

Muhlenberg

Magazine

SPRING 2020

Shared Experience

Inside the College's new externship program



A Virtual Virtuoso

Evan Sforza '07 helps design a VR universe at Microsoft

New Grad Programs

Muhlenberg will launch two master's programs this fall

A Different World

Students visit Cuba with a short-term study abroad course

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“

Thank you, Muhlenberg,
for great memories,
challenging me to think
and giving me the courage
to charge forth!

DAVID
JENKINS '83

”

“

Muhlenberg, thank you for the
education, the friendships, the
opportunities and the community.
Here's to many more generations
of Mules to come.

GABRIELLE
BAUM '21

”

“

As a sophomore at Muhlenberg,
our daughter's feet still haven't
touched the ground! For parents,
that's everything we hoped for in
her college experience.

STEPHANIE &
BILL HOFFMAN P'22

”

“

I would not have been able to
attend 'Berg and have such a
wonderful experience without
the help of financial aid and
scholarships.

NOA
BOONIN '19

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FEATURES



Shared Experience 26

Muhlenberg's new externship program bridges the gap between day-long job shadows and months-long internships.



A Parallel Universe 32

Through his work on VR software at Microsoft, Evan Sforza '07 helps create a welcoming place for people from around the world to meet.



A Different World 38

Last fall's Bodies & Identities in Contemporary Cuba course demonstrates the transformative potential of short-term study abroad.

Profiles

| | |
|---|----|
| Erika Iyengar (biology) | 8 |
| Nora Harkness Kelly '11 | 14 |
| Nick Daza '20 | 18 |
| Richard Miller Jr. '56 and Greg Kantor '18 | 50 |
| Tracy Gartmann '92 | 53 |
| Emily Bayer '14 | 58 |

Departments

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Letters to the Editor | 3 |
| News & Notes | 4-7, 12-13, 17 |
| Remembrance | 10 |
| Creators | 11 |
| New Releases | 11 |
| 10 Questions with... | 16 |
| From the Archives | 20 |
| Mules on the Move | 21 |
| Perspective | 24 |
| The Last Page | 64 |

Alumni

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Alumni News | 46 |
| Class Notes | 49 |
| In Memoriam | 60 |

ON THE COVER Photographer Marco Calderon captured Rhiannon Harwi '20 and Deb Clay-Alston '98 P'14 during Harwi's four-day externship at ADP's new office building in downtown Allentown.

From the Editor



I'll never forget a moment from the start of my junior year of journalism school: On the first day of a magazine writing class, the professor asked each student to share what they'd done over the summer. With each response, I became more and more horrified—was I the only one who'd spent the past few months working at Target instead of completing an unpaid internship at a publishing company in New York City? How did I miss the memo that I was supposed to have an internship already? And how would I ever rise above my peers to land one before my senior year when I was so behind in terms of experience and professional connections?

A program like the one now offered by Muhlenberg's Career Center could have helped me bridge that gap: Students can complete externships with alumni hosts that allow time for hands-on activities and skill-building. The program lets students, including those without previous internship experience (like Rhiannon Harwi '20, on the cover with Deb Clay-Alston '98 P'14), get to know a company and its employees over the course of three to five days. Read more on page 26.

Another memorable experience from my junior year was feeling like I was the only one of my friends not studying abroad. How could I leave for the spring semester when I needed to spend that time scrambling to find an internship that would have me? (Fear not: I found two.) The Muhlenberg Integrative Learning Abroad (MILA) program offers short-term study abroad opportunities ideal for students who may otherwise stay home. These trips are connected with a semester-long class, and the travel component brings classroom work into the real world. Learn about the MILA program through the lens of last fall's Bodies & Identities in Contemporary Cuba course on page 38.

Rounding out this issue, we have a look into the present (and future) of virtual reality with Microsoft Designer Evan Sforza '07, page 32, and a look into the present (and past) of *Muhlenberg Magazine* with the College's Vice President for Communications Brian Speer, page 24.

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Lessons Learned

I was glad to read of the First-Year Seminars (“The Write Stuff,” Fall 2019). I taught four similarly constructed seminars in the late 1970s for the philosophy department at Cornell University and found them rewarding. I understand that the First-Year Seminars reduced the burden previously put on the English department, but I also want to recognize the value that the English department at Muhlenberg provided. I couldn’t have taught the freshman seminars at Cornell if I hadn’t taken Fred Smith’s freshman honors English in the fall semester of 1969. My hope at Cornell was to pass on what I learned from Fred almost 10 years earlier.

Paul Asman '73

On Mental Health

I highly commend you on your pithy and important article, “Mental Health on Campus” (Fall 2019). Our son, Eric Levenson '09, suffered from mental health challenges for many years. The College’s Office of Disability Services was an amazing resource to get assistance with those issues and facilitate extra time and understanding from his professors. Ultimately, Eric succumbed to his illness in February 2016, but our entire family believes that Muhlenberg College, the supportive environment it provided to him and the positive memories he had after graduating helped keep him alive for those years of his 20s. We have created a foundation in Eric’s name, the Eric Eliezer Levenson Foundation for Hope, and have created a scholarship in his memory at Muhlenberg specifically for students with learning challenges.

College is a difficult time for most people: leaving behind family and friends and having to make hard decisions on your own and to decide who you want to be going forward. Many of us need help but are maybe afraid to ask for it. Don’t be! And for those of you who see friends struggling, ask them if you can help and be there to help them.

Eta Levenson P'09

Hats Off

I read your entertaining article on the history of dinks (“Mixed Dinks,” Fall 2019). I am a member of the Class of '72 and I believe we were the last class that was supposed to wear the dinks. We probably all bought them but did not wear them. It was 1968, things were changing and we would not have been caught dead in hats that were exactly like the one in the foreground of the photo.

Brian Flynn '72

I enjoyed your little article, “Mixed Dinks,” with the array of dinks shown. The dink tradition was part of my freshman year in 1967. My dink was gray and red, and I think that I still have it somewhere! Thanks for bringing back fun memories! The dinks were a rite of passage.

Cindy Sparks Mendelson '71

A Different Perspective

As a politically conservative individual, I am disappointed when the College does not present a politically diverse discussion of ideas, whether through its educational programs or through its communications. While Ross Dardani’s article (“Judicial Review,” Fall 2019) may reflect his own views, he bases his position on what he calls “an increasingly progressive populace.” He attacks the idea (“myth”) that the Supreme Court should use the Constitution as the standard for making decisions, not political considerations. His argument is: The Constitution be damned—we are right—so toe the line. If he thinks that “an entrenched conservative majority” (five to four) is dangerous to the institution of the Supreme Court, what should one think of the viability of institutions like higher education or the national news media, where the entrenched liberal dominance is closer to 85 to 90 percent? Also, Mr. Dardani posits, when a “broad national coalition” exists, the Supreme Court should better “align with the public mood to help preserve its legitimacy.” But the 2016 presidential election shows there is no such national agreement. In a society where sensitive issues “trigger” a response, I thought you might be interested that one alumnus was triggered by the recent article in *Muhlenberg Magazine*.

Vance Hitch '67

I read Ross Dardani’s article on the Supreme Court with interest. No doubt the Court is under pressure from without due to our hyperpartisan political environment and from within due to unprecedented predictability on the part of most Court justices. In my view, bad decisions arise when the Court bows to culture (e.g., *Dred Scott*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*) instead of adhering to the law as written. Decisions that adhere to law will serve our nation better than any restructuring of the Court. Cultural and legal changes should come from the elected branches of government.

Robert Matthews P'22

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.

A Powerful Partnership

Interim Dean of Academic Life and Professor of Political Science Michele Deegan co-founded Muhlenberg's College Admissions Mentoring Program (CAMP) in 2016 as a community engagement volunteer opportunity. In CAMP, Muhlenberg students partner with Allentown high school seniors to work through the college application process. Today, CAMP is flourishing as part of a new integrative learning course called Politics, Policy and the Opportunity Gap. To read more, visit muhlenberg.edu/CAMP2019.



A Class of Published Authors

Professor of Political Science Lanethea Mathews-Schultz taught a special-topics course on the 2018 elections with a unique final project: Students had their research collected into an Open Educational Resource (OER) available for free to scholars around the world. To read more—and to find a link to the OER where you can read the students' work—visit muhlenberg.edu/2018OER.



Good Use of a Bad Bug

Muhlenberg faculty and students are using the spotted lanternfly, an invasive species that's now prevalent across the Lehigh Valley, to attract local high schoolers to math and science. Led by Truman Koehler Professor of Mathematics Eugene Fiorini and Lecturer of Chemistry Gail Marsella, the SLIMES (Spotted Lanternfly Investigated through Mathematics and Environmental Science) Project provides an avenue to research the damage the bugs are doing and how to mitigate it. To read more, visit muhlenberg.edu/badbug.

Student Leadership at Muhlenberg

The College's commitment to its students includes fostering opportunities for leadership. Students can serve as models for their peers in many ways, from management responsibilities in clubs to service as resident advisors and hall directors. Muhlenberg's student life team is committed to supporting and increasing the leadership roles available on campus. To read more, visit muhlenberg.edu/leadershipopps.

Muhlenberg Announces the Launch of Graduate Programs



In January, Muhlenberg received accreditation approval from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education for its new graduate programs in applied analytics and organizational leadership, which will begin to be offered in the fall semester. The newly established Muhlenberg College School of Graduate Studies will be led by Dean of Graduate Studies Uppinder Mehan, who began his role in November. Mehan joined Muhlenberg from Moravian College, where he was the dean of the School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and helped launch several new degree programs.

“Adding graduate programs to the rich variety and solid foundation of what we already offer allows us to reach out to those who already have undergraduate degrees and are interested in deepening their knowledge and developing proficiencies and our alumni who have helped make Muhlenberg the highly respected college it is,” Mehan says.

The School of Graduate Studies will offer two master’s degree programs, one in applied analytics and one in organizational leadership. Extensive market research helped administrators decide to offer these particular programs, says AJ Lemheney, vice president and executive director of Muhlenberg’s Division of Graduate and Continuing Education.

“What we found are businesses and government agencies rely on big data to succeed and better serve their customers and communities. Our applied analytics program focuses on helping them carry the best of their past forward, understand the present and use their data to envision their future,” Lemheney says. “Likewise, we found small to large companies and agencies are complex systems of people and processes prone to problems. Our organizational leadership program is an alternative to the MBA for those companies in demand for a leader who thinks holistically, solving complex problems with empathy, ethics and creativity.” Graduate certificates in both areas of study are also being offered as an alternative for those looking only to build specific advanced knowledge and skills in a particular discipline.

“Adding graduate programs to the rich variety and solid foundation of what we already offer allows us to reach out to those who already have undergraduate degrees and are interested in deepening their knowledge and developing proficiencies and our alumni who have helped make Muhlenberg the highly respected college it is.”

—UPPINDER MEHAN, DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

With the addition of the School of Graduate Studies and launch of these new programs, Muhlenberg is also changing the name of the Wescoe School of Continuing Education to the Muhlenberg College School of Continuing Studies. This name “better aligns with the College’s strategic plan and brand identity and provides clarity of the school’s function within the greater community we serve,” Lemheney says.

—Meghan Kita

Muhlenberg Receives \$100,000 Opioid Prevention in Higher Education Grant

In January, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced that Muhlenberg would be one of 13 higher education institutions in the state receiving this grant from the Department of Drug and

Alcohol Programs. The \$100,000 grant—the largest amount awarded to any single institution—supports a program in which Muhlenberg students learn to train members of the Lehigh Valley community to administer Narcan, a nasal spray that can save the life of a person who has overdosed on opioids.

Assistant Professor and

Director of Public Health Chrysan Cronin and Kevan Shah '22 applied for the grant together last fall.

Cronin reached out to Shah last academic year after reading about the work he'd done pre-Muhlenberg, as a contributor to a report about opioid addiction in his home state of New Jersey. "I thought, 'This student needs to be working with me,'" Cronin says.

Shah, who has since declared as a public health major, received a grant from the College to conduct opioid research with Cronin last summer. He found that programs that increase access to Narcan reduce opioid overdose deaths, but those programs don't always offer training on how to administer the medication.

"With that in mind, I founded a nonprofit, End Overdose Together, that recruits, trains and mobilizes

students to host workshops in the community to ensure that individuals are aware, able and ready to administer Narcan when confronted with an opioid overdose," Shah says.

In the fall, he held a pilot training to teach members of Muhlenberg EMS and the Peer Health Advocates at Muhlenberg (PHAM) to train others to use Narcan. Meanwhile, Lehigh County Administrator Layne Turner—whom Shah had met with before to discuss the opioid crisis—contacted him to let him know Pennsylvania was making opioid prevention grant money available. Shah wrote the proposal and Cronin checked it.

"The experience not only taught me how to write a grant proposal but, in a larger sense, how to translate my deep-seated desire to serve others into a compelling narrative to secure the support needed to do so at scale," Shah says.

Cronin, Shah and three other public health students (Rashida Haye '20, Meray Faragalla '20 and Brynn Cardonick '21) are acting as the program's staff. In January, they recruited 54 students to be trained to train others and began connecting with area facilities (such as libraries, small police departments and local firehouses) with personnel who might benefit from Narcan training. In the second half of February, the trained students (who are paid hourly, as well as for their travel) began conducting workshops at those locations and providing them with Narcan—the grant covered 1,000 doses. —MK

"The experience not only taught me how to write a grant proposal but, in a larger sense, how to translate my deep-seated desire to serve others into a compelling narrative to secure the support needed to do so at scale."

—KEVAN SHAH '22

*Assistant Professor and Director of Public Health
Chrysan Cronin and Kevan Shah '22*



PHOTO BY KRISTI MORRIS/LITTLEWING PHOTOGRAPHY

SPRING SPEAKERS

Arthur Brooks (Center for Ethics)

Brooks, now a Harvard professor, spent 10 years as president of the American Enterprise Institute, a public policy think tank in Washington, D.C. He's written 11 books, including 2019's *Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America From the Culture of Contempt*. Brooks was invited as part of the 2019-2020 Center for Ethics speaker series, "Borders, Nationalisms, Identities: The Ethics of Global Citizenship" (muhlenberg.edu/cfe).

Cathleen Cahill (Suffrage Series)

Raising Our Banners: Women of Color Challenge the Mainstream Suffrage Movement

Cahill, an associate professor of history at Pennsylvania State University, is working on a book of biographies of female activists of color in the era surrounding the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Cahill was invited as part of the speaker series "A Century of Struggle: Women's Rights Before and After Suffrage" (muhlenberg.edu/suffrageseries).

Skye Fitzgerald (CFE)

Lifeboat Screening and Discussion

Fitzgerald is the director of the short documentary film *Lifeboat*, which focuses on volunteers from a German nonprofit who risk the waves of the Mediterranean to pluck refugees from sinking rafts pushing off from Libya in the middle of the night.

Mohsin Hamid (CFE)

The author was invited to discuss his novel, *Exit West*, about two young people who leave their war-torn home. *Exit West* was the College's 2019-2020 common read, which the Class of 2023 completed before arriving on campus.

Kenneth Keitt (Conrad W. Raker '34 Lecture)

Strength Beyond Limitations

Keitt is the founder and CEO of health and fitness company ParaPer4mance, an organization and community designed to serve individuals with limited mobility. He formed the organization after an automobile collision left him paralyzed from the waist down. Keitt underwent physical therapy with Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, which co-sponsors the Raker Lecture series.

Allison Lange (Suffrage Series)

Lange, assistant professor of history at Wentworth Institute of Technology, is the author of the forthcoming book, *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement*. Her talk addresses how suffragists developed a national visual campaign to change ideas about gender and politics and win voting rights.

Justin Rose

Becoming a Drum Major for Justice: Lessons from Martin Luther King's Theory of Political Service

Rose, an associate professor of political science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, draws his lecture from his 2019 book, *The Drum Major's Instinct: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Theory of Political Service*. Rose was a visiting assistant professor of political science and Africana studies at Muhlenberg during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Muhlenberg Joins Partnership to Purchase Renewable Energy

In February, Muhlenberg College, Lehigh University, Lafayette College and Dickinson College announced a partnership to purchase renewable energy as a collective—becoming the largest unaffiliated group of higher education institutions to do so. The institutions have signed a 15-year virtual power purchase agreement (VPPA) to buy renewable energy generated by a 200+ acre solar farm located in Texas. Collectively, the group's 45.9 megawatt share of the project is anticipated to help prevent more than 70,000 metric tons of carbon emissions each year, which is equivalent to removing more than 15,000 cars from the road, or the amount of carbon sequestered by nearly 85,000 acres of forest. While Muhlenberg's campus-wide sustainability efforts began nearly two decades ago, this project, along with other environmental initiatives, enables the campus to have a carbon-neutral electricity footprint for the first time.

Campus Rabbi Joins 20 Students on Birthright Trip to Israel

Over winter break, the largest group of Muhlenberg students in five years traveled to Israel for 11 days. (Muhlenberg College Hillel facilitates two Birthright trips for students annually, with 10 to 15 students typically attending.) Partially because of the size of the group, Ari Perten, campus rabbi and associate College chaplain, accompanied the students, in addition to Talya Inbar, the Jewish Agency Israel Fellow working at Hillel. "It's a key trip for our students, so I wanted to have a sense of what the experience is like and the pieces I'm able to add with my background," says Perten, who started in his role last August. "And it's always a nice thing to be able to connect with and learn about students off campus."

Getting Their Feet Wet

Professor of Biology Erika Iyengar found a way to share her love of fieldwork with students in their first semester at Muhlenberg.

When Professor of Biology Erika Iyengar tells a fellow marine ecologist that she teaches in Pennsylvania, she watches as they internally question their knowledge of American geography. *Maybe some part of the state juts out to touch the Atlantic*, their confused expression says. But no—Iyengar, whose primary research interest involves ocean-dwelling snails, works in a landlocked state without direct access to those creatures.

“When I interviewed at Muhlenberg, one of the questions was whether I could maintain an active research program,” Iyengar says. “I said, ‘I will leave during the summer and I will take students with me.’”

And since joining the College in 2003, she’s taken dozens of students out of state to do research, most of them to Maine. However, eight students have had the opportunity to spend a summer at Friday Harbor Labs on Washington State’s San Juan Island, one of the top marine ecology research stations in the world. Most of the researchers there are graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and professors—it’s rare for an undergrad to have the opportunity to collaborate and network with such a group. And that’s how a marine ecologist ended up in Allentown: “It was decided that the benefits would outweigh the costs, in this unique thing our students would be able to do.”

During the academic year, Iyengar and her students conduct freshwater fieldwork in Lehigh Valley streams and ponds, including at Muhlenberg’s Graver Arboretum. Historically, mostly upperclassmen participated in this research, but that changed last fall, when Iyengar added a fieldwork component to Introductory Biology. It’s the College’s biggest class, a prerequisite for all biology-related majors, and it typically enrolls about 150 mostly first-year students. (The whole group attends lectures together; the weekly recitations have between 16 and 20 students each.)

“This large, first-semester class does not have a traditional lab associated with it,” Iyengar says. “Since I’m a field ecologist, even a lab, if it’s stuck inside the classroom, is less exciting to me. Doing an original research project that is out in nature, working with live organisms, has all kinds of wonderful benefits and challenges.”

Her first challenge was figuring out how to orchestrate a hands-on experience for such a large number of students. For the fieldwork component, she selected two nearby sites she’d taken students to in the past: the Trexler Nature Preserve in Schnecksville and the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in Emmaus. Both sites are owned by the Wildlands Conservancy, a small local nonprofit that can use the data. Only 40 students could fit on the bus, so she took 40 to Schnecksville on a Saturday and 40 to Emmaus the next day. The students put on waders to collect samples that would help determine the density of various small invertebrates living in different parts of the water.

Those students handed off the samples to classmates doing the lab-analysis component on campus: 25 students on Saturday and another 25 on Sunday. “It was important to process the samples as soon after collection as possible, so any predators present would not eat the prey,” Iyengar says. The students used microscopes to identify and tally the invertebrates present in the samples. That weekend produced a wealth of data, which Iyengar split up and distributed to groups of three or four students to graph, analyze and present to their classmates.

The data will go into an eventual comprehensive report that will help inform the work of the Wildlands Conservancy. For example, the sampling in Trexler Nature Preserve was done around a dam Wildlands is planning to remove. The students sampled upstream and downstream of the dam. Iyengar hopes to continue bringing students to sample there in the lead-up to the dam’s removal and then in the years after to provide information about the effects of such a change.

“Wildlands has been working hard to convince people that taking out dams makes streams healthier. It does, but it’s a hard sell. When you first take out dams, the area often looks significantly degraded for a while,” she says. “Showing how things recover over time can help Wildlands say, ‘Look, now you’re finding these sorts of things that should be present, which were not here when the dam existed,’ and it is very exciting to have our students involved in documenting those changes.” —MK

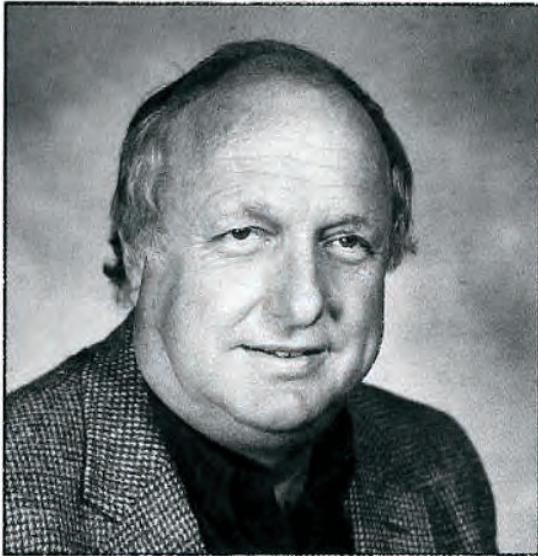


PHOTOS BY MARCO CALDERON



Professor of Biology Erika Iyengar (far left) supervises students sampling upstream of the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in the Lehigh Parkway (left). At top, a complete sample in the dipnet, including a salamander and plant material that were not part of the intended collection. Just above, students remove macroinvertebrates clinging to the net to add to the sample.

Irvin Schmoyer '63: A Beloved Leader in Biology



Irvin Schmoyer '63
in his 2005 Ciarla
yearbook photo

Irvin Schmoyer '63 of Emmaus, Pennsylvania, died February 5, 2020. He spent nearly three decades teaching biology at the College before his retirement in 2005.

As a student at Muhlenberg, Schmoyer was a natural science major and a member of the Phi Kappa Tau fraternity and Omicron Delta Kappa honor society. After graduating, he earned his master's and

doctorate degrees from Purdue University. He taught at Purdue, the University of Pittsburgh and the State University of New York at Fredonia and worked at Air Products before his mentor, the late James Vaughan '52 P'80 P'86 P'89, convinced him to return to the College to teach in 1976.

During his time as a Muhlenberg professor, Schmoyer taught genetics and collaborated with students on research. In the classroom and the lab, he introduced students to tissue culture, a method many peer institutions were not offering at that time. This advanced, hands-on experience enabled many of Schmoyer's students to secure prestigious internships and research positions and to be prepared to move on to medical, veterinary or graduate school. In 1989, Schmoyer and Vaughan co-authored a book called *Laboratory Exercises in Cell Biology*, a testament to their continued collaboration as colleagues.

Schmoyer held various faculty leadership positions, including chair of the Department of Biology from 1996 to 1999. Sarkis Acopian Professor of Ornithology and Conservation

Biology Daniel Klem Jr., a colleague of Schmoyer's for more than 25 years, recalls how skillfully Schmoyer led his colleagues through challenging moments.

Schmoyer's office was always filled with students, Klem says. "I just remember him as having a great sense of humor and smiling a lot and bringing laughter into the classroom," says Nina Zanetti '77, a biology major who took genetics with Schmoyer the first year he taught at Muhlenberg. "On a more serious note, his class was the first one I took that really emphasized going to primary papers, and that was excellent preparation for grad school."

Ann Marie Vest Shattuck '96, also a biology major, says of Schmoyer, "He was always available to offer a word of advice or encouragement. His dedication to his teaching and genuine concern for his students added to my love and appreciation for education, which led me to become a high school teacher."

Schmoyer was preceded in death by two sons, Richard I. and Todd M. Schmoyer. He is survived by his wife, Jean Yockey Schmoyer '85; his daughter, Janine Clarke, and her husband, Richard; his brother, Ronald Schmoyer; and his grandson, Michael Clarke. —MK

"He was always available to offer a word of advice or encouragement. His dedication to his teaching and genuine concern for his students added to my love and appreciation for education, which led me to become a high school teacher."

—ANN MARIE VEST SHATTUCK '96

Recipe for Success

Rachel Mansfield '12—whose Instagram account, @rachlmansfield, has more than 338,000 followers—turned her online influence into a book deal: Her first cookbook, *Just the Good Stuff*, came out in February. We asked the media & communication and business administration double major about her journey from food and lifestyle blogger (at rachlmansfield.com) and Instagrammer to published author.

Muhlenberg Magazine Why did you start your blog?

Rachel Mansfield I began sharing recipes when I was working full-time at a consumer packaged goods brand. I felt I was undervalued and undercompensated, and my passion for all things food and wholesome recipes was really taking off. A few months later, I was fired from my job and pursued my side hustle full-time.

MM How did you amass such a large Instagram following?

RM It took a lot of hard work, a lot of mindless hours staring at my phone and engaging with others on the app to grow my account. I also share recipes that my readers crave and are feasible to make in their own home.

MM Have you always been into cooking?

RM I learned how to cook at 23 from my mother-in-law. I have no culinary experience, and I think that's been the number-one reason why people enjoy my recipes: They're simple. They're made with easy ingredients and minimal steps.

MM How did the cookbook come about?

RM I felt it was time to branch out of the digital space. I love Instagram and my blog, but I wanted something offline, something that my community can take home. I sought out an agent, then I wrote a proposal and it went out to publishing houses. My book was in a bidding war—I was totally shocked! It is surreal to me that I am in bookstores now.

MM How long did it take you to get the book ready, and how was that process different from the work you'd done before?

RM It took me about a year to develop and perfect all the recipes. I'm so used to creating recipes in my kitchen, posting them and getting an immediate reaction. Now it's 100 recipes that people haven't seen yet. Writing a book is isolating, in a way, but it is so rewarding now seeing my readers love all of the "good stuff" I made for us. —Jeremy Fuchs '14



PHOTO BY AUBRIE PICK

| NEW RELEASES |



Rich Niesenbaum (biology)
Sustainable Solutions: Problem Solving for Current and Future Generations
Oxford University Press, 448 pages

Niesenbaum, director of sustainability studies at Muhlenberg, penned a solutions-based book that integrates a variety of perspectives and approaches that equip and empower the reader to contribute to a more sustainable future.



JoEllen Notte '01
The Monster Under the Bed: Sex, Depression and the Conversations We Aren't Having
Thorntree Press, 264 pages

In her first book, Notte addresses how to navigate sex and relationships while coping with depression.



Adrian Shanker '09
Bodies and Barriers: Queer Activists on Health
PM Press, 256 pages

Through artfully articulated, data-informed essays by 26 activists, *Bodies and Barriers* tackles the pervasive health issues queer people experience throughout their lives. As editor, Shanker curates a conversation that has been missing from the health literature.

Scholarships Forge a Bond Between Today's Students and Alumni Donors

From left: Bruce Bird '77, Nancy Walsh Bird '77 Memorial Scholarship recipient Spencer Kirin '21 and Lynn Bird

Truman L. Koehler Jr. '52 and Jeff Koehler '79 have a long family history of philanthropy at the College, which began with Truman's father, the late Dr. Truman L. Koehler Sr. '24. One of the ways they support Muhlenberg is The Koehler Scholarship, which is awarded to students with majors in the natural or life sciences. What stands out about this type of philanthropy is the personal connection the Koehlers are able to make with the students who receive the scholarship.

"Our current recipient is headed off to dental school next year. We sat down and had lunch last September," Jeff says. "Her goal is to be able to provide dental care for people in her home community. This is extremely fulfilling for us. It was exactly where we were hoping the scholarship would go."

This academic year, donated or endowed scholarships were awarded to 395 students, about a fifth of the student body. "Scholarships funded through donations and endowments help the College further its resources so we can help as many deserving students as possible," says Rob Springall, vice president of enrollment management. "Scholarships also help Muhlenberg attract talented students. A Muhlenberg academic scholarship celebrates a student's past accomplishments and encourages them to continue to do their best."

Bruce Bird '77, a trustee who was a chemistry major at Muhlenberg, established The Nancy Walsh Bird '77 Memorial Scholarship in 2010 in memory of his late wife. Bird says he wouldn't have been able to attend Muhlenberg without financial support and believes he has a responsibility to pay it forward. He also has enjoyed the opportunity to meet recipients at the annual scholarship luncheon Muhlenberg hosts for students and donors.

"You always know the money's going out to a deserving person," Bird says, "but being able to put a face to the name and to hear about them and what their aspirations are and what their story is, it gives you more meaning."



One goal of the endowed scholarship program is to generate this kind of meaning: "Scholarships allow the College to both address students' financial needs and connect them with legacies that our donors are celebrating with their generosity," Springall says. "Scholarships give Muhlenberg a tangible way to recognize students' connections with the programs, places and people that our donors hold most dear to them."

What Chris Getz '04 P'09, who established The Chris '04 P'09 and Bonnie Getz P'09 Endowed Scholarship with his wife last year, holds most dear is the Muhlenberg College School of Continuing Studies (formerly known as the Wescoe School of Continuing Education). He was able to finish his bachelor's degree after running a successful auto-body business, and he wants to help other students achieve what he did. The Getz Scholarship will be awarded with preference to Continuing Studies students, with second preference to students studying business administration or innovation & entrepreneurship.

"I was helped by so many people when I needed it, in my business career and at Muhlenberg," Chris says. "When you receive help in so many ways, you start to think, 'What can I do to help?'" —MK

"I was helped by so many people when I needed it, in my business career and at Muhlenberg. When you receive help in so many ways, you start to think, 'What can I do to help?'"

—CHRIS GETZ '04 P'09

Interim President Kathleen E. Harring Named to Two-Year Term by Board of Trustees

In December, Muhlenberg College Board Chair Richard C. Crist Jr. '77 P'05 P'09 announced that the College's Board of Trustees had formalized Kathleen E. Harring's role as interim president with a two-year agreement. Harring, who had previously served as provost and has been a faculty member in the Department of Psychology since 1984, was appointed interim president last June.

In an email to the Muhlenberg community, Crist said, "We are very fortunate that [Harring] is willing to serve the College in this important leadership role. In addition, we have a strong, experienced senior staff capable of leading their areas of responsibility in a collaborative and inclusive manner. The board is pleased with the effective and intelligent approach to leading the College this semester."

The email from Crist said the two-year agreement provides the opportunity for Harring to continue progress on the College's strategic plan. He added that her steady and effective leadership enables the board to conduct a presidential search at a time of its choosing rather than rushing into the process.

Harring has served in a number of leadership roles at Muhlenberg, most recently as the College's provost. During her tenure as provost, Harring was instrumental in guiding a number of important initiatives, including serving as co-chair for Muhlenberg's 2017 strategic planning process, implementing procedures to support the College's diversity initiatives and overseeing planning for new post-graduate programs (see page 5 to learn more).

—Kristine Yahna Todaro '84



PHOTO BY MAGGIE EWALD

Why I Study ... computer science and its many applications Assistant Professor of Computer Science Jorge Silveyra



PHOTO BY TOM AMICO

When I was young, my sister got a Nintendo, and I fell in love with video games. I got a computer around eighth grade, which

was uncommon at the time in my native Mexico. Soon after, I started taking computer classes. It felt natural for me to work with computers.

In college, I trained as a computer engineer—more focused on hardware—because computer science, which is mostly programming, wasn't offered in my hometown. I

spent a year as an exchange student in the U.S. I enjoyed it so much that I returned as an international graduate student in computer science.

I needed to do research, and a computational epidemiology professor asked me, "Would you be interested in joining my lab?" I said yes because I'm very attracted to the multidisciplinary aspect of computer science. My work involved investigating the role of an individual's immune system in an epidemic, so I had to take classes in immunology, biology, biostatistics and genetics. Coming up with computer models to replicate immune responses and different epidemics was fascinating.

When I came to Muhlenberg, [Professor of Political Science] Chris Herrick approached me about collaborating to analyze the rhetoric of speeches by Chinese government officials. It sounded fantastic because I'm interested in politics, too. I've been using language processing algorithms to try to discover patterns.

There are so many different ways to apply this kind of language analysis. For example, we could do studies about newspaper articles on Brexit or other controversial topics. From the reception Chris and I have gotten at political science conferences, it's clear that there is a lot of interest in these types of studies.

An Environmental Educator

In her role at the Audubon Naturalist Society, Nora Harkness Kelly '11 shares her love of nature with the next generation.



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA FERNANDEZ

In her first job out of college, at the Nantucket Conservation Foundation in Massachusetts, Nora Harkness Kelly '11 led a group of high schoolers on a nature walk through the organization's grasslands. As they snaked their way along a sandy path, Kelly, an environmental science major who was working as a field research assistant, talked about the importance of land management. She hoped they'd be lucky enough to spy an interesting insect or two along the way—collecting bee and beetle specimens was part of her role.

Instead, the group stumbled upon a turtle laying her eggs in the sand. The students that day were visiting the tiny island off the coast of Cape Cod from inner-city Boston. They had never seen anything like this.

"I really got to teach them something," Kelly says.

At that moment, she found her passion, at the intersection of teaching and nature. She'd never been particularly fond of what she calls "the nitty-gritty science" that happens in a lab or in fieldwork. She'd been drawn to her major by her own fond childhood memories of being outside: As kids, Kelly and her sister spent hours in their big backyard in Alexandria, Virginia, their imaginations transforming the expanse of green into a woodsy wonderland. Bowls of mashed up leaves and berries became elaborate meals; they became princesses (or adversaries) from neighboring lands. What if she could nurture this kind of early love of the outdoors in the next generation? What if she could carve out an entire career in environmental education?

After six months on Nantucket, she made it happen: She moved to Virginia to work as a youth educator with the Norfolk Botanical Garden. Since then, she's held several education positions at some of the mid-Atlantic's leading environmental centers, including the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center and the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland.

Today, Kelly is the camp director at the Audubon Naturalist Society, the oldest independent environmental organization in the Washington, D.C. area. The title is a bit of a misnomer, as she presides over more than just summer camps. During the school year, she travels to area elementary schools and presents programming like Garbology, which asks students to go through the cafeteria trash to see how much of it could have been recycled or composted.

“Their minds are blown,” Kelly says with a laugh.

During the summer months, she coordinates 80 different camps for 1,300 students at the society’s 40-acre nature sanctuary in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The camps are so popular that many fill up in the first 10 minutes of registration, and 90 percent of participants are return campers.

“A lot of what makes my job so fulfilling to me is that I’m connecting kids with nature,” Kelly says. “They’re going to be the next generation of conservationists and environmentalists. They’re going to decide the fate of the earth. The earlier you can reach them, the better.”

Among the camp offerings are Beginning Backpacking, in which teens hike 24 miles of the Appalachian Trail; Camp Cuisine: Master Chef, which has middle schoolers making meals using produce from an on-site garden; and Slugs to Bugs, in which the youngest campers (ages 4 and 5) get to turn over logs and investigate what lies beneath.

“The world is so fast-paced; we’re giving them the opportunity to be present in the moment,” Kelly says. “They don’t have to memorize facts. There’s no right answer. That can be really liberating for kids.”

It’s a lesson in mindfulness that Kelly finds herself returning to as she hikes the hills around her home with her dog. She always stops, removes her earbuds and closes her eyes, slowly picking out the sounds of nature all around her.

“It really reconnects you with the earth,” she says. —April Johnston



Opposite, Nora Harkness Kelly '11 stands in front of a “bee hotel” made of old logs and hollow stems. At left, she holds Maizie, a corn snake she cares for at work. Below, she and a preschooler observe a vine that is working its way into the base of the bee hotel.



“A lot of what makes my job so fulfilling to me is that I’m connecting kids with nature. They’re going to be the next generation of conservationists and environmentalists. They’re going to decide the fate of the earth.”

—NORA HARKNESS KELLY '11

Q&A

10 Questions with... Brian Fishbone '98

Head of diversity, inclusion and belonging at Cruise,
a San-Francisco-based self-driving car service



ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLIE POWELL

1

Describe what you do in five words or fewer.

I build community.

2

If you weren't in your role at Cruise, what would you be?

Global travel writer

3

What is your favorite place?

The coffee shop [Blue Bottle or Starbucks]—I am addicted [two iced soy or oat milk lattes daily]!

4

What quality in others do you most admire?

Tenacity

5

What are you are secretly good at?

Skee ball

6

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

She did not say it directly to me, but, [President of the Children's Defense Fund] Marian Wright Edelman: "Service is the rent we pay for being."

7

Which living person do you most admire?

My husband, Jon

8

What is your most treasured possession?

A tree of life ceramic from Mexico

9

What question should we have asked you?

What makes you tick?

10

What's the answer?

I am passionate about education and community building, and I am at my best when I am helping others do, be and feel better.

Muhlenberg in the Media

A November Pennsylvania Presidential Election Survey put the spotlight on the work of Muhlenberg's Institute of Public Opinion and its director, Chris Borick (political science).

For two months, the poll was cited or Borick was quoted—or both—in nearly 100 national and international news outlets. Coverage included CNN, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Wall Street Journal*, two articles in *The Washington Post* and *USA Today* and three articles in *The New York Times*.

PBS39 featured the work of Muhlenberg students who helped digitize materials from the Lehigh Valley LGBT Community Archive, which is housed at the College.

Allentown's Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center has a new exhibit from the archive.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* interviewed Kathleen Bachynski (public health).

The Q&A with Bachynski, "5 questions: Are the health risks of youth football being addressed," ran in late November.

Muhlenberg was selected by *Kiplinger* for the list "10 Best College Values You May Have Overlooked, 2019."

The article highlights the College's "strong course catalog and affordable tuition" and says it "earns high marks for being a historic leader in financial aid transparency."

Members of the football team, brothers Max '20 and Spencer Kirin '21 and quarterback Michael Hnatkowsky '21, were featured in their hometown newspapers.

The Baltimore Sun and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* covered the students' contributions to this year's outstanding team.

Muhlenberg hosted the first Reach Out PA: Your Mental Health Matters round-table discussion on January 3.

Convened by Governor Tom Wolf with the help of Representative Mike Schlossberg '05, the discussion focused on how to increase access to and reduce the stigma of mental healthcare. Attendees included U.S. Congresswoman Susan Wild and Muhlenberg's Director of Counseling Services Tim Silvestri. An *Associated Press* article announcing the event ran in dozens of media outlets state-wide and the round-table was covered by PBS39, WFMZ, *The Morning Call* and more.

Muhlenberg's Polling Center Earns A+ Rating from *FiveThirtyEight*

Muhlenberg College's Institute of Public Opinion (MCIPO) is one of only six pollsters in the nation to achieve the top rating from the polling analysis website *FiveThirtyEight*. MCIPO measures the public's views on electoral and public policy issues with a concentration on environmental and health matters. In addition to November's A+ rating, *FiveThirtyEight* gave the institute an A rating in 2018 and an A- in 2016 and ranked it first among all colleges and universities in the nation in 2014. For more than two decades, MCIPO's director, Professor of Political Science Chris Borick, has worked with teams of undergraduate student supervisors and interviewers to conduct more than 300 large-scale public opinion surveys. In addition to voter interviews, students are involved in developing the questionnaire designs and survey sampling as well as the analysis of the completed surveys.

Muhlenberg Summer Music Theatre (MSMT) Celebrates 40 Years

The anniversary season includes the 2007 Tony Award-nominated musical *Legally Blonde*, the world premiere of funk/rock musical *The Legend of New York* (by award-winning composers Joshua Salzman '02 and Ryan Cunningham) and the world premiere of the family circus musical *The Comedy of Wizards* (by MSMT veterans Christopher Scheer '07 and Toby Singer). MSMT founding artistic director Charles Richter will host a day-long celebration of the 40th season on June 20 for patrons and alumni. Events include a banquet and all-star cabaret performance, a post-show dessert reception and a late-night show tune karaoke session. Visit muhlenberg.edu/smt to learn more and RSVP.

Personally Speaking...



Nick Daza '20

Political science major, business administration and religion studies minors, South Brunswick, New Jersey

He has dual citizenship in the United States and Colombia.

"I moved from Colombia to Miami when I was 3 and I lived there for a year and a half. Miami has a lot of Spanish-speaking people, so I didn't learn English right away. When I moved to New Jersey, I would come into the classroom and feel like an outsider. But I picked up on little things, emotions and different things the teacher would do, and I would interpret those. That's how I learned the language."

He was a research assistant for Interim Dean of Academic Life Michele Deegan...

"After I took Research Methods, Professor Deegan approached me about researching Allentown. We were looking at how statistics from the census tract give us an idea of quality of life. We looked at housing, access to healthcare and transportation, socioeconomic status. The houses, most of them are extremely old. There are houses that have no plumbing in Allentown. Things that we take for granted on a daily basis may not be available right down the street. After I saw the statistics, I was like, *I want to do something about this.*"

...and that experience led him to a summer internship last summer at Casa Guadalupe, a community center in downtown Allentown.

"When I was reading the description of the internship, I saw most of the kids and their families spoke Spanish, so that was relatable. I worked as a teacher's aide, but I was also in charge of physical education for the kids. I would come up with games. We would do relay races. We took a bunch of yoga mats and put them all together to make a huge wrestling mat and I taught them some wrestling, too. I still go every Monday."

He's been wrestling since fifth grade...

"A friend on the wrestling team said, 'We have a bring-a-friend day. You could come.' I never liked sports where you run up and down chasing a ball. When I found wrestling, I was like, *This is the sport for me.* My mom always wanted me to live a healthy lifestyle, but she wasn't one of those parents who burns their kid out, and I'm thankful for that. It let me develop a genuine passion for the sport."

...and he's trying to make the Colombian national team.

"Last fall, I represented Colombia at a tournament in Puerto Rico and I placed third. Our assistant coach, Gueseppe Rea, was going—he wrestles for Ecuador. He's a mentor for me, and he thought it would be a good opportunity to get my feet wet. It was my first time competing internationally and my second time wrestling freestyle, which is very different from how we wrestle in the United States—the rules and the scoring are different. I really enjoyed it. Next summer, Colombia has the national tournament, and if you win that, you make the U23 world team."

His experiences at Muhlenberg and in Allentown have shaped what he wants to do with his life.

"When I first came into college, I thought, *I'm going to law school.* But I've really enjoyed being at Casa Guadalupe. It doesn't feel like work to me because I just like spending time with the kids there. So, I've been looking at this summer program called IRT (the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers). They'll help you pay for your master's and they train you to be a teacher in under-resourced communities. I really want to coach wrestling one day, so even if I don't go for my master's in political science, maybe it's something related to education. If I were to be a teacher and a coach at the same time, I think that's the job that I would truly enjoy."

What a Wonderful Mystery

In 1956, Philip Jurus '59 found himself perched in the rigging above a stage in Memorial Hall. Below, Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars were about to perform at the College, and Jurus, a DJ for the 8-year-old WMUH, dangled a microphone attached to the station's new tape-recorder to capture the audio.

Last Thanksgiving, Jurus read a newspaper article about an upcoming limited-edition vinyl release of a newly-discovered recording of Armstrong at Muhlenberg. *It must be mine*, he thought. The recording had found its way to a collector and radio host in Texas by way of flea markets and, later, eBay. The record, *Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars Live in 1956*, was released on November 29, 2019.

Soon after, Jurus got in touch with Betty Skweir, whose late husband, Dr. Leon Skweir '58, helped Jurus record the show. She found a master recording of Armstrong at Muhlenberg among Leon's things. As she, Jurus and Dr. Michael Skweir Jr. '54, Leon's brother, prepared to donate it to Trexler Library, they discovered it was a completely different show. Armstrong played at the College twice in 1956, which means that the Skweir tape is a *second* newly-discovered recording of Armstrong at Muhlenberg...and that the mystery of who recorded the first remains to be solved.

If you have any information or memorabilia related to Armstrong's Muhlenberg concerts, please contact susanfalciani@muhlenberg.edu.



[INSIDE] Football's First Final Four

The otherwise-vibrant Muhlenberg campus typically approaches “ghost town” status during finals week, with students either holing up to study in Trexler Library or returning home for winter break. The end of the Fall 2019 semester was the opposite, thanks to the success of the football team. When Muhlenberg was selected to host a Division III semifinal game for the first time, more than 100 students applied to stay on campus through the weekend to cheer on the team.

The buzz began building the previous Saturday, when the Mules won at previously undefeated Salisbury University to join 1995 men’s soccer as the only Muhlenberg teams to reach a Division III Final Four. The Mules earned a hero’s welcome, with a police escort for the team buses through Allentown and back to campus.

On Sunday came the announcement that Muhlenberg would host North Central College (Illinois) in the semifinal, with the winner advancing to the Stagg Bowl, the Division III championship game, in Texas.

Multiple campus departments came together on Monday to coordinate planning for the big game, which was to be broadcast live on ESPN3. Media outlets descended on campus, looking to get the inside scoop on a team that had broken records while bringing together its community and bolstering Muhlenberg pride. They wanted to know about a defense that became the first in Division III history to record shutouts in its NCAA first- and second-round games (38-0 against the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and 42-0 against The College at Brockport, respectively). They wanted to know about an offense spearheaded by southpaw slinger Michael Hnatkowsky '21, whose 46 touchdown passes broke the previous school record by 15.

And they wanted to know about the legacy of Mike Donnelly, the Mules’ longtime coach who passed away in October 2017 following a brief battle with leukemia. The 2019 football seniors were one of the final two classes recruited by Donnelly, who told them they would one day be right where they were: competing for a national championship.

The ESPN truck rolled in on Thursday, sealing off a portion of Liberty Street, and by Friday afternoon the press box at Scotty Wood Stadium was transformed into a high-tech broadcast booth, complete with replay monitors for video review.

A tailgate hosted by Interim President Kathleen E. Harring inside Deitrich Field House on Saturday allowed fans the opportunity to watch the ESPN broadcast on a big screen, but most braved the chilly rain to pack the Scotty Wood Stadium stands. Although North Central won (and went on to win the national championship the following week), the students who left for winter break a day or two later than expected brought home a renewed sense of school pride.

“Making it to the Final Four is a huge accomplishment, so we were really excited to stay for the game,” says Kate O’Connell ’20. “The atmosphere was crazy, and it was a lot of fun to be there to support our Mules. Even though they didn’t win, we are so proud of them for making it so far.” —Mike Falk and Zoe Keim



Above left, students painted their faces and mugged for the ESPN cameras. At right, Randy Davis '81 and Ken Fiori '82 returned to campus to tailgate. For more about the alumni presence at the playoff games, see page 48.

Men's Soccer Wins First ECAC Title

For all it has accomplished in a fabulous 77-year history that includes 15 NCAA Tournament appearances, six Centennial Conference championships and two Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC) titles, the Muhlenberg men's soccer team had never won four postseason games in the same year—until 2019.



The Mules swept through two consecutive weekends, outscoring four opponents by a 14-1 margin, to capture the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Tournament for the first time. (The team won ECAC regional tournaments in 1974, 1975 and 1988, but this was its first time winning the overall title.)

The championship capped a season that featured a little bit of the old and a little bit of the new for the Mules, who finished with a record of 13-6-2, their most wins since 2014.

Ten seniors appeared on the roster, including goalkeeper and ECAC Tournament MVP Raymond Leto '20 (17 saves, no goals in 322 tournament minutes); Matthew Athanas-Linden '20, who sent Muhlenberg into the final with an overtime goal

against Widener University; and Zach Cimring '20, who scored the first of three second-half goals in the championship match against Kean University.

But the team's star all season was midfielder Chris Richards '23. He finished his rookie campaign with 30 points, breaking the program record for first-year students set by Chris Bingman '90 in 1986. Richards was named Centennial Conference rookie of the year and earned a spot on the All-CC first team—a rarity for a first-year player.

Richards helped the Mules carry on not only their tradition of winning, but also their tradition of keeping it in the family: He is a cousin of Eric '95, Todd '98 and Dave Ervin '00, one of 12 brother duos or trios who have suited up for Muhlenberg men's soccer since 1990. —Mike Falk

Football Standouts

The historic football run to the NCAA semifinals (see page 21) was fueled by tremendous individual performances on both sides of the ball. Defensive end **Frankie Feaster '20** was named Centennial Conference defensive player of the year, becoming only the second player in league history to win the honor twice. He also was a consensus All-American—one of only four players in Division III selected to the first team by Associated Press, the American Football Coaches Association and D3football.com...**Ryan Curtiss '20**, the all-time CC leader in receptions, receiving yards and receiving touchdowns by a tight end, also earned a spot on all three All-America teams, bringing his career total of All-America nods to seven...Offensive tackle **Ryan Malarkey '20** landed on the AP and D3football.com squads, giving the Mules three All-Americans for the first time since 2000... Quarterback **Michael Hnatkowsky '21** was named CC offensive player of the year after shattering the school records for passing yards (3,640; the old mark was 3,101), touchdowns (46 vs. 31) and efficiency rating (175.8 vs. 161.9) in a season. In his third season, the southpaw broke the CC career mark for passing touchdowns; his 97 at year's end led active NCAA juniors in all four divisions, a group that included projected NFL draftees Tua Tagovailoa (Alabama) and Jake Fromm (Georgia)...**Todd Spirt '20** finished his career as the CC all-time leader in points scored by a kicker (294)... Head Coach **Nate Milne** was named Division III National Coach of the Year by the American Football Coaches Association and Andy Talley Regional Coach of the Year by the Maxwell Football Club.

COMING

THIS

SUMMER



Celebrate the last 10 years in Mule athletics with the announcement of All-Decade teams in all sports!

Beginning June 1, we'll release one team per day with the best of Muhlenberg athletes from the years 2010-11 through 2019-20. Look for the teams on muhlenbergsports.com and our social media channels.

MULE ROUND-UP



CROSS COUNTRY qualified an athlete for the NCAA Championships for the 15th consecutive year, and for the 17th time in the past 19 years. Jason Richwall '20 earned the trip to Louisville, Kentucky, by coming in eighth with a huge personal best at the NCAA Mideast Regional. He came in 156th out of 280 runners at the national meet...The **VOLLEYBALL** season was marked by individual milestones, with Maggie Enestvedt '20 (pictured) recording her 1,000th career kill and Maya Illovsky '21 surpassing the 1,000-dig plateau... Defense was the name of the game for the **FIELD HOCKEY** team. The Mules ranked fifth in Division III with nine shutouts in 17 games, finishing with a 10-7 record...The **WOMEN'S SOCCER** team received a bid to the ECAC Tournament and won its first two matches to advance to the semifinals. The Mules finished the



year with a 10-7-2 record, a four-win improvement from 2018...**MEN'S BASKETBALL** started the season 8-0 for the first time in 64 years and received votes in the D3hoops.com poll for the first time in 18 years. Included in the hot start was a thrilling 72-71 win against Neumann University in the Scotty Wood Tournament championship game on a three-pointer by Spencer Duke '21 with 5.5 seconds left in regulation... Just a few years after struggling to field a team, **WRESTLING** has one of the top teams in Division III. The Mules were ranked 18th by the National Wrestling Coaches Association after a 6-2 start to dual meets that included a 31-15 win against No. 16 Messiah College. Seven Muhlenberg wrestlers, representing all weight classes from 141 up to 197, appeared in the d3wrestle.com rankings in early January.



What is Muhlenberg Magazine?

A look back at its 90-year history shows that today's publication isn't wholly unlike some of its previous iterations.

By Brian Speer

When we launched the new *Muhlenberg Magazine* in fall of 2018, our editors' letter explained what you would see in the pages of each issue. It said, in part, "If you read something that moves you, teaches you or challenges your views, send us your thoughts."

We have received a lot of positive feedback about the magazine since then, but it wasn't until the Fall 2019 issue that a Perspective column analyzing the current Supreme Court would generate the kind of discussion we hope the magazine can spark. However, one reader told us a column like that doesn't belong in an alumni magazine.

This reminded me of a question that came up recently on campus: "What is *Muhlenberg Magazine*?"

Of course, I know the answer, but I wanted to gain perspective on what readers had been experiencing to understand the question's context. That meant a visit to Trexler Library's archives.

The very first issue was published in November 1930 by the Alumni Association. *The Muhlenberg College Alumni Quarterly* was 16 pages of brief College news and notes about what alumni were up to. It became *The Muhlenberg College Alumni Magazine* in the late 1930s, a name it kept until 1973. During this time, the class notes grew, and editors added alumni profiles and longer news stories. Columns also began to appear about contemporary issues.

James Edgar Swain, head of the Department of Social Studies, was a frequent contributor, writing about the developing war in the 1930s. In 1935, he predicted a European war within five years and said that if it lasted two years, the United States would become involved. An editor's note in one issue stated that as early as 1932, Swain had said that "when hostilities started with the United States, Japan would be her adversary."

In 1973, the magazine transformed into a

broadsheet newspaper simply named *Muhlenberg* that was produced by the editorial and business offices—a seemingly odd publishing couple. In this new format, the editorial staff introduced a recurring feature called the Continuing Education Reading Club. The first installment, "Electing the American President," was penned by Charles S. Bednar, head of the Department of Political Science and associate dean of the College. The introduction of the new feature stated, "The following introductory article, references and recommended readings relate to the office of the American Presidency... They represent the first in a continuing education series intended to combine ingredients of faculty expertise and scholarship on topics of popular interest."

In January 1989, the first issue of *Muhlenberg Magazine* was introduced as a complement to the *Muhlenberg* tabloid, but the newspaper lasted only another handful of issues. This magazine was a response to an alumni readership survey that wanted a more robust representation of the College's "quality and vitality." Then-President Jonathan C. Messerli closed his introduction to the publication by saying, "We will try hard to produce a lively, incisive magazine that you will want to keep on the coffee table or share with others."

That first issue featured the text of an address by novelist and essayist Frederick Busch '62 P'95 at the dedication of Trexler Library. It was delivered during the final days of the 1988 presidential campaign and used that campaign to talk about the importance of libraries and knowledge. And while the address was suspect of politics in general, it took a decisively political tone: "An election year is a time of lies. Ambitious men—and why, still, must we choose among small, white, Christian males?—tell us, as they campaign, what their pollsters and their tricksters tell them we would hear. They

Much like our predecessors, we understand the rich intellectual capacity of our faculty and alumni and see the magazine as a way to bring their insights to our readers.



assume we love what's easy; and they pander to the least in us."

The incisive quality of the publication has ebbed and flowed over time, and it has been—at times—what I think most people imagine an "alumni magazine" to be. Profiles that focused on connections between their subjects and Muhlenberg mixed with news of the College, the occasional feature on an issue of importance and class notes—although we could do much better in the class notes category if you all kicked it up a notch.

So, what is *Muhlenberg Magazine* today? The Fall 2018 issue that introduced the redesign also marked a pivot from "alumni magazine" to "College magazine." This is a shift, but—based on the laudable work of those who came before us—it isn't a leap. We still hope to produce a "lively, incisive" magazine, which means telling stories that resonate beyond the College. We don't want you to turn to us because you know Muhlenberg; we want you to read because the magazine is smart and funny. We want to take you into the work someone is doing in a way that is interesting and thoughtful. We want to be a part of your lifelong learning journey.

Much like our predecessors, we understand the rich intellectual capacity of our faculty and

alumni and see the magazine as a way to bring their insights to our readers. When Assistant Professor of Political Science Ross Dardani's column on the Supreme Court went through editing, no one on staff read it as partisan, but we respect that some of our readers did. And we are excited that they let us share their thoughts in this issue's Letters to the Editor (page 3). That's the way it should work.

We understand that the news cycle can be tiring and that you might want a publication that lets you escape it. But we hope you will come to *Muhlenberg* as an extension of your education: a place where it is okay to listen, to learn and to disagree in the civil way that is at the heart of the liberal arts.

Busch's 1988 address was about libraries, but in many ways, it applies to *Muhlenberg Magazine* as well: "Colleges, their true teachers and their good libraries, exist to say what's thorny, prickly, itchy, provocative, uncomfortable, dangerous, seditious or crazily exalted. We celebrate the expression of ecstasies and dreads in all our cultures. We celebrate what tyrants most fear and heroes would labor to preserve. Today we honor the word."

Brian Speer is the vice president for communications at Muhlenberg.

SHARED

experience





Muhlenberg's new externship program bridges the gap between day-long job shadows and months-long internships.

BY MEGHAN KITA

The Muhlenberg Career Center staff recognized that some students struggle with a common catch-22: They want to secure an internship to learn skills and make connections that could lead to an entry-level job, but they don't yet have enough experience to qualify for such an internship.

"We've always been imagining how to get hands-on experience for students who are in their first or second year or who maybe haven't had an internship yet," says Samantha Hof, director of employer engagement.

The Career Center's day-long shadow program, which connected 87 students with 56 alumni and parent hosts this past winter break, is a start, but resume-worthy skills and lasting relationships aren't built in a day. Enter the Center's new externship program: Students spend three to five days before the spring semester working full-time with hosts who can assign tasks and projects that build students' knowledge and provide substance for future job applications and interviews. Twenty students were matched with 19 hosts for the first official round of externships this January.

Emma Hamm '15, assistant director of alumni and parent engagement, launched the program by putting out a call for both shadow and externship hosts last summer—those interested in having externs were required to create a job description to

post on the recruiting platform Handshake. To apply, students submitted resumes and cover letters, an exercise that was new for some. Students who matched had to attend an orientation at the Career Center that covered everything from the initial phone call to the post-externship thank-you note.

"We dove into how to present themselves when they're actually there," Hamm says. "For example, nod in meetings. Know when to speak and when to be quiet. It's different than it is when you're in a classroom."

The externships took place the week of January 6, but that's all they had in common: They happened in schools and hospitals, at international corporations and family-owned businesses, as far west as La Jolla, California, and as far east as Boston, Massachusetts. The diversity of opportunities available allowed students from all class years and a variety of majors to find externships that interested them.

In the end, feedback from both students and hosts was overwhelmingly positive, Hof and Hamm say. Students garnered a much deeper understanding of what goes into a job than they could in a single day, and alumni got to share their wisdom and learn firsthand about what it's like to be at Muhlenberg today. Read on to see what three student-alum pairs took away from their externship experiences.

DEB CLAY-ALSTON '98 P'14
SALES EXECUTIVE
ADP

The Home Team

Rhiannon Harwi '20, a media & communication and studio art double major, is from Whitehall, Pennsylvania, minutes north of downtown Allentown. In recent years, she's witnessed the development taking place along Hamilton Boulevard in Center City. Last fall, the human resources company ADP moved 1,000 of its employees to a new office tower there.

"I was interested in what goes on at ADP—it's a pretty prominent company in the area," Harwi says. "I wanted to learn more about what they do, what kind of services they offer and what the company culture is like."

She had an opportunity to see some of that firsthand thanks to Deb Clay-Alston '98 P'14, a sales executive at ADP (and vice president of the College's Alumni Board) who hosted Harwi for a four-day externship. During that time, Harwi sat in on several meetings, including one with Shannon Hubert '19, a new employee at ADP. Afterward, Clay-Alston asked Harwi and Hubert to apply what they'd learned by researching a company and determining which of ADP's services that company might need. Harwi didn't always follow what was going on in these meetings, but Clay-Alston didn't expect her to.

"ADP is such a large, complex organization. As such, it is extremely hard for someone visiting for a

short period of time to fully grasp and understand everything we do," Clay-Alston says. "Rhiannon did an awesome job trying to consume all of the information thrown at her."

During the externship, Harwi met several employees on the sales floor, many of whom had backgrounds in other fields (one had been a teacher, for example). Additionally, Clay-Alston set up a meeting for Harwi with the person in charge of managing ADP's internal employee microsite. Her job responsibilities include design, social media and storytelling—all communication roles of interest to Harwi. She left with that woman's business card, in addition to several others.

For Harwi, who transferred to Muhlenberg from Lehigh Carbon Community College and who hasn't had an internship, the externship was an opportunity to make connections and gain workplace exposure before her final semester. She already knew that every employer needs good communicators, but her externship gave her a glimpse of how those employees fit into a company. "Most jobs involve working with other people, and you have to balance what you're doing on your own and when you're collaborating with others. I saw that at ADP," she says. "There are times when you're going to be doing stuff on your own, and there are times when you're part of a team."



RHIANNON HARWI '20
MEDIA & COMMUNICATION,
STUDIO ART

Mules at ADP in Allentown include (from left) Shannon Hubert '19, Deb Clay-Alston '98 P'14 and Marcus Toomey '14. Rhiannon Harwi '20 (right) met them all during her externship.



PHOTOS BY MARCO CALDERON



Yes, And...

The first rule of improvisational comedy is to go along with what a fellow performer is doing and then build on it, a concept known as “yes, and” thinking. Sydney Holliday '23, who has dabbled in improv, brought this mindset to her Muhlenberg experience. In her first semester, she joined the comedy group Damsels In Excess, the Muhlenberg Theatre Association and the community engagement group Magical Memories. She worked as a campus delegate, hosting prospective students for shadow days and overnights, as well as a DJ for WMUH.

“I came into college with the mentality that I want to do as much as I can while I’m here,” says Holliday, who intends to declare a theatre major. “I want to experience as much as I can and see what things I can try that I haven’t been able to do before.”

So when she noticed that an externship was being offered not far from her home in southern California with performing arts teacher Robert Wagner '07, she applied. She spent three days with Wagner at the La Jolla Country Day School in San Diego County. During her time there, she was able to speak with the head of the school and meet with a variety of arts educators (in dance, band and ceramics, to name a few).

“Sydney was organized with her thoughts and questions—it was abundantly clear that she came to the externship with a mission for herself and goals,” Wagner says. “Having Sydney present for more than one day allowed me to craft a meaningful experience for her.”

That experience included the opportunity to teach two classes—one middle school, one high school—on improv. Holliday prepared a PowerPoint presentation on the history and basics of improv and led the group through some improv games.

“Robert let me take control of what I wanted to teach and how I wanted to teach it,” she says. “He helped me understand what would work for his students. He was good about knowing what to say or what tactics to use if the students weren’t listening or involved.”

Holliday’s experience reinforced her interest in theatre education, but she intends to continue taking advantage of the Career Center’s opportunities for job exploration. After all, she’s only a first-year student. “It’s cool to get a head start with the career stuff,” she says. “It’ll help me figure things out and will influence what I want to do here at Muhlenberg.”

ROBERT WAGNER '07
PERFORMING ARTS TEACHER
LA JOLLA COUNTRY
DAY SCHOOL



SYDNEY HOLLIDAY '23
THEATRE

“I came into college with the mentality that I want to do as much as I can while I’m here. I want to experience as much as I can and see what things I can try that I haven’t been able to do before.”

SYDNEY HOLLIDAY '23

Paul Silverman '78 (left) and Justin Axelrod '20 were all over Jersey City during Axelrod's four-day externship. Here, they visit the construction site of a future SILVERMAN property.



PHOTOS BY AARON KAPLAN

“While Paul was doing a lot in the office, he was also meeting with different departments and going out to construction sites. There’s a lot of mobility, and I like that.”

JUSTIN AXELROD '20

Out of Office

When Justin Axelrod '20 first declared his intended fields of study, they were economics and education. He stuck with the first—it's his minor—but he tried out some other majors (media & communication, business administration) before settling on psychology. He has a wide variety of interests, academically and professionally, so he's done the Career Center's shadow program three times. He enjoyed his one real-estate shadow day (with Adam Brodsky '95), so when he saw an externship opportunity available at SILVERMAN, a real-estate development firm co-founded by Paul Silverman '78, and his brother Eric, he jumped on it.


"I think a lot of real estate firms are larger and focused more on monetary compensation," Axelrod says. "SILVERMAN is still medium-sized but more focused on resident and employee satisfaction, and that drew me to it."

The two spent four days together in Jersey City, New Jersey, which allowed Axelrod to get a sense of the scope of what Silverman does. They visited construction sites and apartment buildings. They had breakfast at Silverman's coworking space, spoke with the owners of retail stores in SILVERMAN buildings and at the end shared a farewell beer made by Silverman's brewing company, New Jersey Beer Co.

"The most valuable part of this experience was sitting in on the meetings," Axelrod says. "One of my favorites was the negotiating of a lease sign-

ing—they were working to figure out a price both parties were comfortable with. Being in those negotiation meetings, with Paul being an exemplary negotiator and so personable, he showed me some skills that are pivotal in any career field."

Silverman documented the week on his Instagram account, @paulsilverman—there are photos of the pair in hardhats, on a rooftop, in a meeting room. "I feel it's a good way to give back to the College, to have these types of mentoring programs for students. I know it's only one student, but it spreads. When Justin talks to his friends and colleagues, it multiplies," he says. "Promoting the program on Instagram and Facebook and in *Muhlenberg Magazine* is really good publicity showing the connections Muhlenberg can afford its students."

And Axelrod made plenty of connections during his externship: He estimates that he met about 60 people. One was the project manager of a construction site, who described the master's program he completed in order to enter his field. The role, like Silverman's, was intriguing to Axelrod—he's not sure what he wants to do, but he knows he doesn't want to be stuck behind a desk. "While Paul was doing a lot in the office, he was also meeting with different departments and going out to construction sites," he says. "There's a lot of mobility, and I like that." 

PAUL SILVERMAN '78
OWNER,
CO-FOUNDER
SILVERMAN



JUSTIN AXELROD '20
PSYCHOLOGY,
ECONOMICS (MINOR)

Career Heroes

These 18 alumni hosted students for three- to five-day externships over winter break:

Dr. Michael Conrad '73
Paul Silverman '78
Dr. David Cohen '79 P'11
Dr. Richard Zamarin '83
Jill Robinson Grosh '84
Dr. Gehred Wetzell '86

Heather Dwinal Slatoff '92
Deb Clay-Alston '98 P'14
Dr. Thomas Zanders '98
Amy Weikel Poplinski '00
Lt. Col. Richard C. Kipp, M.D. '04
Michael Scott Timmermans '06

Robert Joseph Wagner '07
Daniel Kessler '10
Julia Korzeniewski Bucci '10
Rachel Berger '11
Brian Anthony '12
Allison Kovacs '13

If you're interested in getting involved as a career volunteer, contact emmahamm@muhlenberg.edu.

A PARALLEL UNIVERSE

Through his work on VR software, Evan Sforza '07 helps create a welcoming place for people from around the world to meet.

BY MEGHAN KITA





“Design in VR is still such a very new thing. It’s a lot about empathy, trying to understand the other human being that’s picking up the device and interfacing with the software you design. It’s about making sure people from all walks of life have the potential to understand what you’re trying to do.”

EVAN SFORZA '07



This is the beginning of a story about Evan Sforza '07, a designer at Microsoft who works on virtual reality software called *Altspace*. You probably read the headline on page 32, and then you flipped over page 33 to find this first paragraph. You know to turn the right-hand-side page to see what’s next because you’ve been reading magazines and books for years. You expect to look at the bottom of this page and see it numbered; you expect to see photos with captions sprinkled throughout the article. There is an established way that humans interact with print media, and this magazine is designed with those conventions in mind. But what happens when a technology is so novel that it has no conventions?

“Design in VR is still such a very new thing,” Sforza says. “It’s a lot about empathy, trying to understand the other human being that’s picking

up the device and interfacing with the software you design. It’s about making sure people from all walks of life have the potential to understand what you’re trying to do.”

What *Altspace* is trying to do is to bring early adopters of VR technology into a world where they can interact in a more immersive way than they could via text message, phone or video chat. The term used in the VR industry to describe this is “presence,” which means “actually feeling like you’re there and feeling like someone is with you,” Sforza says. His job involves figuring out why someone would want to be there, how they might interact with others and what things there are to do in this new environment. A positive user experience plays a critical role in the *Altspace* team’s overarching goal: to create a space that’s worth coming back to again and again.

WHAT IS VR?

Most people reading this won't have experienced VR personally—while upwards of 170 million VR headsets have been sold, they're far from commonplace. The main piece of hardware, the headset, provides audiovisual immersion. Most headsets connect to an external computing device (a gaming system, desktop computer or phone), though options with built-in processors (called "standalone" headsets) are starting to come to market. The headsets have two lenses inside, each with their own display. Each display renders a slightly different image, which are offset from one another by the distance from one eye to the other. Audio can be built in or delivered through connected headphones. Controllers for each hand allow those movements to be reflected in the virtual world. The best-selling hardware brand in Q4 of 2019 was the PlayStationVR, followed by the standalone Oculus Quest. *Altspace* is software that's compatible with most VR headsets.

Sforza, who began working at *Altspace* in 2016, describes it as "the next evolution of chat rooms," a place where strangers can interact. It's not unlike a bar or a club, he says: "This is just a means of doing what humans have been doing for millennia, from the comfort of our own homes, without all the additional effort and baggage that comes with a face-to-face interaction." Users are able to move through different worlds (with names like Mythical Library, Brooklyn Rooftop Hangout and Space Museum) and speak to one another using the microphones on their headsets.

Putting a bunch of strangers in an environment together comes with both potential delights and

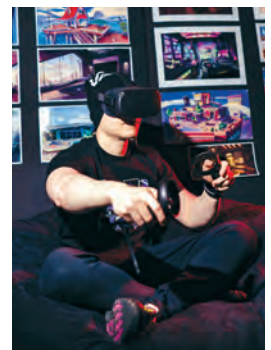
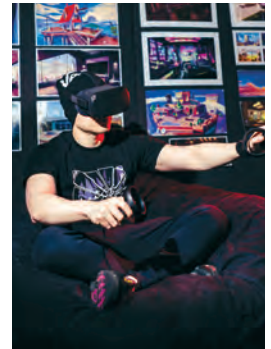
definite challenges, one of which is the relatively small number of people who have the technology: Any given user's real-life friends likely don't have VR headsets of their own, Sforza says. So how can *Altspace* ensure its 30,000 monthly active users—a tiny number compared to conventional social media platforms but a large one in the new frontier of VR social applications—are having enough fun to be active next month, and the month after that?

Altspace's leadership team is focusing most of its energy on encouraging events—concerts, comedy shows, book launches, even small get-togethers. Sforza has been working to make it easy for users to create an event and invite other people. He and his team are also exploring other ways to bring together users with similar interests.

But Sforza's true passion lies in the little details that make the virtual environment feel more like the real world, that give it "presence." For example, he's working on a new line of avatars with additional features like eye movement, even though none of the hardware currently is able to track eye movement. The idea is to program in the ways humans' eyes might move in certain situations, like making brief eye contact when you cross paths with someone else.

"We're thinking through, *What are the important features of the human body and human socialization that we could turn into computer code or an interface?*" Sforza says. "We want to create an experience that's as immersive as possible. We want you to feel like you're talking to another human being."

Sforza works from an office beanbag chair, navigating the world of *Altspace* using a VR headset.



THE "WHY" OF DESIGN

Sforza's passion for tech—more specifically, for video games—is how he ended up as a philosophy major at Muhlenberg. Early in his time at the College, he was perusing job descriptions at Bungie, Inc., the studio that created the popular *Halo* series. He noticed that their game designer listings said they'd appreciate candidates with a philosophy background.

"I really enjoyed going into an environment in *Halo* and trying to think like a designer," he says. "I began to look at the construction of the virtual world as being very intentional. I wanted to understand game design and the reason and philosophy behind the design."

He always liked drawing, so he added an art minor to figure out where the skills he had could fit into a game development studio. Then, he was inspired to take English courses, enough for a second minor, to explore the reasoning behind narratives and the subtext beneath them. By graduation, he had his sights set on a career as a concept artist, the person who imagines what elements of a game might look like. He had some internships and decided it wasn't for him: "I actually cared more about the 'why' than how something looked."

He asked a boss where he should go to grad school to make the jump to game design, which is how he ended up at the University of Southern

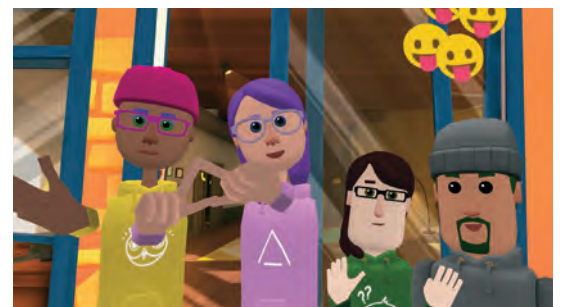
California's School of Cinematic Arts' Interactive Media & Games Division. "I originally went there wanting to make first-person shooters and other video games," he says. "But, after interacting with the professors and seeing the power of software, how much it could influence human behavior and society at large, I got really interested in social media and social networks."

But if there was one opportunity that could pull Sforza back toward games, it was an opening with *Halo*. Shortly after grad school, he landed a job at 343 Industries, the company that acquired *Halo* in 2012. There, he was a multiplayer designer, working on the most social element of the game. He helped design a new game mode for *Halo 5* called Warzone that combined team play with opportunities to defeat AI characters for points.

"For me, there was a certain magic, mystery and allure surrounding *Halo*, but, when I went to work on it, I discovered that it wasn't exactly fulfilling my desire to connect people through cyberspace," he says. "I knew VR was going to be important. I needed to work on it."

So, he began searching for a new role in that field, one that preferably had a social application, and *Altspace* fit the bill. He went from working on a team of more than 600 to a team that's currently about 30 people. "The amount of influence any one person gets is a little bigger," he says.

Clockwise from top left: Event attendees gather to listen to a speaker while expressing how they feel; the Altspace team meets in VR; a few users get together for a virtual photo; Altspace's main hangout, The Campfire, adorned with its seasonal snowfall



“With your phone, it’s in your pocket. It’s always on your person. To use it, you reach in, pull it out, hit a button. When using a VR or AR device is as quick or as simple, that’s when it’ll probably start to become more ubiquitous.”

EVAN SFORZA '07



THE FUTURE OF VR


There are some immediate technical challenges with VR that Sforza encounters in his everyday work. For example, the current sensor placement makes it impossible to accurately track a person’s arm and leg movements, which is one reason *Altspace* avatars just have floating hands. Ideally, more of the human body would be represented in VR, which would likely require hardware with more sensors as well as eye tracking. Long-term, Sforza envisions the ability for users to create avatars that actually look like them by undergoing high-resolution scans of their bodies.

In order for VR to become more widely adopted, Sforza says, the hardware needs to evolve. Right now, there are only a small handful of standalone headsets available, and they still cause the user to lose awareness of their surroundings. The future might lie in mixed use devices that don’t yet exist: Currently, there are augmented reality (AR) devices, like Microsoft’s HoloLens, which overlay some digital content onto what you’re seeing in real life, and VR devices, which are completely immersive.

“When you have this visor over your face, if we color every pixel, you’re in VR. If you see the real world behind it, it’s AR,” Sforza says. “With the right device, you could go from VR to AR and back again.”

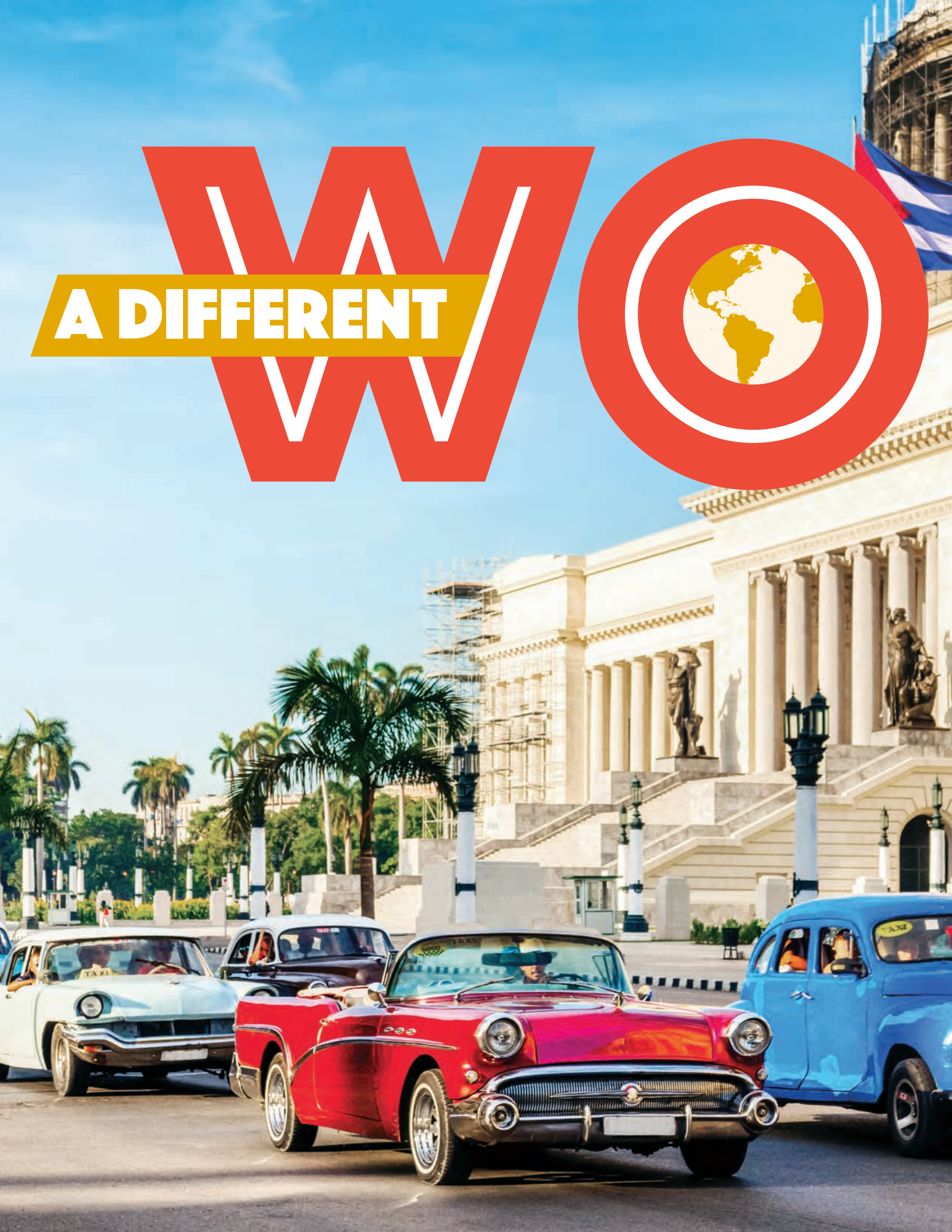
Such a device would need to be able to color a user’s peripheral vision, but in order for it to be widely adopted, it would probably have to look more like a pair of glasses than a pair of ski goggles. “I don’t know how readily people are going to put on a headset with a big glass visor and go to work at Starbucks or any regular place,” Sforza says.

Right now, some employers *are* utilizing devices that are currently on the market. For example, the Air Force uses VR to provide some pilot simulation training. In the medical realm, VR and AR technology have been used to help surgeons visualize a problem before operating, to train new doctors and to treat mental health issues in patients. But these largely behind-the-scenes applications won’t necessarily help normalize the technology as part of everyday life. In other words, both VR and AR devices have a long way to go before either becomes the next smartphone.

“With your phone, it’s in your pocket. It’s always on your person. To use it, you reach in, pull it out, hit a button,” Sforza says. “When using a VR or AR device is as quick or as simple, that’s when it’ll probably start to become more ubiquitous.” 

WOW

A DIFFERENT





RILD

Last fall's Bodies & Identities in Contemporary Cuba course—and its subsequent week-long trip to the island nation—demonstrates the transformative potential of short-term study abroad.

BY MEGHAN KITA

On their first full day in Havana, the 18 Muhlenberg students and two professors who traveled to Cuba over winter break encountered a scene out of a stock image of the city: a line of enormous and colorful American cars from the 1950s. The drivers waited outside the José Martí Memorial, a towering structure that offers visitors panoramic views of the city, knowing that tourists love to take pictures with—and pay for rides in—these classic cars.

“We had talked about this in class,” says Janine Chi, associate professor of sociology, who co-teaches the Bodies & Identities in Contemporary Cuba course with Cathy Marie Ouellette, associate professor of history. “We had read several articles about America’s longing for Cuba to be stuck in the past or the Americans’ picture of the past in Cuba, pre-revolution: rum, dancing, girls...the Tropicana, which is still there. The students were happy to critique that in class, pooh-pooing all of it.”

But as the group walked to the bus, Chi and Ouellette noticed almost all the students snapping photos of the cars. Some even went over to pose with them, though they wouldn’t be able to share the images until their return to the United States—their phones didn’t work in Cuba, and the task of finding reliable WiFi was not built into the week’s packed itinerary. On the bus, Chi called them out. The students looked sheepish.

“That’s when they realized that it’s one thing to read something and get wrapped up in the theory, but it’s another thing to see themselves in action,” she says. “I said, ‘The thing is for you to recognize when those moments are happening. It’s for you to now be able to reflect back.’”

ACADEMICS ABROAD

Reflection is a key component of all the College's integrative learning courses, a designation bestowed on courses that require students to examine the subject matter from at least two distinct perspectives. Since 2017, Muhlenberg has required all students to complete at least one integrative learning course in order to graduate, recognizing that exposure to a range of perspectives and disciplines is the core of a liberal arts education. Muhlenberg Integrative Learning Abroad (MILA) courses, of which Chi and Ouellette's Cuba course is one, predate that revision to the curriculum—the first MILAs took place in 1999.

"Even before we had the integrative learning designation, MILA courses were one of our greatest examples of integrative learning," says Dean of Global Education Donna Kish-Goodling.

All MILAs involve a semester of learning at Muhlenberg and a one- to three-week period spent off-campus with faculty. The majority are team taught, like the Cuba MILA, and many take place every two or three years (Chi and Ouellette first took students to Cuba in January 2018). Still, the differences between MILAs far outnumber their similarities.

"The MILAs span science, social science, the humanities and the performing arts," Kish-Goodling says. "You don't have to participate in one that's your major—they're open to non-majors. They allow students to broaden their entire liberal arts experience. And, MILAs give an alternative for students to get an abroad experience without having to go for an entire semester for academic reasons, athletic reasons or personal reasons."

Many MILAs offer the opportunity to learn about and travel to places in the "Global South," Ouellette says, meaning the low- and middle-income countries in Latin and South America, Africa and southern Asia. (See "Upcoming MILAs at a Glance," page 45, to learn about the four other MILAs being offered this year.) Students who spend a full semester outside the United States more frequently select destinations that are in Europe, where 84 percent of those students chose to study during the 2018-2019 academic year.

"Americans live in such a global world of comfort. We're not multilingual. We don't try to be multilingual. We don't know how to embrace and experience the rest of the world," Ouellette says. "If you prepare students and take them to places they wouldn't go on their own, then you teach them how to engage with the world."



Americans live in such a global world of comfort. We're not multilingual. We don't try to be multilingual. We don't know how to embrace and experience the rest of the world. If you prepare students and take them to places they wouldn't go on their own, then you teach them how to engage with the world.

CATHY OUELLETTE

Students visited Proyecto Muraleando, a community center on the outskirts of Havana that was created from an abandoned dump site and cement water tank. Residents spent months clearing away accumulated trash. Today, the space highlights community art made from discarded items.





In Cuba, Muhlenberg students toured the University of Havana and attended lectures from some UHavana professors, who are all employees of the state. Education at the university is free to citizens who take a series of standardized tests. Every province in Cuba has universities.

INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Cuba is an increasingly difficult place to go on one's own: Americans have been able to travel there since 2015, but the Trump administration has taken steps to restrict access (by banning cruise ships from docking there, for example).

Andrea Kayla Rodriguez '21, an international studies major with minors in Latin American & Caribbean studies and Spanish, was aware of the country's reputation: "Prior to this course, the only things I knew about Cuba were obviously about the revolution and Fidel Castro's time in power, the dictatorship, the typical U.S. narrative that Cuba is evil because of its socialist system," she says. "You're not supposed to travel there because it's dangerous."

Chi and Ouellette spent the fall semester challenging that narrative in the classroom, approaching Cuba's last century of history and its present-day reality from two distinct (and sometimes divergent) perspectives—that of a sociologist and that of a historian. For example, the two disagreed on the merits of a documentary about Cuban rap they watched with the students, and the students, in their reflection papers, ended up equally divided.

These moments of opposition are, in a way, the point of all Muhlenberg's integrative learning courses...and they often make students squirm. "For me, that discomfort—recognizing it on a student's face or in their words—is what we're in the classroom for," Ouellette says. "That is a real moment of acknowledgment that there is no one fixed answer."

"There's no specific right answer. There are better answers," Chi adds. "When you're teaching your own course, you're assuming everyone else thinks the same way you do. You don't even realize the training you've had until you encounter someone who's been trained differently. Then, you're forced to deal with the idea that you're looking at something from a point of view."



There's no specific right answer...When you're teaching your own course, you're assuming everyone else thinks the same way you do. You don't even realize the training you've had until you encounter someone who's been trained differently. Then, you're forced to deal with the idea that you're looking at something from a point of view."

JANINE CHI

CUBA TODAY

By the end of the semester, students had more awareness of the American point of view and its effect on their own knowledge and beliefs about Cuba. But traveling there, and actually being able to see the systems they learned about in class in practice, gave them a rare perspective: that of Americans who've been educated about Cuba well beyond the traditional U.S. narrative who've also spent time in the country.

For a week, the students lived with Cuban families in homestays set up by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). (Approximately 20 percent of MILAs utilize homestays, Kish-Goodling says.) With their host families, they got to see some cultural norms they'd learned about in practice.

"We had talked in class about the fact that in Cuban families, it's normal to live with multiple generations," says Nicholas Blue '20, a history major and business administration minor. "The couple we stayed with owned the building they lived in and had four generations of their family living there. That sense of community was so different from how we see the concept of family in the United States."

The subject matter of the Cuba MILA course uniquely prepared the students to make such observations: While many other MILAs are hyper-specific (for example, the Costa Rica MILA focuses on sustainability, the Ireland MILA on theatre and creative writing), this one is about what it means to live in Cuba today and the history that shaped its modern culture and society.

"Having the academic component allowed us to see what's happening in Cuba a little more critically," says Lisha Rabeje '21, a sociology major. "A lot of things there are state-censored. Sometimes what they say isn't what's really happening for some populations, particularly for Afro-Cubans. The coursework allowed us to be more mindful tourists and see what we studied come to life on the trip."

Students visited the José Martí Memorial, which offers a vista of the revolution square and the Havana cityscape. The museum contained numerous archival photos of the square where national celebrations of Fidel Castro's victory and the Cuban Literacy Campaign took place.



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LISHA RABEJE '21





While visiting the community garden in the Los Pocitos neighborhood, students took note of how discarded items were repurposed to create beds for growing flowers, herbs and fruit and vegetables.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES

The Cuban government's control extends into the itineraries of educational trips such as this one. It requires CIEE to hire Cuban guides to accompany and interpret for each group.

"Cuba is remarkably different from other MILAs in that it requires an extreme degree of flexibility," Ouellette says. "The state has to approve every request we make. Often what that means is: We will have a verbal agreement with a lecturer and then, as we're entering the classroom at the scheduled time, someone else appears."

That happened on this trip, with no advance notice and no explanation provided. Another day, the group had arranged to visit the Cuban National Center for Sex Education, and 20 minutes before their scheduled arrival, their tour guide received a telephone call saying the visit was cancelled.

Still, the bulk of the itinerary took place as planned, including stops the average tourist would not likely make. For example, the group visited Los Pocitos, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Havana where resources are even scarcer than they are inside the city. Students saw a community garden with raised beds built from discarded bottles and planters made from halved cans.

"It took students a while to understand that most of the pollution you see deposited along this river, which is the only access of potable water for that community, it wasn't from the community members themselves. It comes from Havana, and it all ends up here," Ouellette says. "They had a revelation about how communities that are not formally incorporated into any urban area are left to fend for themselves, for even what we consider the most basic necessities."

"Sometimes, it takes scarcity to become resourceful," Chi adds. "We talk about recycling, but we put it in a blue bin—we're not repurposing, not reusing, not doing something with it."

The group also visited Memorial de la Denuncia, a new museum chronicling the history of U.S. aggression toward Cuba since 1959. The museum displayed archival footage of some of the more than 800 times the CIA attempted to assassinate Fidel Castro, video that's not available in the United States. These attempts were described as "terrorism," a word that American students aren't accustomed to seeing applied to the actions of their own government. A couple of students cried, Ouellette says: "They experienced a great deal of hospitality from their host families. How Cubans feel about the U.S. government versus how they feel about Americans was palpable to them."



[The students] experienced a great deal of hospitality from their host families. How Cubans feel about the U.S. government versus how they feel about Americans was palpable to them."

CATHY OUELLETTE

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

Developing this kind of awareness of how another part of the world sees the United States is a goal of all study-abroad programs, Kish-Goodling says. The part of the world explored in this particular MILA has been largely cut off from the American experience—and vice versa—for decades.

Still, what one University of Havana professor told the class rang true for Rodriguez, the junior studying international relations: “Our ways of life aren’t so different. We just have access to different rights.” Cubans may not enjoy the First Amendment rights Americans do—freedom of speech, of assembly, of press—but they have access to universal health-care, free education and government-guaranteed employment, Rodriguez notes. Value judgments of what’s better or what’s worse are inherently shaped by one’s own point of view.

“I realized that, as a global citizen, I wasn’t doing my part,” she says. “I wasn’t making the effort to understand other people’s ways of life. I was following the U.S. narrative of criminalizing everything that wasn’t us.”

Many students had similar revelations, say Chi and Ouellette. When the group met on campus at the beginning of the spring semester, they discussed everything that seemed different in Cuba—for example, the housing system, in which the state sets the value of land and property—and the parallels that could be found in the United States (like rent-controlled apartments in New York City). Not only had the students gained awareness of how Cubans see the United States, their own perceptions of their home country had changed.

“This experience was challenging in the sense that it forced the students to reexamine their own systems when faced with a different system,” Chi says. “And one of the things they learned is that these are all imperfect systems.”

Ji Ku '20 (in foreground), a physics major with a mathematics minor, takes notes while visiting Trimvato, a former African slave plantation in Matanzas, Cuba. It was the site of a series of slave rebellions led by an enslaved Yoruba woman named Carlota in 1843.



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ANDREA RODRIGUEZ '21



UPCOMING MILAS AT A GLANCE

FAST FACTS ON THE FOUR OTHER SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD COURSES SLATED TO TRAVEL IN 2020

DESTINATION

Costa Rica

Community Sustainability in Costa Rica (Professor of Biology Richard Niesenbaum and Professor of Political Science Christopher Borick)

Course debuted in: 1999

Offered every: year

Duration of travel: two weeks

“Students live in and engage with the small community of Las Juntas, where we have been working for more than 20 years. Sustainability is inherently interdisciplinary and integrative, so students from all disciplines make meaningful contributions to the class and the community,” Niesenbaum says.

DESTINATION

Ireland

The Solitary Voice: Theater and Creative Writing in Ireland (Associate Professor of English Linda Miller and Lecturer of English Brendon Votipka)

Course debuted in: 1999

Offered every: two years

Duration of travel: three weeks

“The course is perfect for all students interested in Irish drama, Irish literature, Ireland, creative writing (specifically playwriting and creative nonfiction) and performance,” Miller says.

DESTINATION

Spain & Morocco

Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Spain (Lecturer of Religion Studies Sharon Albert and Associate Professor of History Mark Stein)

Course debuted in: 2009

Offered every: two years

Duration of travel: 2.5 weeks (mostly in Spain, less than a week in Morocco)

“Being in Spain and Morocco, seeing the landscape and the architecture, eating the food, meeting the people and engaging in community activities, the students will be able to experience more directly and understand more fully the incredibly complex layering of ethnicities and religions across both time and space,” Albert says.

DESTINATION

Panamá

Public Health in Practice: Panamá (Associate Professor of Spanish Erika Sutherland and Assistant Professor of Sociology Crystal Adams)

Course debuted in: 2016

Offered every: year

Duration of travel: about two weeks

“Course goals include the development of the basic skills necessary to pursue the study and practice of public health in the physical and social context of Latin America,” Sutherland says.

ALUMNI NEWS



Hello fellow alumni and friends,

The one common denominator we share, as Muhlenberg graduates, is that we came to the College to *learn*. Of course, we were driven by the goal of attaining that diploma, and to earn that we had to take required courses within our major or majors. But then there were those “other” classes—those electives that allowed us to stretch or to try something that we might not consider ourselves particularly able to master, or in which we had only the slightest bit of interest. In the time that I have been working at the College and in discussions with alumni from all decades, I have found it quite interesting that, for many of us, it was those “other” classes that we remember, that introduced us to our favorite professor, that unleashed in us a newfound passion, that forced us to grow outside our comfort zone, that challenged us to see the world through another lens. And that, on occasion, set us on a different professional path.

I want to invite you to look for the educational opportunities that Muhlenberg offers its alumni. Read and discuss books with members of the **Alumni Virtual Book Club**. Venture abroad with the **Alumni Travel Program**. Sit in on a **Lifelong Learning Class** taught by one of Muhlenberg’s current faculty members during Alumni Weekend. Listen to a **lecture** on a current topic live-streamed from campus. Attend **regional club events** that bring faculty to your area. Tune in to **2400CHEW**, a podcast featuring Muhlenberg alumni discussing their industries. Take advantage of a **career webinar** run by the Career Center staff.

We want you to stay smart through thought-provoking, lifelong learning opportunities led by Muhlenberg faculty, community members and industry leaders. What “other” classes or opportunities would you love to see offered? Where would you like to travel and what would you like to learn? Contact me at nataliehand@muhlenberg.edu and let me know. After all, education is our business.

Natalie Kulp Hand '78 P'07

Assistant Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Career Services

Staying Smart

**Because knowledge is power
and your education is for life**

Studies show that those who participate in lifelong learning have increased confidence, are healthier, have sharper brains and sleep more soundly.

There are a plethora of opportunities to stay smart and satisfy your curiosity with Muhlenberg.

**For complete course listings,
registration and all details:**

Visit muhlenbergconnect.com/learning or email bergalum@muhlenberg.edu.

73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners Source: Pew Research Center



Cheers to Another Successful THAW!

On January 16, the seventh annual Toast Heard Around the World (THAW) took place, with 54 groups of alumni and friends of the College coming together for planned events (including 16 in new locations) to celebrate their connection to the College and each other. New this year were THAW@Work events, in which alumni employees gathered at Olympus (pictured above), Vanguard, GOLD Credit Union and Muhlenberg College. Also debuting was a THAW Sip & Move event in Brooklyn, New York; attendees learned wellness practices and enjoyed healthy snacks and drinks. The most distant group event took place in Madrid, Spain.

In addition to the group events, more than 180 alumni toasted on their own—including Maria Mancuso Soltis '86 and Wayne Soltis '87, pictured at right with their dog, Emma—in 30 states and 13 different countries.

For the second consecutive year, Student THAW (below right) was planned and organized by students participating in The Experience Experiment, an event planning industry group led by Robyn Duda '04 through the Career Center. With a Roaring '20s theme, Student THAW featured both a speakeasy and a casino, with student performers, giveaways, raffle prizes and more. Attendance was up 17 percent over last year, with 402 students attending. Campus partners for the event included the Offices of Alumni Affairs and Student Affairs, the Career Center, the Dean of Students Office, the Student Government Association, the Department of Theatre & Dance, the Muhlenberg Activities Council and student performers from GASP (The Great American Songbook Project) and Muhlenberg Circus as well as Renee Audrey '22.

For more photos and information about THAW, including how to host an event next year (on January 21, 2021), please visit muhlenbergconnect.com/thaw.



Inside Marti's Head

I wore the Mule suit so you don't have to.

BY MEGHAN KITA



It smells like a towel you left in the washing machine just a little bit too long before you remembered to transfer it to the dryer. It feels like the cage the technician lowers over your face before you're rolled, claustrophobic and trying not to panic, into an MRI machine. Its weight is almost bearable—until you want to see what's in front of you. As you tilt your head backward to peer out Marti's mouth hole, a vision appears in your mind of Tomorrow You, couch-ridden, wearing a microwavable neck wrap and moaning about how sore you are.

At the moment Marti's head envelops yours, your respect for professional mascots skyrockets and your inexplicable confidence in your own mascotting ability falls even faster than you would if you attempted to traverse the bleachers of Scotty Wood Stadium while in costume.

I volunteered to be Marti for the home football playoff game on November 30 because I thought it would be fun. I like watching mascots. I like being the center of attention. And I like dancing. What more could an aspiring mascot possibly need?


Michael Colasurdo '23, who plays Marti when it's not Thanksgiving break, recommended I watch some instructional YouTube videos before the big day. I learned that it's crucial to always be moving and to never take off any part of the costume in public. "Seeing a mascot without a head can be very traumatic for kids," one video said. Seeing a mascot collapse from heat exhaustion in the middle of a sporting event can also be very traumatic for kids. The videos don't mention that possibility, even though it lies right at the intersection of "always be moving" and "never take off any part of the costume in public."

I am a fit person who can tolerate discomfort. I once ran a marathon (26.2 miles) in a hot dog costume (really). But when Associate Athletic Director Megan Patruno jammed Marti's head over my giant noggin to complete my pregame meta-Mule-phosis, my first thought was, *I don't know if I can do this*. I could see the floor of the

locker room through the screen inside Marti's mouth, but most of my field of vision was consumed by the dark interior of the head. It was closing in on my face, threatening to smother me. "I need to go outside," I said. "Now."

Patruno guided me out the Liberty Street doors and over to the track. The cool air flowing into Marti's grinning hay-hole helped some. The distraction of having to perform helped more. I strutted back and forth in front of the bleachers, clapping and raising the roof. Touchdowns required extra enthusiasm, and unfortunately for me, Muhlenberg scored a lot of them—the Mules ended up winning 42-0.

I could occasionally hear some cheering just for Marti, but nothing delighted me more than my very first heckler. "Hey, Marti! You know what they say about big shoes?...Big socks!" (How original!) While I posed for a few photos and doled out a few high-fives, I mostly interacted with fans from a distance. I feared that I would not be able to see small admirers before I crushed their feet with one of Marti's aforementioned enormous red sneakers. Ending up in the emergency room because of a clumsy mascot can be very traumatic for kids.

By halftime, my eyes burned from sweat and my heavy breathing echoed inside Marti's skull. I desperately needed a break. I staggered back to the locker room and shed the costume. The shorts and T-shirt I wore underneath were soaked through with sweat. It was only 40 degrees out, but faux fur isn't terribly breathable. I contemplated quitting—I had enough material for this story—but mules are stubborn. After a banana, some water and some rest, I pulled on the cold and clammy legs, arms and gloves. I wedged my head back into The Dark Place, which weighed at least three times more than it had in the first half. Fully attired, I felt along the wall, opened the locker room door and strutted out into the world, full of confidence—confidence that I'd never volunteer to be Marti again. 

DON'T MISS ALUMNI WEEKEND 2020!

Mark your calendars now for
October 2-4

Back by popular demand—the all-alumni tailgate.

Were you a Cardinal Key? A field-hockey player? A member of a sorority or fraternity? Celebrate with the reunion classes by reserving space for your affinity group.

All of your Alumni Weekend favorites will be back, including lifelong learning classes, campus tours, Homecoming Fair and more!

CELEBRATING
REUNION
CLASSES

1960,
'65,
'70,
'75,
'80,
'85,
'90,
'95,
2000,
'05,
'10,
'15
AND
'20



For more information or to reserve your tailgate space, email bergalum@muhlenberg.edu.



Tech to Connect

Evan Sforza '07, a designer working on virtual reality software at Microsoft, helps create a welcoming place for people from around the world to meet. **p.32**