction that hopefully will have a benefit on both sides."

—David Fricke '73

July 24, 1968

IT ALL STARTED WITH THE FLOYD

The English Invasion tour brought The Who, Pink Floyd and three other bands to Philadelphia's John F. Kennedy Stadium, an outdoor venue that stood where the Wells Fargo Center stands today. Fricke, a rising high school senior, had a growing record collection, but he had never seen a live show.

Almost 20 years later, Fricke interviewed Pink Floyd's former bassist Roger Waters and its then-guitarist David Gilmour as Waters sued his ex-bandmates over use of the Pink Floyd name. The nearly 6,000-word cover story for the November 19, 1987, issue of Rolling Stone illuminated the infighting that destroyed one of Fricke's formative bands.

From left, Richard Wright, David Gilmour, Roger Waters and Nick Mason of Pink Floyd in 1968



It was a dollar to get in [to the show]. I knew about the Floyd and had heard them on the radio, but the band at the top was The Who, and I was hoping to see them. A friend was going to go with me, but he bailed at the last minute. To his eternal credit, my dad went. He rode the subway with me and agreed to sit three rows away so I didn't look like I was there with my dad.

There was a thunderstorm that rolled in and The Who never got to play, but the Floyd were brilliant. Seeing any live music for the first time, it just opens your consciousness. Being in an enormous outdoor venue with a few tens of thousands of other people, there's a sense of community. Even though I didn't know anybody there—except my dad—we were all sharing the same thing. And even the fact that the show got blown out, we shared that, too. As far as I was concerned, I knew what I was going to do for the rest of my life.

[For the 1987 cover story], meeting those musicians for the first time, it was very important for me to establish as much of a relationship as I could, because I was there to do a job: to find

and bring back insight and information that the folks out in the cheap seats didn't get to have a piece of. And, to try to figure out how to tell a story in which there were two very, very polarized points of view.

As someone who knew [Pink Floyd's] music and the genesis of it and how they created a lot of it, I could speak to both sides. I wasn't there to pass judgment. I was there to report and to describe, and to bring back as comprehensive a portrait as I could in the time and space I had. That's what journalism is.

I succeeded, because I had ongoing relationships with [Waters and Gilmour] going forward [from that first interview]. I did my research and I went in both as a professional and as someone who had an affinity for what they did—for their music, for their own artistic viewpoints and pursuits. That was something that I tried to do in every instance, whether I was talking to a young band just starting out or I was talking to somebody like the Floyd."



1977-1985

THE ROAD TO ROLLING STONE

The first half of the 1980s saw the rise of MTV (which, at the time, stood for Music Television) and the launch of a significant ad campaign to distance Rolling Stone from its hippie roots and embrace more of the pop-culture mainstream. While Fricke's first freelance piece for Rolling Stone was published in the fall of 1977, it took until April 1985 for him to land one of the staff writing jobs there, which he describes as "few and far between" at the time. In the interim, he worked for several other music publications and made valuable connections, including a friendship with former MTV News

correspondent and current SiriusXM host Kurt Loder (pictured, left) that continues to this day.



To be published [in *Rolling Stone*] was a big deal. If I hadn't written for them, I probably would have been disappointed, but in all the time before I got there, it's not like I was sitting around moaning and groaning. I was going to gigs. I was writing for *Melody Maker*. I had the ability to hang out in New York at CBGB or go to The Bottom Line. I was making my first road trips. I didn't have anything to complain about.

[Kurt Loder] and I met at the end of '77 because I came to New York to interview for a job at this free weekly paper called *Good Times* that he was working at. He actually ended up living across the street from me—the apartment complex we lived in was public housing, and he helped me get through the application system because I wasn't a resident. We were palling around, going into the city, going to clubs.

Many of us [music journalists] from that period of time, we were advocates for the music that we loved, for writing, for passionate journalism. It was a small circle because, frankly, there was no money in it. So you did it because you loved it and you liked being around other people who did it.

[Kurt and I] both ended up at *Circus* at the same time [in 1978] before he left for *Rolling Stone*. He took a sabbatical to work on Tina Turner's book, I,



Tina, as coauthor. I ended up working at *Rolling Stone* as a temp because they needed someone to fill in while he was on sabbatical, and I just never left. They asked me to stay, and I did. Not long after that, [Kurt] went over to MTV to work as a journalist and anchor there for many years, but we've been thick as thieves ever since.

Writing for *Rolling Stone* was about getting close to an ideal. It wasn't the only place to be, but it represented a certain quality and authority in the work that I did and had the opportunity to do that was really, really precious. Once I got there, I realized that I was there to live up to those standards and hopefully to enhance them by doing better work."



David Fricke '73 interviewing Joe Strummer of The Clash in New York in February 1979

PHOTO BY EBET ROBERTS

July 13, 1985

DO THEY KNOW I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ON STAGE?

One of Fricke's early feature assignments as a staff writer for *Rolling Stone* was to profile *The Boomtown Rats'* Bob Geldof, the musician who had co-founded the charity supergroup *Band Aid* (of "Do They Know It's Christmas?" fame) and who was organizing *Live Aid*, two simultaneous mega-concerts to raise money to fight famine in Ethiopia. Fricke followed Geldof for four or five days in London during final preparations for *Live Aid*, returned to New York to file the story, then flew back to cover *Live Aid* at *Wembley Stadium*.

During the show, *Queen* gave one of their greatest live performances and *U2* gained fame and prominence with theirs; *David Bowie*, *Paul McCartney*, *The Who* and *Elton John* were among the other big-name performers. The broadcast from the concerts in London and Philadelphia set a then-record for television viewership (almost 1.9 billion viewers in 150 countries), and Fricke was on stage for the London finale.

Top, the London *Live Aid* finale; at right, *Queen* frontman Freddie Mercury



[Throughout the concert], there was a great vibe in [Wembley Stadium]. Everybody brought their best energy and optimism. One of the things [Bob] Geldof was really strident about was: Everybody gets four songs, and they gotta be hits. Give the people something to celebrate, and not just the people in Wembley Stadium, but the untold millions that were watching it on television around the world. And that's what U2 did, what *Queen* did, what *The Who* did, what *Bowie* did.

The PR guy for the show would ferry people back in shifts, take three or four writers backstage to be able to talk to some of the performers, get some quotes, that kind of thing. I got my shot in the late afternoon. I got a chance to talk to *Bowie* for a few minutes. You didn't really get great insight because everybody was working, but you got a sense of the vibe and the spirit back there. After about an hour, the PR guy comes back and says, 'I've got to take you back.'

And I said, 'Look, man, I ain't leaving. What's

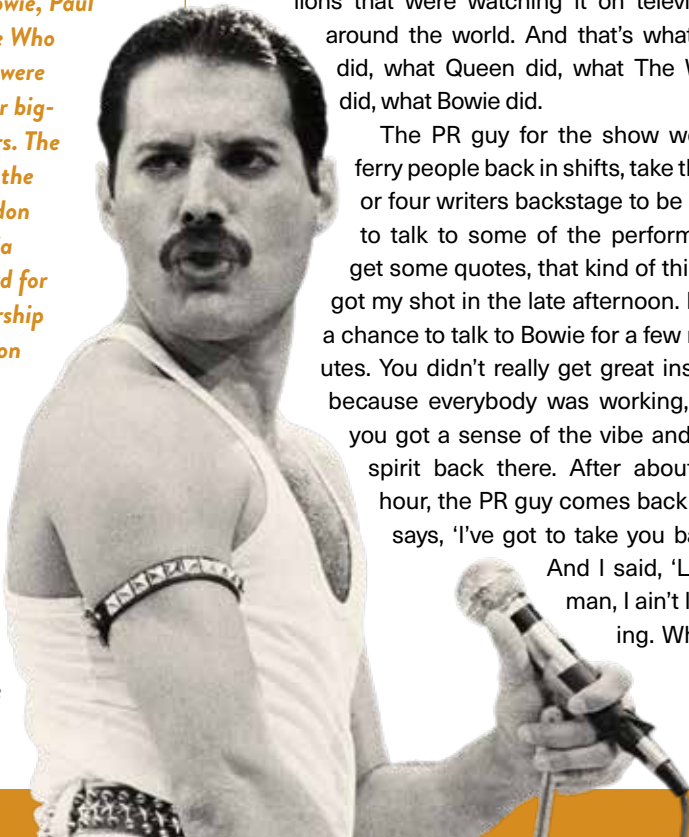
the worst that could happen? They can throw me out.' He said, 'Okay, it's up to you.'

Here's where not drawing attention to yourself can work. You try to blend in, to observe. At one point *McCartney* was on stage singing 'Let It Be,' and they were getting ready to have everybody come out and sing 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' as the big finish. *Sting* was handing out lyric sheets, they're practicing the song. [Security was] about to start shooing people out.

I saw *Geldof* and said, 'I realize you're really busy, but I just want to observe and they're going to throw me out.' He was at the end of his rope. He handed me his artist pass card. He said, 'Here, take this,' because obviously he didn't need it. So I put it around my neck and nobody bothered me.

Then, it was time to go out on stage, and as [the musicians] were walking out, I looked down at my pass and thought, 'What could go wrong?' I just followed them. I stood behind a couple of guys from *Spandau Ballet* and sang along. To see that crowd from the stage, and then to see [*The Who's* *Pete*] *Townshend* and [*Paul*] *McCartney* lift *Geldof* on their shoulders, that was a pretty amazing moment.

When it was all over, I started heading off to the side of the stage and *Geldof* looked at me and said, 'What the f--- are you doing here?' And he kind of laughed and then moseyed off. I still have his pass."



1984-2013

“I’LL DO IT IF DAVID FRICKE ASKS THE QUESTIONS”

The duration of Fricke’s career has allowed him to work with dozens of musicians repeatedly, building professional relationships that can span decades. One such relationship was with the late Lou Reed, the singer and guitarist for The Velvet Underground whose solo career took off with 1972’s Transformer.

Fricke first interviewed Reed for People in 1984, then wrote a 5,500-word Rolling Stone cover feature in 1989 coinciding with Reed’s acclaimed New York album and tour. Fricke and Reed worked together multiple times on a range of projects including documentaries, liner notes and articles. When Reed died of liver disease in 2013, Fricke wrote the extensive obituary that appeared in Rolling Stone.

At right, Lou Reed performing in Milan, Italy, in May 2000

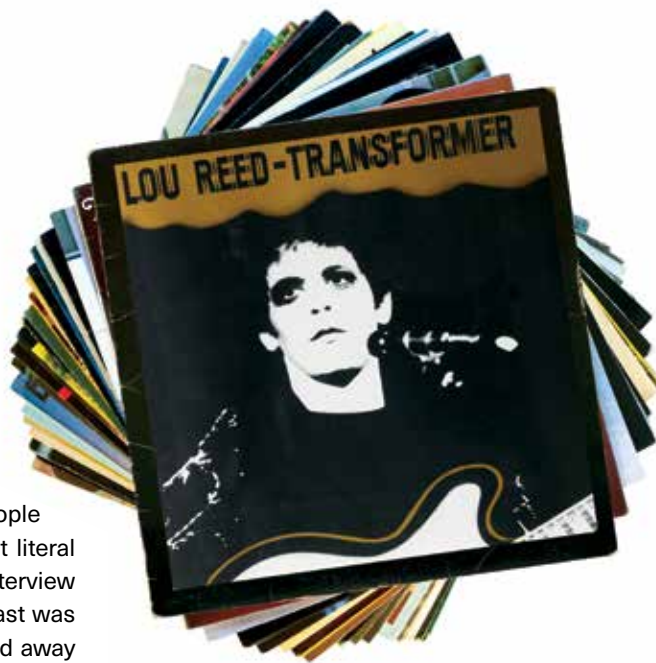


Many of these artists are people I talk to over not just days but literal years. Lou Reed, my first interview with him was in '84, and my last was

just a couple of months before he passed away in 2013. One of the biggest stories I did with him was for one of his first really major commercial successes as a solo artist, the album *New York*, and that was his first cover appearance on *Rolling Stone*. Yes, The Velvet Underground was a band from like 1965 to 1970, but it wasn't like I was interviewing him in his sunset years. He was firing bullets in those songs.

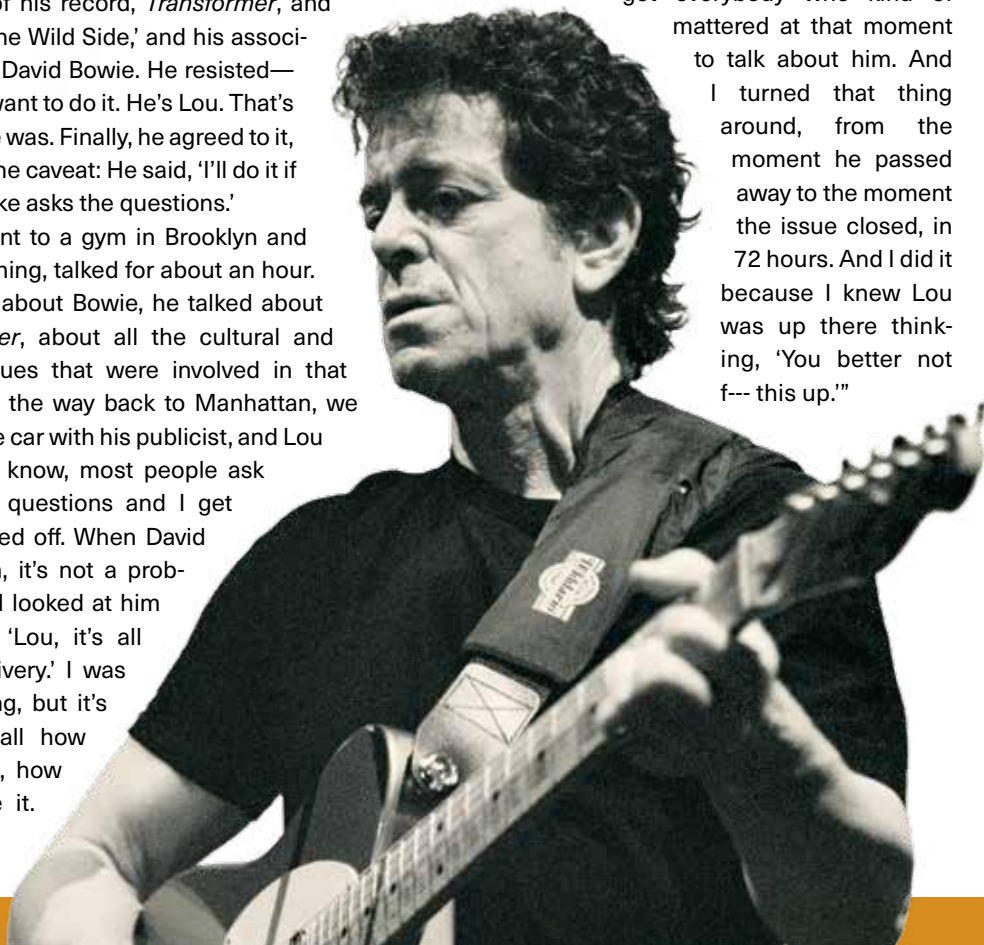
I interviewed him quite a lot in his last three decades. At one point, he was being asked by the BBC in England to do a television interview for a big rock and roll history series. They wanted him to talk about glitter rock in the early '70s because of his record, *Transformer*, and 'Walk on the Wild Side,' and his association with David Bowie. He resisted—he didn't want to do it. He's Lou. That's the way he was. Finally, he agreed to it, but with one caveat: He said, 'I'll do it if David Fricke asks the questions.'

We went to a gym in Brooklyn and shot this thing, talked for about an hour. He talked about Bowie, he talked about *Transformer*, about all the cultural and sexual issues that were involved in that scene. On the way back to Manhattan, we were in the car with his publicist, and Lou says, 'You know, most people ask me these questions and I get really pissed off. When David asks them, it's not a problem.' And I looked at him and said, 'Lou, it's all in the delivery.' I was half kidding, but it's true. It's all how you ask it, how you frame it.



I'm not there to interrogate somebody. I am there to establish a level of communication and interaction that's going to be deeper than, 'Tell me about your latest album. How's the tour going?' Any idiot can ask that.

I do a lot of obits—it's definitely not my favorite thing to do, but it's an obligation that I have. Somebody like Lou, I knew him quite well and I felt I owed it to him. Certainly, my editors felt, 'Who else is going to do this and be able to get the kind of people we need to talk to?' I got Maureen Tucker and Doug Yule from The Velvets. I got everybody who kind of mattered at that moment to talk about him. And I turned that thing around, from the moment he passed away to the moment the issue closed, in 72 hours. And I did it because I knew Lou was up there thinking, 'You better not f--- this up.'



1994-2015

THE FINAL INTERVIEW WITH KURT COBAIN ... AND THE FIRST WITH HIS DAUGHTER, FRANCES BEAN

Fricke served as music editor at Rolling Stone from 1992 to 1995, a stint he ultimately chose to end because it limited the amount of writing he was able to do. One assignment he did take on in that period was a cover interview with Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain. Fricke spoke to him after an October 1993 stop in Chicago on the band's In Utero tour for a 6,000-word story that ran in the January 27, 1994, issue of Rolling Stone. A little more than two months later, on April 8, Cobain was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The interview with Fricke, in which Cobain told him, "I've never been happier in my life," was the last major interview he did.

Later that year, Fricke was the first to interview Cobain's widow, Courtney Love, about her loss for another Rolling Stone cover story. More than two decades later, he was the first to interview the couple's only child, Frances Bean Cobain, also for Rolling Stone.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, confidential service that can provide people in emotional distress with support. 1-800-273-8255



Frances Bean Cobain, Courtney Love and Kurt Cobain at the 1993 MTV Video Music Awards



I had always wanted to get a major feature Q&A interview with [Kurt Cobain]—it was a very important format for conversation and insight with an artist. He had done a lot of press and talked to a lot of people, but I didn't feel that he had talked with that kind of depth. It took a while to get him. He cold-called me at the office one afternoon and said, 'Hey, it's Kurt. I know you want to talk to me. I really want to do this. I don't want to give you the same answers I'm giving everybody else.' And I said, 'If that's where it's at, then you let me know when you're ready.' A few weeks later, I went to Chicago and we ended up spending three hours in the middle of the night after a gig talking at length.

I knew about his subsequent problems, but [when I learned he was dead], I was shocked. There was no other way around it. But having had that shock, I realized I also had work to do—to celebrate the person and tell their story as best you can. The same day, I got a call from Kurt [Loder] because he was over at MTV, and obviously, they were going full steam ahead, covering this and paying tribute to Kurt [Cobain]. He said, 'Look, man, why don't you just come over

and we'll talk about him on TV?' Within about two hours of getting the news, I was live on the air.

The two of us were just talking about Kurt the way we would have talked about him if we were at a gig or a bar. This was a guy who achieved an extraordinary amount of success and created genuinely eternal art and music and left a lot of questions for us to answer in our own lives. And I got a chance to say that, live on TV, on the very day. I still get people who come up to me and say, 'I saw you on TV the day Kurt died, and the things you said really helped me get through that day.'

Even though my relationship with Kurt wasn't able to go any further, it probably helped me start another one with Courtney, [which led to] being able to talk to Frances. In 2015, I interviewed her for a cover story about her dad. At one point, I was sitting with her in her living room. I was actually using a cassette recorder at the time, and at one point, I said, 'You know, that tape recorder in front of you, that's the same one I interviewed your dad with.' And she just kind of looked at it, kind of amazed, and took a cell phone picture of it. There was this tape recorder sitting in front of her, and she was talking into the same one that he had done our interview with back in 1993."

September 2001

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

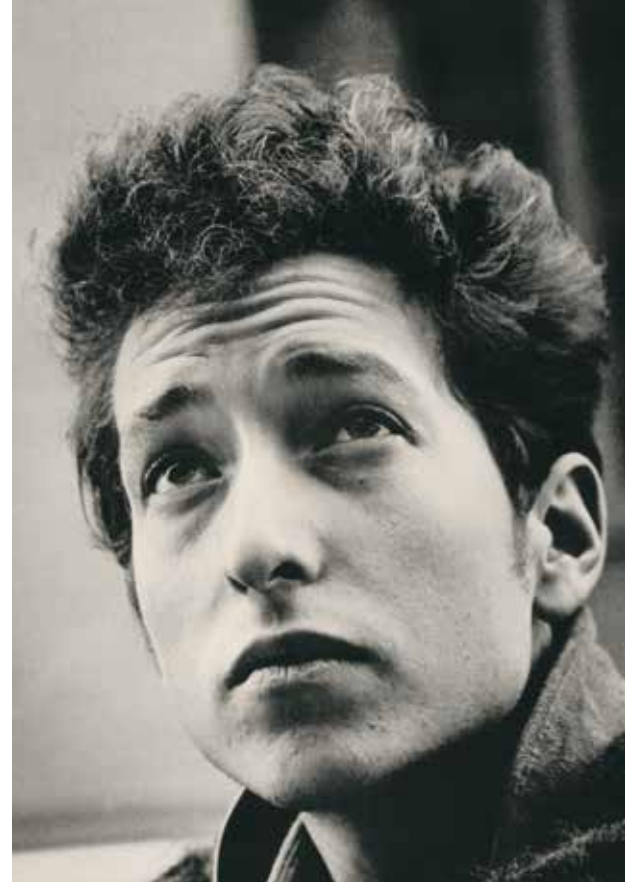
On 9/11, en route to the office from his home on the Upper West Side, Fricke emerged from the subway to find crowds of people standing, slack-jawed, as they watched coverage of what was happening on the southern end of Manhattan on Times Square's giant screens. Rolling Stone sent staff home at noon that day, but its biweekly format meant the team had less than a week before its next issue would go to print, an issue they'd dedicate to exploring the state of the nation after the terrorist attacks. Fricke's editors asked him to write about what music meant in the face of such a catastrophic, transformative event; the resulting essay, "Shelter From the Storm," named for the Bob Dylan song, won an American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers Deems-Taylor Award for music writing in 2002.



I thought long and hard about, 'How do you listen to music and have it mean anything?' The world has been pulled out from under your feet, with an enormous and senseless loss of human life. I actually went over to St. Patrick's Cathedral to sit inside for a little bit, to help sort my head out. I came out and started making some notes about the things that I had started listening to and why. [John] Coltrane, [Jimi] Hendrix, the [Grateful] Dead, U2—they've always been part of my listening. But you go back to things because they not only told you something the first time around, but they can reassure you when you need it. And, there are often layers of meaning that can be revealed when circumstances change. The scene [in the essay] where I was walking up Broadway and seeing all

the homemade posters people had put up, 'have you seen so-and-so,' someone who worked in those buildings and had not come home ... the first thing that flashed into my head was Bob Dylan singing 'Shelter From the Storm.'

He's somebody I have gone to at different times for different



reasons. I think many people in America and around the world went to places of solace and inspiration, places where you get the energy to go forward. When it's music, you go to the things that speak to you most clearly and most profoundly. And for me—in that case and in many cases before and since—it's going to be Hendrix. It's going to be Coltrane. It's going to be Miles [Davis]. It's going to be Joni Mitchell. It's going to be Bono. It's going to be Rage Against the Machine or Kurt [Cobain] and Nirvana. It's going to be Hank Williams. It's going to be Patsy Cline. It's going to be Memphis Minnie and Janis Joplin. I go where I know that there is a place of refuge, but also a place to start over from."



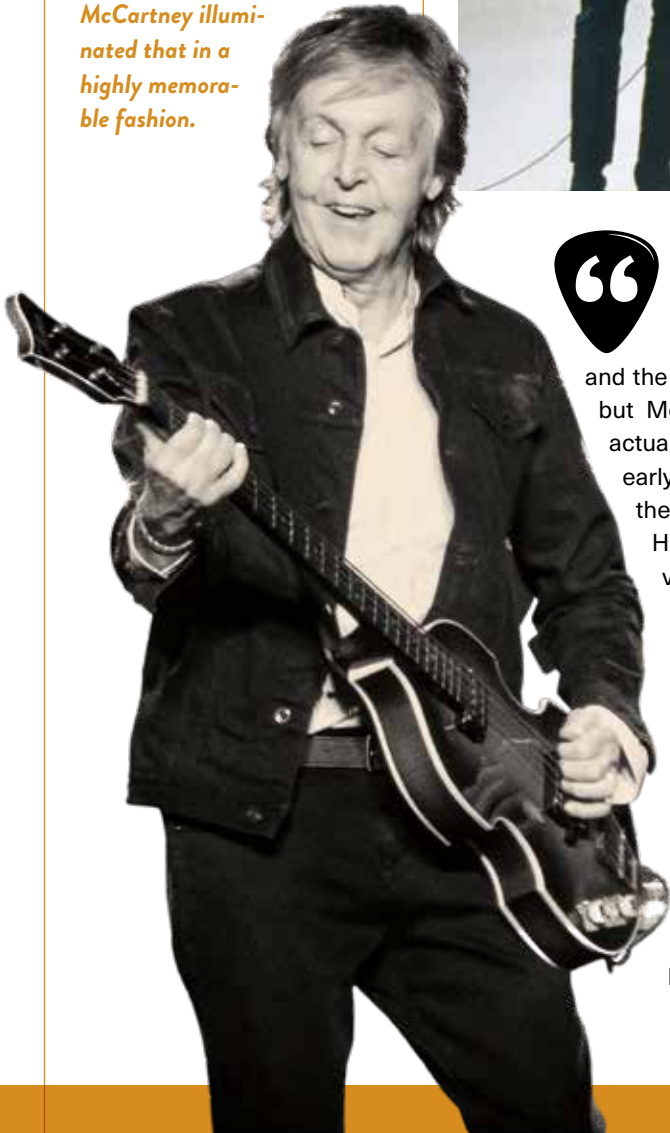
Clockwise from top right: Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell's *Clouds* album, Miles Davis

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Another artist Fricke has worked with multiple times over the decades is ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, including interviews for Rolling Stone cover stories in 1990 and 2016. The more recent conversation took place in London as McCartney prepared to embark on a tour of the United States. One of the reasons Fricke got into music journalism was his own curiosity about the musicians themselves and how they approached making their music, and in this session, McCartney illuminated that in a highly memorable fashion.



The Beatles in 1965; at left, Paul McCartney on tour in 2018



John Lennon is known as the avant-garde personality of the Beatles, partly because of his life with Yoko [Ono] and the way they made art together, but McCartney was the guy who actually was bringing in a lot of the early avant-garde influences in the '60s, even before Lennon. He's also somebody who's very keen to talk about the process of writing and conceiving something.

When I was interviewing him in 2016, I was asking him about songwriting: 'How do you start? What's going through your head? What was it like as a teenager to write songs, to try to find a way into this form of expression? When you haven't written songs before,


when you don't know how to start, what do you start with?'

He started explaining about writing with John Lennon when they were teenagers, before anybody knew who they were, when they were 15 or 16 years old. He said, 'I'll give you an example,' and he picks up an acoustic guitar that's next to him. He starts playing, singing a song that he and John had written when they were teenagers in Liverpool. It was just a verse and a chorus, but it was a song they had never recorded.

So he's actually playing for me an unreleased Beatles song from, let's say, maybe 1958. Like, 'Here's an example of something we put together really quickly.' That was a personal recital. That was a song that, outside of himself and John and probably a very small circle of people, no one had ever heard. He wasn't doing that to show off; he was doing that to explain the process. And I happened to be recording the interview. I had the only copy of that performance of that song in that moment. And you can't make sh-- like that up."

Writing
the

PANDEMIC PLAYBOOK

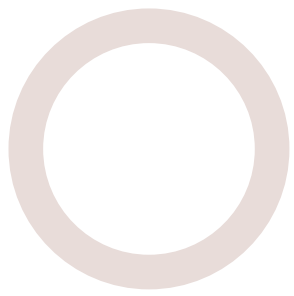


Through her involvement with a National Institutes of Health working group, Samantha Jonson '09 has had a front-row seat to the scientific revolution that COVID-19 inspired.

BY MEGHAN KITA

PHOTOS BY JOSHUA FERNANDEZ





Samantha Jonson '09, who was a dance and psychology double major at Muhlenberg, has worked for the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, since 2013.

Last spring, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched a public-private partnership focused on rapid development of therapeutics to treat and vaccines to prevent COVID-19. The Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) program began to take shape in April and was announced in mid-May. ACTIV has streamlined the process for bringing therapeutics and vaccines to patients that NIH director Dr. Francis Collins told *The Atlantic* late last year, “I can’t imagine we’ll go back to doing clinical research in the future the way we did in the past.”

As part of ACTIV’s Preclinical Working Group, Samantha Jonson ’09 has participated in this reimagining of how science can move efficiently and effectively toward solving a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Jonson, who has worked for the NIH’s National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) since 2013, describes her role on the working group as an organizer and dot-conductor. Because she does not have a public health degree—she was a dance and psychology major at Muhlenberg, and she has a master’s in industrial and organizational psychology—she often holds chief-of-staff-like positions. She has been the person that NCATS leadership calls on when there is a high-profile, complex, national project that requires a skilled organizer to coordinate with prominent scientists and leaders from the NIH, other U.S. government agencies and the private sector. Prior to her ACTIV involvement, she was assigned to work on the NIH’s Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) Initiative, which was designed to fight the opioid epidemic.

“My experience working on a national strategy for HEAL gave me a better understanding of how we could approach COVID,” says Jonson, whose official title is dissemination and implementation strategy lead for the NCATS Office of the Director.

Jonson spent much of 2020 focused on ACTIV (and other COVID-related projects she’s not at liberty to discuss), including chairing her working group’s subcommittee to build and maintain a web portal to share the latest data relevant to preclinical science. Her ACTIV work continues this year and will be part of a knowledge base that will help scientists, the country and the world going forward.

“A lot of what we’re doing with COVID across the NIH, we’ve constantly been thinking about making sure we don’t lose what we’ve learned and don’t throw away the process once it’s been done. What we’ve been doing can fold into a much larger pandemic preparedness plan,” she says. “We’ll probably go through another one of these [pandemics], to be honest. Making sure we know how to operate and quickly mobilize is critical.”



An ACTIV Participant

When 2020 began, Jonson was transitioning off the HEAL Initiative and preparing for another big project that was going to take up most of her time—a project that got postponed as COVID picked up steam. The NIH's 27 institutes and centers began requiring employees who could work remotely to do so on March 16. For the next few chaotic weeks, Jonson waited to see what her role would be.

"Between March 16 and April 10, I was freaking out like the rest of the world. It was the longest month of my life," she says. "Nearly all of my family and friends live in the New York-New Jersey area. I was really, really nervous for four straight weeks."

The idea for ACTIV began taking shape on April 3. Its work would be divided among four groups (preclinical therapeutics, clinical therapeutics, clinical trial capacity and vaccines), and it would fall under the umbrella of the Department of Health and Human Services' Operation Warp Speed (to hasten the development of COVID countermeasures). A week later, NCATS Director Dr. Christopher Austin asked Jonson to join ACTIV's Preclinical Working Group. The group would serve as the hub for data and information on everything that needs to happen before a therapy or vaccine can be tested on humans.

As chair of the data portal implementation subcommittee, Jonson has helped leverage the NCATS OpenData Portal for COVID-19. This resource includes an OpenData Browser, a grid that displays thousands of drugs and what information scientists have (and haven't yet) collected regarding their mechanisms of action and how each drug interacts with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and human cells. The OpenData

"OUR MISSION IS TO QUICKLY MOBILIZE AND DELIVER MORE TREATMENTS TO MORE PATIENTS MORE QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY."

—SAMANTHA JONSON '09

Portal serves as a resource for scientists around the world conducting preclinical research to develop COVID-19 treatments.

This "open science" philosophy is less common in the United States than it is in other countries, Jonson says—the U.S. incentivizes publishing, so it's in a scientist's interest to protect the data they've gathered and take credit for it through publications. However, that mentality has faded as scientists have rushed to slow the pandemic. And, NCATS supported open science even pre-COVID: "Our mission is to quickly mobilize and deliver more treatments to more patients more quickly and efficiently," Jonson says. "Our mission is the patient, not our own careers."



From a Job to a Career

**“I DON’T HAVE
A SPECIALTY
SUBJECT AREA. I
AM OFTEN CALLED
ON TO WORK
ON PROJECTS
OF GREAT
IMPORTANCE. I’M
FIGHTING FIRES
ALL THE TIME.”**

—SAMANTHA JONSON '09

Jonson graduated from Muhlenberg into the Great Recession, which left her and many of her classmates with few prospects. She considered going to law school, but friends who’d pursued that path recommended she try working in a law office first. She moved to Washington, D.C., for a job with a firm there, and within two years, she had become the paralegal at the firm who produced the most billable hours.

While she excelled at her job, she didn’t love it: “If my metric is to bill hours, is that a fulfilling life for me?” she wondered. A friend at the firm thought Jonson might be happy at the NIH—she’d completed the prerequisites for nursing school, but doubted her ability to emotionally handle the work—and passed along her resume. Two weeks later, she’d been offered a job at NCATS, helping to restructure its Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Program, NIH’s largest program with an annual budget that approaches \$600 million.

At the time, NCATS was only a year old, so “there was so much opportunity, a lot of freedom to do what I wanted and work on projects that were of interest to me. It was very different from the legal world,” Jonson says. “I just became so fascinated by public health. It was always something I was interested in but not immediately passionate about.”

By the time she was wrapping up her CTSA work, she’d been promoted to program operations manager—a huge responsibility for someone with her background, given that more than 90 percent of her interactions would be with the country’s most distinguished medical doctors and scientists—while simultaneously completing her master’s degree. Austin then invited her to work as his special assistant, a role she held for about three years, including throughout her work on the HEAL Initiative.

As Jonson continued to be assigned to high-priority projects and recognized for her organizational talents, she says, “I realized I was good at this and I loved it. I love the mission. I love knowing that what I’m doing makes a difference for the better in someone else’s life.”




Onto the Next Priority

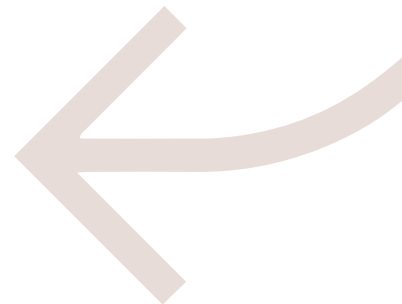
While ACTIV is slated to continue throughout 2021, the majority of the Preclinical Working Group's original objectives are now complete. Those objectives established a framework through which some of the most urgent treatment questions could be answered, Jonson says. Now, the group is able to turn its attention to bigger-picture, longer-term questions. For example, late last year, they began discussing virus mutations: What's the best way to track them and to organize all the scientific knowledge about them in one place?

Even though the country underwent a leadership change this January, Jonson—who started at NCATS during the Obama administration and continued throughout the Trump administration—says that shouldn't affect her work: "I don't have

a specialty subject area. I am often called on to work on projects of great importance. I'm fighting fires all the time."

The next public-health fire she's fighting is a priority that rose in prominence last year, alongside the COVID-19 pandemic: health disparities and inequities. She began working on an NIH committee to address these issues in the final months of 2020, and she anticipates her work will continue throughout the bulk of this year.

"That's something I personally am taking very seriously. As an underrepresented minority, there are not a lot of people who look like me in the NIH," Jonson says. "This feels a little bit like a personal project. I'm very deeply invested in making an impact in this space." 



LOOKING

BEYOND



CAMPUS

**AT THE HEART OF MUHLENBERG'S COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT WORK IS A COMMITMENT TO FORMING
DEEP, MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE
COLLEGE AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE AROUND IT.**

BY MEGHAN KITA



When Sophia Echevarria '21 was in elementary school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a woman from the community visited her classroom regularly to help the students work toward the goal of putting on a play. The experience sparked a love of theatre in Echevarria, who performed throughout high school and who came to Muhlenberg because of its strong theatre reputation.

While she ultimately changed directions academically—she's an anthropology major with minors in documentary storytelling and Latin American & Caribbean studies—she's been coordinating after-school theatre arts programming for Allentown's Jefferson Elementary School since her sophomore year. Echevarria's role involves recruiting volunteers from Muhlenberg and helping to plan and lead the sessions, which have been held virtually since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's been a way that I can include theatre in my life, and I really enjoy working with the kids," Echevarria says. "You start to develop relationships with them. It's a way for them to have a creative outlet and for me to be creative with theatre without any pressure on it."

The College's relationship with Jefferson Elementary is one of many community partnerships facilitated through the Office of Community Engagement (OCE). Last January, the College was granted the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification after Director of Community Engagement Beth Halpern and Dean of Academic Life Michele Deegan spent about nine months on the application, with considerable institutional input. It involved pulling together information from the OCE and its community partners as well as from faculty and staff undertaking community-engaged scholarship and their partners to assemble a comprehensive picture of the College's relationship with the rest of the Lehigh Valley and its institutional commitment to supporting those relationships.

The classification, which Muhlenberg has received three times and which only 119 colleges and universities nationwide received in 2020, is not an award but an elective designation bestowed every five years. It provides those who apply for it a form of accountability—it requires assessing what's been done and committing to next steps. And, says Associate Director of Community Engagement Eveily Freeman, "it gives structural incentive for other folks within the Muhlenberg community to prioritize and create some space for this work. As much as the OCE is shepherding these things, the work is way bigger than the office."

"The work" encapsulates a broad range of activities—from students volunteering with local schools and nonprofits to faculty conducting research in part-

Below left, students perform at Allentown's Cleveland Elementary as part of a dance course offered in Spring 2019. Below right, Kamilah Aviles '21 and a community volunteer help with a May 2020 meal distribution event. Opposite, Vernon Jordan '16 and Ana Negron '17 were the emcees for the 25th annual Jefferson Field Day in 2016.





nership with community organizations to initiatives meant to encourage students to be active citizens of Allentown (via voting, visiting parks and patronizing local businesses, for example). Part of the OCE's mission is to ensure that these activities work toward the goal of forming deep, meaningful relationships between the College and the people who live around it, relationships rooted in reciprocity and social justice.

LOOKING BACK

The OCE has evolved enormously in its scope, its mission and its philosophy since its precursor, the Office of Community Service, launched nearly 30 years ago. Former College President Randy Helm, who arrived in 2003, made it a priority to invest in what's now referred to as "community-engaged learning"—that is, courses with a built-in community-engagement component. Helm also supported the shift to full-time positions for Halpern's and Freeman's predecessors.

When Halpern joined the College as director of community service and civic engagement in 2007, at least half her title

did not accurately reflect the "justice-based philosophy" she brought to the role. She was surprised that the civic engagement component of her title was less represented in her responsibilities—this was before the 2016 advent of BergVotes, the College's nonpartisan student organization focused on increasing voter registration and turnout, which Halpern advises—and wanted to increase it. She also took issue with the concept of "service," which inherently puts College faculty, staff and students in a position of power.

"The notion that service isn't always good pushes people the wrong way," Halpern says. "For folks that have grown up in a charity-based model, particularly white folks, they feel really attached to that notion [of service]."

"It was a major philosophical shift in the way that a lot of colleges and universities were aligning for justice through this time," adds Freeman, who joined the College in 2009. "The word 'service' comes with a bunch of historical baggage, but that is how a lot of this work came to be on college campuses."



Above, Sophia Gordon '20 at Allentown's Roosevelt Elementary as part of a community-engaged learning course offered in Fall 2018. Opposite, at left, inside Community Bike Works during Fall 2017. Opposite, at right, volunteers with Shape It Up, a fitness and nutrition program, outside Allentown's Jefferson Elementary in Fall 2018

Halpern tried to continue to steer existing partnerships away from the notion of service, which might have placed students a bit more at the center, and toward the notion that these relationships should be mutually beneficial, built upon trust and open communication and responsive to partners' evolving needs. For example, the College had been working with The Caring Place Family Health Clinic, and there was a community initiative to shift that space into a federally qualified healthcare center (FQHC). Students had been serving as patient health advocates, but eventually, as the FQHC designation was granted, that role was no longer necessary. So students moved toward becoming involved in community time-banking, and then, eventually, to working as interns from time to time.

"Cultivating relationships makes a difference," Freeman says. "These relationships are strong enough to change into something new. Changing and listening to one another are part of those deeper partnerships."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

One of the deepest partnerships the College has is with Allentown's Jefferson Elementary School. Muhlenberg students first worked with Jefferson students in 1991 in a mentoring capacity. Today, the College has a variety of weekly commitments to the school (students, like Echevarria, help with after-school programs as well as in-classroom tutoring via America Reads) in addition to several events held annually (on hold during the pandemic).

Each grade, first through fifth, has its own event. Every January, the College's basketball teams visit Jefferson to read to first-graders. The other four grades each have their own events on Muhlenberg's campus: second's is literacy-based, third's focuses on imagining a future involving college, fourth's is STEM-related and fifth's is a circus show and workshop. Every May, about 700 Jefferson students join 150 to 200 Muhlenberg students on campus for Jefferson Field Day, a day of fun physical activities organized around a theme. Because of the enormity of this day, as well as the variety of other weekly and event-

based opportunities, the Jefferson partnership involves more Muhlenberg students than any other—approximately 250 annually.

The College's partnerships with the Allentown nonprofits Casa Guadalupe and Community Bike Works both date back to 1996. Most recently, Muhlenberg's involvement with Casa Guadalupe has focused on its after-school programming for elementary and middle-school students, with the OCE helping respond to the center's needs. (For example, Casa Guadalupe was interested in offering programming for girls interested in coding, and the OCE found a Muhlenberg student to lend her expertise.) Community Bike Works, a youth organization founded by alum Stefan Goslawski '68, offers an Earn a Bike program for kids that some Muhlenberg students have volunteered with. Once kids have earned their bike, they have access to the Community Bike Works building, which provides healthy snacks, a large library and educational programming. Muhlenberg students often contribute to the latter; most recently, a few students offered weekly sessions on environmental sustainability.

Another longstanding partnership (since 1999) is with Daybreak, a program based in downtown Allentown that supports people living with mental illness, physical disabilities, addiction or HIV/AIDS. Pre-pandemic, OCE volunteers would participate weekly in Daybreak's programming (games, crafts, informal chats), which varied depending on the interests of Daybreak's members. The College's Food Recovery Network, a newer club meant to salvage catering food that isn't utilized on campus, has collaborated with Daybreak as a

distribution point. And, because the OCE has a representative on Daybreak's support committee, the College is aware of other efforts (such as food and supply drives) and is able to step in to support them when they occur.

The College has 11 other schools and organizations in its rotation of partners with weekly programming, and co-curricular opportunities like the ones described here are not the only way students, staff and faculty interact with these partners. Community-engaged coursework and research take place throughout the year, sometimes based on projects partners need help with and sometimes on a more ongoing basis. For example, one semester, Senior Lecturer of Business Gail Eisenberg's Marketing in Non-Profit Organizations class conducted research to help Community Bike Works secure a grant; for the last three years, Associate Professor of Psychology Stefanie Sinno's Adolescent Development class has assembled and executed activities for Casa Guadalupe's after-school programs.

FORGING AHEAD

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how the College community has been able to interact with its partners in Allentown, in part because it has simply changed how those partners operate. For example, the Allentown School District has been offering only remote learning since last spring.

"Some of the work is just really hard to do at the moment," Halpern says. "I would say that we did pretty well with the pivot that we were able to make, and I think it's about those relationships. Some of the schools we work with regularly, if we didn't have



**"I THINK THERE'S A DESIRE FOR PEOPLE TO
KNOW ALL OF THE THINGS THAT ARE GOING ON
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—DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BETH HALPERN

relationships with them, there's no way they could have even tried to work with us."

Because of those relationships, she says, partners were able to approach the OCE with suggestions of what might be helpful. One thing that has worked well is virtual tutoring with Allentown schools, in which Muhlenberg students join Zoom classes and help kids who need extra assistance in breakout rooms.

Still, despite the pandemic, the College has remained committed to the priorities that emerged from the process of applying for the Carnegie Classification. One of those priorities is to examine how the institution might better support community-engaged scholarship.

This is happening via the Community-Engaged Scholarship Learning Community, a partnership between the OCE and the Muhlenberg Center for Teaching and Learning. Since last spring, Halpern, Freeman and 16 other faculty and staff have been thinking critically about how faculty, staff and students and community partners could collaborate on mutually beneficial projects and coursework. Halpern worked with Trexler Library to create an archive of community-engaged scholarship to better inform the Carnegie application; that archive has given the group a big-picture view of the College's many points of engagement.

"I think there's a desire for people to know all of the things that are going on and see points of intersection and try to connect and collaboratively move in particular directions," Halpern says.

Out of the learning community came three working groups, all of which are meeting virtually throughout this spring semester. One is working on recommendations for how the College could better support community-engaged scholarship and another on a common set of learning objectives for faculty, staff and students participating in such work. The third group is focused on how the College might move toward an issues-based model (versus a partnership-driven model) of community engagement, which was another priority to come out of the Carnegie process. What this means in practice is starting with an issue that's relevant to the community—for example, food security—and then determining which stakeholders, on and off campus, might work together to determine how Muhlenberg and its community partners could collaborate on projects related to that issue.

THE MUTUAL BENEFITS


All of the College's engagement work aims to develop mutually beneficial relationships between Muhlenberg and its neighbors.

Faculty, staff and students can bring new ideas into the community: "Our partner organizations will say things along the lines of, 'It's always lovely to have college-age folks working with us. They're focused in this moment in time on learning and exposed to so much information,'" Freeman says. "It's new or up-and-coming stuff. Students are integrating those ideas into their lived actions, sharing those ideas with the staff, thinking through a problem with a new angle through their own education."

Meanwhile, students benefit immensely from getting to know their adopted city. Andrew Leahy '21, an English and music double major and Dana Scholar, has tutored in Allentown's Cleveland and Roosevelt Elementary Schools via America Reads and has interned with the Allentown Symphony Association. These experiences have helped familiarize him with Allentown's unique opportunities and obstacles and with the world of nonprofit organizations, a space he hopes to enter professionally after graduating this May.

"I was never one of those students who had a specific job I wanted, like becoming a doctor or a lawyer," Leahy says. "What the OCE has really helped me do is shape an understanding of the type of work that I'm really interested in—industries and initiatives that emphasize community development and reciprocity with communities."

Even though students' time in Allentown may have an expiration date, the four years they spend on campus are richer when they also regularly spend time off of it. They become part of the broader Lehigh Valley community in addition to the smaller College community, and the lessons they learn and the connections they make stick with them long after they've left.

"We did an alumni survey two or three years ago, and students gain all kinds of skills from doing this work that are very applicable to life and to future careers," Halpern says. "Students learn an awful lot from the work that they're doing and the relationships they build. We all learn from relationships, and those relationships can be transformational for everybody involved." 

ALUMNI NEWS

From the Office of Alumni Affairs and Career Services



My fellow alumni and friends,

As the past unusual year unfolded, I found myself with considerable time to engage in my favorite pastime—reading. I came across a book of essays by poet Ross Gay, which serves as a record of the year he decided to intentionally recognize and appreciate even the smallest moments of delight, many often overlooked or taken for granted. In his introduction to *The Book of Delights*, he states, “It didn’t take me long to learn that the discipline or practice of writing these essays occasioned a kind of delight radar. Or maybe it was more like the development of a delight muscle. Something that implies that the more you study delight, the more delight there is to study ... I also learned this year that my delight grows—much like love and joy—when I share it.”

This year, when it became necessary to move alumni affairs programming from in-person events to virtual gatherings, the question was: Would anyone show up, especially with the challenges most were facing in their own personal and professional lives? Much to the delight of staff planning these events, not only did many of you show up, you showed up in record numbers.

You supported fellow Mules by answering the Career Center’s call for internships, by writing personal notes or recording video messages of encouragement to incoming students and by contributing to the Emergency Grant Fund to assist those facing financial hardships.

You supported one another by volunteering your talents and expertise to lead classes in yoga, dance, painting and photography; by celebrating the accomplishments of Alumni Achievement Award winners at the virtual Evening of Distinction; and by serving as members of boards and committees and as class fund and reunion chairs. You mentored students and other alumni and reinforced a sense of community through Zoom gatherings with friends, classmates and those connected by affinity.

Whether this past year presented you with personal and professional challenges, or whether it was a year filled with the smallest moments of delight, many stayed dedicated to the College and its students. For this, you have my deepest gratitude.

If you are already involved, let me know what programs or events were most meaningful to you. If you are not yet involved, let me know what might encourage you to reconnect with Muhlenberg—with virtual programming, it may be easier for you to get involved now more than ever. You can reach me at nataliehand@muhlenberg.edu or 484-664-3304.

Natalie Hand '78 P'07

Assistant Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Career Services

Calling All History Buffs

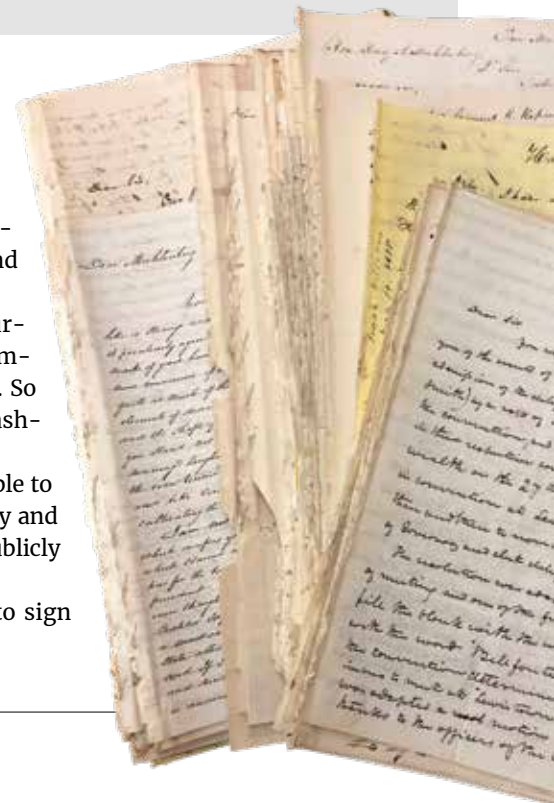
If you like history and puzzles, you may enjoy helping convert Muhlenberg’s unique manuscript collections into searchable text that’s more accessible to researchers.

In December, Trexler Library launched Trexler Transcribes, a public crowdsourcing transcription site. This portal allows members of the Muhlenberg community and beyond to participate in making history more accessible online.

The first project to be transcribed is the Muhlenberg Family Papers collection. Purchased by the college at auction in 1976, it consists of an estimated 1,900 documents comprising mostly letters written by or to members of the Muhlenberg political dynasty. So far, topics revealed in the transcribed letters include social life in Washington, food, fashion, the family’s health, Christmas, cholera outbreaks and political ambition.

By transcribing these documents, you can help make this valuable collection available to the world. Volunteer-created transcriptions allow for improved researching, readability and wide accessibility to historic content and materials, which, in many cases, may only be publicly available for the first time thanks to these volunteer contributions.

Start transcribing today! Visit trexlerworks.muhlenberg.edu/trexlertranscribes to sign up. —Susan Falciani Maldonado



— VIRTUAL — THAW

Exceeds Expectations



One of the few in-person THAW events took place in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with (from left) Karen Long Kuntz '89, Danielle Stewart Magee '94, Ashley Noel '18, Beth Kuntz Gingrich '94, David Kuntz '62, John Briner '99 and Kimberly Titze Briner '99 toasting to Muhlenberg outdoors.

The Office of Alumni Affairs began planning its eighth annual Toast Heard Around the World (THAW) event months deep into the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff were concerned that alumni might feel “Zoomed out” (that is, sick of virtual gatherings) and that they’d need an enticing keynote speaker or some other draw to encourage alumni to participate in the event, which was held primarily virtually for safety reasons.

“My early conversations with our volunteers quickly proved us wrong—alumni really were thrilled just to have the opportunity to reconnect with and talk to each other,” says Tara Simpson '02, associate director of alumni affairs.

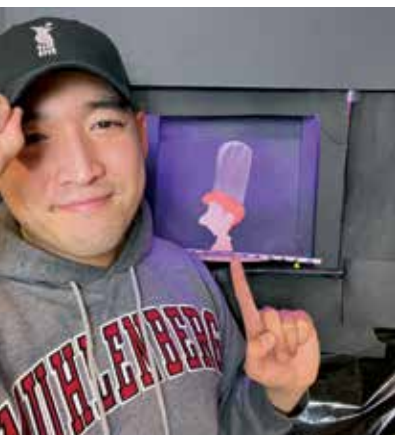
Going into THAW, which took place on January 21, 60 group events were planned (up 11 percent from last year), with many of them organized around affinity groups (class years, clubs, majors, sororities or fraternities). In-person THAW events are typically held based on geographic location, and Simpson sensed increased enthusiasm from some alumni for a virtual event where they would know lots of attendees over an in-person event where they may know fewer. The convenience of toasting to Muhlenberg from home was also a plus: “People liked that it was totally safe and easy to participate—no travel time, parking fees or babysitters needed,” Simpson says.

In a typical year, volunteers would organize THAW events for nearby alumni at bars or restaurants, and while that’s a great way to celebrate the College, this year’s event proved it’s not the only way. “I’ve long wanted to see more personal friend groups coming together to celebrate their connection to Muhlenberg on this day, and this year we really saw that creativity and flexibility much more than in the past,” Simpson says. “I think that’s what will keep THAW growing and evolving each year as we move forward.” —*Meghan Kita*

I Made My “Broadway Debut” Through TikTok

A tiny set I built to follow a trend led to a design credit in the streaming production *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical*, which raised more than \$2 million for The Actors Fund.

BY CHRIS ROUTH '13, AS TOLD TO MEGHAN KITA



From top, Chris Routh '13 points at the pre-show set piece he designed for *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical*; another of the seven total *Ratatouille* set pieces Routh created and shared on TikTok

Last August, TikToker Emily Jacobsen posted an ode to Remy, the rat-chef star of the movie *Ratatouille*. In October, composer Daniel Mertzlufft set the song to orchestration, and his video went viral. Soon, #RatatouilleMusical was trending, and artists of all stripes were contributing songs, choreography and, in the case of Chris Routh '13, miniature set designs. The project got the attention of Broadway producers, and on January 1, a streaming version of *Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical* went live. The performance (featuring stars like Tituss Burgess, Wayne Brady and Adam Lambert) raised money for The Actors Fund, and one of Routh's sets opened the show. Here's how it all came about.

I've been recreating Broadway sets in a “shoebox theater” for my own enjoyment for years, but they were never very good. When the pandemic started, I moved home—I'm a photographer and I wasn't getting much work. I watched all my favorite TV shows and then I thought, “What now?”

I've always thought that *Wicked* has one of the most amazing sets on Broadway. I thought recreating it might be too hard, but I had all the time in the world. I spent four weeks building the model by hand. I used a projector I got for Christmas years ago and a Lego robotics kit from elementary school to light and automate the set to move on its own. Even I was blown away by what I made. I wanted to share it, so I started a TikTok, @shooboxmusicals.


On TikTok, you have to follow trends to be seen. One of the first trends I noticed was the #Ratatouille Musical trend, with Daniel Mertzlufft's orchestration for a song about Remy. I'd just finished my *Wicked* set and I was like, “It would be funny if I used the sound and put this idea onto a stage.” I cut out a Remy, put him in my theater and did some projections. It only took 15 minutes, but that video blew up. I suddenly had thousands of followers.

Then, the #RatatouilleMusical trend got even bigger, so I made an actual set. In the movie, Remy controls [the human chef] Linguini from inside his hat by pulling his hair. I thought, “The best pre-show curtain would be a silhouette of Linguini's hat.” The hat had to be transparent so I could project the shadow of Remy through the back.

I ended up making seven set pieces total. The one that went super viral was inspired by another TikTok creator, Gabbi Bolt, who wrote the song “Trash Is Our Treasure.” Patton Oswalt, who voiced Remy in the movie, shared the video of my set with her song on Twitter, and that's how everything got seen by Broadway and Disney.

From there, it was crazy. I got an email from Seaview, the Broadway production company that put [*Ratatouille: The TikTok Musical*] together, saying, “We love your content. We're trying to put together a benefit for The Actors Fund with a team of Broadway talent.” I looked up the company and it all seemed legit. For the next few weeks, I was in contact with the director and the video designer to try to digitize my set models for a virtual space.

They used my pre-show set piece in the very beginning. I wanted it to move, but that didn't match their orchestration. I wish there had been more communication between the TikTok creators and the show's creative team, but I understand the time pressure they had. Still, all the media coverage has been amazing—talking to *Playbill* and *Broadway World* and *The New York Times*—and the other TikTok creators are good friends now.

When I first moved to New York after graduating, I was trying to be an actor, but then, I lost touch with theatre. Now, from TikTok, I have a lot more friends involved in theatre and talking about theatre. Being able to work with a Broadway team and getting my quote-unquote first Broadway credit, it feels like I'm doing it again. It's an amazing feeling. 

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Amy Attias '22, Chelsea Spell '20 and Frankie Parker '20 make art with students from Allentown's Jefferson Elementary in Fall 2018. To learn about the College's commitment to community engagement, see **p.44**.