

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

AUGUST 2025

Welcome back to the 'Ville for the start of the 2025-26 academic year. Judging by the energy and enthusiasm that I've witnessed during the opening week, this year promises to be an exceptional year. As I walk across our beautiful campus and see familiar faces reuniting and new members joining our community, I'm reminded of the unique energy that makes our university so special.

A great deal of advance planning by our staff ensured a smooth and productive move-in day for our new students. It was a collaboration between several divisions that made it possible. Many parents mentioned to me that they had never seen such an organized and efficient move-in process. I am grateful to the faculty, staff and dozens of student volunteers who supported the best move-in day that I've witnessed. I had the pleasure of participating in many of our EPPIIC weekend activities, including Convocation and the traditional Candle Lighting Ceremony. Even the weather cooperated as we were treated to a glorious evening by the pond with our first-year students, alums, staff and the Marauder Marching Band.

Our opening day enrollment is indicative of the 'Ville's upward trajectory. The gains we saw in undergraduate enrollment last year are holding steady and our graduate enrollment has reached new heights. While final enrollment numbers will not be available for a few weeks, early indicators are pointing to about a two-percent increase in headcount over last year.

As we embark on this new chapter together, I encourage each of you to embrace the possibilities that lie ahead. To our students, challenge yourself intellectually, engage meaningfully with your peers and faculty, and take full advantage of the rich resources and experiences our university



offers. To our exceptional faculty and staff, I am grateful for all you do to build a community that puts our students and their success at the center of our collective efforts.

In this edition of my monthly newsletter, you can read more about a young leader, Hailey Pierce, and her recent appointment by Gov. Shapiro, and one of our faculty experts, Dr. Dominique Didier from biology. We also look back on a great summer at the 'Ville with future educators learning their craft, athletes honing their skills and alumni adding a new professional credential.

In closing, here's to an academic year filled with achievement, connection and the joy of learning alongside one another. I am looking forward to seeing all of you at next week's State of the 'Ville address and celebration, where we will review the past year's achievements and unveil our new strategic plan.

CCRL FELLOWSHIP LEADS TO MU ALUMNA, GOV. SHAPIRO COMMISSION

Hailey Peirce's fellowship with the Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership, part of Millersville's University College, has led to some great networking and an opportunity to serve on Gov. Josh Shapiro's Advisory Commission on Next Generation Engagement.

Through the fellowship, led by Dr. Laura Granruth, faculty coordinator for the Center and associate professor of social work, Peirce was introduced to alumna Ruby Mundok, a 2023 graduate who is the executive director of the Commission. Mundok works with students, stakeholders and legislators across the Commonwealth to advocate for the next generation of Pennsylvanians. "I was able to meet Ruby and learn more about opportunities in our state government," Peirce says. "She told me about position openings in the Commission, and I applied by sending her my resume and participating in an interview with her."



Peirce is a marine biology major with minors in chemistry and environmental policy and management. She is a mentor for the NSF S-STEM Program, which funds scholarships for academically talented low-income STEM majors, and the Honors College. She is treasurer of the

Ocean Science Club and vice president of the Entomology Club and is also working on her Honors and Departmental Thesis with Dr. Carolyn Weaver, assistant professor of general biology, foundations of biology, concepts of botany, ecology and evolution.

Peirce was officially appointed to the Commission on July 7, and she is eager to begin her work as “a voice for nature. Using my knowledge and passion for biology, I will be working with other young people to lead the charge in protecting our environment. I am really excited to work with people my age who share my environmental goals and make meaningful change in Pennsylvania!

SINK YOUR TEETH INTO SHARKS WITH MU’S DR. DIDIER

Millersville University biology professor and ichthyologist Dr. Dominique Didier is the leading expert on ghost sharks and played a key role in the discovery of a new ghost shark species from New Zealand called *Harriotta avia*.

Dr. Didier studies a specific group of sharks known as ghost sharks. These are a group of poorly known deep-water sharks with really unusual biology. She has been studying these sharks since the late 1980s when no one else was studying these fish; however, today there are several up-and-coming young scientists who have been



inspired to focus on these unusual fish. Didier partnered with three other ghost shark scientists to write the authoritative book on these enigmatic fishes, “Ghost Sharks of the World.” In advance of her new book, set for release in January 2026, she offers the following insights.

What types of sharks are vacationers to beaches in New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland most likely to see or hear reports about this summer?

The most common sharks in coastal waters in this area are sandbar, dusky, smooth dogfish and Atlantic sharpnose. Spiny dogfish also occur in early spring as they migrate up the coast to Canada and return south in the fall. It’s important to recognize that these species are relatively small with maximum sizes around 60 inches. Offshore are where larger sharks live and the most common types are the shortfin mako, blue shark, bull and sand tiger, and encounters with these sharks garner a lot more media attention. The main shark you’ll probably hear about in the news, however, would be white sharks, because they really attract media attention. These are not common around here as they prefer colder waters and occur farther north; however, they have been reported off New Jersey.

What are some common misconceptions about sharks that you would like to debunk?

The most common misconception is that sharks are man eaters. Sharks are not hunting humans and do not select humans as a preferred food; in fact, sharks typically will avoid humans.

I think another misconception is that they are all large apex predators. Only 20 percent of all shark species reach lengths of six feet or more. More than 50 percent of sharks are less than three feet long, and most sharks live in the deep ocean.

What role do sharks play in an ecosystem?

Sharks are important predators and serve to keep other species in balance. Even small sharks are important for keeping other species in check. When sharks are overfished, we see a shift in the balance of species in the ecosystem with other, sometimes undesirable species taking over. By overfishing sharks, we have altered the ecosystem, and this affects both commercial and recreational fisheries as well as the overall health of the ecosystem, because a properly functioning ecosystem requires a balance of organisms at all trophic (feeding) levels.

What are the chances of being attacked by a shark?

Infinitesimal. You are more likely to be injured by a toilet seat. In fact, it is way more dangerous to get into the car and drive to the beach. Most people who are attacked by a shark are engaging in some type of risky behavior – and usually they don't even realize it's risky or unsafe behavior. For example, swimming where someone is fishing with bait, swimming alone at dusk or dark, purposefully harassing a shark, etc. Remember, the ocean is the shark's habitat, it is their home, and we are the invaders. If someone broke into your home, you might just feel like attacking them.

FUTURE EDUCATOR ACADEMY BRINGS PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS TO CAMPUS

Millersville University has its roots in teacher preparation dating back to our founding in 1855, and we continue to be a premier institution for future teachers. This summer, from July 13 to 19, nearly 20 high school juniors and seniors interested in careers in education (including teaching, social work, administration, and guidance counseling) attended this year's Future Educator Academy on campus.



A weeklong residential college experience created to address teacher shortages, the Academy immersed the students in life at Millersville. They stayed in residence halls, ate in the dining hall, and spent time attending classes, learning how to prepare for college and co-teaching in a summer reading camp or Lancaster City School District's Horizons summer program.

Students came from Hempfield, Penn Manor, McCaskey, York County School of Technology, Camp Hill, Solanco, Downingtown East, Palmyra, Conestoga, Central Bucks South and Odyssey Charter School.

Millersville students served as mentors to the high schoolers, spending evenings with them engaged in fun activities, teaching them from Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens" and accompanying them on field trips.

The Future Educator Academy is the third phase of Millersville's Future Educator Pathway program. The first phase is the Color of Teaching Mentoring Program that pairs area 7th through 12th graders with Millersville University student mentors. Phase two is Side by Side, which takes college students into area schools to encourage students to think about careers in education or social work. And the fourth phase is Dual Enrollment, during which local high school students attend Millersville classes and earn up to 12 college credits before graduating from high school.

MU COHORT, INCLUDING ALUMNI, COMPLETE CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER® PROGRAM

Millersville University is the sole accredited provider of the Certified Public Manager® credential in Pennsylvania. A cohort of eight adult students, including two alumni, presented their Capstone Projects and completed the program on June 24.

"This cohort was our largest and most impressive yet," said Hope Schmids, director of Millersville's workforce development program. "We want to build on this momentum."

The Capstone Project is the key assessment mechanism of the program and requires participants to apply their learning to an identified need in their organization. Through research and analysis, the students develop an improvement plan within



their sphere of influence that focuses on cost savings, revenue increase and/or customer satisfaction.

Alumnus Neil Lovekin serves as township manager for East Marlborough Township in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. A 2001 Millersville graduate, Lovekin earned a bachelor's degree in geography with an environmental studies concentration. He focused his CPM Capstone Project on the need for the Township to undertake strategic planning.

Since 2000, he says, East Marlborough Township has experienced significant population and infrastructure growth with little to no forecasting to ensure future generations are not burdened by aging and failing township infrastructure. The appropriate step, according to Lovekin's Capstone Project, is for the township to develop a strategic plan that incorporates its staffing needs, capital projects and customer service-oriented roles and responsibilities into an actionable plan. By linking the budget and strategic plan, township officials will gain a clearer understanding of development trends, population growth and the township's overall financial health, both in the present and in future years.

Diane Garber has served for more than 13 years as assistant township manager/emergency services coordinator for East Hempfield Township. She earned a master of science in emergency management from Millersville University and returned for the CPM credential in 2025.

"My skills, knowledge and abilities are very diverse," she says. "This credential allowed me to add a certification specifically associated with municipal government and public sector work to my tool belt. It filled a void that I didn't realize existed."

Garber's Capstone Project examined the challenges facing the volunteer fire departments in East Hempfield Township, including declining volunteerism, rising costs and increased service demands. "It concludes that consolidating the Township's two fire departments is the unrivaled solution for ensuring the long-term success of fire services," according to Garber.

Garber appreciated the curriculum, "but the people, the networking and sharing of information and perspectives, the relationships were – no, are – the best part," she says. "The time I spent in this program has helped me grow as a person and as a municipal official, and I sincerely hope that I am able to put into practice the knowledge I gained to the benefit of everyone around me."

SCHOOL IS OUT, CAMP IS IN

Although Millersville University classrooms were relatively quiet over the summer without college students, over 25,000 people spent time on campus attending 27 camps and conferences. That includes K-12 students who participated in a variety of camps, ranging in focus from STEM to soccer. Hosting such camps allows the University to serve its public mission and introduce campus to the next generation of potential students.

The array of summer programs included the ever-popular Millersville Technology & Engineering Camps in Osborn Hall. Children in grades three and up actively pursued their interests in science, technology, engineering and math, under the direction of faculty and staff in the Department of Applied Engineering, Safety, and Technology. This year's lineup included camps on small gas engines, printing, video game design, woodworking, LEGO robotics, and more.

Millersville University Athletics offered camps for K-12 student athletes, including full-day youth camps for baseball, basketball, football and more, all hosted at MU's state-of-the-art facilities.

"It's an honor to host so many camps and conferences on our beautiful campus each year," says Michael Kurland, assistant director of conference services. "We look forward to meeting all of our guests and ensuring they have the best experiences that Millersville University has to offer.



MU TO HOST THREE OPEN HOUSES THIS FALL

Millersville University of Pennsylvania will host three Open Houses this fall for high school students who want to learn more about attending the University. Prospective students and families are invited to campus on September 27, October 18 and November 8, with activities beginning at 8 a.m. in the Student Memorial Center.

Open Houses provide the opportunity to tour campus with current students, meet professors, explore academic programs, experience campus life and learn more about admissions and financial aid.



Additional information on visiting Millersville University is available at www.millersville.edu/admissions/undergrad/visit/.