

Millersville University

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

July  
2020

This month I write to you with a sense of both excitement and responsibility as we navigate the complexities of opening campus for the start of the 2020/21 academic year. As we plan for the return of faculty, staff and students to campus, know that the health and safety of our community is of the highest importance. Notably, Millersville was once again recently ranked as one of the nation's safest schools and the safest school in Pennsylvania. Given the extraordinary circumstances that we face at this time, I ask that we should all embody our award-winning commitment to community safety in the days ahead.

I have always been impressed by the resilience, resourcefulness and resolve of our community of Marauders. Many thanks to our faculty and staff who are guiding our University through these times in big and small ways. You have responded to an ever-evolving landscape of challenges with a spirit of exploration, professionalism and compassion.

Earlier today the [Board of Governors announced plans](#) to begin a review that would evaluate the potential for integrating six of our fellow State System universities. The move would increase fiscal health systemwide so that we can continue to provide affordable high-quality education throughout Pennsylvania. While this news can understandably stir concerns within our community, I want to assure you that Millersville University is academically and fiscally strong, but also well positioned to excel in the years ahead by leveraging the collaborative, adaptive and innovative spirit we are demonstrating now.

This week the [Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference \(PSAC\) Board of Directors announced plans to suspend all conference athletic events](#) through the fall semester with the intent to shift fall sports competition to the spring semester if conditions are safe. I am saddened for our athletes and coaches, having seen first-hand your excitement and prowess on the field and court and knowing your passion for the game. Please know that concerns over your health and safety were at the core of this decision in the hopes of positioning all of you to compete again in the future - and I will be there to watch.

In the weeks ahead, each of us will have to play our part to help our community respond to the next stages of this pandemic. We have established a fall opening planning team comprised of individuals from across the institution who are working tirelessly to prepare for

the new academic year. Their work informs the [Fall 2020 webpage](#), which I encourage you to refer to often for updates. Newly added to our Fall 2020 webpage is our [Health and Safety Plan](#), which is an overview of the approaches for mitigation and monitoring, supporting campus programs and activities, and communicating with our University community.

Students should check the "[Student FAQ](#)" link on the right side of the Fall 2020 webpage for answers to frequently asked questions and to submit additional questions via the "[Contact MU](#)" link. Through this process we have recently received questions specific to tuition associated with online courses. Millersville University is committed to providing quality education, and this fall will be no different. During the spring semester when students and faculty made the extraordinary transition to remote instruction, our students rallied and produced outstanding results ranging from a virtual Made-in-Millersville event to an excellent posting from our student-athletes with a department GPA of 3.37.

This fall, as with every semester, our advisors, the counseling center, health services and tutoring will all be available, regardless of the class modality, to make sure every student has the ability to succeed. Therefore, our tuition will continue to be the same for in-person, online and multi-modal courses. During the pandemic, our efforts to keep the campus community safe, while providing the highest quality education, means students will still be able to start or continue pursuing their degree in a variety of modalities. The University is investing significant resources in the areas of technology and faculty development through workshops to ensure that the quality of the remote instruction is on par with the in-person classes and will meet all of the required learning outcomes. The credits earned for online and hybrid classes are equivalent to those earned for in-person courses. Students who have extraordinary needs are encouraged to review these resources for information regarding financial assistance the [CARES Relief Fund](#), the [EPPIIC Student Compassion Fund](#) and [scholarship opportunities](#).

In this issue of my monthly newsletter, there is a lot of information to share. Updates on a new strategic plan as well as new faces, new offices and new roles and responsibilities are included. I am excited to introduce new members of the Council of Trustees, celebrate work performed by our faculty to familiarize K-12 educators with online learning environments, share a new online bookstore and highlight selected students doing summer internships. Ongoing efforts within our University community to encourage healing as the nation faces ongoing racism in our society are also discussed. Finally, I would like to share an [article](#) that I wrote for the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry in response to ongoing social injustice and an effort that Millersville University will make to help our local economy recover. There is much to share because there is a lot going on. I hope that within these stories you find moments for joy, excitement and reflection.

Be kind, be safe and stay healthy.

## **NEW STRATEGIC PLAN**

I am pleased to announce that after a year of hard work by a cross section of our University community, we have a new strategic plan, which will guide Millersville University through 2025. Our Council of Trustees endorsed the new plan at their June 2020 meeting, and it officially went into effect on July 1, 2020.

Along with our EPPIIC Values, the University has put forth a new mission and vision, as well as four strategic directions that will guide the next five years.

**Vision** - We will inspire learners to change the world.

**Mission** - We are a community dedicated to high quality education at an exceptional value.

### **Strategic Directions**

- Ensure access, affordability and completion
- Transform student experiences and foster innovation
- Invest strategically in people and place
- Communicate our value

While a lot has been done, there is still much to do. Measurable goals and objectives have been created for each strategic direction and vice presidents will develop implementation tactics to bring them to fruition. Drs. Victor DeSantis, Jennifer Wood and Kyle Verbosh will lead our efforts in the coming months to establish key performance indicators and baseline data so we can track our progress toward these goals. These data points will be announced later this year.

The challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic were considered in the creation of this strategic plan, and I am confident that it will set us on a solid path forward as a University. The level of collaboration and hard work that was exerted in the design of this plan was impressive, and I want to thank everyone who was involved—particularly the late Dr. Lisa Shibley who made a large contribution to the success of this plan.

## **NEW COT MEMBERS**

Our Council of Trustees (COT) is the 11-member governing body for Millersville University and it serves as a valuable supporting force for our university. I am pleased to announce that our two newest members are Dr. Saul W. Fink, '85 and Mr. Rick Rodgers, who were

appointed in May 2020. Dr. Fink is an alum and Mr. Rodgers is a long-time supporter of Millersville University. I know they will play active roles in shaping the future of our institution.

Dr. Fink is currently Vice President of Pharmaceutical Development at Goldfinch Bio. He is a biotech and pharmaceutical research and development leader and was previously with Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) where he spent a good part of his career. At BMS he led key strategic business and laboratory operations. He worked closely with senior executives to accelerate strategy execution, business transformations and operational performance. He graduated from Millersville with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and earned a doctorate in analytical/physical chemistry from the University of Houston. Saul serves as a member of the Resources Committee.

Mr. Rick Rodgers, CFP, CRPC, is co-founder and president of Rodgers & Associates. As a leading retirement expert and personal wealth adviser to high-net-worth individuals, Rick provides integrated financial, tax, and investment strategies, retirement planning, executive compensation, and estate and charitable planning. He is the author of the book "Don't Retire Broke. An Indispensable Guide to Tax Efficient Retirement Planning and Financial Freedom," in which he offers expert advice on how to navigate complex tax issues using clear language and real-life examples. Rick serves as a member of the Resources Committee.

## **NEW OFFICES, NEW FACES**

In response to the pandemic, we have created two new offices and made personnel changes to guide us through the weeks and months ahead.

Dr. Victor DeSantis is now serving as the executive director of our new Office of Community Engagement, Governmental and Economic Development (CEGED). As one of the region's leading public universities, it is our responsibility to address the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic head on and play a lead role in the region's economic resurgence. This office will do just that.

With Victor's move, Chris Steuer became my Chief of Staff on July 1. As our sustainability director for the past five years, he has done a fabulous job of coordinating and advancing Millersville's sustainability initiatives and is already helping me as we prepare for our fall opening.

New this summer, Stephen J. diFilipo, our Chief Technology Officer took on additional responsibilities as Chief Innovation Officer. The Office of Innovation will tackle innovative practices throughout the University to deliver exceptional differentiated experiences for students, faculty, staff, the campus community and region.

Earlier this month, Dr. James Delle was appointed the dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning (CGSAL). He will continue to serve as associate provost for Academic Administration. Dr. Janice Moore has assumed the position of associate dean of CGSAL and director of Online and Adult Learning to help with our work on remote instruction.

I am also pleased to welcome two new deans, Dr. Marc Tomljanovich as the dean of The Lombardo College of Business and Dr. Rachel Finley-Bowman as the dean of Student Success and associate provost for Academic Support Services. Dr. Tomljanovich comes to Millersville from Drew University and Dr. Finley-Bowman comes from Elizabethtown College.

Please join me in congratulating all of these individuals in their new roles.

## **SUPPORTING K-12 TEACHERS**

In this unprecedented time of online learning, Millersville University faculty members have stepped forward as a resource for other educators. Our University's long history of educating educators puts us in a prime position to support each other during this difficult time.

On June 30, MU's Professional Education Unit held the first virtual "Supporting Learners Conference." It was quite a success with 730 registered attendees and 47 presenters who held sessions on six different Zoom calls. Presenters included in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, school counselors and building administrators. Approximately 30 members of our faculty, led by Dr. Tim Mahoney, associate professor and chair of the Department of Educational Foundations, collaborated on this conference from three colleges and six departments, plus the McNairy Library and IT support staff.

Our faculty and students presented original research and resources, including the effects of distance learning on child development and social and emotional learning in the transition to online schooling. The conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Oliver Dreon, professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, spoke about the need to be more mindful as an online teacher. In the presentation, Dr. Dreon discussed the need for teachers to be empathic and build community in the online learning environment.

I am excited to see our Marauder Community come together and find unique ways to support learning during this challenging time. The Professional Education Unit plans to follow the success of this conference with another virtual session on August 10, and again this coming November.

## **ONLINE BOOKSTORE**

For the coming semester, we have made changes to our student bookstore to provide more options and cut costs for students. All orders will be placed completely online, and students can either pick up their books at the Student Memorial Center (SMC) or have them shipped directly to their preferred address.

These changes come at the heels of a new partnership between Student Services Inc., and Akademos, a company that gives students access to a convenient online bookstore and course materials platform. Through the new textbook website, students can search for course materials needed by listing their class number, department or professor.

This new platform will also allow students to see a personalized list of the textbooks required for each course and it gives them the ability to order materials for an entire term. A wide selection of new, used, rental and digital formats will be offered, as well as access to the Akademos Marketplace, which has over 100 million used textbooks at an average discount of 60%. Additionally, students will be able to use financial aid on all purchases, along with free shipping options. This is yet another way we are lowering barriers for our students during this challenging time.

If you have questions or need additional information, visit the [website](#), email [textbooks@ssi.millersville.edu](mailto:textbooks@ssi.millersville.edu) or call (717) 871-7610.

## **SUMMER INTERNSHIPS**

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic interrupting different facets of our lives, many Marauders are still spending the summer completing internships to get hands-on experience in their respective fields. I am excited for all these students as they learn more about their future professions and careers and to have the ability to demonstrate skills they have learned in the classroom.

Senior Skylar Robidoux is spending her summer completing a remote internship with Keperling Preservation Services. This internship is through Millersville University's partnership with SCORE Lancaster-Lebanon. Robidoux is a business administration major with a concentration in marketing. As an intern, Robidoux has learned how to apply her marketing skills in an industry in which she has never worked before. So far, she has learned more about social media marketing, and how to use various business marketing platforms.

Another student completing an internship this summer is senior Alicia Garges. Garges is a speech communications major with a concentration in public relations. She is serving as the marketing and communications intern for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lehigh Valley. So far, Alicia has learned more about social media marketing and is helping to plan and execute a recruitment campaign for September.

I am excited for all the Marauders completing internships this summer and I hope they enjoy their time learning more in their future professions.

## **HEALING OUR COMMUNITY BY NEGATING HATE**

Millersville University is fully committed to our EPPIIC values. To that end, the [President's Commission on Cultural Diversity and Inclusion](#), led by Dr. Tyrone Washington, recently spearheaded two online webinars for staff and faculty. The first meeting was called "The Healing Gathering" and it brought our employees together to ask difficult questions about racism in the wake of George Floyd's death. It was attended by nearly 100 employees. A second event was held on July 9 to continue this important discussion.

Results from a follow-up survey of attendees indicated the webinars were needed and well-received. When asked if they felt they had gained more insight into the prevailing issues surrounding the economic, social, psychological, and emotional injustices in America, 76 individuals answered either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree."

Another ongoing effort to combat bigotry on our campus is our [ever-growing Digital Quilt](#). This quilt is made up of virtual patches that contain challenges, quotes and affirmations. To date, this tapestry has received over 600 submissions. As we strive together to foster an inclusive and compassionate community at MU, it is my sincere hope that you will participate in all of our efforts to ensure that we are a welcoming campus.