

SPRING 2025

Bloomsburg

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

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COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY



Greetings Bloomsburg Family,

In this issue of *Bloomsburg: The University Magazine*, we celebrate the launch of a historic fundraising campaign—The Campaign for Bloomsburg: *It Starts With Us*.

Already, the campaign has garnered more than \$83 million in gifts and pledges toward a \$100 million goal.

These gifts are already making a transformative difference in Commonwealth University's ability to improve the lives of students. And the impact of these gifts will be felt for decades to come. Because of the generosity of donors, new scholarships will allow students to pursue their education and graduate with less debt. And contributions for Professional Experience grants are empowering students to pursue life-changing experiences, such as internships, research projects, or study abroad that would otherwise be financially out of reach.

We also highlight the generous \$6 million gift of Steph '89 and Allie Pettit to support our performing arts students and upgrade our arts facilities. An avid supporter of the

arts, Pettit is also a longtime supporter of Husky athletics, whose contributions have been recognized with the naming of the Pettit Athletic Complex on campus.

Other highlighted donors include Joshua Payne '89, whose gift will support scholarships and professional experience opportunities in the College of Health, Science, and Technology, and Jack Mulka '66 and Kathy Matzko-Mulka '68, loyal alumni who are supporting first-generation students on the football team.

A college degree remains a critical tool for our students' upward economic mobility; and these generous donors help our students afford a CU degree so they can experience the transformative power of education firsthand.

We'll also learn about how faculty in CU's online Clinical Mental Health Counseling program teach students techniques to use games to help clients.

And we will meet two CU leaders: Provost Michelle Kiec and Council of Trustees member Angela Smith. These remarkable women embody a philosophy of leading through service.

Finally, enjoy the images of our fall Homecoming festivities and celebrate our men's soccer team's remarkable PSAC championship season.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, reading "B. Hanna".

Dr. Bashar W. Hanna,
President





COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

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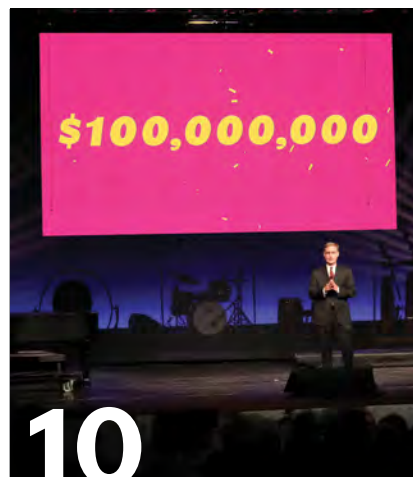
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Bloomsburg

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



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The University as Servant

By Eric Foster

Dr. Michelle Kiec, Commonwealth University's provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, talks about the role of CU as that of a servant.

"We're here to serve the needs of our students," says Kiec (pronounced "kick"), who came to CU in July 2024 from Oklahoma City University, where she served as provost and vice president for academic affairs since 2022. "We're serving the needs of our region. We're serving people in the community. And we're preparing our students for a better life, for a future, for a career to be strong contributors to our society."

Balancing those interests takes a skilled touch—the touch of an artist, a musician, a director. And that is exactly what Kiec brings to the provost role.

A musician by training, Kiec holds both a master's and doctoral degree from the Peabody Conservatory of Music at Johns Hopkins University. She earned bachelor's degrees in music performance and German from the University at Buffalo. An avid hiker, Kiec has also trekked the entire Appalachian trail, almost exclusively during weekends over two and a half years.

"At the core of who I am, I identify as a musician," says Kiec, who continues to perform chamber music as a clarinetist. "Music is a form of engaging with people. The music that I make is primarily chamber music, it involves collaboration, a give and take. How do we blend to form a whole? That's how I think about leadership. We are better together than we are apart."

"We're here to serve the needs of our students. We're serving the needs of our region. We're serving people in the community. And we're preparing our students for a better life, for a future, for a career to be strong contributors to our society."

Kiec began her career as a music faculty member at the University of Mary in North Dakota. The collaborative skills learned as a musician propelled her to academic leadership roles in North Dakota and later at Kutztown University, where she served in roles including interim vice provost for Extended and Lifelong Learning and dean of Graduate Studies, acting dean of the College of Education and dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

To Kiec, CU represents an opportunity for students. "We are an institution with campuses of three different sizes, which is unique. A student may choose a campus because it's the right size, it feels right. At the same time, they can take some courses virtually at the other campuses. And we share operational resources university-wide, which helps make the university sustainable."

UPMC Contributes \$200,000 For Nursing Simulation Center

CU-Bloomsburg has received a \$200,000 gift from UPMC, which will be used to name the Peri-Operative Suite within the new Nursing Simulation Center at the Breiner School of Nursing on Bloomsburg's campus. This gift supports the creation of a state-of-the-art facility that will significantly enhance the clinical training experience for nursing students, preparing them to meet the growing demands of the healthcare industry.

The Nursing Simulation Center, part of the upcoming McCormick Center renovation, is set to be completed in 2025. It will provide a high-performance clinical practice environment where students can hone their skills in a setting that emulates a real hospital. The center will be equipped with cutting-edge technology,

including advanced simulators and AV capture systems, enhancing the learning experience for students at Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield campuses.

"Nursing is a hands-on, practical skill career, and having access to such a robust simulation program like what's available at Bloomsburg is going to be a game changer for the nurses who complete the program," said Patti Jackson-Gehris, president, UPMC in North Central Pa. "Nurses are an essential component of our health care system, and we value our partnerships with the universities and colleges who are committed to advancing programs so that students are graduating into fulfilling careers with limitless potential."



Patti Jackson-Gehris, president, UPMC

CU Offers Credit for Learning Completed Before Enrollment

Commonwealth University is offering qualifying students a unique advantage to get a jump on earning credits toward a degree before even taking a class at CU with the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) program through the office of Workforce Development.

Through partnerships made with several area career and training centers, CU is offering students credit for prior learning if they choose to enroll in a program at any CU campus (Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, or Mansfield) that is related to the courses or training that they have already taken.

One of CU's partners, Keystone Central Career and Technology Center, has had at least 10 students who have completed one of several pathways to CU's early childhood education, criminal justice, health science, or general education programs.

As another example, a Muncy High School student enrolled in the health careers program at the Lycoming County Career and Technology Center also registered in a workforce development 90-hour non-credit

phlebotomy training over the summer. Upon successful completion of the training, students will be able to secure employment as a phlebotomist. If the student chooses to further their education in a health science program at a CU campus, they will also be eligible to earn two credits toward their CU degree with the option to earn an additional credit if the student completes an externship.

CU's Criminal Justice Pathway Program allows students to include Mansfield's Act 120 Municipal Police Academy as part of the two-year or four-year degree program. Through the pathway program, students will earn an associate or a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with 20 credits to be applied toward their bachelor's degree and also be certified as a municipal police officer upon graduation.

In addition, CU is a military friendly institution recognizing students who have served in the military and who will receive course credit toward their degree at CU for their military training and experience.

No Tuition Increase for Seventh Consecutive Year

Commonwealth University students did not experience an increase in their tuition for the 2024-25 academic year. The Board of Governors for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education voted unanimously to freeze tuition, keeping CU one of the most affordable public higher education options in the state.

This is the seventh consecutive year the tuition rate will remain the same. The repeated freezes save students nearly 25% in tuition costs compared to the price if tuition had risen at the inflation rate for the last six years.



Janeyda Ortiz

NAMED STUDENT TRUSTEE

Student Janeyda Ortiz has been appointed to the Commonwealth University Council of Trustees.

A sophomore business administration major from Bethlehem, Ortiz works in the president's office at the Lock Haven campus and is a member of the women's wrestling team.

Ortiz is a peer mentor for TRIO Student Support Services, a member of the Latino Student Association, and a member and social media manager for the Eagle Eye Club. She is also a

member of the Outreach for Humanity Club and Athletes Bible Studies Club a Board of Governors Scholarship recipient, and a student representative on CU's strategic planning committee.

Ortiz came to CU–Lock Haven as an experienced advocate for students. She worked to have women's wrestling added to the offerings at Liberty High School in Bethlehem and was the school's class speaker of 2023. Ortiz credits her athletic experience with giving her the tools to handle pressure well.

CU Awarded Grant to Develop Future Special Educators

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has awarded Commonwealth University \$20,000 as part of a grant program to grow the Commonwealth's next generation of special educators. The award is part of more than \$1.4 million that was awarded to 77 local education agencies and institutions of higher education.

CU will use a portion of the funds for recruitment events for high school students interested in careers within special education. The other portion will provide opportunities for current CU students in the special education program to engage in professional development activities such as professional conferences and advocacy events. CU has approximately 275 undergraduate and graduate students in its special education programs.

Marcella Woods Honored with Keepers of the Flame Award



Marcella Woods (left) and her nominator, Madelyn Rodriguez.

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) has named faculty and staff members at three Commonwealth University locations as recipients of the third Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Keepers of the Flame Award.

Award recipients are Marcella Woods, coordinator of cultural affairs and student support services at CU–Bloomsburg; Louise Sullivan-Blum, professor of English at CU–Mansfield; and Dr. Lisette Schillig, associate professor of English and co-director of women, gender and sexuality studies minor at CU–Lock Haven.

The award recognizes an individual from each of the 14 State System university campuses for their contributions to creating and promoting diverse, equitable and inclusive environments that cultivate a sense of belonging. The award recipients were announced during PASSHE's annual DEI Summit held at Millersville.

Woods initiated the establishment of the Multicultural Center at Bloomsburg, becoming the center's first director. She partners and collaborates with many campus departments to attract underrepresented students to Bloomsburg and retain them.

As the coordinator of Cultural Affairs and Student Support Services, she assists students who may be experiencing housing and food insecurities and other obstacles that may be preventing them from focusing on their education. Her relationships with community organizations and businesses have created work study employment for students as well as volunteer opportunities.

She provides workshops on financial literacy for students and parents and also on historical and current cultural issues of diversity. To allow students to continue their faith practices, she created church visitation, which has existed for nearly 20 years.

Woods was instrumental in recognizing Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a non-school day at the university encouraging a day of service to the Bloomsburg community.



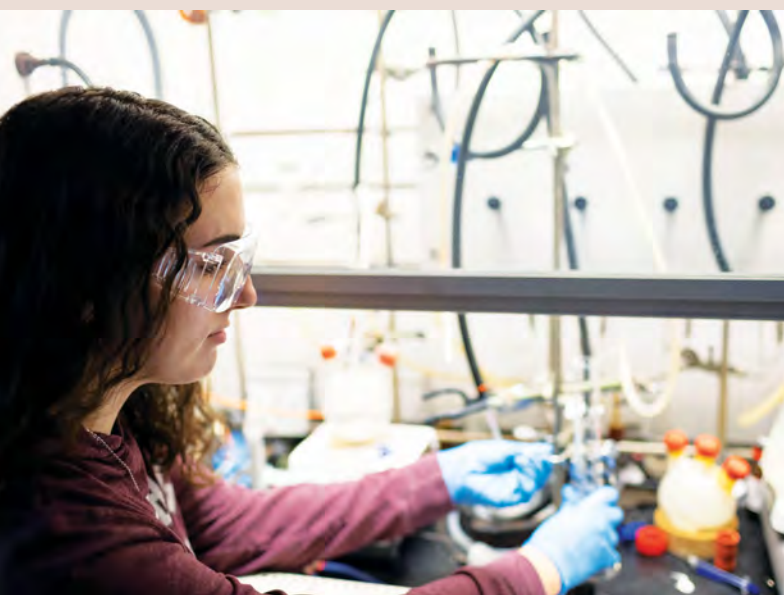
Bloomsburg Adds a NEW OFFICER TO THE FORCE

The newest addition to the Bloomsburg campus police department is K9 officer Rush, a Belgian Malinois. Having graduated from 22 weeks of explosive detection training in October, Rush is working hard to keep the Bloomsburg campus, and the wider community, safe, by doing sweeps for explosives at large gatherings, such as football games, homecoming events and graduation with his handler Ptlm. Eli Middaugh.

CU Launches Nurse Executive Program

Commonwealth University has launched a new program to prepare nurses for executive leadership roles, The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP): Nurse Executive program consists of 29 credits delivered online asynchronously over two years.

The program requires 1,000 clinical hours, half of which are part of the curriculum and half are completed outside of coursework. Throughout the program, students also complete a personalized evidence-based project that seeks to improve some aspect of the healthcare system.



CU-Bloomsburg Named a **BEST COLLEGE** for WOMEN IN STEM

Commonwealth University–Bloomsburg has been listed among the “Best Colleges for Women in STEM” by *Washington Monthly* for chemistry.

Washington Monthly notes that women now make up about 60 percent of college students in the United States, but account for 39 percent of bachelor’s degrees in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), according to the National Center for Education Statistics. As a result, women make up only a third of the workforce in STEM industries, including just 17 percent of engineers.

In the rankings, *Washington Monthly* ranked CU–Bloomsburg eighth in the nation for chemistry, noting that 63.6% of CU–Bloomsburg’s chemistry graduates are female and 59.2% of the percentage of the campus’ student body is female.

CU’s chemistry and biochemistry programs have garnered other accolades as well. Both programs are approved by the American Chemical Society (ACS). Students who complete certain requirements may then have their degrees certified by ACS. The biochemistry and pre-medicine concentrations are also accredited by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB). Students in these concentrations can have their degree certified after completing the ASBMB exam. Additionally, students have opportunities to conduct undergraduate research directly with faculty mentors, which helps them earn acceptance in top graduate programs, medical and dental schools, and career positions.

LevelingUP

NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH GAMING

By Julie Stellfox

Mental health used to almost be taboo to talk about. Today, many people take intentional steps each day to improve and maintain good mental health.

Strategies include the expected—exercise, a healthy diet, plenty of sleep, yoga.

Dr. Stephen Kuniak, a faculty member in CommonwealthU's online Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) master's program has another strategy to add to the toolbox—gaming.

Video games, tabletop games, role playing, and fantasy literature can all help some people through difficult times, says Kuniak, who is based out of the Lock Haven campus.

Kuniak has experienced first-hand the benefits of gaming therapy and has since brought it into his own personal practice as well as his classes, many of which focus on the practical application of the content for the students to use in their future practice working with clients.

The CMHC master's program is CACREP accredited and offers several concentration and certificate opportunities for students. The program also received the Outstanding Education Program award during the 2023 Pennsylvania Counseling Associations' annual conference.

"I really think that we have the best of all worlds. Delivered online, but taught in a way that resembles a traditional on-ground program," says Kuniak, a professional counselor for nearly 17 years, who has worked in family, substance abuse, and relationship counseling.

A gamer since childhood, at Saint Vincent College Kuniak conducted undergrad research projects on the benefits of fantasy storytelling.

During his first semester of his Master's of Counseling program at Duquesne University, Kuniak was involved in a serious car accident in which his car was hit head-on by another vehicle. His right femur was crushed and he had to endure reconstructive surgery involving a titanium rod and pins being placed through what was left of his leg. It was during his recovery when he began to see a clinical application of gaming.

"I found that diving deeply into fantasy stories and particularly deep narratives in the games that I enjoyed playing were a better way to occupy my mind than the pain medication I was given. And though this wasn't any sort of magic, I realized that there were some practical utilities to games," says Kuniak.

When he began family-based counseling, an in-home model of treatment where a child is at risk of removal from their home, he found that connecting with his clients quickly was imperative to helping them. Gaming began to be a bridge that made that rapid connection possible.

"Over time, I've found more opportunities to incorporate gaming into practice and expanding my repertoire of interventions," Kuniak says. "I've made connections between the interventions and the theories that we use in counseling. I also tend to teach these in specific courses where we learn more about incorporating creative interventions to reach clients in unique and out-of-the-box ways."

Kuniak has found that integrating gaming into his teaching lessons helps him reach students who are also a gamer or are interested in pop culture. “I think it also shows students how to modify theoretical perspectives or specific counseling interventions to better meet the needs of our clients,” he says.

Gaming incorporates itself well into his courses, as it lines up with art and play therapy skills and shows the students how to use other areas of interest to help their clients.

“There is a perspective that gaming is something fringe and that only maladaptive people are engaging in these behaviors, but it’s estimated that more than 60% of the population game at least one hour a week,” explains Kuniak.

“There are a lot of reasons why people game,” Kuniak says. “The stories, art, and music can all be very deep and emotionally charged, it’s not just getting high scores and completing mindless tasks. We game to feel something.”

According to the Entertainment Software Association, a non-profit organization that gathers trends and usage reports for the games industry, estimates that roughly 190.6 million people between the ages of 5 and 90 game at least 1 hour per week, and of that, 80% game socially.

In his practice, Kuniak has found that being able to “speak gamer” has helped him connect better with his clients who are members of the culture and using gaming interventions tends to help make the work more palatable for his clients.

“It provides unique metaphors to build upon and clever ways to practice skill areas without putting the client through extra challenges that might make progress as hard. I’ve found that it can help to build our therapeutic relationship more quickly and effectively,” Kuniak says. “Counseling can naturally be rather uncomfortable, and this can remove some of that discomfort for a specific population.”

Kuniak’s practice has evolved. Rather than just focusing on what he could individually do with his clients in a small amount of time, he decided to turn it into a non-profit organization that provides education, outreach, treatment, and gathers research data.

“I call the organization ‘Experience Points,’ a gamer term for the points earned in a game from completing difficult tasks, which are used to level up your character,” Kuniak explains.

“It is a really clear metaphor for what we try to do with our clients in mental health

counseling. Help them achieve experience points

through their treatment goals, in order to help them level up their mental health.”

Kuniak has been interviewed for his work in publications like the Washington Post and Counseling Today, was interviewed on the talk show KDKA “Talk Pittsburgh,” and has had a study on “gamer culture” published in the Journal of Creativity in Mental Health.

“It’s been really exciting to see people’s interest in the gaming culture,” Kuniak says. “It lets me know I’m finding a niche that really deserves to be paid attention to.”

“The stories, art, and music can all be very deep and emotionally charged, it’s not just getting high scores and completing mindless tasks. We game to feel something.”

— DR. STEPHEN KUNIAK





BLOOMSBURG HOMECOMING 2024



Huskies of all ages returned to campus for Homecoming on Oct. 12. The weekend celebrations included a tent party at the Fenstemaker Alumni House. At the Steph Petit Athletic Complex on upper campus, athletes competed in field hockey, swimming (alumni), football, and men's soccer. Later, the Class of 1974 held a 50th reunion reception at Monty's.







Student presenters Katie Starr and Christian Price



CU President Bashar W. Hanna and Erik Evans, Vice President for Advancement

IT STARTS WITH US

BLOOMSBURG LAUNCHES \$100 MILLION CAMPAIGN

By Tom Schaeffer '02

Early Support Propels Bloomsburg to more than \$83 Million Toward \$100 Million Goal

On a historic October evening last fall, CU-Bloomsburg and the Bloomsburg University Foundation unveiled its most

ambitious initiative to date: The Campaign for Bloomsburg, with a record-breaking \$100 million goal. Dubbed “It Starts With Us,” the campaign seeks to transform the university’s future by providing unprecedented support for students, programs, and the campus community.

“This campaign is about more than just a number—it’s about changing lives,” said CU President Bashar W. Hanna at the launch event. “The support we raise will provide scholarships, enhance academic programs, and ensure that every student has the resources and experiences they need to thrive. This is a pivotal moment for Bloomsburg, and we couldn’t be more excited to embark on this journey with our dedicated alumni, donors, and friends.”

Focused on three pillars—Attract, Elevate, and Prepare—the campaign underscores the university’s commitment to recruiting top-tier students, enriching the student experience, and equipping graduates with tools for career success.

A standout moment of the launch event was the announcement of a \$6 million gift from Steph and Allie Pettit to establish a new Center for the Arts, bringing their total campaign contributions to over \$20 million. The couple’s generosity will fund scholarships, enhance performing arts resources, and create innovative spaces for student creativity.

“ This campaign is about more than just a number—it’s about changing lives. — CU PRESIDENT BASHAR W. HANNA ”



Campaign Co-Chairs Julie Breiner '77 and Stephen J. Jones '83 surrounded by student performers.

“What we have given sounds like a lot, but it’s just a drop in the bucket compared to what the university and our students need to be successful.”

— STEPH PETTIT '89

“The best way to thank us for our donations is to get involved,” said Steph Pettit '89. “What we have given sounds like a lot, but it’s just a drop in the bucket compared to what the university and our students need to be successful.”

Student presenters Katie Starr and Christian Price shared heartfelt stories about the impact of donor support.

“As a student-athlete, I’ve been able to pursue both my academic and athletic dreams thanks to scholarships,” said Starr, a psychology major and women’s basketball player. “This campaign will create new opportunities for student-athletes like me, and I’m so grateful for everyone who has supported us.”

Price, a junior sales and marketing major, added, “Your generosity has given me the chance to participate in life-changing experiences, like competing in a national sales competition and securing an internship. None of this would have been possible without the support of our donors.”

With the announcement of Pettit’s gift, the total raised toward the campaign goal at the launch was revealed at \$79,959,509.

At publication time, the total raised was more than \$83 million.

“This campaign is about the power of collective action,” Hanna said. “Together, we are building the future, and it all starts with us.”



Speakers Marc Steckel '93 and Michael Gillespie '95.



Speakers Brandon Gill '22 and Juli Miller '92.

For more information or to learn more about how you can contribute to this historic campaign, call Stephanie Ulmer at 570-389-4059, email sulmer@bloomufdn.org, or visit giving.bloomu.edu/the-campaign-for-bloomsburg-it-starts-with-us.



A Community Transforms One Student's Future

By Tom Schaeffer '02

Hailey Hukill's journey to Bloomsburg is a testament to the transformative power of community and support—a story that reflects the spirit of “The Campaign for Bloomsburg: It Starts With Us.”

A senior accounting major from Scranton who graduated in December, Hukill is blazing her own trail as the first in her family to attend college. Despite challenges, she found a second family in the Bloomsburg community.

“My favorite thing about Bloomsburg is the education I’ve received in the accounting program,” Hukill shares. “Dr. Michael Shapiro is tough—he demands a lot of work and studying—but I know that when I enter the field, I’m well-prepared, even compared to peers from other colleges. That confidence makes me happy.”

Hukill's academic achievements were supported by scholarships that have lifted the financial burden of pursuing higher education. Among these were the Piatkowski Family Scholarship, established by alumnus Ed Piatkowski '86. More than just a donor, Piatkowski became a mentor and cheerleader for Hukill, staying in regular contact and offering guidance as she works toward her goals.

“Helping students like Hailey is what it’s all about,” says Piatkowski. “Her perseverance and work ethic are amazing. Students like her

remind us why giving is so important, especially now, with state funding so far from what it was when we were in school.”

For Hukill, this relationship has been life-changing. “Ed cares about my education like I’m one of his own children,” she says. “He’s so supportive and understanding. We often talk—he’ll send me job opportunities or articles he thinks will help me. We’ve gotten to know each other on a personal level, and I’m so grateful for him.”

Hukill's path to Bloomsburg wasn't without obstacles. Initially planning to attend another university, she encountered



challenges with financial aid that seemed insurmountable. Bloomsburg, however, welcomed her with open arms, working with her to find a way forward. “Bloomsburg’s financial aid office was willing to help me achieve my dreams,” Hukill explains. “That meant everything.”

Beyond financial support, Hukill has found a network of friends, faculty, and staff who have become her champions. “There will always be people who want to help you out,” she says. “Make those connections. If you’re willing to break cycles and work hard, you’ll meet people who will want to support you and be there for you. And you’ll carry that kindness forward.”

This sense of community has inspired Hukill to think about how she can pay it forward in the future. “If I have even a little extra money, I’ll want to help somebody else,” she says. “I’ve seen firsthand how much of a difference it makes.”

Hukill's commitment to paying it forward started before she even left campus. She has already made her Senior Class Gift, a tradition that allows soon-to-be graduates to leave a legacy of support for future Huskies. “It’s important to me to give back, even in a small way,” she explains. “I know the difference donor support has made in my experience, and I want to do the same for others.”

Her resilience and gratitude are a powerful reminder that every act of generosity—no matter the size—can change a life.

“Students like Hailey show us why giving matters,” Piatkowski says. “They are the future, and it really does start with us by providing our support.”



Ed Piatkowski '86
and Hailey Hukill



STEPH & ALLIE PETTIT HELP THE ARTS SHINE BRIGHTER

By Tom Schaeffer '02

The arts programs at CU-Bloomsburg will shine even brighter thanks to a \$6 million gift from Steph '89 and Allie Pettit.

Announced during the public launch of “The Campaign for Bloomsburg: It Starts With Us,” this gift will establish the Steph and Allie Pettit Center for the Arts.

“The arts have the power to change lives, ignite creativity, and bring people together,” says Pettit. “We hope this center becomes a place of pride and inspiration for everyone. Bloomsburg shaped who I am, and it’s an honor to give back to a place that means so much to me. Growing up in a home full of musicians, artists, and performers gave me a great appreciation for the power of music, art and performing arts. We hope this gift ultimately encourages others to join us in supporting the arts at Bloomsburg.”

The gift allocates \$3 million to revitalize the Haas Center for the Performing Arts and \$3 million to fund scholarships and technological advancements. Enhancements

include cutting-edge theatrical and architectural lighting, immersive audience technologies, and versatile performance spaces designed to elevate both student learning and patron engagement.

“This gift gives our students unprecedented access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, preparing them for thriving careers in the arts,” says Abby Manns, director of performing arts and programs and the Arts in Bloom series. “The scholarships will open doors for talented students who might

otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue their artistic dreams.”

“We are deeply grateful to Steph and Allie for their transformational gift, which represents a remarkable commitment to our students and the arts,” says Erik Evans, CU vice president for advancement. “This is just the beginning of the support we’ll need to fully enhance our programs, facilities, and available scholarships to provide the next generation of artists with the technology, experiences, and opportunities they need to thrive.”

The Steph and Allie Pettit Center for the Arts will serve as a cultural hub, attracting artists, educators, and enthusiastic audiences to Bloomsburg. This vision is aligned with the campaign’s core pillars—Attract, Prepare, and Elevate—underscoring a commitment to empowering students and fostering academic and artistic excellence.

“We are deeply grateful to Steph and Allie for their transformational gift, which represents a remarkable commitment to our students and the arts.”

— ERIK EVANS, CU VICE PRESIDENT
FOR ADVANCEMENT



JOSH PAYNE: PROVIDING SUPPORT & SERVICE

By Luke Wilson '24

Following more than 30 years of consistent contributions to his alma mater, Joshua Payne '89 has made a gift of \$3.5 million to advance scholarships and student success.

This endowment, through a bequest in his will, will go directly toward scholarships and Professional Experience Grants (PEGs) for students in the College of Health, Science, and Technology at Commonwealth University.

"We are profoundly grateful to Josh, whose remarkable generosity as an alumnus will have a transformative impact on the lives of our students," says Dr. Bashar W. Hanna, CU president. "Josh's unwavering commitment to Bloomsburg highlights the enduring connection between our alumni and their alma mater—through scholarships and PEGs, his gift will not only ease financial burdens, but provide students with more opportunities to grow, innovate and lead."

Payne graduated with a bachelor's in computer science. As a student, he was heavily involved in the arts and humanities through his participation in the campus choir, marching band, and the national band fraternity Tau

Beta Sigma. After graduation, he moved to Houston, Texas, to pursue a master's degree in computer science.

Payne's generosity was inspired in part by the lasting influence of the late Dr. Edward Kerlin and Dr. Paul Hartung, beloved professors who heavily impacted his undergraduate experience. "Bloomsburg shaped who I am, and this is my way of giving back in a meaningful way," says Payne. "It's about more than scholarships—it's about creating opportunities for students to gain the confidence and skills they need to succeed."

Since 1991, Payne has made a substantial amount of contributions to Bloomsburg students. In 2019, he created the Payne-Lyons Scholarship to support LGBTQA students in the College of Health, Science, and Technology. "Josh's vision for our students reflects the importance of real-world experience in academic learning," says Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan, dean of the College of Health, Science, and Technology. "This gift will allow more students to pursue research, internships, and projects that not only advance the fields of science, health, and technology but prepare them for their future careers."

After 17 years at Nike and a senior management position at Wayfair, Payne retired in 2022, and not only started dedicating more financial resources to Bloomsburg but began to get involved on campus.

Payne, whose brother and nephew also graduated from Bloomsburg, is currently working on opportunities to give students confidence, professional experience, and a competitive edge, and he continues to invest his time and expertise in supporting students as they transition from college to their careers.

"The decline in state funding has been tough to watch because it raises the cost of a degree and makes it harder for students to succeed," says Payne. "But I believe the most valuable resource I can offer isn't just money—it's my time. I know that sharing my wisdom and experience can make a real difference for students as they finish their degrees and step into the workforce. Genuine, authentic conversations can boost their confidence and help set them on the right path."

Jack Mulka '66 and Kathy Matzko-Mulka '68



JACK & KATHERINE MULKA: ENDOW SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

By **Luke Wilson '24**

A gift from dedicated and longstanding alumni, Jack Mulka '66 and his wife, Katherine “Kathy” Matzko-Mulka '68, will establish two endowments—\$25,000 for scholarships and \$25,000 for Professional Experience Grants.

“We couldn’t be more thankful to Jack and Kathy for their generosity, along with the incredible network of alumni in the Bloomsburg community and beyond,” says Jerome Dvorak, Bloomsburg University Foundation executive director.

Jack enrolled at Bloomsburg in 1962 as the first in his family to pursue a college degree. It was at Bloomsburg that he met Kathy, and their shared experiences as students laid the foundation for decades of dedicated service. Jack went on to serve as the dean of student development, leading the student union for more than 20 years, while Kathy made her impact as an admissions counselor, helping students begin their own academic journeys.

Beyond their professional roles, Jack extended his influence as a committed member of the Bloomsburg University Alumni Association Board of Directors and through two extended stints on the BU Foundation Board of Directors, where he remains an active contributor. Together, the couple has built an extraordinary legacy of more than 50 years of service and philanthropy to Bloomsburg.

“We value the education we received, and the cost of living and education have gone up significantly,” says Kathy, reflecting on their commitment to giving back to their alma mater.

As part of their contributions, the couple established the Matzko-Mulka Endowed Scholarship, dedicated to supporting first-generation CU-Bloomsburg football players. This scholarship reflects Jack’s own undergraduate experience as a first-generation student and honors the athletic program that provided him with valuable mentorship and life lessons.

Over the years, the two have met and helped many Bloomsburg students, including the most recent scholarship recipient, dean’s list student KJ Riley, and in the past, New Orleans Saints player, coach, and NFL Hall of Fame nominee Jahri Evans.

“Helping students is what it’s all about,” says Jack, whose father left school during the Great Depression to make ends meet by working in the coal industry and wanted his son to become a teacher. “We’ve gotten to know many first-generation students over the years—we’re so proud of the recipients.”

TOP TEACHER

Stephanie Machmer

FINALIST FOR TEACHER OF THE YEAR

By **Eric Foster**

Stephanie Meisel Machmer '96/'00M was one of 12 finalists for the 2024 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. She has been a secondary life skills support teacher in the Jersey Shore Area School District for more than 28 years.

"I was always drawn to education because I enjoyed working with kids, but my middle school guidance counselor suggested I try special education," says Machmer. "I student taught in a life skills classroom for one of my student teaching placements and really enjoyed it, so when a position at Jersey Shore opened, I immediately applied."

"When I started at Jersey Shore, we didn't have a secondary life skills program, so I was able to build the program," Machmer says. "I love helping students prepare for being successful after graduation. 'I'm helping students get ready for life in so many areas—from cooking and daily living skills to self-care and job readiness—I want my students to be as independent as possible in all areas. I love helping students reach their full potential. Many of my students have been told they can't do things and I love showing them they can do it.'"

"In the last five years, I have started a student-run coffee shop, a facility dog program, and a Unified Bocce team. It keeps me busy, but it also keeps things fresh and new for both me and my students. Sharing new programs and projects with my school and community keeps my spark in education burning."

"My greatest satisfaction comes from seeing my students be successful, especially in an area where they didn't believe they could do it. Seeing confidence grow for once timid students. I also love seeing my past students being productive members of their community—both working and participating in the community."



BELLA CULP

Makes Her Mark on the Field and in the Classroom

Bella Culp, a standout two-sport athlete, defines what it means to be a student-athlete at Bloomsburg.

In July, Huskies field hockey standout Bella Culp added another accolade to cap off her impressive year as she was named a Third Team College Sports Communicators Academic All-American.

The Academic All-America honor is the first of her career. Culp finished the season as a National Field Hockey Coaches Association (NFHCA) Second Team All-American and earned first team honors from the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC). Culp is also a three-time NFHCA Scholar of Distinction and a three-time member of the NFHCA National Academic Squad.

Culp had a breakout season as she recorded a career-high 11 assists and 19 points in 2023 as she helped lead Bloomsburg to a 14-5 record and an appearance in the PSAC Tournament. In 55 games played for the Huskies, Culp has posted five goals and 15 assists while playing in the midfield.

Culp also served as a key piece of the Huskies softball team, leading the team in batting average (.359), runs (44), hits (69), and triples (6). The Huskies went 33-24 and made a trip to the NCAA tournament.

PSAC Scholar Athletes

Culp was named a 307 PSAC Scholar-Athlete for Bloomsburg during the 2023-24 season.

For Bloomsburg, the 307 PSAC Scholar-Athletes marked a school record and the most of any PSAC institution. To earn this honor, a student-athlete must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher during the academic year. In all, a remarkable 52% of Bloomsburg student-athletes achieved the “scholar” distinction, which marked the fourth consecutive academic year where at least 50% of the student-athlete population excelled in the classroom—to a mark of a 3.25 GPA or higher.





THE WAIT IS OVER

MEN'S SOCCER CLAIMS FIRST PSAC CHAMPIONSHIP



The Bloomsburg men's soccer program no longer has to wait. The 2024 Huskies claimed the first PSAC Championship title in team history with a 2-1 victory over Gannon at Steph Pettit Stadium in November.

After back-to-back heartbreaking defeats at home in the 2022 and 2023 Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference postseason tournaments, the Huskies went through the top two teams in the West to capture the elusive trophy in the team's 50th season.

For head coach Mark Bassett, the win validates a coaching philosophy of teamwork. "Cherish your teammates, move your teammates, and hunt success together," says Bassett, whose 49-22-8 record as coach represents the most successful four-year period in program history.

"Experience was the key this season," says Bassett, who credits the team's "incredible work ethic, unwavering commitment to each other, and the experiences gained in the past three seasons." The team's bond was strengthened by their overseas trip to Portugal and Spain last summer, an experience in a long list that has connected and bonded them as a team.

The 2024 PSAC Championship caps a series of remarkable seasons for the squad.

In 2022, after clinching the PSAC East top seed to host the PSAC Tournament, the Huskies defeated Gannon only to suffer the heartbreak of a 1-0 defeat at Steph Pettit Stadium in the conference championship game. In 2023, Bloomsburg suffered a similar anguish in a penalty

shootout loss at home to West Chester. The Huskies leveraged frustration from the loss into motivation to defeat Southern New Hampshire 2-1 for the program's first NCAA Tournament victory. A second-round exit brought a hard-fought end to 2023 but signaled that the Huskies were a team to watch.

The early 2024 season began with mixed results, with a 3-2-1 start following a defeat to West Chester. But on Sept. 25, Bloomsburg scored inside the final 10 minutes against Shepherd to win. The wins continued, with an 11-game winning streak becoming the longest single-season run in program history. The regular season record of 15-4-2 was highlighted by firsts for Bassett's tenure that included a home victory over Millersville and a win over West Chester.

With a chance at redemption, the Huskies' post-season began with a matchup at Pettit Stadium against Slippery Rock with 1-1 match being decided by penalty kicks. Days later, on that same field, the Huskies jumped out to a 2-0 lead over Gannon. A Gannon goal halved the Huskies' lead, but when the final horn blew, what had slipped from the Huskies' grasp in 2022, was firmly in hand—a PSAC title.



Season Honors

All-America Honors: Defender **Patrick Walsh**

Division II Conference Commissioners Association All-America Third Team and College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-America First Team. Goalkeeper **Brady Rimple** Second Team CSC Academic All-America honors.

United Soccer Coaches All-America Honors:

Defender **Kody Besser** and Goalkeeper **Brady Rimple** (First Team). Forward **Owen Hollobaugh** (Third Team)

United Soccer Coaches Atlantic Region Staff

of the Year: Head Coach **Mark Bassett**, graduate assistant coach **Patrick Alvarez**, and volunteer assistant coach **Liam Harmon**.

United Soccer Coaches All-Region Honors:

Defender **Kody Besser**, Forward **Owen Hollobaugh**, and Goalkeeper **Brady Rimple** (First Team). Defender **Patrick Walsh** (Second Team).

Hale Inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame

Former Bloomsburg football head coach Danny Hale was formally inducted into the National Football Foundation College Football Hall of Fame at the Bellagio in Las Vegas in December. Coach Hale is the one of 233 coaches all-time and is the second Husky enshrined by the NFF.

“I didn’t even know how many wins I had,” says Hale. “You go from one season to the next and it’s on going. There is always something to take care of. You never have a chance to enjoy your previous season. You are always on to the next one.”

Coach Hale was one of just two honorees from Division II. “I made a career choice to stay at the Division II level. There were so many reasons involved. The number one is that when I took the head coaching job at Bloomsburg, I had an 11-year-old son who was diagnosed with cancer. So that changes perspectives, everyone’s motivation is different. Mine was, I enjoy this level. And you can make an impact and develop student-athletes.”

Before coaching, Hale was in the Marine Corps right out of college—an experience that shaped his coaching philosophy.

“When I think of the marines, I think of not having the best of everything but you made due. My coaching career paralleled that,” says Hale. “Wherever I went, I didn’t have a fully funded scholarship or coaching staff, so you have to adapt and overcome. And as a Marine, you have to do that as well.”

Adapt and overcome, he did. Hale finished his career as the all-time winningest coach at Bloomsburg with a record of 173-56-1 (.754) and a career record of 213-69-1 (.754), which includes five seasons at West Chester. Hale led the Huskies to 11 outright or shared PSAC Eastern Division titles and eight NCAA post-season playoff berths. In his final 13 seasons (2000-2012), Bloomsburg was one of the most successful NCAA Division II programs with a



combined record of 121-32 (.791). He guided the Huskies to seven 10-win seasons.

Hale is a member of the Bloomsburg Athletics Hall of Fame following his induction in 2021. Coach Hale joins current Bloomsburg head coach Frank Sheptock as the two Husky inductees into the NFF College Football Hall of Fame. Currently, Bloomsburg is the only school in the PSAC with multiple inductees. The Huskies have two more finalists on the College Football Hall of Fame ballot as Jahri Evans and Franklyn Quitech await their call for



Roger Sanders, Hall of Fame Wrestling Coach, Passes Away

Legendary Bloomsburg wrestling head coach Roger Sanders passed away on Dec. 18, 2024. A 2014 inductee into the Bloomsburg Athletic Hall of Fame, Sanders was the Huskies’ head wrestling coach for 21 years, finishing with a record of 250-104-8. He was the PSAC Coach of the Year in 1984–85.

Sanders guided his teams to two first-place, four second-place, and five third-place finishes in the Eastern Wrestling League (EWL). Bloomsburg won the EWL championship in 1980–81 and 1992–93, his final season as head coach. His 1987 team finished fifth in the NCAA Division I Championships, the highest finish in school history.

A member of the health and physical education staff, and Sanders also served as Bloomsburg’s

athletic director for five years. He was president of the National Wrestling Coaches Association (1987–1991) and was wrestling coordinator for the US Association for Blind Athletes.

Sanders was presented the Lifetime of Service Award by the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Hall of Fame in 1995 and the Eastern Wrestling League Hall of Fame in 2004.

Sanders is survived by his wife, Nancy; two daughters, Julie and Traci; and five grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the **Roger Sanders Scholarship** at the Bloomsburg University Foundation, 50 E. Main St., 4th Floor, Bloomsburg, PA 17815 or online at: giving.bloomu.edu/donate.

60s

Royce Robbins '67 wrote a children's book in English and in Spanish called *Paco and the Purple Porcupine* (*Paco y el Puercoporcin Purpurado*). Published in 2023 by Amplify Publishing, the book is available at Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and other bookstores.

80s

Judith Mariotz Maloy '84, CEO and director of Polaris Direct LLC, has been inducted into the Printing Impressions 2024 Printing Industry Hall of Fame. This prestigious honor recognizes Maloy's career, marked by innovation and leadership in the direct marketing industry. Polaris Direct, a certified Women's Business Enterprise and Women-Owned Small Business, is now in its 21st year.

Robert Williams '86 retired in June from Parry McCluer High School in Virginia after 38 years of service. His mathematics teaching career encompasses one year at Shamokin High School, 17 years in Charleston, S.C., and 20 years in Virginia. He also coached several athletic teams for 37 years, including track and field, cross country, football, basketball, and tennis. He has held positions as athletic director, activities director, and mathematics department head.

Joseph Sassano '89 has been named senior executive for information technology at Little League International. Sassano was previously executive director of information technology services and chief information officer for York County Government since 2013. He earlier was the chief information officer for the Pennsylvania Employees Benefit Trust Fund, a system and technology analyst at the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, and a systems analyst for the Administrative Offices of the Pennsylvania Courts.

90s

Michelle Seibert Appel '90 has been awarded the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2024 AIR Outstanding Service Award. The Outstanding Service Award recognizes an AIR member for professional leadership and exemplary service to the association. Appel is assistant vice president, institutional research, planning, and assessment, at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Alan Eck '91 was named to the West Branch Valley Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. A Williamsport native, Eck was a quarterback for the Huskies, where he holds the school record for most pass completions in a season with 194. Eck has been a professional



John Kaschak '98 was promoted to Pennsylvania state comptroller /deputy secretary for comptroller operations. As the Commonwealth's deputy secretary of comptroller operations, Kaschak ensures that the Office of Comptroller Operations is a trusted advisor to the agencies by offering fiscal insight, oversight, and foresight related to financial systems, processes, and policies. Among his previous experience, Kaschak was executive deputy secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. While at the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, Kaschak served as the chief operations officer and oversaw the processing of 10 million tax returns and the collection and accounting of over \$40 billion in revenues annually. He was one of the architects behind their three-pronged transformation plan, which included modernization, reorganization, and employee empowerment.



Jahri Evans '07 was inducted into the New Orleans Saints Ring of Honor in November. A fourth-round pick by the Saints in the 2006 NFL Draft, Evans quickly became one of the best offensive linemen in the league, and in 2020 was named to the NFL's 2010s All-Decade Team. He played 169 games in total for New Orleans. Starting with the franchise's Super Bowl season in 2009, he received first-team All-Pro honors four consecutive times and reached six straight Pro Bowls, while serving as a premier pass blocker for quarterback Drew Brees.

football official in the National Football League since the 2016 NFL season, wearing uniform number 76.

John MacDonald '91 has been named vice president of marketing at The Giant Co., an American regional supermarket chain that operates in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia under the Giant and Martin's brands. A veteran of the retail and health care industries with more than 30 years of experience, MacDonald first joined The Giant Co. in 2012 as director of marketing. Before his tenure with the company, MacDonald held a variety of roles at Ahold Financial Services and served as the vice president of marketing at Giant Food. Before returning to The Giant Co., MacDonald served as chief marketing officer for FreshDirect.

Matthew Phelan '98 retired as chief from the Bedminster Township Police Department. He was previously employed by Tinicum Township Police Department from 1998-2007 and again from 2009-2020 as a patrolman, corporal, sergeant, and chief. From 2007-09 Phelan served as the assistant director of safety and police at Bloomsburg University and joined Bedminster Township as the chief of police in 2020. Phelan is pursuing a career opportunity at the Upper Bucks County Technical School, where he will educate the next generation of local law enforcement officers.

Christina Hostetter Zamon '99, head of special collections and archives at Georgia State University, was inducted as Fellow of the Society of American Archivists. A multi-hyphenate archival practitioner Zamon has held many roles including solo archivist, department head, educator, fundraiser, author, and mentor.

00s

Eric Stair '03 was named assistant principal at Poinciana Elementary in Key West, Florida. Stair enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps after high school and was a helicopter crew chief before earning his degree in elementary education at Bloomsburg University.

Amanda Breon Hamilton '05 was inducted into the Centre County Sports Hall of Fame. Hamilton earned 12 varsity letters at Bellefonte Area High School, including four letters in softball, when she was named all-state in 2001. Hamilton continued her athletic career at Bloomsburg University where she set several school records and was named All-PSAC.

Krystle Gaeta Vodron '08 has been named executive director of Family Promise of Midland (Texas). Vodron has over 16 years of experience in education, serving students from pre-K through 12th grade. Family Promise is a nonprofit organization committed to addressing family homelessness in Midland, striving to help families achieve sustainable independence.

10s

Nevin "Skip" Pighetti '10M was inducted into the Centre County Sports Hall of Fame. A Bald Eagle Area alumnus, Pighetti capped off a 69-5-3 career record at BEA with an undefeated senior season and a state championship. He later coached the Eagles for five years and now is an elementary principal in the Bald Eagle Area School District.

William Mack '12M was honored by the Hawk Mountain Council of Boy Scouts of America as the 2024 Elbert K. Fretwell Educator of the Year. Mack is an instructor at Schuylkill Technology Center North Campus.

Jennifer Welborn '13 is town clerk and human resource officer for Emerald Isle, North Carolina. Emerald Isle hired Welborn in March as a project specialist, where she supports the finance, planning, and administration departments.

Obituaries

Janet Shultz Ungerman '46	Doreen Schramm '66	Nancy Rupert '77
Joyce Gass Barnhart '48	Wilbur Carlson '67	Kay Creveling '78
Edwin Keiser '49	Roberta Williams Chase '67	Patricia Cyganowski
Irene Eckert Harrison '52	Alice Ghezzi '67	Slygh '79
George Kallenbach '54	Danny Lee '67	Raymond Zale '79
Marcella Cedor Belles '55	Arthur Merz '67	Cynthia Craver Bilsky '80
Donald Beck '56	Edwin Charles '68	Dwight Johnson '80
Mary Hoeffcker Coughlan '56	Ronald Funk '68	Melissa Ann Pealer Wakefield
C. George '56	Miriam Davis Wagner '68	'80
Barbara Berry Kissinger '56	Bonnie Ann Brobst '69	Barbara Bradley '81
George Davenport '57	Thomas Wenner '69	Carmela Perrotta Haber '81
Donald McNelis '57	William Mastropietro '70	James Young '81
John Phillips '57	Tony Miller '70	Deborah Ricci '83
Helen Baron Kerstetter '58	Albert Silveri '70	James Rushton '83
James Vowler '58	Joan Wert '70	Darlene Barberio Payne '84
Craig Beach '59	Jeanette Hall Zapushek '70	Charles Zartman '84
Daniel Fritz '59	Judith Haytmanek Flynn '71	John Chapin '85
Mary Ann Swisher '59	Patricia Leiby Rogers '71	Tracy White '85
Catherine Hoffman Murray '60	Ronald Viglone '71	Lou Jean Hittle Beishline '86
Thomas Stover '60	Robert Bower '72	Thomas Leonard '86
Louis Palermo '61	Larry Brusseau '72	Pamela Audi Dommies '88
Lynne McHail Zelez '61	Thomas Mullen '72	Austin Griffith '88
Carol Ann Hartzell	Stephen Oxenrider '72	Mark Ott '88
Dieffenbach '62	Susan Scholato Petrovich '72	Joann Gray '89
John McMurtrie '62	Robert Robacker '72	Robert Madden '89
Eugene Rinehimer '62	Kenneth Houck '73	Jill Morrow-Furgele '92
Sandra Bundle McCormack	Patricia Kessler Runyan '73	Patrick Sapack '92
Colon '63	William Troutman '73	Karin Yesalavich Wrobel '92
Eugene Homa '63	Patricia Budd '74	Christina Reed Hazlett '94
Edna Yurick Stauffer '63	Michael Flock '74	Dixie Gavason '96
Margaret Desmond '64	Betty Thompson Krill '74	Daniel Boop '98
William Haas '64	Jane Louise Baker '75	Bonnie Burgess-Malloy '00
Bonnie Burnard Voiles '64	Patricia Munley Krakoski '75	Thomas Davies '01
Harold Ackerman '65	Susan Snyder Myers '75	James Phillips '01
Joyce Diehl Delaney '65	Nancy Ulsh Doran '76	Christopher Ulloth '13
Stuart Faust '65	Donna Rothermel Hirst '76	Season Whitenight '14
Clarence John '65	Gary Patrician '76	Brooke Berger '15
Lincoln Miller '65	Maryann Romano '76	Peter Zeigler '17
Patricia Burns '66	Sandra Schuyler Fairman '77	Dylan Newman '18
James Cino '66	Richard Jennings '77	Sean Burke '21
Robert Fisher '66	Paul McConnell '77	

Marriages

Dr. Michaela Renee Wagner '18
& Ryan Jacob Schmeck '18, April 28
Allison Reed '21 & Justin Reed '21, Aug. 23

Births

Sarah (Weinberg) Downey '06/'07M
& Bryan Downey, twins, a daughter, Emma
Lynn, and a son, Liam Robert, Nov. 6, 2023
Chloe (Stine) Harris '16 & Matt Stine '16,
a daughter, Peyton Mae, March 29, 2024

Alison (Meter) Palubinsky '14 & Chris
Palubinsky '17, a son, Graham Joseph,
April 4, 2024
Elise (Horn) Slaughter '22 & William Slaughter,
a daughter, Lainey Marie, April 13, 2024
Rachel (Gaizick) Gregory '21 & Patrick Gregory,
a daughter, Charlotte Lee, May 30, 2024
Audra Briggs '14 & Matt Hess, a daughter,
Josephine Noelle, June 25, 2024
Megan '13 & Patrick '12 McDevitt, a son, Killian
Patrick, July 23, 2024
Kimberly (Tohill) Zelonis '05 & Joseph Zelonis,
a son, Brecken David, Aug. 12, 2024

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Bloomsburg, PA 17815-1301

A packed Haas Auditorium for its October 12, 1967, dedication.

A HOME FOR THE ARTS: The Haas Center

By Robert Dunkelberger

For the first 100 years of its history, Bloomsburg had just one large auditorium on campus—the second floor auditorium of Carver Hall.

Carver Hall, dedicated in 1867 hosted all of the large-scale nonsporting events in the auditorium—including lectures, programs, commemorative events, concerts, theatrical productions, and every graduation through 1956.

As the 1960s began and enrollment at Bloomsburg State College projected to reach 5,000 by 1970, the need for a separate auditorium building, which would also serve as a center for the arts, was apparent. Funding from the state was approved and construction on the center began in July 1965. Continuing for two years, work on the \$1.2 million facility with a seating capacity of nearly 2,000 was completed in August 1967. The dedication ceremony was held in the auditorium on October 12, when the building was named for former president Francis B. Haas, who had passed away at age 81 the previous year.

Haas had served as president from 1927 to 1939, in between terms as state superintendent of public instruction. He led Bloomsburg through the Great Depression, expanded the campus, and inaugurated programs in business education and special education. He was chosen as the perfect candidate to be the namesake of a building that by 1971



Noted actor and art lover Vincent Price inspecting a student work in the Haas Gallery, February 6, 1968.



Singer Billy Joel greeting fans during an April 21, 1977, concert. Photo by Wayne Palmer, Class of 1978

had become known as the Haas Center for the Arts. From the beginning, the center was active with a busy schedule of concerts, theatre performances, and programs in the auditorium, while the second floor was used for art exhibits.

The center has been renovated several times since its completion. An acoustic shell and new sound system were placed in the auditorium in the mid-1980s, paid for with a donation by Marco and Louise Mitrani, for whom the hall was named. The latest major work, completed in 2008, was a \$7.9 million project that provided an addition for the music programs and renovations to the interior. For nearly 60 years the Haas Center for the Arts, home to the Department of Music, Theatre, and Dance, has provided a showcase for the important place the performing arts have in society.



Angela Smith

Trustee

Interview by **Eric Foster**

Trustee Angela Smith, a Clinton County native and 2007 Lock Haven alumna, is a Spanish teacher and elementary Spanish program coordinator in the Bald Eagle Area (BEA) School District. At BEA, she created and produced a unique curriculum and fun-to-learn Spanish introductory program that has her also reaching every elementary student from kindergarten through fifth grades in the four-school district.

Smith graduated summa cum laude from Lock Haven with a bachelor's degree in education with a concentration in Spanish and a minor in mathematics. Smith continued her studies and graduated from the University of Boston Massachusetts with her master's degree in applied linguistics with a concentration in ESL.

When not working, Smith enjoys being with her family, travels to Costa Rica to continue connections made during her study abroad with Lock Haven, serves at her church, and volunteers with Clinton County Police Camp Cadet, which exposes children to law enforcement work.

Q | Why did you choose Lock Haven? Why did you major in education with Spanish and math?

A | I'm a local—born and raised in the county—and Lock Haven has the best education program in the area. For math, I was good at math, it came naturally. So growing up I would help my siblings with homework and people suggested I become a teacher.

As for Spanish, in high school my family was visiting the southern U.S. and we met someone from Mexico and I was able to communicate. I found language to be like a math equation that never ends. I fell in love with the language and culture. With Spanish you're always learning. I enjoy the challenge of working with people—the "aha" moments. I love learning and love helping others to learn with me.

At BEA, I collaborate with elementary, middle, and high school programs. My Lock Haven professor, Eduardo Valerio, had a focus on teaching languages to younger children, so I felt very prepared to instruct the diverse range of ages.

I created the elementary program with two periods a day, a video camera and a student helper. I teach the students through videos and I visit them on a rotation. I don't know of any other program like it. Then I work at the middle and high school with Andrea Simpson, another proud Lock Haven alumna.



Q | How did you become involved as Trustee?

A | Living in Lock Haven, I'm close to what's happening. When I heard there was a position open, I really wanted to serve and give back. I was part of the Lock Haven board before integration. With integration, I was asked if I was interested in continuing. It was yes, I'm still in it for the right reasons.

Q | What value does the integrated Commonwealth University bring to the region?

A | The value of CommonwealthU is making potential possible. We had to adapt and grow. It brings more to the table, not less. CU gives all of our students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to grow.

CU offers opportunity for central Pennsylvania. Students don't have to go as far away for college and families can use the resources they may have needed for a college farther away for other things.

Each campus has its own culture and each has been able to preserve their own identity. I really appreciate that. Maintaining the culture of the campuses has been critical.

Q | You travel frequently to Costa Rica. What have you gained from that experience?

A | Before college, I met an exchange student from Costa Rica, Noemy, in the community and was impressed with her. I knew to be good enough to teach it, I needed to live in the Spanish-speaking culture. I chose Costa Rica to do my exchange from Lock Haven.

I still had Noemy's telephone number and I made arrangements to visit. She was eight months pregnant when I visited but she welcomed me kindly. I made a



life-long connection. When I came back to Lock Haven, I felt ready to teach. I had the experience.

Now, I've been to Costa Rica 21 times. I've taken students there. I've watched Noemy's daughter grow up. I talk to them regularly; they are family.

Q | What role does service play in leadership?

A | If you do not serve, you should not lead. I am a woman of faith and that faith shapes my purpose. I serve in my church extensively. I serve in my local community, in my job, and in my work as a trustee.

I am very thankful for my family. My parents raised me to be thankful for what we had. We started out with little and built a life for our family.

Q | What are your favorite books?

A | The Bible and, this is different, but Victorian novels. Life is so serious, I often use reading time to relax. One book that has impacted my approach is the "Five Love Languages." It's about the concept of caring for others in the language they understand. Professionally, that has shaped how I teach, especially in dealing with students who may have come from different circumstances.

Making the Most of a Husky Journey

Graduate student **Ariane “Aria” Rouffignac**’s journey to Bloomsburg is unconventional. A native of Angers, France, Rouffignac and her family emigrated to the United States, and she chose Commonwealth University–Mansfield for her undergraduate degree in marketing.

For her MBA, Bloomsburg was the clear choice. While pursuing her studies, she also serves as a graduate hall director—helping new Huskies adjust to life in a new environment.

Rouffignac has also kept busy on the academic side. While earning a 4.0 GPA in her graduate program, she additionally founded E 2nd Street Digital, a student-run digital marketing and advertising agency that includes students from all Commonwealth campuses.



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