

The University RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

The University Research Newsletter is published twice a year by the Office of the Provost.

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A Message from the Provost

Millersville University students and faculty excel at discipline-based research in its many

forms, and in applying their research expertise to enhance the social well-being of their fellow citizens. Whether on campus or in partnership with community and corporate entities, collaboration is a guiding principle in Millersville's expanding research culture.

As the spring semester comes to a close, research activities abound on campus. Scores of undergraduate and graduate students are completing research theses that will earn them departmental and University honors. On April 15th, University Honors College students hosted more than 70 Honors peers from across the State System in a professional development conference at the Dixon Center, followed several days later by Millersville's own Student Research and Visual & Performing Arts Conference. In both venues, the creative and technical skills honed in University labs, galleries and archives were put on display. On May 4th, the University

hosted its annual Honors & Awards Convocation, a lively event at which hundreds of student scholars are celebrated for their achievements.

In this issue of the *University Research Newsletter* you will get a glimpse of the wealth and diversity of research projects now underway on campus and in the community. Our centers, institutes, and working collaboratives are abuzz with meaningful projects that expand the University's research culture in new and exciting ways, and provide ample evidence that Millersville University is committed to scholarship, theoretical and applied research, and civic and community engagement that enriches the classroom, the community and civil society.

Sincerely,

Vilas A. Prabhu, Ph. D.
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

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Millersville University
SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

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THE PENNHURST PROJECT: Documenting Pennsylvania's Disability Rights Movement

BY CHELSEY WIRTH



Dr. Dennis B. Downey and several Millersville University students have been working closely with members of Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance (PMPA) in a statewide effort to honor the story of Pennhurst State School and Hospital (1908-1987) and its role in America's disability rights movements. This Pennhurst Project has developed into a research and advocacy project centered in the University Honors College.

Pennhurst (also known as the Eastern Pennsylvania Institution for the Feeble Minded and Epileptic) was originally established to segregate people with mental and developmental disabilities from the general public. Over eight decades, the institution suffered many trials and tribulations, scandals and controversies. Due to instances of malpractice at Pennhurst beginning in the 1940s, activist groups advocated for changes in administrative practices, more humane treatment of residents, and equal rights in this and other institutions. Pennhurst was recognized in several ground-breaking lawsuits during the 1970s that affirmed the civil rights of people with disabilities. In 2010, Pennhurst became a Pennsylvania landmark and is recognized as an International Site of Conscience.

Millersville's role in the Pennhurst Project began when Downey was invited to become a historical advisor to the PMPA, an advocacy group committed to documenting the history of people connected to Pennhurst. On April 5, 2013, Millersville University hosted a public conference to establish a statewide coalition that honors people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. Entitled "Just Imagine," this conference brought approximately 60 advocates, activists and agency heads to the Bolger Conference Center. The Just Imagine Conference offered expert panel discussions and a town hall meeting to explore the merits of bringing organizations and agencies together to promote historical research, community education and policy advocacy related to disability rights issues. By bringing this coalition to fruition, those involved in the project hope to engage in advocacy that shares stories and struggles surrounding disability through artifacts, film, documents, genealogy, the arts and other forms of media.

"My internship with Pennhurst has been an enlightening experience, and it has been fascinating delving into the history of people with disabilities in Pennsylvania," says Sharon Hess, one of two key interns in making the Just Imagine Conference

a success. "Their history has often been neglected, and it is a part of our shared past that should not be forgotten," Both Hess and intern Chelsey Wirth worked with PMPA Executive Director Dana Olsen, Co-Presidents Jim Conroy and Jean Searle, and other organizational leaders to plan the disability conference. These interns supervised every aspect of the conference planning process, and they are currently responsible for spearheading a follow-up action agenda. Wirth describes her experience planning the conference commenting, "I have greatly enjoyed my experience working with a fun, interesting and diverse group of people to plan this conference. Planning and organizing such an important event has taught me many invaluable lessons that I will take with me as I continue my academic and professional careers. I look forward to the future of this coalition and maintaining the great new relationships I have established. It was truly an honor to be part of this team!" This conference also has created opportunities for new student internships with agencies and organizations across Pennsylvania.

Along with the coalition, Millersville and PMPA expect a bright future in advocacy efforts for people with disabilities. Dr. Thomas Neuville of Millersville University is working on a Disability Studies curriculum that will be part of the new major in Multidisciplinary Studies. Furthermore, Downey and co-editor Jim Conroy have contracted with Penn State University Press to publish a book entitled *A World Apart: The Story of Pennhurst State School and Hospital*. Historians, sociologists, other scholars, attorneys, preservation experts, disability rights advocates and self-advocates are among a dozen contributors to this volume, which is scheduled for publication in 2014.

PASSHE Honors Conference

BY DANIEL LIPSON



From left to right: Betsy Hernandez, Amy Parker, Allison Breiner, Jordan Weller, Dan Lipson, Cassie Werth, Emily Neideigh and Dr. Dennis Downey. Not pictured: Emily Yost, Emily Lazar, Chelsey Wirth, Brittany Tomes, Rachel Kucnicki and Erin Runyon.

On April 15th, delegates from ten of the fourteen Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) universities gathered in Harrisburg, Pa., for the second annual PASSHE Honors College Conference. Millersville's University Honors College hosted this year's conference, which allowed honors students and faculty to collaborate on "best practices" and to discuss challenges unique to each institution's program. Both the Chancellor's Office and MU's Division of Academic Affairs provided financial support. President John Anderson and Provost Vilas Prabhu attended for part of the day.

In addition to a dozen Millersville honors students, delegates attended from East Stroudsburg, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Slippery Rock, California, Cheyney, Edinboro and West Chester Universities. The day consisted of a series of panel discussions, with student facilitators from each school guiding conversation on a number of issues that face the PASSHE honors colleges. Topics of discussion

included: Academics and Service Learning, Student Government and Leadership, Study Abroad, Community Building and Student Retention, Career Building and Mentorship, and Thesis and Capstone projects.

Mentorship in the Honors community and the role played by University alumni were key elements of the program. Paul Beideman, a 1971 Millersville University graduate, offered luncheon remarks on the positive effect alumni and professional mentors can have on current students. Mentors can offer career advice and networking opportunities. Beideman and his wife have provided generous support to the Millersville University Honors College, including a multifaceted endeavor known as the Beideman Mentorship Initiative. In addition to guest lectureships and other outreach, students have contact with mentors who provide guidance on career and professional opportunities. The Beideman Initiative is unique within PASSHE and provides Millersville honors students distinctive choices for professional development.

Student delegates also discussed the importance of research in their undergraduate studies. Each university's curriculum has some type of capstone project that students must complete at the end of their senior year. For some universities, this requirement takes the form of a service project. Other programs emphasize the internship experience. At Millersville, the thesis requirement permits honors students to choose from a formal research, applied internship or creative project option. At the conference, Millersville University students hosted a panel discussion focusing on the various capstone projects and explored the challenges and rewards from each.

At the end of the day, honors students and program directors gathered to reflect on their experiences. Each school returned home with new ideas for improving its respective programs. West Chester University's Honors College will host next year's conference.

Student Research and Visual Performing Arts Conference

BY DANIEL LIPSON

On April 19th, Millersville University sponsored the annual Student Research and Visual and Performing Arts Conference, which for more than twenty years has showcased student research

and creative projects. Both undergraduate and graduate research were showcased, with several dozen panels and displays that highlighted the role of student research across the University. This annual event

precedes the spring Honors and Awards Convocation, where hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students are celebrated for the breadth and diversity of their academic achievements.

MILLERSVILLE STUDENTS Pursuing Research Degrees

Ginger Handley

*Class of 2013
Sociology and
Philosophy Honors*



Handley's research explores how religious views regarding contraception are framed in mainstream print media in the United States. She has studied how these religious ideas are presented in media coverage, whether those opinions are similar to those held by the general public on such issues, which religious authority figures are cited, and how disagreements are addressed, framed and discussed. Furthermore, Handley has been researching how issues of gender, class and race are brought up and handled within the context of the contraception debate.

Alyssa Ackerman

*Class of 2014, Honors History,
University Honors College*

Drawing on archival and secondary sources, Ackerman's thesis research focuses on the dichotomy between strict moral standards and the prevalence of social vice and prostitution in Victorian England. With special attention to England's Contagious Disease Acts (passed in the 1860s), Ackerman will assess efforts to regulate public vice and the spread of venereal disease.

Suzanne Yocom

*Class of 2013, Environmental Biology and
Environmental Geography Honors,
University Honors College*

Yocom's research focuses on how landscape and local factors influence the abundance of the European crane fly, *Tipula paludosa*, an invasive species whose larvae cause great economic damage to golf courses, sod farmers and other landowners. The insect feeds on the roots and stems of grasses. Yocom's environmental analysis considers such variables as the availability of impervious surfaces, land use, soil type and the presence of parasitic nematodes, as well as how soil type affects the nematodes' ability to locate a host.

Jennifer Mastrangelo

*Class of 2013, Secondary Social
Studies Education Honors,
University Honors College*

Mastrangelo's recently completed thesis centers on the concept of British imperialism in India during the Victorian period. Using both archival and published sources to assess elements of continuity and change in British government policy toward colonial India, Mastrangelo consulted a rich variety of materials, including Parliamentary papers, political cartoons, Queen Victoria's personal correspondences and 19th-century periodical collections.

Charles Loughery

*Class of 2013,
History Honors*



Loughery's historical research focuses on the significance of Presbyterian Reverend William Tennent, who settled in Warminster, Pa., in the 1720s. Tennent established a seminary for the religious and classical education of his sons and other young men, and helped to create a new generation of American clergy. Like their mentor, these students became leaders of the Great Awakening and religious culture on the eve of the American Revolution. Tennent's disciples brought Christianity to the frontier and helped to establish Princeton University, Washington and Jefferson College, and other church-affiliated centers of higher education. Loughery recently was awarded the Jack Loose Sons of the Revolution Research Award for his original work.

Emily Rissinger

*Class of 2014, Early Childhood and
Special Education Honors*

Rissinger's recently completed research has been published in the *Social Role Valorization Journal*. Titled "One For All and All For...Some," Rissinger analyzed how society regards and treats those people who are seen as more marginalized and of lesser value. Her research was completed while volunteering with the elderly and making numerous visits to urban school districts.

Win Phan

*Class of 2013,
Business
Administration
and Economics
Honors,
University Honors
College*



Phan's thesis investigates the Vietnamese market for swiftlets' nests, an expensive delicacy that is believed to be a miracle food in the markets of Southeast Asia. There is no scientific backing for this popular belief, and the market is largely unregulated, which leaves potential buyers with several problems. Phan's research includes creating a simulation of the environment in a lab setting (with conditional limitations) in an attempt to assess the behavior of both producers and consumers, and to determine when a "lemon," or market failure, is most likely to occur.

Racheal Erb

Class of 2013, Molecular Biology Honors

Erb has been working with Dr. Ryan Wagner to determine the antimicrobial activity of various secondary metabolites extracted from the Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*. The data collected can be correlated with the activity level of polyphenol oxidase—a defense protein involved in the responses of pathogens and herbivores—to determine if there is a direct relationship between the two. Her research also considers how antimicrobial activity and polyphenol oxidase levels change as the tree ages.

Erin Donovan

*Class of 2013,
English-Journalism
Honors,
University
Honors College*



Donovan has been conducting student-based research to assess the effects of "reverse culture shock" in the study abroad experience. There has been much attention given to the phenomenon of culture shock itself, which many who travel abroad experience, but there has not been as much research on the sensation of returning to a home country and re-entering into that culture. Donovan developed a detailed survey and collected data from those who have gone through reverse culture shock to record personal experiences and determine ways to make re-entry a less difficult transition.

Daniel Lipson

*Class of 2013,
Business
Administration
Honors,
University Honors
College*



Lipson performed market research with the Lancaster County Clean Water Consortium, which recently received a grant to cover the costs of improving residential properties by making them more environmentally friendly. Lipson surveyed landowners to measure their knowledge and awareness of watershed pollution issues. This data was used to create a marketing strategy for programs that will improve properties and clean up the Little Conestoga watershed.

Kristen Glod-Wetzel

*Class of 2014, Special Education and
Early Childhood Education
and*

Max Shirey

Class of 2014, Early Childhood Education

Glod-Wetzel and Shirey, along with several other students from Dr. Cheryl Desmond's fall 2012 semester course "Whose School Is It Anyway?" conducted research and oral history interviews to preserve the voices and remembrances of African-American teachers in the School District of Lancaster. Researchers were given the opportunity to learn about the lives and challenges these teachers once faced as African-American students attending school and entering their profession in the early years of desegregation. They will compare these histories with stories from a national perspective to gauge the effect that Brown v. Board of Education had on African-American students and educators of the time.

Dr. Sandra Deemer (Educational Foundations) has recently published a book titled *Reflections on How Educators Use Motivational Theories in Educational Psychology*. For the book, Deemer interviewed 13 local high school and middle school teachers, including eight Millersville alumni, about how best to construct a learning environment to maintain students' motivation within the classroom. The study illustrates how secondary teachers utilize Achievement Goal Theory in order to create motivational instruction, and shows how these methods can be translated into everyday use.

MATHEMATICS in the Elementary Classroom

Dr. Laurie Hanich (Educational Foundations) researches adolescent children and how they learn mathematical skills. Research data suggests that mathematics disabilities in children are often overlooked, creating fruitful opportunities for research. “My preparation as a developmental and educational psychologist has prepared me to think about how young children learn and how their learning changes over time,” Hanich states. Although most people feel ashamed to reveal they are poor readers, it is not uncommon for individuals to admit readily that they are “bad” in math. Reading ability, considered to be the hallmark achievement in elementary school, is frequently equated with a good education and high levels of intelligence, but this is not as true about math. Difficulties with mathematics are widespread among American schoolchildren, but have been studied far less extensively than reading difficulties. Hanich’s studies focus on the questions: How do children learn math? Why are some children better at math than others? What predicts how well children perform at math?

Early work that Hanich conducted in this area revealed that second-grade children with mathematics disabilities (MD), who are good readers (MD-only), show a different pattern of cognitive deficits than children with MD who are poor readers (MD/RD). In particular, children with MD-only have an



advantage over children with MD/RD on mathematical tasks that can be mediated by language, but not on tasks that require basic mathematical understanding. Holding predictor variables of IQ, income, ethnicity and gender constant, children with MD-only grew at a faster rate in mathematics achievement than did children with MD/RD over a two-year period. When reading achievement was examined, children with disabilities in reading (RD-only) and MD/RD grew at about the same rate. It appears that reading abilities influence children’s math development, but math abilities do not influence reading development. These findings could have huge implications for the elementary classroom.

In the last few years, Hanich’s research has expanded to include motivational factors that influence children’s math performance. She was awarded a grant from the Spencer

Foundation to examine whether children’s reported task difficulty and affect predicted mathematics performance. Findings from this study, published in *Child Development Research*, suggest that relative to their peers, children with mathematics disabilities are more likely to describe math as difficult; they are also more likely to show an increase in difficulty ratings of math (but not reading) from grades two to three. Second-grade ratings of difficulty and likeability predict math achievement in third grade. These findings support the notions that dispositions towards math emerge in early childhood, are revealed through casual discourse, and are predictive of school-based math achievement outcomes.

Researchers have made great advances in the learning sciences over the last decade, and there is an emphasis on preparing children to enter STEM fields. Knowing more about how children learn math and how they develop adaptive motivational profiles is essential to helping children become successful mathematicians in the 21st century. Therefore, Laurie Hanich’s research is crucial to the elementary classroom.

RESEARCH In Retirement

Dr. Carole Counihan joined the Millersville University faculty in 1987 to teach anthropology, and she retired in 2012. In the course of her career, Counihan taught Food and Culture, Ethnographic Methods, World Hunger, as well as courses on Latino cultures. She served as director of Women's Studies (1986-96, 1999-2002), and also taught courses in that program. Counihan was active on the Latino Studies Curriculum Committee. "Ethnographic fieldwork is the life blood of anthropology," she stated when asked about research in her field. The author of three books and editor of numerous other publications, Counihan taught at Franklin & Marshall College, Boston University, Stockton State College, the University of Cagliari, Italy, and the Università di Scienze Gastronomiche, Colorno and Pollenzo, Italy. Since her retirement, Counihan has been traveling and researching abroad.

In 2011 Counihan carried out approximately 50 informal, recorded interviews with food activists. She has been researching the Italian alternative food



movement in Cagliari, Italy, a city of 160,000 on the island of Sardinia. Counihan is interested in people engaged in promoting

democracy in the food system through initiatives like farmers markets, buying groups, organic production and farm-to-school projects. Furthermore, she seeks to understand what actions people are taking to change the food system and why. She returned to Italy in April 2013 to continue her research. From this project she has submitted a paper entitled "Masculinity and Taste in Italian Food Activism" to the prestigious journal *Women's Studies International Forum*. The article focuses on how four male activists speak about food in their culture, what aspects of masculinity they bring forth in doing so, and how these might contribute or detract from gender equality in Italian society. Counihan's

research includes ethnographic interviews and participant observation conducted with several Italian food activists in diverse regions of Italy.

Counihan is completing a book co-edited with Dr. Valeria Siniscalchi entitled *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy, and Economy*. This is a collection of 15 essays written by anthropologists from all over the world about food activism in diverse cultural settings. Counihan spent the month of March in Marseille, France, with Siniscalchi at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales to finish the book. The third edition of her co-edited book *Food and Culture: A Reader* has just been published in 2013, and she will return to Boston University for the 2013 fall semester to teach again in the Master of Liberal Arts in Gastronomy Program.

Consulting in International Education



Dr. Carol Sperry (Educational Foundations, instructor emerita) delivered the keynote address and participated as a discussion facilitator at the First Thailand Constructionism Symposium held at Government House and the King Mongkut University of Technology in Bangkok, January 15-17, 2013. Sperry spoke on "The Evolution of a Constructionist Teacher" to an audience of Thai teachers, community leaders and business

leaders. For more than 20 years she has worked and consulted with the teachers of Bangkok's Darunsikhalai School for Innovative Learning. Her work has included an international consortium of researchers from Harvard University, M.I.T. and other prestigious institutions. This was Sperry's fourth trip to Thailand as an educational facilitator for constructionist learning.

INTERVIEW WITH Dr. Victor DeSantis

Victor DeSantis, Ph.D., is Dean of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies. A trained political scientist with an interest in applied research, Dr. DeSantis directs the Civic and Community Engagement Research Project (CCERP).

How would you characterize the role of research in graduate and professional education at Millersville University?

Millersville University places a strong value on the importance of research in graduate and professional education. We strive to help graduate students refine their skills as consumers of information so that they are capable of staying current with their field and understanding new and emerging literature. In addition, we strive to help graduate students hone their research skills so that they are capable of producing quality research and adding to their discipline's body of knowledge. Our graduate programs pursue these twin goals by encouraging active engagement in research—theoretical and applied—in the classroom and through capstone experiences in many of our master's degree programs.

With the creation of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies has there been any special emphasis on advanced research skills?

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS) was created in 2009, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of graduate studies at Millersville University. CGPS supports student research experiences by providing graduate student research grants and supporting student attendance at national and regional conferences. We also stress the importance of graduate research opportunities during our new graduate student orientation program. CGPS demonstrates its commitment to research by helping sponsor the annual statewide Graduate Research Symposium.



With the creation of several new degree and certificate programs has the nature of applied research at the graduate level changed?

Millersville University continually seeks to develop new graduate degree and certificate programs which emphasize research and applied knowledge. The most recent graduate degree programs created at Millersville reflect this trend toward professional degrees that stress applied or “action” research. These programs include the master's of social work and the master's of science in emergency management, two of Millersville's most popular master's degree programs. The College of Graduate and Professional Studies is confident that the new Integrated Scientific Applications graduate degree will follow this same path. Additionally, when an existing degree program is re-designed to reflect current trends in the community, the College of Graduate and Professional Studies ensures there is a strong research component, as with the newly re-vamped and completely online master's of special education.

What do you see as the role of research in the future development of graduate-level academic programs?

Recent new graduate programs, such as the Integrated Scientific Applications and Emergency Management degree, stress the importance of interdisciplinary study and research. The opportunity to examine a research question through multiple theoretical lenses is an important component of advanced graduate study in these disciplines, and we are likely to see more of this brand of research. As well, Millersville has recently begun investigating the possibility of offering advanced practice doctoral programs in collaboration with other State System institutions. Under consideration are programs such as the doctor of social work (D.S.W) and an Ed.D. in educational leadership.

A final question: How might your involvement in CCERP help establish an applied research agenda in community-based education?

As a political scientist with a long record of applied research activity, I am very supportive of research that has direct benefit to the community and addresses critical issues facing policymakers and community leaders. We have many faculty members on campus that have active research agendas on political, social and economic issues, and regularly journey into the field with their students conducting research. This past year, CCERP sponsored a new internal grant opportunity to support faculty members interested in “community-based” research and awarded four \$2,000 grants to deserving faculty. Drs. Stacey Irwin, Jessica Kelly, Nadine Garner and Greg Paul have been spending time this academic year working on their award-winning projects that cover a wide range of topics from environmental preservation and sustainability to children's issues to community discourse.