

Millersville University

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Feb.
2021

Dear Millersville University community,

On this last day of February, I am reminded that the spring semester is moving along faster than imagined and the weather in central Pennsylvania can change at an equally rapid pace. One day I enjoy my walk across campus with a hint of spring in the air, and the next day I have to wear a heavy winter overcoat to brave the elements. Miller, S'Ville and the ducks seem to be holding up well despite the rapidly changing conditions.

Several exciting events scheduled for early March highlight some of our important directions and initiatives on campus. The fourth annual [International Women's Day event](#), hosted by the President's Commission on the Status of Women, takes place on Tuesday, March 8, at the Ware Center. In addition to an excellent list of speakers, the event will showcase local women-owned businesses and their products.

Our historic roots as a top-tier teacher preparation institution will be on full display on March 8 during [Teacher Recruitment Day](#). This event, held at the Student Memorial Center Ville Courts, allows our teacher candidates who are near completion or recent alums to meet with a wide range of school districts to explore job opportunities. It is a testament to our excellent faculty and the high demand for graduates from our education programs. Based on the early registration data, over 100 school districts from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and other states will be present.

In this edition of my monthly newsletter, you can read more about our talented students who received Neimeyer-Hodgson Student Research Grants to support their scholarly endeavors and a group of dedicated faculty members who received an NSF grant to support STEM education. I also feature our campus members supporting the strong town-gown partnership and a faculty member making his mark on the international stage working with Olympic athletes.

Finally, kindly keep the people of Ukraine in your thoughts and prayers based on the current situation in their country.

Kind regards,

Daniel A. Wubah
University President

FIVE STUDENTS RECEIVE GRANTS TO CONTINUE RESEARCH

Thanks to [Neimeyer-Hodgson Student Research Grants](#) from the Millersville University Alumni Association, five Millersville students will be able to conduct scholarly and creative projects.

The Neimeyer-Hodgson Fund was established in 1983 with money left to the Millersville University Alumni Association by Minnie Menges Neimeyer, Class of 1923 and Laura L. Hodgson, mother of Pearl Hodgson, Class of 1931. Any full-time student attending Millersville University pursuing a bachelor's degree is eligible to apply for a grant.

Meet this year's recipients:

Alan Snavely is a senior majoring in biology. His project aims to improve industrial hemp production by analyzing its root bacteria microbiome structure.

Emily Dalessandro is a senior biology major. Her project is identifying the genetic changes responsible for the evolution of parasitism in nematodes (roundworms).

Duncan Lynn is a senior majoring in biology. Lynn's project will attempt to classify certain types of root vegetables so that consumers know what they are buying. Currently, many tubers are sold under the same name but are potentially of a different species.

Elizabeth Esperanza is a senior majoring in psychology. Esperanza's goal is to add to the existing literature on substance abuse in rats. This will hopefully lead to new treatments in humans suffering from substance abuse disorder.

Apran Akbar is a senior majoring in biology. Akbar's project will focus on the embryonic development of the *Trachemys Scripta* species of turtles.

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Millersville University and the Millersville Borough have always had a strong relationship. The Borough Council is a good example of that, having a Millersville student serve each year as an advisor.

A government major at the University, Andrew Geer was recently appointed as the student advisor to Millersville Borough. His role consists of reporting to the borough council about what is going on at campus and how the school operates. Geer also provides a student's perspective to the council about any issues the Borough is facing.

Geer says his objective as student advisor is to increase awareness of the position to the student body. He wants his fellow students to know that they have a voice in local government. Geer is also a member of the Student Government Association, where he plans to take an executive position after his term of one year with the Borough is over. Geer has a passion for civil service and looks forward to gaining experience serving his community so that he may find a career in government.

In addition, Dr. Carrie Smith, a sociology professor at Millersville, was recently honored with an appreciation award from Millersville Mayor David Aichele for her service as borough council president.

My congratulations to Andrew on his appointment and a big thanks to Dr. Smith for her service.

STUDENT-CENTERED FACULTY SPEARHEAD EFFORT TO OBTAIN \$1.5 MILLION STEM GRANT

Millersville was recently awarded a [\\$1.5 million grant](#) from the National Science Foundation. The award will help Millersville recruit, retain and graduate more low-income academically talented students in STEM disciplines.

MU will provide S-STEM scholarships to 30 students over the six-year grant period at an average annual scholarship amount of \$8,000, totaling 120 scholarships. Key components of the program include a Community Building Retention Activities Program, a combination of social support and community building activities to engage scholars, and a paid three-week summer interdisciplinary curricular boot camp at Wallops Island in Virginia.

The program aims to produce a strong, globally competitive STEM workforce complete with students equipped with scientific literacy and confidence in their field of study and to produce graduates who are prepared to meet local and regional workforce needs.

Dr. Janet White, chairperson and professor of mathematics education, technology and secondary methods and Dr. Kathryn Allen, associate professor of organic/polymer chemistry, will select the first scholarship cohort later this spring.

SOCIAL WORK PROF HELPS OLYMPIANS

While the Winter Olympics came to an end on Feb. 20, Dr. Marc Felizzi, an associate professor of social work at Millersville, will continue to work with the athletes for many years. He was recently selected to serve as a mental health provider for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee. He will be referred to U.S. Olympic athletes who may need mental health assistance or therapy in his role.

Mental health issues, ranging from anger and anxiety to panic attacks and sleep problems, were exacerbated during the pandemic. Athletes are not immune and from Olympic gymnasts choosing not to compete to pro football players walking off the field, we've had a front-row seat to mental health issues.

Felizzi says besides the pressures of making the team, of dealing with COVID in a foreign country and a host of other issues, athletes are often considered vulnerable for mental health issues, especially on the world's stage. Injuries, career-ending or career delaying, are always at the forefront of an athlete's mind. Additionally, recovery times from events losses can impact an athlete's mental health. There is also the specter of a positive drug test and the potential consequences hanging over athletes.

While Felizzi will be able to help the lives of athletes, he says his work will also benefit Millersville students, "The benefit for our students will be immeasurable, as the sub-specialty of Sports Social Work gains a foothold. Social Workers provide the majority of mental health services in North America, and the profession is ready to work with and support athletes in their journeys."

Felizzi will continue to teach in the School of Social Work and says, "This experience will be invaluable for students in our Dual Degree MSW/MEd in Sport Management, as I will be able to discuss real-life cases (maintaining confidentiality, of course) to the classroom. Additionally, this will supplement learning through discussing my clinical experiences with athletes in our new Mental Health, Sport and Social Work course."