

Millersville University

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Sept.
2023

Welcome back to the 'Ville and the start of the 2023-24 academic year. It's wonderful to see so many returning faces and meet new members of our community.

The semester has begun with a high level of excitement and energy. Following a smooth and well-organized first-year move-in day, we launched new traditions as part of EPPIC Weekend. The new Student Academic Convocation was well attended, and some parents wished they could have been present. This year's Candlelight ceremony was lively, and the "Glow" party on the Rugby field was a new tradition. Miller, S'Ville and the Wubahs were glad to have a block party on a Friday night near the pond. Overall, our new first-year students were truly welcomed in grand fashion.

Our opening two weeks have continued with a whirlwind of exciting events. We launched a new partnership with Climavision to provide much-needed weather radar coverage to the Susquehanna Valley on the same day that we welcomed Governor Josh Shapiro to the Student Memorial Center to announce a new partnership with Google to provide our students with industry-recognized professional credentials. Activities on that day have received national coverage, and I can't wait to see our students benefit from these events.

On the opening night of their Fall season, our Marauder football team opened with an impressive win in front of a packed stadium. Since then, most of our teams have won their games, and we are off to a great start.

Last Friday, we gathered for the State of the 'Ville event, followed by our Garden Supper, which was held at the Winter Center because of the rain. It was exciting to recognize the winners of the 2nd annual EPPIC Value Awards as part of the event. Congratulations to all the nominees on their accomplishments. Feedback from that event has been overwhelmingly positive, and the credit goes to everyone involved in making it possible.

In this edition of my monthly newsletter, we celebrate the successful conclusion of the record-breaking "Imagine the Possible" campaign. We also introduce you to a new student leadership organization, the Cygnus Society, and our first set of Amazon Lockers at Boyer Hall. We highlight the recent reintroduction of the special education department and its academic programs. We also showcase our public mission by discussing a new partnership with an area nonprofit for equine therapy.

I look forward to participating in the United Way Day of Caring tomorrow morning. I wish our students, faculty and staff a very productive semester!

IMAGINE THE POSSIBLE CAMPAIGN MAKES HISTORY

On Tuesday, August 15, Millersville University announced that their “Imagine the Possible” fundraising campaign to support student success reached a record-breaking \$110,056,873. Not only was “Imagine the Possible” the largest fundraising campaign in University history, but the campaign is also the most successful fundraising effort in the history of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

The accomplishment is the culmination of a six-year fundraising campaign that surpassed a \$90 million goal in March 2022 and topped \$100 million in January 2023. The total of \$110 million exceeds the overall campaign fundraising goal by more than 22%. Donors to the campaign established 118 new scholarship endowments and 112 newly named annual scholarship awards.

Through the tremendous generosity of the entire Millersville University community, the campaign set a record for private support at Millersville University. [Visit the “Imagine The Possible” Campaign.](#)



AMBASSADORS OF THE PRESIDENT



escorting the platform parties.

Members of the Cygnus Society have been front and center at events on and around campus since their unveiling during graduation ceremonies in May. The Cygnus Society is a new student organization designed to create a capstone experience for seniors who have embodied the [University's EPPIC values](#) and demonstrated superior academic achievement, University involvement, leadership and community service.

The society's first events were the 2023 Spring Commencement ceremonies. Cygnus Society members greeted and engaged with honored guests. They also processed into the ceremonies,

There are 12 students representing all colleges, various majors and numerous clubs and activities (including intercollegiate athletics). The members were formally inducted in March.

The primary role of the Cygnus Society members is as official ambassadors of the Office of the President. Throughout the academic year, members will be designated special assignments at various University events and functions. As members, they will have the opportunity to wear the official insignia of the society in the form of a medal and a pin.

The Cygnus Society members participated in a series of workshops focused on enhancing their knowledge of the University and increasing their professional network skills. Examples of some of the sessions members have participated in are developing and refining how to articulate MU's EPPIIC values, improving presentation skills, particularly a personal 30-second elevator pitch, networking skills and dining etiquette.

From deciding on video topics to starring in the videos, the financial aid staff and student workers have been involved in different aspects of the process. Alvarez determines the video's priority based on the financial aid cycle; Assistant Director Julia Howey creates the scripts and vision for each video and works with Victoria Pappas, digital media specialist for UCM and a 2021 graduate, who helps bring the videos to life. [Learn more about the Cygnus Society.](#)

PUSH FOR SUPPORTING SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

"Special education teachers are essential because they provide specialized support and resources for children with various needs. A special educator works with students and supports general education teachers and parents," Dr. Lara Willox, dean of the [College of Education and Human Service](#), explains. Millersville University recognizes the importance and need for special educators and provides students with the opportunity to study special education at varying levels.

Dr. Janet Bertoni, department chair of special education, explains the need for special education teachers. "Historically, special education has been a high-needs area of education. This could be due to several factors, including the increased litigation within that field and the stress it creates for professionals, the increased paperwork associated with this role and the physical and emotional toll of working with students who require the highest levels of support."



MU offers various opportunities to study and earn a career in special education. They include:

- An [undergraduate PK-12 special education certification program](#)
- A [master's in special education](#), which is geared toward in-practice special education teachers
- Post-bac programs are designed for students with bachelor's degrees outside of special education who want to get their [special education certification](#) to teach.
- Online post-bac and undergraduate programs

The current teacher shortage also plays a role in the need for special education educators. Willox notes that the teacher shortage could negatively affect many students, especially those in special education. "Unfortunately, shortages in special education could result in students not getting the resources and

support they need to have the most appropriate education. In some cases, students may have to wait to be served in the most appropriate environment because there are specific regulations regarding a student-teacher ratio."

Because of the teacher shortage, there are many opportunities for teachers working in special education. "With the push towards inclusion of exceptional students, there are positions for special educators within general education environments, as well as self-contained opportunities for those students who need increased levels of support. There are also opportunities within private clinics to specialize in modifying behaviors and increasing students' communication skills," Bertoni explains.

Willox explains that preparing students with hands-on experience is an extremely important aspect of the special education programs at MU and contributes to providing special education students with an adequate education and equal opportunities. "A hallmark of our special educator preparation is hands-on experiences. Our students don't just learn about ideas hypothetically. They learn, experience and reflect."

NEW AMAZON LOCKERS PROVIDE PACKAGE SECURITY



Amazon is a convenient service for people worldwide, as the website sells various products that are delivered in that oh-so-convenient two-day window. However, one main problem for the company is securely and conveniently delivering Amazon packages to college campuses. Because Millersville University recognizes this modern-day problem, the University will install Amazon lockers on campus for student, faculty, staff and community use beginning in the spring 2024 semester.

George Ciarrocchi, executive director of MU's systems and networking information technology, explains what Amazon lockers are and how they work. "When you're checking out on Amazon, you can choose an Amazon Locker as your delivery address. In our case, they would refer to our campus. Once your package arrives at the locker, you'll receive a notification with a barcode and a code. You can go to the Amazon locker hub on campus and scan the barcode or enter the code to open the locker and retrieve your package. Packages are typically held at Amazon lockers for three days."

Not only can you ensure your package will not be stolen, but you can also pick your package up when it is convenient for you, seven days a week. Previously, students living on campus would have to pick packages up during the Boyer mail room hours or when a resident assistant or desk assistant was available in the residence halls. Faculty, staff and community members are also encouraged to use the lockers.

Ciarrocchi notes that the lockers' costs align with what a customer typically pays for shipping. "The lockers are free for Amazon Prime members. If you're not a Prime member, you can still use Amazon Hub Lockers. You'll pay shipping in the same way you'd pay it to have an Amazon package shipped to your home. Instead, it goes to the locker." Students and community members can locate the lockers outside of the Boyer Building on the right side, where the loading dock and current entrance to the mailroom resides.

Ciarrocchi explains safety and weather protection features will be installed around the lockers. “This area will provide lighting, cover from weather and have security cameras installed to monitor the area. This also provides proximity to the new location for the MUPD as they will soon occupy the lower left side of the Boyer building.”

SMC FACILITIES UNDERGO RENOVATIONS

To keep up with the increase in personal well-being interest and high athletic demand, renovations were made this summer to the Rec Center in the Student Memorial Center. Millersville's Capital Construction and Campus Recreation oversaw the upgrades in the Rec Center, including the new floor for the multi-activities court. The renovations include updated flooring, new fitness equipment and court expansion.



“With the increase in pick-up basketball over the years, the floor needed renovation,” says Allison Yarrow, the director of campus recreation. “The flooring reached the end of its typical lifespan. We wanted to extend the space so students can play indoor soccer, floor hockey and roller hockey.” According to Yarrow, the team feels extending the space will benefit Millersville students and “will allow them to experience more opportunities for practice and games with a variety of different sports.”

The 4-to-5-year plan is to work with Webster Fitness and Matrix to purchase and update the equipment in the SMC Rec Center. “The all-new strength equipment will include an additional squat rack, more plate-loaded machines, new free weights and an updated 8-stack machine,” says Tom Richardson, associate vice president for student affairs for operations. “There will be more variety as well as updating the existing equipment.”

There were temporary closures to the center during renovations. “Construction of the MAC finished on Friday, July 21. New equipment was also delivered on the 21st,” says Richardson. “Final touch-ups, including paint, were completed during the first week of August.”

The changes students will notice when they arrive include:

- The MAC is extended to include basketball lines with 3-point lines.
- All new strength equipment
- Updated interiors/walls
- Updated rental equipment, including new table tennis tables and pickleball paddles.
- Equipment is relocated closer together to accommodate the new equipment to pre-pandemic density.

Faculty and staff need to pay a fee for use starting with the fall 2023 semester.

Campus Recreation's goal is to renovate and update the space to best meet students' needs. The last major renovations coincided with the SMC expansion, which finished in 2011. The Campus Recreation department prioritizes wellness and recreation while having fun," says Yarrow. "We promote a safe and welcoming environment for students that come for various reasons. Whether it be to workout, play sports, take a break from a busy academic workload or destress or connect with others, our students are our main priority." [Visit Camps Recreation website.](#)

EQUINE THERAPY PROGRAM AIMS TO HELP FRONTLINE WORKERS OF COVID



'Heroes and Horses' is an equine therapy program provided by Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center that was born out of necessity after the COVID-19 pandemic. The program originated in 2022 with a focus on helping healthcare professionals deal with the potential ramifications associated with the pandemic. GMTRC then approached Millersville University to see if there would be interest in creating a partnership for delivering the program. The program is currently onboarding and hopes to provide the first session soon.

"The purpose of the program is to provide mental health relief for people who provide emergency care and wellness/health care to people in Lancaster County and to reduce the number of people leaving these industries," says Jennifer Rummel '07, executive director at GMTRC.

After the social distancing restrictions associated with COVID were relaxed, and GMTRC staff and board came together in person, they evaluated the potential mental health ramifications of the pandemic. They found emerging research about the pandemic's profound impact on healthcare workers and research that indicated people in those professions were leaving their industries due to their experiences.

With the assistance of Dr. Debra Vrendenburg-Rudy, associate professor and department chair of the psychology department at Millersville University, GMTRC spoke to some psychology students at MU to identify interns while they searched for funding. "I received my bachelor's degree from Millersville in 2007," says Rummel. "I had been in touch with the University over the years for various reasons. Based on those positive experiences, I thought it might be a good place to seek expertise and guidance that would complement what our organization is able to offer."

After almost a year of searching for program funding, GMTRC received an award for financial support in March 2023 from a Harrisburg-based foundation that will provide no-cost equine-assisted mental health intervention to forty people who work or worked in the healthcare or emergency industries during the COVID-19 pandemic and are experiencing mental health issues and concerns.

Individuals interested in taking advantage of the program should contact GMTRC. Interested parties can also call or text 717-615-9222 or email Stephanie Fleck, program director, at sfleck@greystonemanortrc.org.