

MANSFIELDIAN

SUMMER 2024 *magazine*

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MANSFIELD 

COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY



Greetings Mansfield Family,

Earlier this spring, we had the privilege of celebrating the achievements of our 2024 graduates. The class of 2024 represents a group of hard working, determined, creative students, many of whom began their college careers at the height of the global pandemic. Their story is one of perseverance, grit, and the power of a positive mindset. My colleagues and I were immensely proud to watch them walk across the stage on commencement day.

I'm sure that many of you can relate to the feelings of excitement and uncertainty that arrive upon graduating. Change can be daunting. That is a lesson we have all learned these past few years. My hope for our graduates is that they will embrace the future with open minds and courageous hearts. Our graduates have proven that they are capable of rising to the occasion and overcoming any obstacle in their path.

This, I believe, is also true of our Commonwealth University family. Despite the difficulties inherent in the ever-evolving higher education landscape,

our CU community remains focused on providing an affordable, high-quality education for students and families.

In our last issue, we shared the launch of our first-ever strategic plan. Since then, we have remained steadfast in our efforts to put our plan into action for the benefit of our students. Our mission and our vision are built on student success. Our top priority is helping students to achieve their goals and improve their lives through education.

Having experienced the transformative power of education myself, I believe it is crucial to support our students by providing them with the resources they need to succeed without the burden of financial stress. This is essential for the success of our students, and for our region's growth and prosperity.

A college degree remains critical for upward economic and social mobility; and we remain steadfastly committed to walking alongside our students and their families to help them afford a CU degree so that they can experience the transformative power of education firsthand.

Our efforts are making a real difference to Pennsylvania students and families, and it is encouraging to know that Commonwealth University has become a destination of choice for our region's students. They rely on us to prepare them for successful careers and fulfilling lives. We are keeping our promise to them through an updated curriculum that offers the latest programs that are relevant to the workforce and available at an affordable cost.

The pages that follow include stories of our alumni and students who have shown incredible generosity, overcome challenges, and chosen to lean into opportunities to expand and grow their worldview. Their stories are at the heart of what we do and why we do it. I hope you will draw the same inspiration, encouragement, and motivation from them as I have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bashar W. Hanna".

Bashar W. Hanna
President

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

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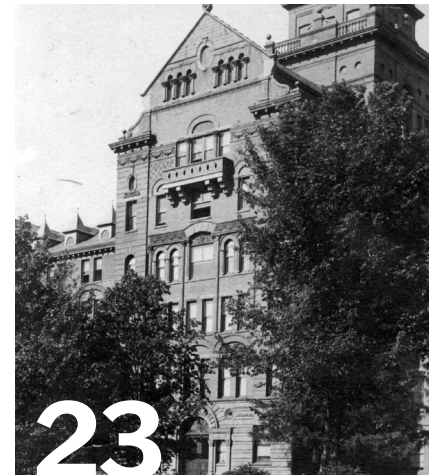
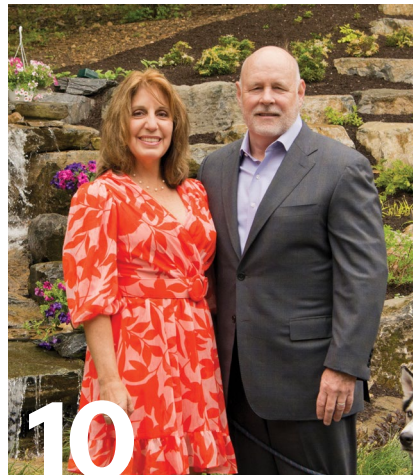
Jaime North, Eric Foster, Ryan McNamara

Design

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The Mansfieldian is published biannually by the Commonwealth University Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing, free of charge, for alumni, supporters, and friends of CU - Mansfield.

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MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEER FOUNDATION Established to Enhance Fundraising and Student Success

Commonwealth University-Mansfield has taken a significant step to enhance fundraising capabilities and support students, faculty, and programs with the establishment of the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation (MUMF).

The trustees of Commonwealth University recognized the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation as an affiliated entity at its May 3 quarterly meeting. This recognition establishes the MUMF as the only officially recognized foundation that exists solely to support CU-Mansfield and its students.

“CU-Mansfield is important to Commonwealth University and the region, and the development of the MU Mountaineer Foundation is proof of our commitment to Mansfield students, employees, alumni, and the community,” explains John Wetzel, CU council of trustees chair. “A strong foundation partnered with the leadership of the CU Advancement Office provides the campus community the ability to make a significant and lasting impact on the lives of current and future Mounties.”

“The Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation represents an ideal opportunity for our alumni and donors to directly support Mansfield students and the future of the university,” says President Hanna.

“Through their generosity and support, we can create transformative experiences for our students and continue to elevate the academic excellence of CU-Mansfield.”

“The foundation endeavors to solicit vital philanthropic support, with the overarching goal of enriching the educational journey and broadening opportunities for Mansfield students,” Hanna adds. “All gifts to the foundation will directly support and make an immediate impact on students, faculty, and programs exclusively at CU-Mansfield.”

Dr. Robert Strohecker '91, chair of the board of directors of the MUMF, brings a wealth of community involvement and leadership to his role. “As chair of the board, I am committed to ensuring that the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation operates with transparency, integrity, and a focus on making a meaningful impact,” he

says. “Our foundation will serve as a beacon of support for CU-Mansfield, providing opportunities for individuals to invest in the future of our students and community.”

Kate Billmeyer brings more than two decades of fundraising experience to Mansfield as the senior director of philanthropy.

“I am honored to be a part of this initiative that will directly benefit Mansfield students,” Billmeyer says. “The foundation will serve as a platform for alumni and donors to contribute to the success and growth of CU-Mansfield, helping to increase our efforts to provide students with access to the resources they need to thrive.”

The inaugural foundation board of directors includes alumni and industry leaders. Eight board members and officers were approved during the Foundation's first official meeting in April.

- Dr. Robert Strohecker '91, optometrist, Strohecker Vision Care
- Brendan Cregan '89, principal, Hempfield School District
- Bob Christie '92, partner, The Brunswick Group
- Claire Yang '04, partner, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLP (PwC)
- Alanna Huck '99, superintendent, Wellsboro Area School District
- Roger Maisner, professor emeritus-MU, coordinator of military and veteran affairs-MU, MU athletic director-retired
- Freddie Coleman '87, ESPN radio host
- Matt Baker, former director of U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, region 3; former member of PASSHE board of governors; 13-term member of PA House of Representatives

The university requests that all gifts in support of Mansfield students go through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation. Previous gifts given directly to the university will continue to honor and follow donor intent and be used for the area or program specified by the donor.

For more information about the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation and how to get involved, visit mountaineerfdn.org.



Strohecker Health and Science Scholarship established with \$50K gift to Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation

A \$50,000 gift from Dr. Robert Strohecker '91 has established the Strohecker Health and Science Scholarship for CU-Mansfield students through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation (MUMF).

This marks the inaugural gift of the newly established Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation.

“My donation to the MUMF represents the hope and commitment that I have for CU-Mansfield, our community and a new era of giving at the university,” says Strohecker. “I am honored to be part of this inaugural board and rallying others to its cause.”

The Health and Science Scholarship will support the recruitment and retention of students pursuing a field of study in health or science at the Mansfield campus.

Strohecker received a bachelor's degree in general studies from Mansfield University in 1991 after receiving his Doctor of Optometry in 1989 from Pennsylvania College of Optometry. He owned Strohecker Vision Care Inc, located in downtown Mansfield, from 1989 until selling the business in 2020. Strohecker continues to see patients at the downtown location.

A lifelong resident of Tioga County, Strohecker is very engaged in the community as president of the Mansfield Borough Council, chair of the Mansfield Borough Shade Tree Committee, as an elder for the Church of New Covenant, and an assistant basketball coach at New Covenant Academy. He served as a trustee of Mansfield University from 1997–2022.

Strohecker has been involved in mission trips for more than 25 years, making an impact in communities in Haiti, Nicaragua, Cuba, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic.

He was named to the inaugural Board of Directors for the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation and was selected to serve as the chair of the board.

“Thank you to Dr. Strohecker for his leadership and support of CU-Mansfield students. His generosity through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation paves the way for philanthropic support that will enable our students to pursue careers in the high-demand fields of health and science. We are grateful for his commitment to the success of Mansfield students,” says President Hanna.

Commonwealth University trustees recognized the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation as an affiliated entity at its May 3 quarterly meeting. The recognition established the MU Mountaineer Foundation as the only officially recognized foundation that exists solely to support CU-Mansfield and its students.



Freshman Wins Big at Husky Dog Pound Competition

The seventh annual Husky Dog Pound Competition was held this spring at CU-Bloomsburg, where middle, high school, and university-level students compete for cash prizes in a Shark Tank inspired business pitch competition. The event aims to prepare students for real-world marketing and business deals.

At the competition, Jade Selby, a CU-Mansfield business management in administration major, presented her idea, the “Safe Watch,” a product focused on personal safety. The Safe Watch has a break-away band and a pickpocket protected clasp that provides a quick, safe and discrete way of contacting the police and the owner's family without needing to have a phone nearby.

“I once experienced an uncomfortable situation where someone followed me and tried to get me to leave with them in multiple stores,” says Selby. “When I called the police, the situation quickly escalated. I believe if I had been able to be more discrete, the situation never would have been what it was.”

Despite being a first-year student competing against graduating seniors, Selby, the only competitor from CU-Mansfield, finished the day as the fourth-place winner, receiving a \$1,300 scholarship.



Commonwealth University Bands Perform in New Year's Day Parade in London



Above: Student performer, Valerie Miller, in London

By invitation of The King of England, Commonwealth University bands were invited to perform in the London New Year's Day Parade and Celebrations from Dec. 28, 2023, to Jan. 4, 2024.

Students in CU-Mansfield's bands—The Spirit & The Pride of PA Marching Band and the Mansfield Concert Wind Ensemble, as well as members of the Lock Haven and Bloomsburg bands and color guard performed in the New Year's Day parade to ring in the new year. More than 600,000 people lined the parade route and the parade was broadcast on television to an audience of approximately 6 billion viewers.

A total of 69 performers traveled to London, along with four staff members. Ten students from Bloomsburg and six students from Lock Haven joined the 47 students from Mansfield who made up the core of the group. In addition, six Mansfield alumni rejoined their alma mater. Staff members included director of bands, Dr. Adam F. Brennan and his wife, Jonelle and Eric and Wendy Griffin, alumni staff assistants and former LNYDP participants.





Reception – From left: Steve Summers, former lord mayor of the city of Westminster; Wendy Griffin, Mansfield alumna; Jonelle Brennan; Dr. Adam F. Brennan, director of bands; Duncan Sandys, parade patron; Eric Griffin, Mansfield alumnus; and Robert Davis, parade patron.

A WEEKEND WORTH THE INVESTMENT:

By **Andrea O'Neill**

On a chilly Saturday in February, students milling about at an early morning breakfast at the Greenly Center seemed uncomfortable in their business attire; stiff and nervous with a cuff adjustment here, a collar adjustment there.

The group of juniors and seniors from all three Commonwealth University locations had signed up to spend a weekend honing the skills that will enable each of them to graduate as a confident professional. It was inspiring, relieving, and exhausting. And it was intense. It was, after all, “boot camp.”

The Career Intensive Boot Camp (CIBC) is exactly what the name implies—an immersive weekend designed to prepare students for everything the professional world can throw at (and trip up) a new grad. Students practice everything from how to dress and eat in a professional setting to surviving the first week on the job, to paying back student loans.

Sessions began Friday with team building and dining etiquette. On Saturday, students dove into workplace diversity and personal finance workshops before moving into resume reviews, mock interviews,



Students participating in the Spring 2024 Career Intensive Boot Camp gather for a group photo with members of the Commonwealth University Department of Alumni and Professional Engagement. Students, staff, and alumni from all three Commonwealth University locations gathered at the Greenly Center in downtown Bloomsburg for an intense weekend of student professional development.



Jerome Wood '77 (at the table, left), and his wife, Nativia (table, right) speak with a student during a Mock Interview at the Career Intensive Boot Camp. Wood was one of eight Mansfield alumni who volunteered for the Spring 2024 Career Intensive Boot Camp.

and a keynote lunch, then finished the weekend Sunday with professional headshots, a networking lunch, and alumni panels.

“The boot camp provided an important learning experience that extended beyond technical knowledge,” says Aviel Kuhn ’25 (Bloomsburg). “It allowed me to forge meaningful connections within the industry and the workshops offered guidance on navigating the professional landscape.”

In order for CIBC to provide a high impact experience, Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield alumni, as well as community and employer partners, play a critical role by volunteering their time and expertise. They serve as keynote speakers, mock interviewers, resume reviewers, panelists, and presenters. Some stay several hours, while others stay for several days. Some travel to campus while others participate virtually from anywhere in the U.S.

“The connection between current students and alumni help graduating students understand their skill sets, begin to build a strong network, and land the job they have worked so hard for,” says Wren Fritsky, director of career and professional development for CU–Bloomsburg.

“I wish I had this when I was in school,” says Ryan McCourt ’10 (Bloomsburg), transportation planning manager at Vroom. “I think it takes a lot of the nerves and the guesswork out of it and helps everyone prepare for what to expect. It helps everyone enter work a little better.”

While CIBC is a student-centered event, alumni also benefit from networking opportunities. Integration multiplied the connections among alumni volunteers as new grads and seasoned professionals

from three locations assemble for the same cause. The students they influenced in February will be among the newest Commonwealth University alumni—joining a 147,000 strong network of fellow Huskies, Mounties, and Bald Eagles that has the power to provide everything from camaraderie and encouragement to mentorship and, perhaps, their first professional position.

“Alumni I met that weekend are now connected with alumni from different locations,” says David Donlick ’87 (Mansfield), director of alumni and employer engagement at CU–Mansfield, whose daughter, Nicole (Donlick) Brodt ’18 attended Bloomsburg and one of the very first CIBC events in 2017. “The more we get involved and work together, the more we can offer students.”

By the end of the weekend, the students were visibly less nervous, more talkative, and moved a bit more effortlessly than they had at first—physical signs of the professional ease that will provide an edge in the hiring process. Once the thank-you notes had been written and contact information shared, the students headed back to their respective campus confident, connected, and ready for their next chapter.

“It was an amazing experience,” says Breanna Koslowski ’24 (CU–Bloomsburg). “I hope I get to come back after graduating to help others as much as the alumni helped me this weekend.”

The Career Intensive Boot Camp runs each spring and fall semester and returns on September 20-22. To volunteer, email alum@commonwealthu.edu.



CELEBRATING GRADUATES' ACHIEVEMENT

The CU-Mansfield Class of 2024 was celebrated by family, friends, and fellow graduates during a ceremony on Saturday, May 11, at Karl Van Norman Field. Freddie Coleman '87, ESPN radio host and alumnus, served as commencement speaker. Smiles, cheers, embraces, and tears were shared as more than 230 Mounties walked across the stage to receive their degrees and transition from Mansfield students to alumni.





English major, Isabella Folino, had a dual concentration in literary analysis and professional writing, with minors in environmental science and psychology. She was a member of the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority (president, philanthropy chair, treasurer); Sigma Tau Delta English honor fraternity (president, treasurer); the Order of Omega; a member of the Honors College (president, vice president); and was 2023 Homecoming Queen. She held several campus jobs including RA for Spruce Hall and she started the literature magazine, "Prism Arts and Literature." She volunteered with the Tioga County Democrats and You Are Worth It food pantry and clothing closet and was the recipient of the PASSHE Foundation Guido and Anna Pichini Merit Scholarship, the Dr. Geraldine Cox Leadership Scholarship, and the Dr. Kent L. Gardner Scholarship.





A LEGACY HONORING EXCELLENCE

Bloomensburg Alumnus **Stephen J. Jones** Elevates The Honors Experience At Commonwealth University With Transformative Gift

By **Amanda Alexander '09** (Lock Haven)

A transformational gift from Stephen J. Jones '83, and his wife, Melanie Sanchez-Jones, will enrich the Honors College experience for Commonwealth University (CU) students by expanding scholarships, experiential learning opportunities, and faculty support. The \$5.6 million endowment is the largest gift to date benefiting students across all CU locations, Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield. Combined with a previous \$1.5 million gift supporting the renovation of the Honors College residence hall on the CU-Bloomsburg campus, the new gift brings the couple's investment in the CU honors experience to more than \$7 million, enabling the integrated university to attract and retain bright students from diverse backgrounds into the CU Honors College community.

In recognition of the couple's generosity, the CU Honors College will be named the Eileen G. Jones Honors College, in honor of Jones' late mother.

"I wanted to name the Honors College after my mother because of the positive influence she had on my life and my siblings' lives," explains Jones, a first-generation college graduate. "She really pushed education. When we started going to school, my mother was a big influence on making sure we aspired to do better and did our homework and all those things. She was a big support throughout my life."

Eileen Jones unfortunately passed away at the young age of 52, but her legacy of support and encouragement for education will continue through the CU Honors College named in her honor. CU's Honors College welcomes high-achieving students and prepares them for leadership through high-impact, immersive experiences and academically rigorous coursework.

"We have not made plans yet for exactly how the donation will be used, but I can say with confidence that a substantial portion of the gift will be used for scholarships and grants for our students. Increasing affordable faculty-

led study abroad opportunities for honors students is also a high priority,” says John G. Hintz, interim dean of honors and interdisciplinary studies at CU–Bloomsburg.

Enhancing the Honors experience

Although Bloomsburg University, the CU legacy institution Jones attended, did not yet have an Honors College in the early 1980s—in fact it was founded in 1985, just two years after his graduation—Jones was able to create community as a student through his closely-knit fraternity, Sigma Iota Omega, where he forged friendships that continue today.

“That was an important part of my time at Bloomsburg,” says Jones of the fraternity of which he served as vice president and then president.

CU’s Honors College provides a similar sense of belonging for like-minded students who have big dreams for the future and also want to contribute to their communities in the present — volunteer service is a key component of the Honors College experience.

As a student, Jones also had the opportunity to study abroad, and is delighted to support professional experience grants (PEGS) for similar opportunities through this gift.

“What really impacted me was going abroad. I went to Liverpool, England, and it was eye-opening. I realized there was a whole other world out there,” Jones says. He knows there are many college students like him who may not have been outside of the United States or even Pennsylvania, and the Honors College gives students the chance to expand their cultural and personal boundaries through just this type of experience. Since his time in Liverpool, Jones has earned an MBA from Temple University and a law degree from University of Pennsylvania, lived in China, and done plenty of international traveling for business.

“My semester abroad was an eye-opening experience,” he adds. “That’s also part of experiential learning that the Honors College wants to provide to students” he adds. “There’s a big world out there, and there are lots of opportunities.”

He hopes the financial support will lead more students to capitalize on the chance to dive into high-impact experiences without worrying about funding; from studying abroad to taking an internship or assisting with faculty research, he said, “Those types of activities for students help them realize what their potential is.”

Jones is also pleased his gift will increase scholarship funding for Honors students across CU, easing the financial toll on gifted students and making CU an attractive choice for their educational journey. Hintz noted the increased support for Honors students and for

scholarships in particular helps to bring CU closer to achieving its ambitious recruitment and retention goals, including an increase in honors students across campus populations, set out by CU President Bashar W. Hanna.

“To grow the Honors College and continue to offer small classes, student support, engaging opportunities and grants and scholarships, honors relies on donor support.”

— JOHN D. HINTZ, INTERIM DEAN OF HONORS & INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

“President Hanna would like us to increase enrollment in Honors to the point where we sustain an enrollment equivalent to ten percent of the undergraduate student population. This aligns with the scholarly literature on proven best practices within large Honors Colleges,” Hintz says. “The Jones gift will help in this regard immensely, and in so many other ways.”

Strengthening the value of a CU degree is important to Jones, who understands affordability is a significant consideration for

prospective students, just as it was for him.

He adds, “There’s still a large percentage of first-generation college students going to those campuses, which I find amazing.”

As a first-generation college student himself, Jones says affordability was one of his main concerns as he navigated the college application process.

“Commonwealth University is a great value for the money,” he says, adding that he hopes the infusion of funding into the program will “entice different types of students to come to CU. Because you get the opportunities through the Honors College and now there’s the money there to take advantage of those opportunities.”

Hintz elaborates, “Every component of the Honors student experience costs the University money. Honors classes, for example, cap at 20



Mansfield Honors students Bella Folino and Valerie Miller each made the most of the many opportunities available through the Honors College at Mansfield.

students. This is substantially lower than the typical general education class. Honors students receive extra mentoring ‘in-house’ in the form of peer mentors (upper-level Honors students) their first year and faculty mentoring (Honors faculty directors) for their entire four years. We offer students many opportunities for participation in events throughout the year, including presenting at Honors conferences, overnight service trips, outdoor recreation events, and social events.”

Paving a bright future

A loyal Husky donor for nearly 40 years, Jones joined the BU Foundation Board of Directors nearly 10 years ago and was named chair on July 1, 2023. “There are challenges associated with merging three organizations and there are also opportunities,” he acknowledges.

These new opportunities stem from The Power of Three, which gives students access to more than 80 academic programs as well as more minors, courses, and faculty experts by pooling the resources of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield. The integrated university makes it possible for philanthropic support to reach more students, too, through programs such as the Honors College that offer vibrant, closely-knit communities on each campus. Jones says the objective for his philanthropy is to impact the greatest number of students possible—and with CU’s ambitious strategic goal to increase its number of Honors students, the Honors program was a natural fit for his support.

“To grow the Honors College to ten percent of the student body, and continue to offer small classes, student support, engaging opportunities, and grants and scholarships, honors relies on donor support,” Hintz says. “Without generous gifts like this one from the Jones family, the honors student experience would not be close to what it is.”



Bella Folino: Honors College Student Finds Perfect Match with Mansfield

Bella Folino '24, an English major from Mont Clare, had a big decision to make after being accepted to all 17 colleges and universities she applied to—Mansfield ultimately won.

“The second I got to Mansfield I knew it was the school for me,” Folino recalls. “Ironically, I had a tour on a cold and rainy day, but something about it was exactly what I had imagined my future college would be.”

Folino held a dual concentration in literary analysis and professional writing, as well as minors in environmental science and psychology. “My professors have helped me realize my goals beyond the classroom and beyond a degree and have supported me in actualizing them,” she says. “I could not have found a better experience at any of the other 16 schools.”

Folino said she chose honors courses that expanded her view on the subjects and ultimately pushed her toward her future career. “My favorite course was called ‘What is Fair?’ We examined ethical dilemmas and looked at what justice means in different contexts,” she says. “With the students being from different disciplines, the conversations were always engaging.”

In the honors association as an upperclassman, she aimed to cultivate a welcoming environment for new students and used the club as a pathway to become more involved on campus. “My senior year, I was involved in the honors program as work study. It allowed me to come up with engaging ideas for honors activities on campus,” she says. “I also got to attend open houses and meet prospective honors students and talk about the benefits of the program with them.”

During her time at Mansfield, Folino was a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority, serving as vice president of programming, treasurer, and president; Honors Association, vice president and president; Sigma Tau Delta English honor fraternity, treasurer and president; *Prism Arts and Literature Magazine*, head literary editor; and Order of Omega Greek honor society. She also held several work study positions on campus including serving as a resident assistant, a peer research consultant, Honors program consultant, mailroom worker, and helped with editing projects and writing for CU Strategic Communications and Marketing.

Her future goals include attending a graduate program at the University of Montana for environmental science and natural resource journalism.



Valerie Miller: Gaining Perspective Through Honors College Experiences

Valerie Miller, of Arkport, New York, is a media and journalism major, focusing on media production. Miller, an incoming junior, says she chose Mansfield for the smaller campus and class sizes and the sense of community it has.

“My college experience in the Honors College has created a lot of great opportunities through the different events we can attend,” Miller says. “I’ve gone to many talks and places where I’ve learned so many things and gained different perspectives on ideas.”

Miller is a member of the Flashlight student newspaper, WNTS 89.5 campus radio station, Kappa Kappa Psi organization serving band programs, marching band, wind ensemble, and orchestra as a bassoonist. She also was part of the group of students who traveled to England to participate in the London New Year’s Day Parade as a member of the color guard.

BEYOND THE *classroom*:

CU PART OF INITIATIVE TO EXPAND WORK-BASED LEARNING

By integrating real-work experiences into the academic curriculum and expanding a regional network of employers, Commonwealth University will provide invaluable opportunities for students to bridge theory and practice beginning in the fall semester.

CU is one of five State System universities participating in a pilot initiative with major employers to significantly increase work-based learning that provides real-world experiences like internships and apprenticeships for students.

Highmark Health is the initial partner employer and Strada Education Foundation awarded Commonwealth University \$100,000 of a \$750,000 grant to support the pilot project.

“Strong partnerships between universities and employers provide students with incredible experience through applying learning to doing and gives them the competitive edge they need to achieve social mobility,” says Hope Lineman, executive director of workforce development for CU.

The three-year pilot will reach a minimum of 370 CU students, beginning in fall 2024. The initiative will embed real-work experiences into the academic curriculum to broaden access and configure a shared online platform, Handshake, to help students identify opportunities that align with their career interests. CU will also expand the regional network of participating employers and integrate work-based learning into on-campus work study—an additional benefit for students who are using the paid jobs to help fund their education.

Employers will be able to partner with CU to create internships throughout the year that accommodate students’ class schedules, develop additional job-relevant instruction for interns and, when possible, link paid internships to potential jobs after graduation.



Riley Kleinfelter, Mansfield political science major and field hockey standout, interned this spring with Loomis & Koernig, Attorneys at Law, in Mansfield. There, she was exposed to a variety of types of law practice to include real estate law, criminal law, family law, estate law, and tax law. Following graduation, Kleinfelter plans to attend law school after taking a gap year.

“The partnership with Strada validates and strengthens the work we’ve done to intentionally integrate career and professional development in the student experience through Professional U,” says Lynda Fedor Michaels, associate vice president for alumni and professional engagement.

Work-based learning, which can include internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing, allows students to connect their classroom education with technical and workplace skills and to develop professional connections and networks as part of their overall education. University students with high-quality, work-based learning, especially paid internships, have more confidence in their skills, are more likely to get higher-paying jobs after graduation, and are more satisfied with their education and career choices, according to findings by the Strada Education Foundation.

Low-income, first-generation, Black and Latino students, and women are less likely to have paid internships, which can reduce their employability and income after graduation. To address the access gap, the pilot has a goal of 60 percent of students in the initiatives being low-income, first-generation, or under-represented minorities.

“To impact social mobility, CU is piloting two initiatives that focus attention on moving students entering college from low-income backgrounds into the upper half of wage earners after graduation through Professional U On-Campus Apprenticeships and work-based learning within academic courses and programs,” Lineman says. “Through these two avenues Commonwealth University intends to level the playing field by giving all students the experiences they need to succeed.”



From Haiti to the Northern Tier:

Marvens Ravix Named CU-Mansfield Student Trustee

Newly appointed Commonwealth University-Mansfield student trustee Marvens Ravix's journey to Mansfield was longer than most of his peers.

A rising senior biology major who joined the Council of Trustees in the spring, Ravix immigrated to the United States from Haiti as a teenager.

"Growing up in Haiti, where I lived for most of my teenage years, I faced lots of challenges accessing necessities and witnessing the loss of loved ones to preventable diseases, which instilled in me a sense of purpose and desire to serve," Ravix says. "My experiences as a first-generation student in the United States, my drive to become a physician assistant and my dedication to enhancing the quality of healthcare to all people have shaped my worldview. Becoming a trustee at Commonwealth U will allow me to leverage my experiences and insights to make a meaningful impact on the university community."

Ravix is a defensive lineman on Mansfield's sprint football team. Off the field, he is an active student researcher in biology and a member of the Future Health Professionals Club and the Black Student Union Club, among others. He is also a member of the Army National Guard and the Mansfield Military and Veterans' Organization.

His academic advisor, Kristin Long, associate professor of biological and allied health sciences, describes Ravix as "ambitious and tenacious."

"Marvens is a natural leader and a team player," Long says. "His involvement with his local community has had a tremendous impact."

Among Ravix's activities that he is most proud of is serving as a mentor for the university's disability program. "As a freshman, I faced challenges adjusting to college life," Ravix recalls. "I was trying to figure out how to study effectively, form meaningful friendships, or even ask for help. Fortunately, I had Dr. Long as an advisor. She showed me that success was achievable and her mentorship was invaluable, leading me to become a mentor myself. I wanted to give back and support other students, especially those with disabilities."



Marvens Ravix presents at the March Trustees meeting.



Fighting Crime with Creativity:

Lycoming County Judge Denise Dieter '90
Creates Youth Education Program

In a career spanning more than 30 years, Denise L. Dieter has used her Mansfield degree to affect change in her community, first as an attorney and now through her role as a Lycoming County judge.

Dieter was admitted to Mansfield through the Act 101 Program in June of 1986. Dieter attributes Mansfield and her participation in the Act 101 Program as giving her the foundation for success in her life's endeavors. She graduated from Mansfield University in 1990 and from Widener University School of Law in 1993.

In 2021, Dieter was elected as Magisterial District Judge in Lycoming County. She took office in January 2022 and is the first female in Lycoming County to hold the title. Prior to taking office, Dieter practiced law for 29 years. She was sworn in by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2019, which enabled her to practice before the highest court in the country and served on many boards and organizations throughout her career.

While practicing law, she saw first-hand the need to educate children that the law and law enforcement is not something to fear, but rather something to understand and respect.

"After taking office, I was surprised at the number of juvenile filings in my district and the varying types of crimes," Dieter says. "I had juveniles being charged with truancy, vaping in school, disorderly conduct, and harassment, with the alleged actions being very serious and extremely risky internet-related crimes.

"My concern was twofold," she adds. "First, what is the cause of these acts and second, what can I do to divert the minor away from recommitting a crime and avoiding a criminal record, which could interfere with their ability to go to the military, college, play sports, or even be gainfully employed?"

In response to these questions, Dieter created a Juvenile Offender Diversionary Program, which is a first-time offender program. The Diversionary Program includes an application, signed by the minor, their parents, and law enforcement. The components of the program are tailored to the individual minor.

"I have been creative in that regard and expect that such individual creativity will have more of an impact than a one-size-fits-all approach," Dieter says. "I hope the components of the program will increase the likelihood that minors will understand the risks of their behavior and serve as a deterrent for reoffending."

Some of the program components include counseling, learning to sign their names in cursive, memorizing their Social Security Numbers, participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, online classes, and charitable work. If the minor completes the program, which includes a final exit interview and an essay describing what they have learned, depending on the offense, Dieter will dismiss the charges.

"As I began to put this program together with input from my colleagues, it became more evident to me that my district is unique, and I would have to mold this program around the needs of the juveniles and their families," she says. "With this focus, I look forward to working with the youth of my community in a positive and successful manner."

Dieter lives with her family in Lycoming County, is a sports enthusiast, and enjoys traveling.

Freddie Coleman answers audience questions during his visit to Mansfield



ESPN Commentator Freddie Coleman '87 Shares Career Insights with Students

Mansfield alumnus Freddie Coleman '87 visited campus on March 25 to speak with student-athletes, sharing valuable information and advice for their futures.

Coleman spoke at a luncheon and provided meaningful advice to students and Commonwealth employees. The alumnus presented in front of a digital communications class with faculty member Dr. Andrew Longcore and answered many student questions.

To end the visit, Coleman met with the athletic teams, coaches, and faculty for a one-on-one career retrospective interview with Peggy Carl, director of athletics, and answered the audience questions.

Inducted into the Mansfield Athletic Hall of Fame in 2017, Coleman has worked as a nationally syndicated radio host and commentator on ESPN since 2004.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, he became the co-host of ESPN's afternoon drive show, "Freddie and Harry," alongside Harry Douglas. Prior to that, he co-hosted Freddie and Fitzsimmons, alongside Ian Fitzsimmons from 2016 to 2023. He has appeared on the television shows "First Take" and "AirCheck" along with ESPN's NFL Draft coverage. A strong advocate for CU-Mansfield, Coleman served as the spring 2013 and 2024 commencement speaker and has returned to speak at the Frank Butsko Breakfast.

Sensational Skylar Brown

In sports terms Skylar Brown, of Drexel Hill, is a walk-on—an athlete who rather than being recruited, shows up and asks for the opportunity to compete.

Brown got chance to compete when she walked into the track and field office in 2021 and asked to run for the team.

Now, when Brown steps onto the track, she doesn't walk—she flies.

The senior political science major holds Mansfield records in the 60-meter dash, 100-meter dash, and indoor and outdoor 200-meter dash. Nationally, Brown currently is 36th in the 200-meter dash, and 23rd in the 60-meter dash.

In the spring semester, Brown earned accolades in both the indoor and outdoor competition. Indoors, she became the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference 60-meter dash champion in February.

When competition moved outdoors, Brown didn't slow down.

In May, Brown was crowned the fastest women in the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference as she won the 100-meter dash in the conference championships with a time of 11.68. Brown's fastest time of the season was 11.63 at the Bucknell Team Challenge. She holds the fourth fastest time in the Atlantic Region in the 100-meter dash. She also finished second in the 200-meter dash.



She became the first Mountie in history to win the PSAC championship in the 100-meter dash and is the first female conference champion since 2013-14.

As the season closed, Brown earned All-Region honors announced by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association. The honor is Brown's fifth All-Region honor and third outdoor honor.

"Never give up," says Brown of her achievements. "You're not always going to be 'motivated,' but you have to be disciplined. Believe in yourself. I think that's the reason why I was able to accomplish and achieve, because I believed in myself."



MANSFIELD STANDOUT SUCCESS



Hannah Meyer, field hockey



Jasmine Hilton, women's basketball



John Szentesy, head coach,
men's basketball



Abigail Taylor, track and field

- ▶ August Lewis, Hannah Meyer, and Kenedy Stroup of the field hockey team were named NCAA DII NFHCA All-Americans, the most players in program history for one season.
- ▶ Hannah Meyer was named to the 2023–24 PSAC Fall Top Ten list. Meyer is the fourth student-athlete in the field hockey program and 27th student-athlete to earn the award in Mansfield history.
- ▶ The women's and men's basketball teams made their first conference tournament with the women returning for the first time since 2017-18 and the men making their first appearance since 2012-13.
- ▶ Saraj Ali, men's basketball, was named to the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) Eastern Division Second Team.
- ▶ Jasmine Hilton, women's basketball team, was named to the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) Eastern Division First Team, joining the coveted team for the second consecutive year.
- ▶ Jasmine Hilton moved up to third all-time in career points (1,470) and into fourth all-time for rebounds (862) in women's basketball history.
- ▶ Skylar Brown and Abigail Taylor earned USTFCCCA All-Region honors after the 2024 indoor track and field seasons. Brown earned two nods, one each for the 60- and 200-meter dashes. Taylor earned her spot in the triple jump.
- ▶ Skylar Brown was the 60-meter dash champion at the PSAC conference indoor track and field championships, her fourth All-Conference finish and first indoor champion since 2013-14.
- ▶ Abigail Taylor earned a bronze medal in the triple jump and her third All-Conference finish.

Tara Koleski Named Head Coach of Women's Soccer

Tara Koleski was named the third head coach of the Mansfield Mountaineers women's soccer team in March.

She joins the Mounties after serving as head coach for FC Arizona, a United Women's Soccer team, as well as serving as FC Arizona's Director of Coaching. Koleski was a former head coach at the Dominican University of California (2013-15), former associate head coach at University Northern Iowa (2008), former head coach at NCAA DI UMBC (2006-08), and NCAA DII West Chester University (2003-06).

At West Chester, she earned, the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Northeast Region Coach of the Year, the Southeast Pennsylvania Coaches Association (SEPCA) Women's College Coach of the Year, and Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) East Coach of the Year.

Koleski also has served as vice president of Building Pathways, a non-profit youth soccer club since 2020 and as sports diplomat for the U.S. Department of State since 2022.

Before her coaching career, Koleski had an illustrious playing career. She was a member

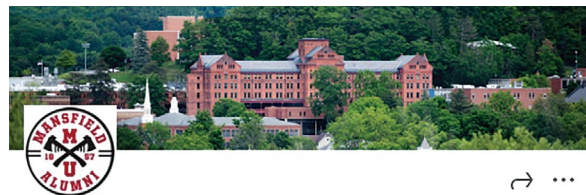
of the United States U-21 National Team in 1996–97, then went on to play professionally in Germany in 1999 and 2000. Koleski was drafted in the 11th round by the San Diego Spirit of the Women's United Soccer Association in 2001 and also played for the Philadelphia Charge and New York Power. She was part of the full United States women's national team pool in 2002.

Koleski earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from University of Portland and a master's degree in administration leadership from Northern Arizona University.



Accepted Student Day Alumni Panel

During the spring semester, on both March 23 and April 13, alumni came back to campus on accepted student days to share their Mansfield story and let future students know how their college experience shaped their careers.



Mansfield University Alumni & Professional Engagement

New LinkedIn Alumni Group Page

Mansfield has launched an official LinkedIn group for Mountie Career Networking. It is a platform for alumni, new graduates, students, and other members of the university community to post job openings, make career connections, and share career-related tips and advice. Our goal is to engage Mansfield alumni with current students and activities, while at the same time connecting Mountie alums together. This is a private group and only members can see posts in this group.



GAME ON Leadership—Spring 2024

The second semester of “GAME ON” (Gamma Alpha Meaningful Experiences for Opportunities and Networking) ended on April 2. Participants attended workshops on important topics such as financial literacy, resume building, career development, alumni match networking, and a debriefing presentation on what was learned during the program.



Commonwealth University Honors Kim Shelton with Keepers of the Flame Award

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) has named a faculty member at three Commonwealth University locations as a recipient of the second Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Keepers of the Flame Award.

Award recipients are Kim Shelton, faculty and director of TRIO Student Support Services at CU–Mansfield, Dr. Carroll J. Redfern, faculty emeritus at CU–Bloomsburg; and Dr. Fredrick “Rick” Schulze, professor of health sciences, 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.

Shelton is a dedicated leader of the university's TRIO programs which provides no cost academic assistance to up to 200 low-income and first-generation college students and students with disabilities to succeed and earn their bachelor's degree. Respected for always giving her time and energy to supporting students, Shelton strives to include diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging into her work.

Shelton arrived at Mansfield in a faculty/advisor position in the Department of Academic and Human Development from 2008 to 2010 and returned as faculty and director of TRIO Programs in January 2016. Believing that each student has a unique learning style, Shelton encourages instruction using a variety of teaching techniques and actively engaging students in the learning process.

Shelton's many contributions to the university include serving on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Title IX Committee and Foster Care Youth Work Group as well as previously serving as a president of the Pennsylvania Association of TRIO Programs.

2024 CU–Mansfield Society of Honors Inductees Announced

Outstanding alumni achievements are recognized through the Society of Honors program each year. Annual honors include the Alumni Citation Award, the Elsie Burk Service Award, the Distinguished Educator Award, the Outstanding Young Alumni Award, the Health, Safety, and Wellness Award, and the Innovation and Inclusion Award.

2024 Society of Honors Inductees



Alumni Citation Award

Established in 1969, the Alumni Citation Award recognizes a member of the alumni community who has made exceptional contributions to society through professional, civic, philanthropic work, and leadership activities.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Robert G. Shipp III '98**



Elsie Burk Service Award

Established in 1983, the Elsie Burk Award recognizes a member of the alumni community who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, loyalty, and service to the university over a long period of time.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Doreen McElroy Donlick '87**



Distinguished Educator Award

First presented in 1986, the Distinguished Educator Award recognizes a member of the alumni community or university staff who is an exceptional leader and demonstrates service and commitment to education.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Douglas C. Orzolek '89**



Outstanding Young Alumni Award

Established in 1986, the Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizes a member of the alumni community who has graduated from Mansfield within the last 25 years. This award recognizes a young alum's outstanding leadership, achievement, and professional performance.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Andrew Putt '16**



Health, Safety and Wellness Award

Established in 2022, the Health, Safety, and Wellness Award recognizes a member of the alumni community or friend of CU–Mansfield who has made outstanding efforts to advance the health, safety, and wellness of the Mansfield community.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Laurie Zaparzynski**



Innovation and Inclusion Award

Established in 2022, the Innovation and Inclusion Award recognizes a member of the alumni community or friend of CU–Mansfield who has made advancing efforts to society by establishing a collaborative environment that empowers individuals with knowledge that fosters innovation.

2024 INDUCTEE: **Shannon M. Argetsinger '89**



PA Education Secretary Mumin Tours CU-Mansfield Reinforces University's Essential Role in the Northern Tier

Dr. Khalid N. Mumin, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, visited CU-Mansfield in March to meet with students, faculty, staff, and administrators as part of his Northern Tier tour.

At the Traditional Reading Room in North Hall, Mumin sat down with CU President Bashar Hanna along with university leadership, trustees, and a local school administrator. The group included newly appointed student trustee Marvens Ravix.

Hanna highlighted the increased student scholarship opportunities implemented by Commonwealth University, including the Local Community Scholar agreements in

place with more than 50 school districts. The top-level scholarship reduces in-state tuition by \$7,000 annually.

Mumin visited South Hall to learn about the newly reimagined Student Success Center. He toured the TRIO offices, which provide no-cost assistance to low income and first-generation college students and students with disabilities.

The Student Success Center tour continued with a look at the study and meeting spaces along with areas for students to access financial aid, student billing, the registrar, dean of students, student involvement, and student conduct.



Mumin reinforced the important role the university plays in providing education to the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania and stated, "Mansfield isn't going anywhere." In discussing the increase of new students choosing to study at Mansfield and Commonwealth University, he channeled LL Cool J when he said, "don't call it a comeback, we've always been here."



1960s

Dr. Ronald J. Markert, a 1966 graduate of Mansfield University, established the Heaps-Neff Scholarship, Mansfield University in honor of two Mansfield faculty members. In 2001, he received Mansfield's Distinguished Educator Award and along with teammates was inducted into the Alumni Athletic Hall of Fame (basketball) in 2014. Recently ScholarGPS™ recognized Markert as a Highly Ranked Scholar for research productivity, quality, and impact among all faculty in the history of all medical schools worldwide.

1970s



Back row from left: Denny Barr '72, George Steigerwalt '71, Herb Jordan '75, Chet Nebrotski '75, Stanley Korenkiewicz '73, Pat Savage '75, and Jim Keenan '72. Front row from left: Lance Frace '72, Jim Sampson '75, Steve Spatz '72, and Frank Misiti '72.

The Mansfield Epsilon brothers have been going to the Cedar Run Inn south of Wellsboro on the bike trail for more than 20 years. The brothers all graduated between 1971 to 1975 and have kept in touch since graduating.

Have a class note to share? We'd love to hear from you.
Visit www.mansfield.edu/alumni

2000s



Greg Pellegrino '04 and his wife, Mary, have harnessed the energy of health challenges experienced by their son, Bennett, to help

others facing the same struggles.

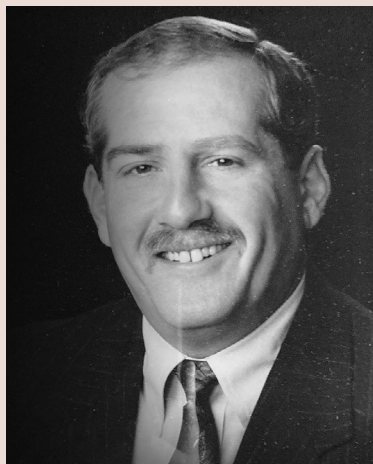
In 2017, the Pellegrinos founded the Bennett Strong Foundation to provide support to families of medically complex children who are patients in the neonatal intensive care unit at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). The heart of that outreach is providing a "survival kit" to families, which includes a 5x7 journal and pen so that parents can keep important notes on treatment or simply journal their experiences.

The Pellegrinos were inspired to start Bennett Strong after their experiences at CHOP with Bennett. Born prematurely at 25 weeks, the struggles that Bennett endured from his premature birth required many surgeries and plenty of time at CHOP. At age 3, Bennett was diagnosed with hepatoblastoma, a rare form of liver cancer requiring surgery and chemotherapy.

It was after the cancer battle, which Bennett survived, that Greg and Mary founded Bennett Strong.

For his work with the Bennett Strong Foundation, Pellegrino, the sports information director at Penn State Abington, is the recipient of the 2024 Bob Kenworthy Community Service Award.

Mansfield Mourns the Passing of Hall of Famer Bob Diliberto



Bob Diliberto, a member of the Mansfield University Alumni/Athletic Hall of Fame and one of the top players in Mountaineer baseball history, passed away on April 24.

Inducted with the HOF class of 1992, Diliberto earned 1st Team All-PSAC honors at first base during his freshman season in 1970, helping the Mounties capture the PSAC, NAIA District 19 and NAIA Area 8 Championships.

He was also exceptional on the mound that season winning seven straight-games including posting a no-hitter – just missing a perfect game with a walk in the third inning – in a 9-0 win over Millersville.

Diliberto threw another no-hitter in the 1971 season, blanking Bloomsburg by a 2-0 score while striking out 13 and helping Mansfield earn a repeat appearance in the NAIA District 19 Championship Tournament. He also excelled at the plate that sophomore season driving in a school-record 8 runs in a 9-6 win over Clarion. Diliberto's remarkable performance that season earned him 1st Team All-PSAC recognition as a pitcher and as an outfielder.

He earned All-NAIA District 19 1st Team honors as a pitcher in 1972, posting a 19-4 overall record on the mound over his first three seasons.

After passing up the opportunity to play professionally in the Houston Astros organization, Diliberto returned to Mansfield for his senior season, helping the team again advance to the NAIA District 19 Championship Tournament. He earned 1st Team All-PSAC as well as NAIA District 19 All-Star honors.

Diliberto threw 24 complete games during his Mansfield career, holding the PSAC record in that category for more than 25 years. The mark is still the second-most in conference history. Diliberto set a school-record by striking out 88 batters in his rookie season, a mark that stood for 18 seasons and still ranks third in school history.

In Memoriam

Gene Harbach '50
Joan James Douglass '52
Fanny James Marshall '52
Thomas Cheplick '53
Donald Jones '53
Shirley Campbell Daddona '54
Patricia Shimer Auerbach '54
Joan Devine Moody '55
Marlene Borck Wetmore '56
Beverly Rice Rossi '57
Janet Kneiss Beach '58
Alberta Crowder '59
Lois Cox Churchill '59
William Carlson '60
Jeanette Secondo Nicolaisen '60
Sigrid Johnson Wilkinson '60
Ruth Carlson Grimes '61
Helene Jurkovic Corrigan '62
Patrick Charney '64
Walter Badeau '65
Paul Hunt '65
Dawne Sensinger Ladeas '67
William Wipfler '67
Janice Schoonover Kytte '67
Anna Russell Leonard '68
Marcia Humphrey Hajjar '68
Terry Neuffer '69
James Curyk '69
Janet Hamlin Harrison '69
John Beyrent '70
Weston Andre-Henn '75
Daniel Waldspurger '75
Edward Strunk '76
Janice Butko Cmar '76
Rhonda Neidigh Haas '77
Frank Bubb '79
Samuel Bailey '81
Scott Gardner '85
Susan Dubs Reichard '92
Carole Sell Unger '92
Travis Joy '99
Stephanie Johnson '04

SAVE THE DATE!

October 4 - 6, 2024



Alumni & Friends Homecoming Golf Tournament

Alumni/Athletic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Alumni Garden Bar with Entertainment

Mountie Football

Social Mixer and SO MUCH MORE!



150 YEARS OF PERSERVERANCE:

THE STORY OF NORTH HALL IS THE STORY OF MANSFIELD

By Ryan McNamara

For 150 years, North Hall has stood guard at the campus “high upon the eastern hill,” an inescapable landmark of the university and the town it serves. With construction of the original North Hall completed in 1874, no one could imagine what those bricks would see in their lifetime.

Former president, Rod Kelchner, captured the spirit of building and university when he said “Mansfield survived many struggles. North Hall is a microcosm of similar challenges.”

Known as the “Ladies Building,” North Hall was built to serve as the women’s dormitory and to house the campus kitchen and dining hall. From those origins, it expanded, adapted, fell into disrepair, closed, was renovated, and now stands as a proud symbol for Mountaineers of all generations.

“Mansfield always came back. It overcame challenge after challenge and emerged stronger and stronger,” says Kelchner.

The idea of a comeback is nothing new to Mansfield. It is engrained in the DNA of the university.

Mansfield Classical Seminary opened its doors in 1857. Three months later, the school’s only building burned to the ground. The founders immediately vowed to rebuild and continue their dream of making Mansfield a hub for education and growth.

The potential and possibility of education was not lost on one of Mansfield’s most notable figures and a founder, Simon B. Elliot (1830-1917). At the dedication of North Hall, Elliot laid out his vision for the institution, “that the rich and the poor; the child of him who has power and place, and of him who treads the lowly paths of life shall receive alike



the blessings of education.” Elliot dedicated the building for the uses of education, “equally and alike without distinction of sex, or race, or creed, or party.”

As student enrollment grew, so did North Hall. By 1894, the central and north portions of the building as we know them today were finished. Electricity was incorporated in 1897—five years after Mansfield played the world’s first night football game at Smythe Park—and by 1909 the southern portion of the building was completed.

As the institution evolved from Mansfield State Normal School (1862-1927) to Mansfield State Teachers College (1927-1960), North Hall also saw several renovations to adapt and modernize its facilities.

The 60s were a time of great change for both the college and North Hall. As the campus grew, areas of the campus transitioned into office space, lounges, and classrooms, while the name evolved into Mansfield State College (1960-1983). It was also an era where plans were made to demolish the building.

The grand staircase was removed in 1969 to make way for the construction of Memorial Hall. Architects changed plans that would have built Memorial over a portion of North Hall following strong protests to save the building.

North Hall was closed in 1982 as Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) took shape and Mansfield University of Pennsylvania (1983-2022) was born. It was then that plans were made for a modern, renovated building.

Tireless work from many individuals, a state appropriation, and a capital campaign secured the funding to renovate North Hall. Completed in 1996, an 18-month project transformed the building into a modern library with internet, executive offices, and dedicated student spaces. The once doomed building was now the proud centerpiece of campus, ready to serve students into the new millennium.

Now, almost three decades after its renovation, North Hall continues to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of its students like the university that surrounds it. Students can learn about the Victorian era the building was constructed in—and lifetimes of information—through a book, over Wi-Fi internet, or in the virtual reality lab.

Meeting the needs of the modern higher education landscape, Mansfield joined forces with Bloomsburg and Lock Haven to form Commonwealth University (2022 to present). Mansfield’s campus, like its prized North Hall, continues to evolve with dogged determination as a bastion of learning and opportunity.



Nichole **Book**

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator
& Title IX Deputy, CU-Mansfield*

Interview by **Sara Karnish**

Nichole Book has worked at Mansfield for over 16 years. They have served in several roles at the North Hall Library and recently transitioned to their role in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as the DEI coordinator and Title IX deputy for the Mansfield campus. Nichole lives in Mansfield with their family.



Q | What are some of your main responsibilities as DEI Coordinator?

A | In the simplest terms, I tell people, “My job is to make all students who come here feel like they belong.” We’re in a rural setting. We have students coming from all over. It’s a big shift for them.

One of my main responsibilities as DEI rep is representing Mansfield in spaces through a DEI lens. We celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, Black History Month, Pride Month. Some events are fun, like the silent discos and movie nights. Others delve into some of the deeper issues around DEI. We hold workshops and create educational opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. We also partner across a lot of different divisions to provide support to underserved students and recruit a diverse student body. I help create space to have difficult conversations.

Q | What are some of your favorite parts of your job, and why?

A | Helping the students. Being there for them in whatever way I can to help them feel like they belong and can be successful while they’re here, whether it’s sitting and chatting about what happened that day or what’s going on with their friend groups. Being able to support them in a variety of ways is really impactful. I love spending time with them in different environments.

Q | How do you define student success?

A | Success is the diploma. For me, student success is a holistic experience. Academic success is really critical, but there’s so much more Mansfield can provide—opportunities for students to get out of their comfort zone, leadership roles, facing adversity along the way, all the while being supported by us here. I’ve seen students step up and take a leadership role and find their voice through that—finding that holistic approach and being supported while they do it.

Q | You’re very involved in the Mansfield community. How does this enhance your role and help build relationships for Mansfield’s students?

A | I can be their voice in rooms and spaces they’re not able to be in. I can tell their stories to people I know—I can let them know our students are here, and they need support from the community. We’ve been trying to build that “town and gown” relationship back up since COVID. Students don’t need to be in the community with things like Door Dash and ordering online. We all got really good at staying in and staying away. We have to be a little more intentional now about creating opportunities and bringing the community to campus. One thing I love about DEI is bringing people together and creating that sense of inclusion and belonging. Being involved with the community is one more way I can do that.

Q | Why is Mansfield such a great place to be?

A | As a campus, we are a community. We know each other and support each other through the good and the bad. It’s really important to us to have the tight-knit community we have on campus. We go through our days with students at the forefront of all we do.

Q | What’s your favorite way to unwind?

A | If it’s just me, I love listening to true crime podcasts and documentaries. I also love spending time with my family. We’re all foodies and love to find new and interesting places to eat. My daughter is 9 and is already quite the foodie.

MANSFIELD 

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