

The University RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

The University Research Newsletter
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MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



A Message from the Provost

Fall semester at Millersville University is an exciting time for everyone. Millersville's students create a positive and inclusive environment for new students just starting out their journey through the world of higher education and campus living. Millersville's faculty are excellent at creating a challenging yet rewarding academic experience that pushes students to their limits while supporting them along the way.

An essential aspect of higher education that Millersville University strives for is to create an environment that supports a wide variety of opinions, perspectives, and values. Fostering civil discourse among differing beliefs and standpoints is critical for generating new ideas that can

grow into academic research topics to be pursued by our undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.

The University Research Newsletter will provide you with a brief glimpse into the abundance of research being created by everyone in the Millersville University academic community. This introduction is brief because my main contribution to this newsletter can be found on page 4 with my Commentary.

Sincerely,

Vilas A. Prabhu, Ph.D., M.B.A.
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Introduction
- 2-3 Faculty Interview with Dr. Stacey Irwin
- 3 MU Alum Profiles
- 4-5 Commentary by Dr. Vilas A. Prabhu
- 5 & 7 Student Profiles
- 6-7 Faculty-Student Collaboration
- 8 Study Abroad
- 8 Newsletter Staff

FACULTY INTERVIEW

BY DANIEL IRWIN, STUDENT EDITOR

Dr. Stacey Irwin

Professor at Millersville University | Media and Broadcasting Program | Department of Communication and Theatre

When did you begin teaching at Millersville?

"My first year at Millersville was in 2004, so that is 15 years ago. Wow, time flies when you're having fun!"

Where did you receive your degrees from?

"My doctoral degree was from University of Maryland, College Park in the Education, Policy and Leadership program. My Master of Art degree was from Emerson College in Boston in the Mass Communication program. My Bachelor of Art degree was from Salem College in Salem, West Virginia, also in Mass Communication."

When did you realize that you wanted to be in the field of communication?

"Well, my parents always joked that I started talking at a very young age, so communication seemed like a natural fit. I was always listening to music, making mixtapes, taking photographs and involved in musical theatre through high school. I entered an audio documentary contest when I was in elementary school—storytelling was something I really enjoyed from a young age. I took a tour of WGAL with my Girl Scout troop when I was in eighth grade, and that sealed the deal for me. I remember having a difficult time picking college classes in media production because I wanted to take all of them. In college, I was very involved in student media work. I had a radio shift and wrote for the college newspaper. My first few years out of college, I was a radio DJ and news copywriter at several radio stations. From there, I moved into video production and digital video editing. One of my favorite experiences in my early career was stage managing a children's television show at WMAR-TV in Baltimore. Then, I moved into teaching what I love and never looked back. I would not say it was a straight path to where I am today, but looking back, I can see how



all of those experiences brought me to Millersville University."

What research projects have you worked on during your time at Millersville University?

"I teach writing, media production and theory classes. My research agenda involves me in creative media work, as well as publishing in academic journals and books. I have had several big passion projects. One was the completion of my first book, "Digital Media: Human Technology Connections," (2016, Lexington Books). That was definitely an exciting project, but I really had to dig deep to write an entire book. It was a real challenge. A year after my book, I worked with colleagues in my research group from Israel and Belgium to publish an edited book called "Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human-Media-World Relations" (2017, Lexington Books). That book was more collaborative, but it is more challenging to work with colleagues in different time zones."

"Before and after these book projects, I worked on a documentary film titled "Raising Faith: Stories About Dyslexia." It took me a while to interview different families about their experiences with dyslexia and then edit the entire film. I also collaborated with a student from music business technology on

an original music score for the film, which was a rewarding experience. I'll be screening the documentary around Lancaster this fall and in 2020. I also have some invitations to travel and share the film across the country. Along with these showings, it will be part of Millersville University's Disability Film Festival this fall. The film, started as a sabbatical project in 2012, gave me the opportunity to expand my skills in media production and filmmaking. Thanks to this project, I can be at the top of my game when teaching my students the most current production techniques in cinematography and visual storytelling."

Which project was your favorite and which are you most proud of?

"I like to learn, so I think each project I've done is my favorite when I am working on it. The film on dyslexia reminded me how much I love the creative process and fostering storytelling with my students. The books and some of the book chapters I have written have allowed me to collaborate with colleagues from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Scotland and Sweden, as well as Belgium and Israel. All of these collaborations have been a really special experience and continually remind me about the importance of global partnerships. I was happy and proud to learn that my book received a positive review from "Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries," a journal of the Association of College and Research Libraries."

In your opinion, why is student research an important part of a college education?

"I think that academic scholarship in both creative and research-oriented ways is a highly important practice for student learning and engagement. Knowing a lot about something, I mean really

MU ALUM PROFILES

discovering the ins and outs of a process or problem or idea or story, is a huge part of what lights our passions and fire for learning. At the college level student research helps students gain confidence about their knowledge on a specific topic which allows them to shine in their career. I'd highly recommend students become involved in creative or research-oriented scholarship."

How can students get involved in research or gain experience in the Communication and Theatre department?

"Our department has opportunities for students to create a department honors thesis, an independent study project or present work at *Made in Millersville*. My students have shared their screenplays, websites and video productions at *Made in Millersville*. We also have plenty of internship opportunities and ways to work and lead a student media organization. MUTV, WIXQ and The Snapper all have advisors who teach in the Media and Broadcasting program. Students can gain so much experience in these clubs and even present research at national student media conferences, enter media work into associated media arts festivals, screenings and competitions, and so much more. The Department of Communication and Theatre also has the PRSSA student chapter, Her Campus, and many theatre production auditions for different organizations, plus a Communication Club. Honestly, I am probably forgetting more opportunities we have. Our program really values growing student expertise in all areas of the communication and theatre fields." ♦



Alexis Chin as a Fulbright Teaching Assistant, with her students in Germany

Alexis Chin '18, University Honors College, majored in German and Business Administration - Finance and minored in General English. Her interest in second-language acquisition (SLA) began with her own studies of the German language, continued as she peer-tutored other students in the German department and led her to write her senior honors thesis about grammar and its effect on language acquisition.

Her love for working with students and interest in SLA led her to pursue a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Grant to Germany for the 2018-2019 school year. While she was there, she worked with sixth through tenth grade students in the Heinrich-von-Bibra Realschule in Fulda. She brought authentic games and other materials

to the classroom, provided feedback and natural language input for the students, represented American culture, and encouraged the students to speak English whenever possible, sometimes even outside of class! In addition, she attended linguistics classes at the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt. When she wasn't helping to teach or attending classes, she traveled to many different European countries, including Spain, England, Ireland, Austria and Slovenia.

This fall, Alexis is beginning a Ph.D. program in German Linguistics at Penn State University, where she intends to focus on applied linguistics and SLA, and teach undergraduate German classes. Afterwards, she plans to teach English or German as a foreign language and conduct further research on SLA. ♦

Nathan Vonderheide

'18, received his bachelor's degree in Government and Political Affairs and subsequently has been accepted into Widener Law School in Delaware. After an expected Widener graduation in May 2022, Nathan plans on furthering his education by completing a Legal Master's Degree (LL.M). His ultimate goals are to eventually practice Criminal Law in the Tax Division within the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. and to start a non-profit organization that will assist single mothers and their children, with



an emphasis on giving young men the opportunity to learn how to become successful in their communities.

Correction: It has come to the attention of the Millersville University Research Newsletter staff that there were errors in Nathan Vonderheide's Student Profile in the Spring 2019 edition of the newsletter. In addition to his last name being misspelled, his graduation date was reported as 2019, when he actually graduated in December 2018. In addition to attending the legal conference at Great Lakes Academy of Legal Studies in Business, Nathan Vonderheide won an award for Best Student Paper at the conference. ♦

COMMENTARY

BY DR. VILAS A. PRABHU

A Decade of Celebrating Scholarship



Vilas A. Prabhu, Ph.D., M.B.A.
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the approaching 10th anniversary of the “University Research Newsletter.” Conceived in 2009 in the Honors College, the newsletter has the dual

purpose of promoting a broad culture of scholarship and professional engagement and highlighting the important research conducted by faculty and students. The first issue appeared in 2010 and the newsletter has been in continuous publication ever since. Dr. Dennis B. Downey, former director of the Honors College and professor emeritus in the history department, was the founding editor of the “University Research Newsletter” and an exemplar of its values.

In the inaugural issue, I stated my conviction that scholarship is central to a vibrant campus learning environment. Each subsequent newsletter installment has bolstered that assertion by celebrating the fruits of faculty and faculty-student collaborative research. In some respects, I stated an obvious but sometimes overlooked aspect of our university’s 150-plus year history – namely, that from the outset, scholarship has coexisted with teaching excellence and community engagement at Millersville. In that first generation of faculty who oversaw normal school teacher-training, men and women such as Peter Brooks and E.O. Lyte (both of whom would serve as president), Amanda Landis and Sarah Gilbert represented the ideal of the teacher-scholar. Excellent teachers and engaged citizens, they and their colleagues brought their discipline-based knowledge to a wider popular and professional audience. They published, formed organizations and guided their students in the art and craft of effective pedagogy. As a result, they earned for

Millersville State Normal School a stellar reputation that continues to this day.

My own experiences as a first-generation college student in a developing country like India, and later as a graduate student and a faculty member in the United States, inform my beliefs regarding student success and the faculty’s role in enhancing it. As the Provost and Chief Academic Officer of this great institution for the past 15 years, and having served the academy for over four decades as a faculty member and an administrator with increasing responsibilities, I can affirm that this belief has only strengthened over time: research and scholarship inform outstanding teaching.

I strongly believe in the teacher-scholar model that engages both faculty and students in the scholarship of discovery, exploration and innovation. My own interests in the field of healthcare started at an early age, when I learned that my grandmother and many aunts and uncles had succumbed to infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and typhoid at an early age, before I was born. This tragic family history was the primary impetus for my pursuit of education in the discipline of pharmaceutical sciences. After completing my Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the University of Texas at Austin, I started my career as a faculty member in pharmaceutical sciences. I was deeply engaged in researching new drug discoveries that routinely involved six to eight undergraduate students in my laboratory. The most important lesson I wanted my students to take from their research experience was that they would learn as much or more from unsuccessful experiments, as they would from successful ones.

One dictionary definition of scholarship is “knowledge resulting from study and research in a particular field.” Put another way, scholarship is the product of a process of inquiry, investigation and research in one’s chosen discipline. Whether it

is through publication and conference presentations, orchestral performances and recitals, juried exhibits and fieldwork, or community-based research, scholarship reshapes the classroom experience and gives students and faculty new possibilities for intellectual and personal growth. As a result of the “University Research Newsletter,” the campus and our wider regional audience gain a better sense of the full meaning of “scholarship” and what kinds of scholarship occur on a daily basis at Millersville. University centers, including the Center for Disaster Research and Education (CDRE), the Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change, and the Entrepreneurial Leadership Center (ELC), provide faculty and students with interdisciplinary research opportunities. The establishment of the Atlantic World Studies Research Center is the latest example of a university center created to advance interdisciplinary scholarship and cross-institutional collaboration.

Across our colleges and academic divisions, Millersville faculty continue to make substantial contributions to their disciplines. Each year in the arts and humanities, education, and the natural and applied sciences, faculty research has resulted in scores of conference presentations and a plethora of articles, books and reviews. This scholarship has brought both individual and institutional distinction. A consistent record of scholarly growth, along with effective teaching and performance of professional responsibilities and service, is essential for applicants for promotion and tenure to succeed.

One of the trends apparent from the first newsletter issue onward is the degree of collaboration that exists among faculty and their peers. Both within Millersville and at other institutions of higher education, collaborative research has thrived. Faculty have co-authored path-breaking books and articles and shared the podium with fellow scholars. Equally important, our faculty have collaborated with colleagues

STUDENT PROFILES

Student Research Opportunities

within and outside academia to organize conferences that address critical scientific and social concerns. The campus and the downtown Ware Center frequently serve as venues for artistic, theatrical, and musical collaborative programming. This trend reminds us that scholarship, and the research process in general, are frequently shared experiences.

As a result of the newsletter, we now know, better than before, that faculty-student collaborative research is alive and thriving at Millersville. A growing number of undergraduate and graduate students have joined faculty mentors in collaborative research that can open doors to professional internships, admission to graduate programs, and award-winning conference presentations. As an example, Millersville University graduate Erin Jones won the Ali Zaidi Award, which includes a scholarship, for academic excellence last year. This award is presented to only one student selected from applicants from all 14 PASSHE institutions. Each year, more than one hundred students pursue a graduate-level, University Honors College, or Departmental Honors thesis that involves some level of original research. Our doctoral students have taken research to a new level of expertise in their dissertations. The annual *Made in Millersville* conference serves to highlight the best of student scholarly achievement.

In conclusion, it is worth recalling words from Millersville University's anthem, "Millersville, We Sing to Thee." Nearly a century old itself, our university song proudly proclaims, "Scholarship thy highest aim." Millersville University continues to evolve and mature, but the enduring value of scholarship remains a constant—as it should! ♦



BY MICHELLA SALVITTI

As I begin my senior year at Millersville, I am always impressed and interested in learning about the abundant amount of research my fellow classmates and professors conduct. Often times the research relates to a science class I took or an extension of that prior knowledge. A poster on the wall in the science building limits the audience it reaches. How could Millersville reach more Millersville students, faculty, or alumni? At the end of my sophomore year, I approached a professor about creating a print publication that would highlight the academic research that the students and professors create here at Millersville. When the fall semester of my junior year began, Justin Mando, a professor in the Department of English, began working with me to make my goal a reality.

Creating the print publication, "The Oculus," was a two-semester project. During the fall semester, I reached out to science professors to inquire about student research. After communication was established with the professors, student writers were then assigned to those students and professors willing to be interviewed. Writers for "The Oculus" were students from the science writing classes and science writing majors. Science Writing is both an advanced writing course and a major in the Multidisciplinary Studies Program. By the end of the fall semester, the articles were being finalized and edited.

Throughout the winter, the page layout and design of the publication were

created. Ideally, the publication aims to be appealing and understood by people with varying levels of scientific knowledge. Finalized page layouts and last-minute article edits were all completed in April. "The Oculus" was presented at Made in Millersville with print copies distributed to the guests. This experience at Millersville University has provided me with so many opportunities that have impacted me in such a positive way. Science Writing is a field that bridges a gap between the science world and their readers. Research reaches its ultimate potential when it is communicated at a level that all audiences can appreciate and understand.

This summer, I had the opportunity to conduct field research with Lancaster County and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to survey and manage the mosquito population in the county. During the week, I was required by DEP to set a specific number of mosquito traps and take water samples that were then sent to our lab in Harrisburg. The mosquito traps resembled a fishing tackle box with a fan inside and were placed meticulously over a tray of alluring water. After approximately 24 hours, I would return to the trap and put the samples in a bottle that would be sent and tested for West Nile Virus in the main laboratory in Harrisburg. Mosquitos lay their eggs in standing water, so if larva or pupa were present, those samples from the water were also collected and sent to the main laboratory as well. Having an internship that was in the science field helped shape what I wanted to do in the future.

College is a time in a young impressionable student's life where they have the resources and encouragement to pursue their passions. However, opportunities are not handed to students. They have to be willing to put in work and make the connections to find them. Millersville is an environment that fosters that type of opportunity between students and their professors. "The Oculus" would have never been created without the support of the professors and administrators at Millersville. ♦

FACULTY-STUDENT COLLABORATION

Bridging the Gap

Drs. Jennifer Frank, Laura Granruth and Heather Girvin, along with the help of graduate student, **Brittany Leffler**, are engaged in social work research focused on “Bridging the Gap.” While the research takes place in a town called “Gap”, the name also relates to other gaps within our communities, such as socioeconomic, education, resource availability, and even in our own understanding of social distance and poverty. The research focuses on breaking down the stereotypes of poverty and fostering empathy in students through experiential learning. This community-based research has the added benefit of exploring how pedagogy can be improved to better prepare students for a career in social work.

The research is multifaceted. It is social work research but it is also part of a UNIV 103 social work class focusing on the lived experiences of people in poverty and using experiential learning to educate students on rural poverty. The project includes both an interactive visit and dinner in collaboration with a local agency as well as a “pen pal” correspondence program between students and community members.

Working with a local agency focused on helping those experiencing rural poverty, the UNIV 103 class takes a trip each fall to go meet with the people who are living in rural poverty. During the challenging trip, students are tasked with locating necessities such as banks,



gas stations, welfare offices, medical care and daycare centers. Students then meet with community members for dinner and collaborate in a two-way dialogue about experiences living in a rural area and experiences being a first semester college student. The goal of this exercise is to close the social distance between the groups and help students develop empathy with their hosts, a necessary skill for a social worker to have.

During this process, the research team is taking careful field notes on the actions of the students as well as the community members. They are looking for subtle clues, such as changes in body language or tone of voice, to see how the two groups react to each other. What makes them more comfortable with each other and what does the opposite? What do the students’ attitudes, body language and reflections say about their experience? Do the students develop more empathy throughout the experience?

Prior to the visit, students are connected with a “pen pal” from the community and write several cycles of letters before meeting at the dinner. This component of the project is called “Paper Trails”. Qualitative research methods are used to explore the themes presented in these letters and how such themes may relate to the overall experience of decreasing social distance and building empathy. The research team is able to evaluate these letters later and see how students’ attitudes changed after the experiential learning process.

In the past, the research has mainly focused on the students and their development through experiential learning. Now, the research team is going to focus more on the community and the impact that the project may make. Future possibilities for additional research could involve the UNIV 103 class doing similar projects but focused on urban poverty instead of rural poverty. The research team could then evaluate how the students react to a different type of poverty and if this helps to reduce or increase the social distance between the groups. A long-term goal for the project is to compile a text of firsthand accounts of poverty from those who have lived the experience. The “Bridging the Gap” research project incorporates a multitude of aspects including pedagogy, professional development, direct community service, and data driven research, which allows it to expand in almost any direction with room to grow. ✦

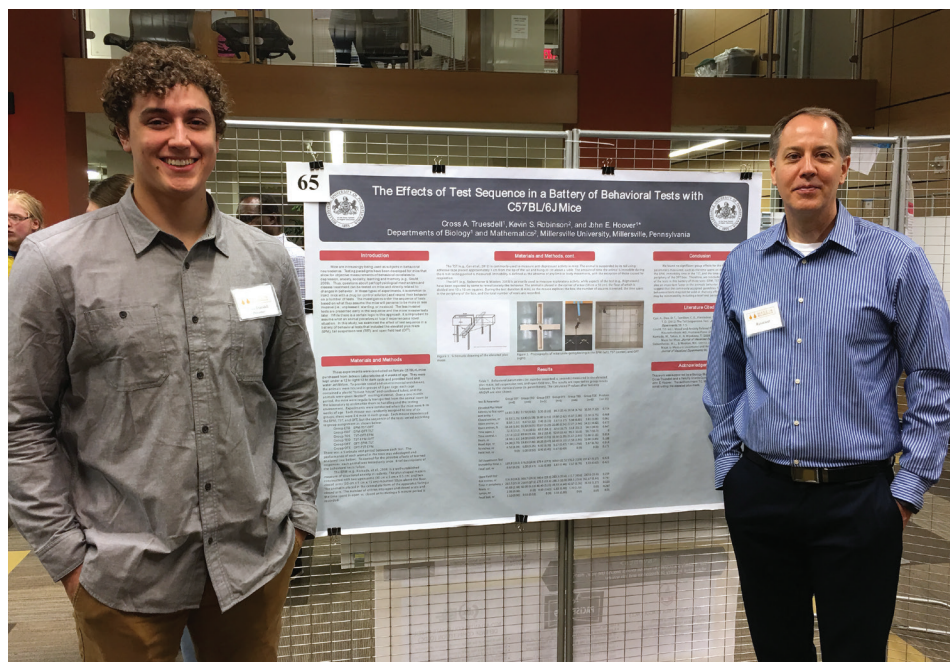


Cross Truesdell '20, Biology, University Honors College, is currently conducting research for his University Honors thesis with Biology department chair, Dr. John Hoover. After graduation, Cross plans on attending medical school.

Cross's project aims to determine whether the performance of mice (C57BL/6) in a battery of three behavioral tests is affected by the sequence of the tests. To study these possible interactions and to guide future experiments, Dr. Hoover and Cross are examining the performance of mice in three behavioral tests: the elevated plus maze (EPM), the tail suspension test (TST), and the open field test (OFT). This study will also examine if age and its association with changes in the brain affect behavioral changes in mice.

The nervous systems of mice utilize the same neurotransmitters and receptors present in humans and other mammals, which allows mice to be good representations for studying the biological processes that underlie the effects of drugs on behavior.

In studies of mouse behavior, the animals are often subjected to multiple behavioral tests. However, the order in which the tests are administered or the interval between the tests is sometimes not reported in sufficient detail. In these types of experiments, the investigators order the sequence of tests based on what they assume the mice will perceive to be more or less invasive (i.e., unpleasant, startling or noxious). The less invasive tests are presented early in the sequence and the more invasive tests later.



Cross Truesdell with Dr. John Hoover at 2019 Made in Millersville.

While there is a certain logic to this approach, it is imprudent to assume what an animal perceives or how it experiences a novel situation. This study is important because it addresses whether an animal's performance in one test is affected by the administration of a previous test.

Hoover and Cross found no significant group effects for the behavioral parameters measured, such as the time spent on the open arms of the EPM, immobility time in the TST, and the time spent in the periphery of

the OFT box. Therefore, they conclude that the sequence of the tests in this battery of three tests (EPM, TST, and OFT) did not play an important factor in the animals' behavior. These results suggest that the commonly accepted guidelines for sequencing behavioral tests may not be valid or that any effect of test sequence may be minimized by including a brief rest period between the tests. Cross is currently in the process of examining how age affects behavioral changes in mice. ✦



Cedrick Kazadi '22, Computer Science, University Honors College, kicked off his summer volunteering at Cradles to Crayons where he helped organize donations for kids who come from lower-income families around Philadelphia.

Cedrick then took part in a 3-day Leadership Camp that helped him discover himself and expand his connections within his interests. Cedrick interned at the Philadelphia International Airport

for the summer as well, working in customs to help international passengers with translation in English, Portuguese, Swahili and French. He also worked as a facilitator at a week-long STEM camp for middle school students at Keystone University. This camp was a great experience for him because he is an alumni of this specific program, and it proved an amazing opportunity for him to pay it forward. Even though he is a declared Computer Science major, Cedrick dedicated his summer to opportunities that helped him improve his interpersonal skills. These skills will be of great help as he continues his last several years at Millersville University. ✦

STUDY ABROAD

Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Germany

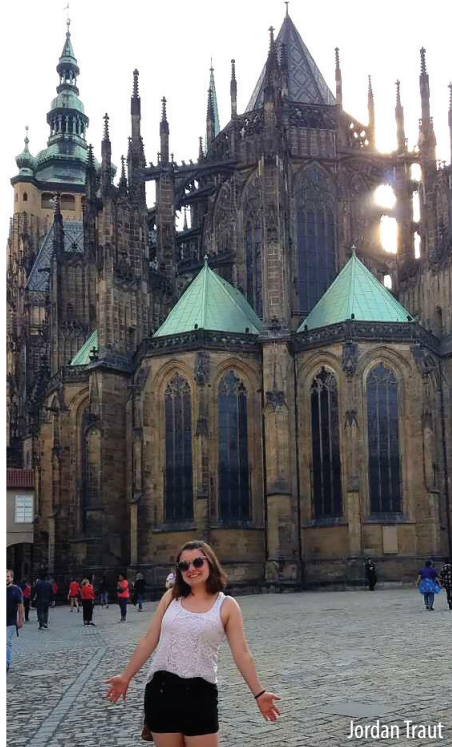


Kristen Hart, Prague

Jordan Traut '20, English and Anthropology with a minor in Japanese Culture Studies, University Honors College, and

Kristen Hart '20, Communication Studies, University Honors College, attended the May 12 to June 5, 2019 PASSHE Honors Study Abroad Program. This year's trip was hosted by Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania along with Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. Two students from participating PASSHE honors programs were selected for this trip after a competitive application process. The group of 24 students traveled to Krakow, Poland; Budapest, Hungary; Prague, Czechia; and Berlin, Germany.

Both Kristen and Jordan learned useful information and experienced cultures that ultimately propelled them forward in their returning semester here at Millersville University. In the words of Jordan herself, "This study abroad opportunity taught me many things that I would not have learned in a traditional classroom, especially since the timing of our stay coincided with the European Union elections [held between May 23-26, 2019]." Jordan went on to explain, "This was an incredibly important event to follow as we studied in our Jewish Experience class about the cycles of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries in Europe." This study abroad trip enabled Jordan to experience a real life application of her studies thus far at Millersville, and create opinions on the rise of anti-Semitic ideologies throughout the years and even in modern day. Kristen and Jordan both focused greatly on the importance of their visit to Auschwitz, and how it changed their views on the culture they had only learned about in school, rather than seeing



Jordan Traut



Kristen and Jordan at Jagiellonian University for the convocation ceremony.

the reality firsthand. Jordan discussed the amazing ability she now has to educate friends and family on the sites she experienced and the knowledge she retained about our world's history. Kristen focused on the newfound connections she gained by receiving a deeper understanding of history and cultures not directly related to her major and getting to share them with other PASSHE students that are equally as passionate. Overall, this study abroad opportunity has changed both of their lives, and completely changed their perspective on their Millersville studies in amazing ways. ♦

NEWSLETTER STAFF



Student Editor: Daniel Irwin is a sophomore at Millersville University and is majoring in Writing Studies. He is a member

of the Millersville University Honors College and serves as the vice-president of the Millersville University Fencing Guild. Daniel is also a 2019-2020 Walker Fellow within the Walker Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership. This is his first semester as a student editor for the University Research Newsletter. ♦



Student Managing Editor: Phoebe Tanis is a sophomore at Millersville University who is working to achieve a BSE

in English. Writing and editing are her passion, and she works at the Writing Center in the McNairy Library assisting students with both of these tasks. She is the Community Building Chair of the Honors College Student Association and actively participates in small clubs around campus. This is her second semester serving as a student editor for the University Research Newsletter. ♦