

Millersville University

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

May  
2020

One of my maternal grandfather's favorite quotations states "It is never wise to remove thorns in your clothes while standing in the middle of a field of thorns." Under normal circumstances, this saying applies but not in our current turbulent times. Due to the uncertain times in which we find ourselves, it has become necessary to come up with creative and experimental solutions to address unexpected challenges that appear to emanate from nowhere on a daily basis. Hence we seem to be removing thorns from our clothes while standing in the middle of thorns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That is when our core value of "Exploration" is on full display. Most of the approaches that we have employed to address the pandemic have been rooted in being resourceful. I am glad to say that our community has lived up to this value by coming up with and implementing innovative ideas. Isn't this what the Marauder community is all about?

Over the past few weeks, two task forces have been working hard to develop plans for re-opening our campus. The Re-Opening Task Force is a subgroup of the Incident Response Team (IRT) that is developing health and safety protocols to guide our employees and the University community when state and local officials move Lancaster County into the Yellow phase of the Governor's phased reopening plan for Pennsylvania. Although Lancaster County remains in the Red phase and under the existing Stay-at-Home order until June 4th, several counties in Central Pennsylvania will move to the Yellow phase today, May 22. The Innovations Task Force was charged with developing new ideas and thinking boldly about teaching and learning models for the fall semester and beyond.

I will work closely with my Cabinet and the IRT to unveil the plans and guidelines from the two task forces in the weeks ahead. We also have an aggressive outreach effort planned for roll-out, including videos on return-to-work procedures, a new website with re-opening information and FAQs, as well as informative print and email communications. I am grateful to the talented faculty and staff who answered the call to serve on these important teams.

In this issue of my monthly newsletter, I am pleased to highlight some of the extraordinary Marauders who make our campus a unique and caring community. We found new ways to virtually celebrate with our May graduates and to financially support our students through this challenging time. We honor our exceptional student-athletes, highlighted by Ben Fellman of our men's tennis program. We applaud our talented students from Chromatic Expansion

for their beautiful music. And we recognize the faculty, staff and students who are partnering with a local school district to support students and families in need. Our campus community never ceases to amaze me and our EPPIIC values continue to shine brightly.

Be kind, be safe and stay healthy.

## **CONGRATULATIONS 2020 GRADUATES!**

On May 9, nearly 1,200 undergraduate and graduate students became alumni of our University. While our spring 2020 commencement was far from typical, in true Marauder fashion, we found many ways to celebrate this important milestone for our graduates.

Our student [a cappella group dedicated a song](#) to the graduates online, our caring [alumni sent in recorded messages](#) of well-wishes and encouragement for our newest alums, many students posted photos of their own celebrations online using the hashtag [#villegrad20](#) and much, much more.

[Amber Liggett](#), a Bridgewater, Pennsylvania native, is a member of MU's class of 2020. In fact, she's a two-time graduate of MU. She earned her bachelor's degree in meteorology in 2018 and graduated with a master's degree in emergency management this May. A proud Marauder, she says Millersville really shaped her into the professional she is today.

I am so proud of each and every one of our students who earned their degrees this spring. Allow me to reassure you once more that we will hold an in-person celebration for the class of 2020 in the future. Our graduates and their families will receive at least 45 days notice ahead of the ceremony.

## **CARES ACT, EPPIIC FUND & MILLERSVILLE FOUNDATION SUPPORT STUDENTS**

Nearly every aspect of normal life has been affected by the coronavirus. Our students felt the enormity of the impact, for example many lost their on-campus jobs, they had to move home or with friends, and some did not have the tools or resources needed for remote learning. It quickly became clear that as a university we needed to support our students during this difficult time by providing emergency funds for basic needs.

The EPPIIC Student Compassion Fund was established and has awarded more than \$23,000 to help students with rent, groceries, laptops and other immediate needs. Generous alumni,

staff, faculty, fellow students and community members have contributed almost \$40,000 to date. In addition, the Millersville Foundation voted recently to increase the spending rate by a quarter percent to 4.5% to increase scholarship dollars for next year. With this increase, the foundation will award approximately \$60,000 more in scholarships, funds for academic programs and student/faculty research.

The Office of Financial Aid has also been working hard to award as much federal money through the CARES Act as possible. The CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund provided funding to institutions for emergency financial aid grants to students. Dwight Horsey, associate vice president of Student Financial Services, reports that of the total \$2.8 million received, approximately \$1,070,500 has already been allocated to 1,374 student applicants. The funds are being awarded on a first come first served basis and will continue until it is gone.

Students in need should [visit this webpage](#) for more information, and to apply for both the EPPIIC Student Compassion Fund and CARES funding.

## **STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

Spring semester 2020 at the 'Ville was unlike any other due to the pandemic. On March 16, we announced that because of directives from the Centers for Disease Control, the Governor's Office, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Office of the Chancellor, all face-to-face classroom instruction would transition to remote instruction for the remainder of the semester.

We recently surveyed over 6,000 students and I'd like to share some of the results with you. More than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the University provided effective communications and that they were able to access the technology they needed. More than 65% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to University resources, that administration and staff showed concern for their needs and that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the University's response.

With those survey results in mind, our goal is to remain responsive to our current and returning students over the summer months, so please keep in touch with us. We are ready and able to answer your questions, listen to your concerns and resolve issues that may arise. To our faculty and staff; thank you for working for the betterment of our students during this challenging time.

## **THE 'VILLE'S PSAC SCHOLAR - TWICE**

Congratulations to junior men's tennis player Ben Fellman, who was the recipient of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) Champion Scholar Award for the second year in a row. Every year only 23 athletes, one in each sport, receive this prestigious award. Although the spring season was canceled and no championship was held, PSAC still recognized its top student-athletes in each sport and Ben's 4.0 GPA through 97 credits earned as a meteorology student was tops among all men's tennis players in the conference.

As an epitome of a student-athlete, he is the only Marauder to ever win the award twice. Not only does he achieve at a high level in the classroom, but he also excels on the court. Ben was 7-1 in singles and 5-2 as a member of the team's No. 1 doubles pairing this season. His play has helped the Marauders go from 2-14 just two years ago to a regionally ranked program. Additionally, Ben represents his fellow student-athletes by serving as the treasurer of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). I am proud of the tennis program's incredible improvement and how Ben represents Millersville University as a student-athlete.

## **MU'S A CAPPELLA GROUP BRINGS JOY AND INSPIRATION**

While the sudden transition to remote learning was challenging for many individuals on campus, it was especially difficult for our student a cappella group, Chromatic Expansion. How do you translate a complex activity like singing without instruments, an exercise that requires in-person and real-time collaboration and feedback, into an online environment?

That's where Noah Manno, a sophomore music education major, stepped in. He said he noticed a lot of people were lamenting the loss of activities and events in which they expected to participate. So, he thought about how he could use music to bring some light to this dark time. He worked quickly with the members of Chromatic Expansion, getting them to submit recordings of themselves singing their individual parts of an a cappella arrangement of Simon & Garfunkel's hit song, "Bridge Over Troubled Water," which he mixed and compiled into a video.

The result was a truly moving rendition of a classic that resonated with many of MU's online followers. To date, that video has reached nearly 90,000 people on Facebook alone. Noah says they wanted to remind people they are not alone, that there are people who care about them even though we may not be physically together.

I would like to express my appreciation to Noah, the student members of Chromatic Expansion and all of the faculty members of the Tell School of Music for their continued support of this group and others. Your work has brought joy to our Millersville family and others across the globe.

## **PENN MANOR PARTNERSHIP**

Supporting our family, friends and neighbors has never been more important than during these challenging times created by the pandemic. In that spirit, a group of Millersville University students have volunteered to support our neighbors, the students and families of the Penn Manor School District (PMSD), in their transition to online learning.

A new partnership between MU and PMSD connected our students with more than 50 local families in a “buddy-type” program to provide assistance with remote learning. While Millersville students do not provide teaching-specific services, they are helping families with a variety of online learning platforms including Zoom, Google Docs, Google Hangout and Google Classroom. This partnership was made possible by the teamwork of Dr. Nazli Hardy, computer science; Allison Yarrow, Campus Recreation and Lori Leaman, Civic & Community Engagement, in collaboration with the senior leadership at Penn Manor.

I am thrilled to see our students reaching out in creative fashion to support our neighbors during this unsettling time. This program demonstrates two of our EPPIIC Values, Public Mission and Compassion, and I am proud of the hard work that is being done by all members of our University community. Our hope is that this partnership will help to strengthen the existing bonds between Millersville and Penn Manor, and let local students and their families know that they can find new support systems in this difficult time.