

Penn State Harrisburg

Fall 2014

Currents

Students join local residents to fight blight.

Project provides a medium for community spirit.

Putting
Art into
Action



Online at harrisburg.psu.edu/currents



Mukund S. Kulkarni

Greetings FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Great things are happening at Penn State Harrisburg and it is always my pleasure to keep our readers informed about the college.

In August, we dedicated the 51,000 square-foot addition to our Educational Activities Building (EAB). The addition includes new civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering labs; support offices; general purpose classrooms; and a multi-purpose room that provides flexible space for art and the performing arts.

This fall, our total enrollment reached another record high and now stands at 4,519 students. As our student population has continued to increase, meeting the need for more classroom and laboratory space has become imperative. The EAB expansion, and the planned Student Enrichment Center, will help Penn State Harrisburg to accommodate these pressing needs and will enhance the educational and social experience of our students.

Penn State president Dr. Eric Barron frequently speaks about Penn State's commitment to engaged scholarship. At Penn State, engaged scholarship is defined as out-of-classroom academic experiences that complement in-classroom learning. The University's vision of engagement involves the integration of teaching, research, and service to enable faculty, staff, and students to address pressing societal challenges. Articles in this issue of *Currents* illustrate many facets of engaged scholarship.

You can read about two communications graduate students, Jeff Copus and Emilia Yang, who are fighting blight through community art in one Harrisburg neighborhood. Meet psychology major Sarita Lidle, who traveled thousands of miles on an international study tour to visit her homeland in India for the first time since she was adopted from there. She not only learned about India, but also about herself. And, you can learn about research by Dr. Roderick Lee, associate professor of information systems, that is aimed at helping nonprofits to grow and prosper.

These stories, and many others, demonstrate how our students, faculty, staff, and alumni contribute to the University and the community every day. We thank you for your continued dedication and support to the college.

Mukund S. Kulkarni, Ph.D.

Currents

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Mukund S. Kulkarni, Ph.D.

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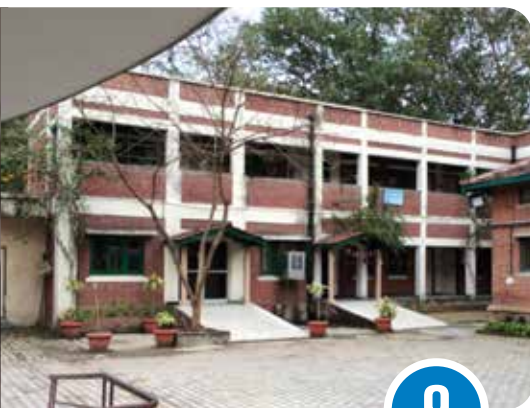
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Fighting blight, through art and action

Illustrated by vacant, decaying buildings, blight is a crisis facing many communities – forgotten structures that pose serious safety and health risks, diminish the value of surrounding homes and businesses, and create a haven for criminal activity.

In South Allison Hill, a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania neighborhood plagued by a glut of abandoned, unmaintained properties and crime, Penn State Harrisburg communications graduate students Jeff Copus and Emilia Yang have found a way to fight blight and build community pride through art.

The duo's efforts were an independent study project under the supervision of Dr. Robin Veder, associate professor of humanities and art history/visual culture, in which they researched artistic and creative practices used by activists to create social change on a local, national, and global scale. Copus and



Yang said they view communications as a cultural field and as a tool for change, and see a relationship between creativity, art and activism.

Copus first got the idea for a public mural project while volunteering during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. He worked on a project to add art to blighted buildings in South Allison Hill, commissioned by TriCounty Community Action, a social service agency that fights poverty in Cumberland, Dauphin, and Perry counties. Yang had experience working with city youth in her home country Nicaragua conducting public art and creative activism workshops there.

"I quickly began thinking about how this overlapped with my studies," Copus said. "Emilia and I were looking for a way to put the theories we were studying into practice and this seemed like a good opportunity – a way to partner with the community through an established organization to use research and theory to help give voice to the residents."

Copus and Yang's own art project became part of a larger program this past year to enhance blighted properties in Harrisburg, a collaborative effort involving the city, TriCounty Community Action and the National Guard Counterdrug Task Force. The goal: remove blight, reduce crime and bring the community together with pride in their neighborhood by creating art pieces to cover doorways and windows of 13 vacant, city-owned properties.

"Because blight has affected so much of the neighborhood, the perception is that no one cares about it, which is untrue," Copus said. "Projects like this help to show that there are people who care about the neighborhood and, hopefully, this is one of the first steps to reclaim some of the blighted spaces and reclaim the community's identity."

"The size and scope of the blight is something that feels daunting when residents are worried about weeds and litter," Copus added. "Though the two go hand-in-hand, it is hard to teach children to place trash into a trash can, when from almost any place you stand in South Allison Hill you can see a blighted property or a boarded window."

Engaging a community

The first step was to engage and mobilize the community members to participate. Because they are not South Allison Hill residents, Copus and Yang realized the importance of getting input from the people who lived there. Community involvement was also a way to inspire citizens to create and improve their own public places and strengthen the connection between the people and the places they share.

"We were interested in finding out the challenges and strengths they perceived in the community," said

Give voice to the residents.



Reclaim the community's identity.



"It was fun to work with the kids and explain to them how their leaves were going to be used as a piece of artwork to better the community."



Yang. "When we asked about strengths, they answered: 'We don't usually think about them. Unfortunately we look at the needs and weaknesses and we don't look at the strengths.' I thought to myself that we should focus on the strengths, what makes the community special as a source of motivation," she said.

Copus and Yang held neighborhood focus groups during regular meetings of community religious officials and the Residents' Association. Discussions focused on the neighborhood's current state, the residents' hope for the community, and images that they wanted to see on the murals. Community members were invited to draw in groups – images of how they currently viewed their neighborhood and their visions and dreams for its future.

This exercise revealed that the community wanted to celebrate their diversity and they prefigured a city with more green spaces and trees.

"We lifted our ideas and images for the mural right from the words and drawings at those meetings," Copus said.

Growth, green space, roots

Copus found that during the drawing sessions, one consistent image was referenced – a tree, representative of growth, green space, and roots in the community. Also, an existing mural in the neighborhood – one painted by Penn State alumna Elody Gyekis as part of her undergraduate studies – features a tree that incorporates residents' faces.

Convinced a tree was the appropriate image for the art project, Copus and Yang then invited community members, a majority of them kids and teens, to paint 80 leaves to be included in the tree during South Allison Hill's Multicultural Festival. Penn State Harrisburg's School of Humanities contributed funding to the project, and other graduate students from the college volunteered to help.

"It was fun to work with the kids and explain to them how their leaves were going to be used as a piece of artwork to better the community," Copus said. "A few families even took photos of their leaves and said they were going to look for them after the mural was installed."

"It was very inspiring because one of the girls I worked with in the Harrisburg event told me she wants to be an artist and that she has known this all her life and that she could paint everyday," Yang said. "These stories make this type of project valid. Just trying, in some way, to become tools for the people we work with to say this is possible and to become their friends is really incredible."

The final project was completed on four panels of plywood with the 80 community painted leaves attached to the tree. The project's title, selected from the focus group, was "Our Diversity Is Our Strength."

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The leaves made a beautiful metaphor of how diversity is lived in the neighborhood and how the community members could express their multiple identities through art.

On May 27, 2014, the 15' x 7' art installation, spanning 25 feet across three windows on a building in South Allison Hill, was installed by members of the National Guard Counterdrug Joint Task Force and presented by state Senator Rob Teplitz, Harrisburg Mayor Eric Papenfuse, TriCounty Community Action Executive Director Kathy Possinger, and Copus, representing Penn State Harrisburg.

Officials from TriCounty called the project a “momentum builder in the community,” and Yang agreed. Since it was unveiled, the project has inspired more people and organizations to create murals. Yang sees this as a goal achieved. “We made it clear that this was not a project acted upon the community, it was the community acting upon it themselves,” she said.

“It was rewarding to see the finished project on the building,” Copus said. “The best part was throughout the day as the panel went up, residents and their children came and looked at the installation, often seeking to find their own leaves.

“South Allison Hill is one of Harrisburg’s most diverse neighborhoods, and all the leaves were different,” Copus added. “This made a beautiful metaphor of how diversity is lived in the neighborhood and how the community members were also able to express their multiple identities with the use of art.”

He added that the community reception has been favorable. With many residents and



organizations looking for ways to be involved with bettering their neighborhood, this gives them another way to improve the area.

“It became pretty clear after the installation that . . . murals and public art are things that the community and city want more of,” Copus said. “What I have personally seen is a group of dedicated community members who work hard to do what they can to keep the neighborhood clean.”

In exit interviews, residents said “they feel good” being a part of something that transformed their environment, Yang said. She stressed that by involving people in the creation, they value the outcome more and eventually become caretakers. “Public art has two functions which act in combination,” Yang said, “the physical aspect that helps to remove the blight and the sense of ownership of the place that cities like Harrisburg need.”

Copus and Yang said the project enhanced a blighted property, created a means to activate dialogue, and provided a good medium to represent the spirit of the community.

“One of the main interrogations of the study of urban space and the city that intrigues me the most is ‘who is entitled to use public spaces, to invest in them and create public culture,’” Yang said. “I believe murals are a great tool for people to define the image of the city and be part of the public culture in a collaborative way. Instead of private interests or corporate slogans, public art contributes to the democratic revitalization of a place.”

Over the next year, as Copus continues his graduate studies, he will continue working on the mural project. His goal is to find a way to continue to lead the collaboration with Penn State Harrisburg and TriCounty – teaching students about art, communication, representation, and civic engagement. He also is currently documenting the mural project process so that the initiative can continue.

Copus said that his experience on the mural project spurred him to create his own organization, Sprocket Mural Works, with two other local artists. Sprocket is a citywide project that works with neighborhoods, artists, organizations and governmental agencies to create vibrant community murals across Harrisburg, and tell the stories of the city’s rich mural history

“This project has been the pivotal moment of my studies at Penn State Harrisburg, and it is possible that I will look back in 10 years at this as a defining moment in my life.” Copus said. “In the short term, this has given me the opportunity to work beside and learn from some great people. It has also given me the opportunity to give back to my city. I’ve always been civic minded, but struggled to find a good fit for my energies and talents and this project has helped to uncover some of this potential.”

Provide a medium to represent community spirit.

For the Future campaign benefits Penn State Harrisburg students

For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students officially concluded on June 30, 2014. The campaign mission was focused on making a Penn State education more attainable and affordable for students and their families. Penn State Harrisburg raised a record \$15,712,982. Here are just a few of the students who benefited from donors' generosity.

Andy Dessel

Recipient: Joseph E. and Barbara A. Murphy Scholarship
Major: Public Policy, undergraduate; Training and Development, graduate

"[Receiving the scholarship] shows that what you've done is positive, and there are a lot of people out there who appreciated that and want to create opportunities for you to keep doing that type of work," Andy said, adding that he has been able to explore his passions in life because of the scholarship and to focus on being involved in the community, on and off campus. Andy said he is passionate about giving back, because of the opportunities that have been given to him.



Kimberly Snyder

Recipient: Russell E. Horn Trustee Scholarship
Major: Criminal Justice

Because of her scholarship, alumna Kimberly Snyder was able to cut down her work hours, having previously worked full time at a daycare center. This allowed Kimberly to get an internship at the Middletown Police Department and graduate with a job opportunity. "My ultimate goal is to be able to have a job where I can donate and give money back to Penn State and be able to impact somebody's life," she said.

Dave Hartman

Recipient: Mary Sachs Scholarship
Major: Computer Science

Dave Hartman is a military veteran and president of the Chi Gamma Iota Fraternity (XGI) who was nominated for the scholarship by his faculty advisor. Dave said that he is able to focus on graduating and devote more time to his school work because of the scholarship he received. "The major achievement will be in spring 2015 when I'm walking across that stage," he said.



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Malina Mastrocola

Recipient: Charlotte W. Newcombe Scholarship

Major: Psychology

The first in her immediate family to attend college, Malina Mastrocola said receiving a scholarship was meaningful to her and her parents. “With this award, I don’t have to work long hours to make money to continue school and keep up with my loans,” she said. The scholarship allows Malina to spend more time with her family by removing the financial burden from her life.



Marcellus C. Taylor

Recipient: Penn State Harrisburg Capital College General Scholarship

Major: Sociology, undergraduate; Training and Development, graduate

Marcellus C. Taylor was a prime candidate for his scholarship because of his involvement in a fraternity and numerous campus organizations, including student government. “It was like winning the lottery,” he said, “because I was able to finish school and become the first person in my family to graduate with a bachelor’s degree.” Marcellus also received the Ralph Dorn Hetzel Memorial Award, for his outstanding academic and leadership achievements.

Megan Conrad

Recipient: Jeffrey and Jean Merritt Thesis Award

Major: English, undergraduate and graduate

Megan Conrad’s goal from the moment that she was accepted into the Penn State Harrisburg honors program was to win the Thesis Award, which she received for her thesis titled “Nurse and Soldier: Two Diaries of Civil War Women.” The scholarship helped her to achieve her goal of attending graduate school at Penn State Harrisburg, where she currently is studying with the goal of becoming an English professor one day.



Naseem Zomorodi

Recipient: Stanley Secrist Memorial Scholarships

Major: Science

As a freshman, Naseem Zomorodi began doing research in the Central Pennsylvania Laboratory for Biofuels at Penn State Harrisburg. She was able to establish a relationship early on with her professors and donate her time to research because of the scholarships that she received. “Being able to do research opened up a lot of doors for me. That’s what I want to do for a living,” Naseem said. Because of the scholarship, she said with confidence that she will have a future career in research.

For the future
THE CAMPAIGN FOR PENN STATE STUDENTS

Discovering Her History

Each spring, Penn State Harrisburg's international study tours take students on voyages around the globe. These tours provide students an opportunity to learn firsthand about different countries, going beyond the classroom to immerse students in a new culture.



As a baby, Sarita Lidle (1) was left in a basket at an orphanage. During a recent study tour to India, she had the opportunity to visit that orphanage, including its courtyards and classrooms (2,3), visiting for the first time since she was adopted by an American family, just shy of her second birthday (with orphanage nurse and in orphanage crib, 4,5).

For Sarita Lidle, a junior psychology major, the spring 2014 India study tour offered her even more – a once-in-a-lifetime chance to discover her roots.

Sarita was just 10 months old when her birth mother left her in a basket outside the Delhi Council for Child Welfare. In 1994, just shy of her second birthday, she was adopted from a New Delhi, India orphanage by Chris and Deb Lidle, of Middletown, Pennsylvania. Sarita had not returned to India since that time, though it had long been her family's dream for her to visit India one day.

When Sarita received an e-mail advertising the India study tour last year at Penn State Harrisburg, she was ecstatic. In her application essay, she wrote about wanting to go to India because she was adopted from there. She said that the trip would be “a lifetime opportunity to immerse myself in my native culture and learn about the customs, traditions, food and language,” and that it would provide her the opportunity to “truly respect where I came from, what I have now, and the life I could have had, if not given the chance to be adopted.”

That memorable essay stood out to Marie Louise Abram, Penn State Harrisburg director of international programs. While other factors, including a stellar GPA, made Sarita an ideal candidate for the tour, her story was another great reason to accept her.

Sarita was in class working on a project with her childhood friend and fellow Penn State Harrisburg student Broghan Schlicher when she received the acceptance e-mail. “I immediately began hyperventilating,” she said. Then, after calming down, she exclaimed, “I’m going to India!”

Broghan's excitement matched Sarita's. She too had been accepted for the study tour. “It was priceless, we were hysterically in tears,” Sarita said.

Once accepted, Sarita and her parents worked with Abram to plan the orphanage visit. “Delhi is such a huge, bustling metropolis, so we definitely had to have a plan,” Abram said. “I was determined to make this visit happen for Sarita.”

Leading up to the visit, Sarita said she was excited at the prospect of discovering where she was from. “Everyone has a history,” she said, “but I don't have one. Mine starts here [in India].”

Her parents had always talked to her about where she came from. Her mother used to visit her in elementary school to talk about India and have Sarita share her personal story. Now, thanks to the study tour, she was returning “home.”

Returning home

Once in India, Sarita began feeling her way around, putting things into perspective as she immersed herself in her homeland's culture for the first time.

When she arrived at the orphanage, the first thing she saw was the “palna,” or basket, where mothers can place their babies outside the gate 24 hours a day, no questions asked. Although some mothers explain their situations, orphanage directors said that 90 percent of the children are simply left in the basket.

Sarita and her party, which included Schlicher, Abram, and another Penn State Harrisburg student, Kristen Weaver, arrived at the orphanage 10 minutes after closing and were initially refused admittance. Sarita thought that she had come all this way for nothing, until Abram stepped in and informed the

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In 1994, Sarita arrived with U.S. missionaries to meet her parents Chris and Deb Lidle (1). She is also shown with her parents and the judge at her adoption (2), and soon after her arrival (3). During her return to India this year, Sarita exchanged gifts with orphanage administrators (4) and visited the Taj Mahal, a dream destination since she was in elementary school (5).



“It will always be a part of me...You can’t change who you are or where you are from, but now I do feel more connected.”

orphanage coordinator that Sarita was one of their children, that she had been adopted and now was living a happy, successful life in the United States.

After explaining a few times, they were finally admitted. As they toured the orphanage, Sarita was able to finally see the place where she had spent the first years of her life. It was sobering and profound, she said.

The orphanage boasts a 100 percent adoption rate. In fact, the group met some children waiting to go off to their new homes and lives. Sarita said that as much as it was sad to see the children, it was hopeful too, because of the adoption rates. “You know that they are going to get a better chance,” she added.

During the tour, when they visited the room where the two-year-old children are located, Sarita began to cry. It was the room she would have been in before she was adopted. The orphanage coordinator comforted her, saying, “You are where you are because of us; don’t cry.”

She said that she was grateful that she had friends there to share this monumental personal moment with her. “I think it was surreal that it happened now, that it happens ever,” Sarita said. “I don’t know if I would ever have wanted to go by myself.”

The orphanage visit ended with a gift exchange. Sarita’s family donated 100 American dollars in rupees to the orphanage and some of the other students on the trip also donated money, and the orphanage presented her with a calendar with photos of the orphanage children and pictures they had drawn, as well as a book about those who have been adopted and what they are doing now.

Sarita was also invited to return to the orphanage for an extended visit. She was welcomed to stay there to work with and help care for the children. “I would definitely go back,” she said. “I wanted to stay.”

Sarita said that she now feels like she is “a part” of India. “It will always be a part of me,” she said. “You can’t change who you are or where you are from, but now I do feel more connected. One day I can say to my children, ‘hey kids, I was there.’”

Sarita added that she could have been adopted elsewhere, not adopted, or never put into the basket, so she thanks whoever put her there for the opportunity that got her to where she is today. “I wouldn’t have the life I have now, the parents, the family,” she said. “Not that I didn’t respect what I had there and appreciate what I have now, but you see where you are from and what life could have been. I think it is just a broader appreciation of where you are.”

For Sarita, the visit to India was an opportunity that she had waited for, seemingly, her entire life. In sixth grade, she penned a letter about a dream vacation to India in which she outlined everything that she wanted to do – visit the orphanage, see the Taj Mahal, see a Siberian tiger (from a distance), sample food, visit the markets, buy souvenirs, take pictures, and look at saris.

The study tour gave her this opportunity – except for the tiger sighting – and much more.



Ellen Burgess, a graduate student in Penn State Harrisburg's Literacy Education program, helps young students prepare for the Summer Reading Program culminating event.

Summer program aims to make better readers all year long

"He has found a joy in reading, and that's a wonder." That's how one mother described the effect Penn State Harrisburg's Summer Reading Program had on her son.

This past summer, 15 students from area schools and 15 teachers who were completing their Master of Literacy Education at Penn State Harrisburg came together for the six-week Summer Reading Program.

The children participating in the program ended the summer with more confidence and skills which they could carry forward into their classrooms this fall, according to Program Director Dr. Beth Scott. The teachers for the program were learning as well; the Summer Reading Program is their master's program capstone course, in which they apply what they learned during their coursework at Penn State Harrisburg.

Ellen Burgess, a teacher at Southwest Elementary School in the Lebanon School District, said she learned strategies she could apply immediately.

"There have been semesters where we have been introduced to an idea in class, and on my drive home I was already revising my lesson plans to incorporate teaching strategies and methods I thought might benefit my students," she said.

About the Summer Reading Program, she added, "I really enjoyed how we motivated students to read at home over the six-week period, and I have already begun discussions with my principal about how we can incorporate something similar at my school."

Scott said the thinking processes teachers develop during the summer program are applied in their classrooms or as reading specialists when they return to their schools in the fall. "The key is, these teachers are better prepared to deal more effectively with students who have not yet reached

their potential as readers," she said. "They can analyze classroom data and student work and develop instructional plans that are more finely tuned to students' needs."

The summer program is unique in that each teacher works with only one student. That's a luxury not often afforded to classroom teachers during the school year. The teachers and students, ranging from first to seventh graders, met three times a week, for three hours a day.

During the program, the teachers gathered at 8 a.m. every day to plan. Teachers with students in similar age groups worked together to develop a positive, motivating environment. While each student was assigned to one teacher, students also had plenty of opportunities to interact with one another. At the end of the day, after the students left, the teachers compared and received feedback on their instructional plans and reviewed and peer-edited the case studies they were writing.

The teachers assessed each student's abilities and developed instructional goals for each of them. One student, for example, was bright, but had trouble decoding words and needed targeted work on phonics. Another was able to read the words smoothly, but struggled with comprehension.

To help build students' confidence, the teachers built their instruction on the students' strengths and used a variety of strategies to keep the children motivated. The teachers also spoke daily with parents to keep them informed and involved and offered them suggestions for working with their children at home. The children, their parents and guardians, and the teachers worked together for the benefit of one another.

During the celebration at the end of the Summer Reading Program, the students performed during a "readers' theater" on stage. One group read from a poem titled *The End*, which Scott used to make a point about the importance of making reading a habit.

"Actually," she told parents and students, **"what your child has learned is really the beginning of what we hope will be a lifelong love of reading."**

around campus



Penn State's social media campaign #PSU24 chronicled a day in the life of Penn State and trended at number 8 nationally, with many contributions from Penn State Harrisburg students, staff, and faculty.



Students celebrated the annual Fall Fest with a pumpkin decorating contest, live music, and "America's Got Talent" star Mark Hayward.

Read more online at harrisburg.psu.edu/currents



Stem to STEM: program promotes student research, career aspirations

Mario Soliman wants to be a neurosurgeon. Although his summer experience in the Central Pennsylvania Research and Teaching Laboratory for Biofuels at Penn State Harrisburg had him working with plants, not brains, it was incredibly useful anyway, he said.



Soliman learned to use cutting edge techniques and equipment often only available to doctoral students. "Reading about these techniques in books is one thing, but physically doing experiments with your hands is another," he said.

Soliman, a junior life sciences student at Penn State Harrisburg, and the nine other students from colleges around the country participated in the ten-week undergraduate research program this summer. Funded by a National Science Foundation Research

Experiences for Undergraduates grant, the program aims to introduce and retain students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines and focuses on minority and female students, groups traditionally less likely to pursue STEM careers.

Soliman said that the students felt privileged to work in the college's state-of-the-art, 3,000 square foot biofuels laboratory and greenhouse, directed by Dr. Sairam Rudrabhatla, associate professor of biology. Dr. Shobha Potlakayala, assistant professor of biology, led this summer's program.

Potlakayala said programs like this are making a difference. National and international statistics show a trend toward more women and minorities represented in the STEM disciplines, she said.

Rudrabhatla said the students will be ready for the job market when they graduate with their bachelor's degrees, but many students say they want to pursue their doctorates.

The students studied three biofuel plant species, exposing them to environmental stresses such as cold, drought and salinity. It's a complex process, but they eventually extracted the DNA, RNA and proteins to see which plant genes responded to the stresses and eventually to understand their function.

This was the third and final year for the grant, but Rudrabhatla is applying for one again. He said the program, which he advertises all over the U.S., improves each year.

Program participant Comfort Effi, a native Nigerian living in Harrisburg, just finished her freshman year at Cheyney University, majoring in molecular biology. "As African-American women, we might not get that many opportunities," she said. "We women have to fight for our place in the world, but this shows there's hope for us...This program helps us build confidence.

"I don't mind working with genes for the rest of my life," she added. "I'd like to be one of those people to change the world."



The men's soccer team had its best season in history, finishing the year 14-6-2 and advancing to the Capital Athletic Conference (CAC) Championship before suffering a loss to Christopher Newport University. The team also competed in the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference Tournament, finishing second in the South Regional final. During the regular season, the team defeated Salisbury University and Christopher Newport, both ranked nationally.

Head coach Seamus Donnelly was named the CAC Coach of the Year, and five players earned CAC all-star selections. Aaron Kline was selected to the CAC First Team. Kline led the Lions with eight goals, including three game winners, and two assists.

Second Team All-Conference honors went to Alex Panuccio, Jon Willingham, Michael Jones, and Jonathan Vanaskie.

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around campus



Renowned author Jacqueline Woodson recently spoke on campus, discussing the importance of reading diverse literature as a vehicle to expand conversations about issues facing today's youth.



When Penn State Harrisburg hosted a high school journalism competition this fall, communications students from Catherine Rios' documentary class captured the action, preparing to create a three-minute video about the event.

Read more online at harrisburg.psu.edu/currents



Research aids nonprofits

Americans are generous, but skeptical. They give abundantly to charities – an estimated \$218 billion in 2011 alone. But they are increasingly demanding transparency in the organizations they choose to support.

Dr. Roderick Lee, Penn State Harrisburg associate professor of information systems, and colleague Dr. Marie Blouin, assistant professor of accounting at Ithaca College, have been studying nonprofits and the ways they can use their websites to build trust with potential donors.

Lee has long been interested in charitable organizations. One of his early studies looked at how the slow adoption of information technology by black churches hampered their access to federal programs.

About six years ago, Lee was helping a charity find ways to increase donations and volunteers. When he suggested posting financial information online to show they were efficient and financially sound, he was told that

In their latest survey, Lee and Blouin received responses from 176 charitable organizations about roadblocks to transparency. The most common response: not enough resources.

The responders said the workload is too great, it would not be helpful, it's not a priority, or they don't want to reveal their donor lists. Some were not even aware that such practices are recommended.

Nonprofit organizations are notoriously short-staffed, Lee said, but software programs are available that make sharing information simpler. Volunteer assistance is available, too. As part of their coursework, Lee's students develop websites for nonprofits every semester.

Organizations like Charity Navigator and GuideStar can steer donors toward charities that put most of their money into helping their clients instead of administrative costs, but many people want more detailed

Because nonprofits are operating in an increasingly complex and turbulent environment, the need for efficiency and reaching a larger pool of donors and volunteers rises.

information was private. That spurred his interest in transparency.

Lee and Blouin's first collaboration, published in *Nonprofit World*, relied on studies which show that transparency translates to greater donations. "Those strong financial performance indicators you've been working so hard to achieve are more strongly associated with donations when people can read about them on your website," they wrote.

In 2012, Lee and Blouin, with Penn State Harrisburg Professor of Information Systems Dr. Parag Pendharkar, studied online accountability. They surveyed 125 nonprofits and examined information from IRS forms. They found that only 10 percent of the charities posted their annual reports, 4 percent posted IRS 990 forms, 1 percent posted audited financial statements and 2 percent posted their code of ethics.

While most charities posted their mission statement and purpose on their websites, only 27 percent described the outcomes of their efforts and 18 percent related success stories. Few of the organizations interactively engaged with their stakeholders online.

The researchers' most recent work hones in on the reasons charitable organizations do not disclose that information in an easy to find format. By law, nonprofits have to disclose certain financial information when asked.

Most don't do so unless they get a specific request, Lee said, which "limits who they can serve."

financial information before dipping into their pockets, Lee said.

Aside from IRS forms and annual reports, charities should also post easy ways to get in touch, names of board and staff members, financial statements, and a clearly written executive summary. Lee also suggests that charities explain their policies on whistleblowers, conflicts of interest and document retention to show they are serious about preventing fraud.

Most difficult perhaps is explaining on the website the tools used to evaluate the success of their programs, but people want to know that their money is doing some good. Only two dozen of the charities that responded disclose the methods they use to evaluate their social mission, Lee said.

As governments cut back on social programs, nonprofits are trying to take up the slack, Lee said. But they are also getting fewer grants and handling greater social needs. Some high profile scandals involving charitable organizations also have eroded people's trust.

Because nonprofits are operating in an increasingly complex and turbulent environment, the researchers said, the need for efficiency and reaching a larger pool of donors and volunteers rises.

"Nonprofits have to change the way they do things," Lee said.

Next up for Lee will be a look at emotional design – how to design a website to increase donations. "I'm hoping nonprofits will start heeding our advice," he said.



M.B.A. student Patrick McKenna recently placed second among more than 7,500 competitors in the national Wall Street Journal student index challenge.



The Involvement Fair allows students to learn about campus-wide committees, intramural sports and over 70 recognized clubs and organizations available at Penn State Harrisburg.

Alumni volunteers honored

Penn State Harrisburg was honored by the Penn State Alumni Association during the Annual Volunteer Awards Dinner on October 24.

The Penn State Harrisburg Alumni Society received the Communication Award for a project spearheaded by Tina Hess, a 1996 communications graduate. Hess is a marketing manager at Daymon Worldwide/Ahold and chair of the Alumni Society Student Interaction Committee. At commencement, the society distributes to graduates jump drives containing information about Alumni Association membership, staying connected to the University, and activity highlights.

Helen Klinger, a 1982 business administration graduate, was recognized as the 2014 Philip Philip Mitchell Alumni Service Award recipient. This prestigious award, endowed by Philip P. and Elizabeth Mitchell, allows for the recipient to choose a Penn State initiative to support with a \$1,000 gift made in the recipient's name. The gift will be given in support of Penn State Harrisburg's veteran's organization – Chi Gamma Iota fraternity (XGI).

Klinger has held positions with Vanguard Group of Mutual Funds and The Hershey Company and served on Penn State Harrisburg's *For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students* committee. She also enabled the college to implement a tax credit opportunity for corporations to impact local K-12 education and serves on the college's Alumni Society board. With her husband, Andy Klinger ('81, '90g), she established the Klinger Family Business School Program Fund.

Alumni Society names new officers, executive committee chairs

Penn State Harrisburg's Alumni Society recently announced new officers and executive committee chairs and outlined goals for the academic year.

New officers include: President Tim Ritter ('89); Past President Patti Thompson ('86, '08g); Vice President Garrett Schmidt ('03); and Secretary Marcellus Taylor ('12, '14g). Committee chairs include: Karen Dielmann ('78, '09g), Mentor; Peter Whipple ('85g), Alumni Interaction/Awards; and Tina Hess ('96), Student Interaction.

The Alumni Society serves to mentor students and engage alumni with the campus. Through professional development activities such as etiquette dinners, résumé reviews and mock interview sessions, the group assists students in developing lifelong professional skills. The society also develops initiatives to connect alumni to the campus and each other through networking events, recognition programs and reunion activities.

Hartzler named Penn State Alumni Fellow

J. Alex Hartzler, a 1990 graduate of Penn State and Harrisburg native, has been honored for his outstanding professional accomplishments and given the lifelong title of Alumni Fellow, the highest award given by the Penn State Alumni Association. Hartzler is a longtime friend and benefactor of Penn State Harrisburg, where his father was a faculty member. Penn State Harrisburg nominated Hartzler to receive the Alumni Fellow award.

Hartzler is managing partner and founder of WCI Partners, LP, a Harrisburg real estate development company focused on urban revitalization. He provides strategic guidance and oversight.

He also serves as chairman of Sarna Asset Management; chairman of the board of Ten Thousand Villages; on the board of directors of the Mennonite Economic Development Associates; and is the publisher of *TheBurg*, a monthly community magazine in Harrisburg.

Hartzler received Penn State's Liberal Arts Alumni Society Service to Society Award, The Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC's Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and the Governor's ImpAct Awards' Entrepreneur Impact Award.

At Penn State Harrisburg, Hartzler established the following scholarships: Webclients.net Trustee Scholarship in Honor of Founder, Mounir Elabridi; J. Alex Hartzler Program Fund in Honor of Dr. Jefferson Hartzler; and Hartzler International Study Tour Fund for Honors.

Since the Alumni Fellow was established in 1973, more than 700 alumni (out of more than 631,000 living alumni) have been honored with the permanent and lifelong title by the Penn State Board of Trustees.



J. Alex Hartzler



Tom Varano brought his Tom's Emotion Into Art™ to campus, taking his audience through a journey of excitement, suspense, cheer, motivation and surprise.



In November, Penn State Harrisburg celebrated the traditional Indian Diwali festival of lights, marking the triumph of good over evil. The event is one of many on campus that highlight international cultures and customs.



Penn State Harrisburg celebrates alumni achievement

Penn State Harrisburg recently presented Alumni Achievement Awards to one graduate of each of the five academic schools who demonstrates outstanding professional accomplishment. The awards, bestowed during the Alumni Awards Dinner on October 16, honor a diverse collection of talents and accomplishments from across the college.

The School of Behavioral Sciences and Education honored **Peter G. Gurt**, a 1997 master's of education graduate. Gurt is currently the president of Milton Hershey School, a cost-free, private, coeducational home and school for children from families of lower income. Prior to becoming president, Gurt served as the school's senior vice president and chief operating officer.

An alumnus of the Milton Hershey School, Gurt has served in a succession of roles there, including vice president of student life and vice president of administration.



Peter Gurt, '97g

Matthew Hartzler, a 1995 structural design and construction engineering technology graduate, was honored by the School of Science, Engineering, and Technology. He is president of Warfel Construction Company, one of Central Pennsylvania's oldest and largest providers of construction management, design/build, and general contracting services.

Hartzler joined Warfel shortly after graduation as a project engineer and was later promoted to project manager. He was named assistant manager of operations in 2002 and became a partner/vice president in 2007. He assumed the role of president in 2013. Hartzler is also instrumental in leading overall strategic planning at Warfel.

Amanda Moyer, a 2002 communications graduate, was honored by the School of Humanities. Moyer is the assistant news director of WSB Radio in Atlanta. She also serves as executive producer of Atlanta's Morning News. Prior to that, Moyer was national correspondent at CNN Radio, covering a range of stories, including breaking news nationally and internationally.

As national correspondent, some of Moyer's most prolific coverage included the 2008 presidential election; on-scene reporting of the 2007 bridge collapse in Minneapolis; live coverage of the May 2007 Greensburg, Kansas F5 tornado; live coverage in 2006 of the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah with reporting from Jerusalem, Haifa and the Israeli/Lebanese border; the 2005 aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the devastation Hurricane Rita left behind in Texas and Louisiana.

The School of Business Administration honored **James Talalai**, a 1994 master's of management information systems graduate. Talalai serves as Select Medical executive vice president and chief operating officer. Based in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, Select Medical is a leading provider of specialized health care encompassing long-term acute care, inpatient medical rehabilitation, outpatient physical rehabilitation and contract therapy.

As chief operating officer, Talalai oversees operations across all Select Medical business lines and is a guiding force behind The Select Medical Way, a company-wide initiative designed to create enhanced patient and employee experiences that differentiate and elevate the organization. With a tenure spanning more than 15 years, Talalai has played a key role in the growth of Select Medical through strategic acquisitions, collaborative joint ventures and organic growth.

William Terrill, a 1992 criminal justice graduate, was recognized by the School of Public Affairs. Terrill is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University.

His research centers on police behavior, with an emphasis on police use of force and police culture. He has published over 50 scholarly articles, chapters, and reports, as well as two books – *Police Coercion: Application of the Force Continuum* and *Police Culture: Adapting to the Strains of the Job*.

Terrill recently completed a National Institute of Justice grant to examine variation in use of force policies throughout the country and the outcomes associated with the different policies, as well as a private foundation grant involving an observational study of the police in Flint, Michigan.



Matthew Hartzler, '95



Amanda Moyer, '02



William Terrill, '92



James Talalai, '94g

alumni news

We want to hear from you!

Help us keep up with your whereabouts, activities, and achievements.

Send updates to:

Penn State Harrisburg, Alumni Office, hbgalumni@psu.edu or 777 West Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057-4898 • 717-948-6715

Building addition promotes sustainability, collaboration and active learning

Penn State Harrisburg dedicated the new Educational Activities Building addition on August 20.

The 51,000 square-foot addition to the existing Educational Activities Building includes new civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering labs; support offices; general purpose classrooms; and a multi-purpose room that provides flexible space for art and the performing arts.



“Student enrollment at Penn State Harrisburg has grown consistently over the past decade, creating the demand for more classroom and laboratory space,” said Chancellor Mukund Kulkarni. “The expansion and enhancements to the Educational Activities Building provide us the opportunity to meet these pressing needs and to enhance the educational experience of our students.”

The state-of-the-art learning facility also incorporates several unique elements in its design. Some promote environmental sustainability, such as a rainwater collection system that provides water for use in the building and for landscaping

needs, as well as a daylight harvesting system that reduces energy usage.

Others include active and collaborative learning features, such as exposed mechanical systems, so that students can see the engineering of the building; three different pavement surfaces, where students can study permeability and runoff firsthand; and open spaces with walls of whiteboards to facilitate group work.

