

Millersville University

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

July  
2023

As we approach the height of summer heat, the campus remains quiet, although we experience periods of youthful energy and enthusiasm as we continue to host incoming students for their one-day orientation sessions.

Unfortunately, we started the new fiscal year without an approved Commonwealth budget signed by the Governor. While we await final action in the legislature as they seek to overcome several challenging items, we remain cautiously optimistic about positive gains for PASSHE and Millersville University. Currently, the budget bill includes a 6% base increase in PASSHE's budget plus \$65 million in additional funding for legacy debt relief.

Several additional items in the budget bill, which are likely to remain in the final product, will have a positive impact on the 'Ville and our students, including the continuation of funding for the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, funding for sexual assault awareness (It's On Us), and much-needed support for student teacher stipends.

We sincerely appreciate our local legislative delegation's continued support and recognize their important roles in securing a bright future for our University. I have been heartened by the warm reception from our local legislators as I visited with them during this budget season. We also appreciate the strong role of the Chancellor and his team as they advocate for a sustainable future for our campuses. I will update the campus community as more details emerge from Harrisburg.

I am proud to announce a record year for our student-athletes and the collective success they earned this year. Millersville University Athletics established a new department record in 2022-23, with 202 Marauders reaching PSAC Scholar-Athlete status, marking the first time the department surpassed the 200 threshold. To be eligible, the 2022-23 student-athletes must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 upon completion of the academic year.

This excellent achievement continues a positive trend that has witnessed our athletics program increase its total number of PSAC Scholar-Athletes for eight consecutive years.

In this edition of the newsletter, you can read more about new academic opportunities for our philosophy students and an exciting focus on ethics. You can also learn more about the new TRIO Talent Search grant and its outreach to our regional communities as well as the new videos which are supporting students and families to overcome challenges to the financial aid processes. Finally, I am excited to share news of an important milestone for one of our long-standing academic and community partnerships and the upcoming investments in our athletic facilities.

Enjoy the remaining weeks of summer break with family and friends. I look forward to the opening of the new academic year and welcoming you to the State of the 'Ville and Garden Supper on September 8.

## NEW MINOR AND CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE FOR PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS



Millersville University's [Department of Philosophy](#) has added an Ethics & Society minor and certificate program. The minor requires 18 credits, while the certificate requires 15 credits. The minor was given final approval in May 2021. It became available for students to declare in the fall of 2021. The certificate was given final approval in November 2021 and became available in fall 2022.

The certificate requires five courses, instead of the minor's six, and both paths only require the Introduction to Ethics course before letting students choose from an array of courses, including Business and Professional Ethics; Black, Latin and Native American Philosophy; and Philosophy of the City and Technology and Public Health.

"The certificate program offers an experience and education that develops important and necessary critical thinking skills and perspectives that students can apply in almost any area, discipline and the many diverse workplaces they will find themselves in," says Dr. Jennifer Miller, philosophy department chairperson at Millersville University.

The certificate program is not limited to traditional students but extends to those currently working in the area. The certificate can enhance a person's professional credentials: it is also a standalone 15 credit hours that anyone can take, especially those from professional communities.

The department is also enacting new requirements this fall for the philosophy major. The major will require less focus on the history of philosophy and allow students more flexibility to take issue-centered courses.

"We did want to raise the profile of philosophy on campus and figured the way to do that would be to help people see how it could complement their other educational goals," says Chuck Ward, professor of philosophy at Millersville University.

## MAKING FINANCIAL AID ACCESSIBLE ONE VIDEO AT A TIME



Millersville University

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

financial aid journey.

Financial aid is often essential to the college experience, but it can be confusing and challenging for many students and their families. Having the correct tools and information can make the process much more accessible.

The financial aid team at Millersville has put an emphasis on reaching students and families in new and innovative ways. From restructuring their website and creating content for social media to producing financial aid videos, they are continuously striving to find ways to provide information concisely to help students through their

Financial aid videos are not new, but most are very general and created through a third party. The Office of Financial Aid wanted to focus on a more customized approach to what Millersville University students need to know about financial aid and the requirements and tasks they may need to complete. This is why they teamed up with the Communications and Marketing Department to create 11 videos explaining financial aid in a simple and accessible way.

These videos highlight aspects of financial aid concepts and processes, understanding your financial aid offer letter, applying for scholarships, step-by-step instructions, and more! During an event in February, several students recorded testimonials about their experience with financial aid at MU.

Emiyaril Alvarez, director of Financial Aid at MU, explains the importance of the videos. “Our goal is to inform, educate and empower current and future Marauders with the knowledge of financial aid programs, their financial responsibility, and to encourage them to play an active role in the investment toward their future. These videos are helping us to transform the student aid experience, allowing us to take intricate concepts and share helpful financial aid information and resources in a more user-friendly format.”

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.

The [financial aid videos](#) are available on the Millersville website ([millersville.edu/fa-videos](http://millersville.edu/fa-videos)), are posted on social media ([@finaid\\_mu](#)) and are available on the [Financial Aid playlist](#) on Millersville's YouTube channel. These videos, other social media posts and events by the MU financial aid office have gained attention on a national level. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has acknowledged, praised, and shared the content on their social media platforms. NASFAA is an organization of more than 29,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools nationwide.

“It has been rewarding to see these projects come to fruition, and we look forward to continuing this important work,” says Alvarez.

## MORE THAN 200 STUDENTS HELPED BY GRANT SO FAR



In 2021, Millersville University applied for and received a \$1.3 million TRIO Talent Search grant from the Department of Education. The grant was received earlier this year, and over 200 students from the Lancaster, Lebanon, Norristown and Pottstown school districts have benefitted to date.

The Talent Search Program is designed to identify and assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. The program provides early college readiness, academic, career and financial literacy programs to its participants and encourages them to graduate from high school and to

continue and complete postsecondary education. The program also encourages persons who have yet to complete education programs at the secondary or postsecondary level to enter or reenter and complete postsecondary education.

Ten high schools in south-central and south-eastern Pennsylvania will benefit from the grant as these areas endure high poverty rates and need stronger academic support. Those 10 schools are Lancaster, Columbia, York William Penn, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Reading, Pottstown, Norristown, Allentown Allen and Allentown Dieruff.

The program, which is overseen by [Student Access and Support Services](#), hopes to reach at least 600 students per year. There is also a weeklong camp that took place this month that covered early college readiness and career. The students who participated will be rising seniors next year.

For more information on federal TRIO programs, [visit Trio Talent](#).

## NEIGHBORING COLLEGE TO LEASE SPACE ON MU CAMPUS



Less than six miles from Millersville University, Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology has been a neighboring institution since 1905. However, due to an increase in enrollment at TSCT and a surplus in housing by Student Lodging Inc., many of their students will be much closer than that. A recent agreement between TSCT and SLI will have students living in Reighard Hall during the academic year. The lease agreement is for three years, beginning on August 1, 2023.

"TSCT currently has a shortfall of housing options for their current enrollment. SLI had beds available, so it was a win-win situation," says Geoffrey Beers, CEO of Student Services and Student Lodging, Inc.

MU signed an agreement with TSCT in March of 2019 that allows students graduating with an associate in science in business administration from Thaddeus Stevens to move seamlessly into the online Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program with a general concentration at Millersville University, so the schools already have an academic relationship. This new housing agreement, however, is solely between TSCT and SLI, and the students will have the same access to the campus and facilities as any other community member.

## HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES FOR 25 YEARS



Since its founding, the mission of Aaron's Acres has been to help children and young adults with disabilities discover new things in the world in a safe environment. Millersville University has been an affiliate on this journey since the beginning. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the bond between MU and Aaron's Acres is still going strong.

Founded in 1998, this non-profit organization serves children and young adults ages 5-21 with disabilities and provides year-round recreational programs. The committee that first formed the organization included Dr. Barbara Beakley, professor emeritus at Millersville University, who at the time was the chairperson of the special education department. Beakley, Risa Paskoff (the executive director) and a small group of parents were instrumental in getting the program off the ground. This year, the organization is marking its 25th anniversary.

Initially, the program was just over the summer. Beakley saw the program's value and allowed her graduate students to work at the camp and earn course credits. The camp program has since evolved into a school year program where once a month, on Friday nights, students ages 13-21 with disabilities go out into the community. MU students intern for the Saturday night program for ages 5-12 held at the University once a month during the school year. "For the camp program, the kids are outside...they go swimming, horseback riding and play games, but at the same time, we're still working on those skills," says Paskoff.

"There is a 1-to-1 or 1-to-2 staff-to-child ratio, so interns get the experience allowing them to focus their energy on that one child," says Paskoff.

300-level special education students can apply for the internship. If accepted, they spend a semester at Aaron's Acres. Then they can continue their work at the organization as a 400-level student, which can be up to a year of internship opportunities taken for credit. Each MU student works with one child during the 300-level experience, then during the 400-level experience, they create and implement programs. Several students have remained after the internship and continued on as staff members. Currently, an MU graduate has served as a site supervisor for 18 years.

"The first part of the experience is one-on-one learning about kids with disabilities, and the second part is stepping away from the kids and having more of a teacher/internship experience where they can try things out for a group," says Paskoff.

For more information about Aaron's Acres, visit <https://aaronsacres.org/about/>.

For more information about the Millersville University Special Education Department, visit [MU special ed.](#)

## ATHLETIC FACILITIES TO BE RENOVATED WITH \$4.9 MILLION IN GRANTS



Thanks to grant funding, two Millersville University athletic venues will soon see various improvements and renovations. The total funds amount to over \$2 million and will go toward construction projects at Pucillo Gymnasium and Cooper Park. Both projects are slated to be completed in 2024.

The improvements to Pucillo are made possible through a \$2 million grant from the [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#). The money will go toward a new HVAC for the facility.

Dan Griest, project manager for Capital Construction, Contracting and Design, explains that it's important to maintain the HVAC in Pucillo, especially as it is the largest indoor venue on campus.

"The humidity control impacts the hardwood flooring in the Gymnasium, as well as indoor air quality for our athletes and spectators," Griest says. "Code-compliant ventilation improvements are also being provided for our classroom, wellness office, training and locker areas."

New field lighting for Cooper Park will be added, assisted by a \$425,000 grant from the [Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development](#). The baseball field will be supplied with this new lighting in accordance with the guidelines provided by the NCAA for best lighting practices for regional and national broadcasts. These improvements include dimming capabilities and the limitation of light spillover into the neighborhoods surrounding the campus.

"The impacts of these projects for our community will be multifold," adds Griest. "The improvements will positively impact our athletic programs by providing better facilities in which to compete and practice, it will positively impact our training program to provide better facilities for the health of our athletes, and it will provide an avenue to allow the University to share our facilities with camps and programs."