

Millersville University

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Sept.  
2024

The 2024-25 academic year is off to a great start, and the energy of the 'Ville has been electric. I have not felt this level of excitement in quite a few years. As we look ahead, there is much to be thrilled about. The remaining Fall events, such as [Family Weekend](#), promise to be spectacular. A range of activities that celebrate the season and our community spirit are also just around the corner.

Beginning with the arrival of our first-year students, the EPPIIC Kickoff Weekend was very successful. The welcome activities energized me, and the candle lighting ceremony was a massive hit with our students and alumni. This year's [State of the 'Ville address and Garden Supper](#) were boosted by splendid weather and fine culinary treats from our Dining and Catering Service. It was delightful to see so many retirees among the guests at Tanger House that evening. If you were unable to attend, the [video](#) and [photo gallery](#) offer a glimpse of the event. Again, my congratulations to this year's [EPPIIC award winners](#).

This past weekend's [Homecoming Celebration](#) was filled with many new features, including a new Block Party location and the debut of the Maker's Market and the Skully Shoppes. These two tabling events, which showcased crafts, vintage items, and more, were hosted by members of the community and our entrepreneurial students and alumni. Highlights of the weekend also included our traditional events, such as the annual Athletics Hall of Fame Recognition Dinner and the Millersville Parade. The classes of 1964 and 1974 held their 60th and 50th reunions, respectively. It was great to welcome our alumni back to campus for their important milestones.

This month's issue highlights MU's success on multiple fronts. Our overall headcount enrollment surpassed 7,000 students for the first time since the pandemic, with growth in graduate programs, first-time students, and online programs. MU's reputation also improved nationally as we climbed in the 2024 U.S. News & World Report rankings and received recognition from other organizations for the value of our academic programs. Emergency Management, Nurse Educator, and Clinical Social Work were notable among these. A demonstration of our core value of public mission can be found in how our employees engage with our community by volunteering with Junior Achievement to inspire students, and the Future Educator Academy continues to cultivate future teachers.

An update on MU's Positive Energy Fund program, which is funded by utility rebates from our net-zero-energy Lombardo Welcome Center can be found in this issue. This program supports faculty, staff, and student projects aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and serves as an example of our institutional commitment to sustainability. On September 23, my presentation on

the Welcome Center at the [2024 NYC Green School Conference](#) held in New York City was well received.

I encourage everyone to stay engaged and participate in various events and initiatives planned for the rest of the year. Your involvement is crucial to maintaining the vibrant and dynamic environment that defines the 'Ville. Let us continue to build on this momentum and strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our community. Together, we can make this academic year truly remarkable.

## FALL ENROLLMENT REPORT

We continue focusing on enrollment management and have positive news to share about our final Fall numbers. Led by the enrollment management team, we rallied back above the 7,000-student threshold through the combined efforts of multiple units on campus.

Overall enrollment increased from 6,752 last fall to 7,009 this fall as of last week's freeze date. Highlights include:

- Graduate enrollment hit an all-time high of 1,157 - up 15% from last fall's 1,009.
- First-time students are up from 1,179 last fall to 1,218 this fall.
- Undergraduate Online Programs moved from 430 to 555, an increase of 29% from last fall.



Knowing that traditional-age undergraduate enrollments will be challenging as we approach the projected "demographic cliff," graduate and adult learners are crucial segments for sustaining the University. We're glad that more and more students are choosing to attend Millersville University.

Another bright spot helping to support our overall enrollment was the increase in student retention. As I mentioned at the State of the 'Ville last year, our first- to second-year retention rate climbed to 78.1%, which was the highest rate in about a decade. I appreciate the hard work of our faculty and staff for their support in advancing this important metric.

## National Rankings for the 'Ville

Millersville University is once again ranked among the Best Regional Universities in the North by U.S. News & World Report, increasing its overall ranking and its position among the top public schools. In a new ranking, Millersville ranked #19 in "Undergraduate Teaching Programs" among all regional universities in the North.

The University climbed 15 spots to #101 in the overall ranking of regional universities in the North. In addition, it rose five spots to #37 in the ranking of top public schools among regional universities in the North, up from #42 last year.

In addition to the national rankings, Millersville University has been recognized by various national organizations for the academic caliber and monetary value of its degree programs.

### Study Abroad Aide

Out of 8,060 universities across 69 countries, [Study Abroad Aide](#) ranked Millersville in the top 21% of universities with the best value for international students. According to the site, rankings are determined based on the "academic quality, comprising 75% of the weight, and cost of education for the remaining 25%."

This ranking highlights the many benefits of Millersville's numerous degree programs, including cost-effectiveness.

### Forbes Advisor

Millersville University's [Emergency Management program](#) has been recognized as one of the [Best Online Emergency Management Degrees Of 2024](#), published this spring on Forbes Advisor Education.

Forbes Advisor's education editors are committed to producing unbiased rankings and informative articles covering online colleges, tech boot camps and career paths. Their ranking methodologies use data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), education providers, and reputable educational and professional organizations.

### Online Master's Degrees

Online Master's Degrees has ranked Millersville in the top 9% of U.S. universities with the best online and hybrid graduate-level degree programs. Online Master's Degrees determine their rankings by evaluating "which universities offer the best value regarding education quality, availability, cost, and flexibility."



Three different Master's degree programs were explicitly recognized for their merit.

- 13th place in "[Best Online Master's Degrees in Emergency Management](#)"
- 20th place in "[Best Nurse Educator Certificate Online Programs](#)"
- 31st place in "[Best Online Clinical Social Work Programs](#)"

## CounselingPsychology.org

[CounselingPsychology.org](#) ranked Millersville's Master of Social Work degree program as the third-best MSW program in Pennsylvania.

Counseling Psychology ranks programs "through a multifaceted assessment process encompassing several key criteria," where they evaluate "the overall quality, impact, and effectiveness of programs, ensuring a fair and accurate representation of each program's strengths.

## VILLE EMPLOYEES ASSIST JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

In keeping with one of the University's core values of public mission, employees from Millersville have volunteered for the Junior Achievement program once again.

Since 2012, employees from Millersville have volunteered to work in local classrooms and schools with the nonprofit organization Junior Achievement of South-Central PA. This year, 11 employees volunteered a total of 16 times with the organization:



- Alison Hutchinson, Registrar
- Andrew Welaish, Director of Library Operations
- Dr. Brooke Martin, Adjunct Professor in Art Education
- Gwendolyn Phillips, Criminology, Sociology & Anthropology Department Secretary
- Jasmine Campbell, Director of Student Accounts
- Dr. Jennifer Burke, Assistant Professor of Early, Middle & Exceptional Education
- Jim Lee, Faculty Instructor of Business
- Jorge Santiago, Talent Search Academic Caseworker
- Dr. Leslie Gates, Professor of Art Education and Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinator of Art Education
- Dr. Mary Beth Williams, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Dr. Sarah Brooks, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Professional Development Schools

Millersville University was rewarded with a certificate of appreciation, recognizing each employee's hard work in inspiring students in "financial literacy, career readiness and entrepreneurship."

"Volunteering with Junior Achievement, or one of the many other organizations our employees serve, connects personal interests of our team members to the overarching values of our workplace, ultimately benefiting the communities in which we live," says Wendy Bowersox, employee engagement specialist.

Employees recall their experiences and how they benefit the students.

"These students get excited to talk to adults who might be in the career they are considering," says Alison Hutchinson, a registrar at Millersville. "They love hearing about college as an option. They know the value of a skilled trade, and competition for spots in our career and technology programs in Lancaster County is fierce. They know that they can make a good living in various ways.

Most Millersville volunteers start their work in a familiar place: their own child's classroom; others choose to work at the school closest to their home or at a school they attended.

"I had the opportunity to go back into my middle school in the Pequea Valley School District to do the career clusters module," says Hutchinson. "So, when I said to the classroom, 'When I sat where you are sitting,' I really meant it!"

"As educators and higher education professionals, we have the best information about careers that require a 4-year degree or more," says Hutchinson. "We not only know about our discipline area, we know about all the directions our grads might pursue. It's pretty easy to start with your child's school or the school closest to your home, and it is a nice short-term volunteer commitment of a few hours. It's also a great way to show that Millersville cares about our local community."

As a result of this successful year of volunteering, MU's Career Center team will strive to increase the number of volunteers for Junior Achievement in the coming years to ensure each student is prepared for their future.

"It takes a lot of volunteers to make Junior Achievement happen," says Hutchinson.

Employees interested in volunteering for Junior Achievement should email the Career Center at MU at [careers@millersville.edu](mailto:careers@millersville.edu) for volunteer opportunities.

## FUTURE EDUCATOR ACADEMY CONTINUES TO INSPIRE

Pennsylvania is facing a teacher shortage, and Millersville remains at the forefront of the efforts to recruit the next generation of teachers. The [Future Educator Academy at Millersville University](#) aims to help. The University held its fifth program this summer.

The program, hosted by Dr. Miriam Witmer, associate professor of Educational Foundations at Millersville and Dr. Aileen Hower, assistant director of the academy, was open to all high school juniors and seniors in Pennsylvania who wish to pursue a career in education. During the week, students can experience college life while learning the fundamentals of teaching and preparing for college.



Witmer and Dr. Lara Willox, Dean of the College of Education, travel to schools around the state to discuss the program, hoping to recruit young individuals interested in teaching. Teachers at the schools are asked to recommend students who would be good for the program, boosting their confidence in the application interviews. Students at high schools in the Millersville area can attend the week-long program for free, with their \$750 tuition paid by the School District of Lancaster. Zoe Patterson, a senior at McCaskey High School, is returning for her second year with the program and is eager to learn more.

"As college is approaching and I'm learning more and more about education, I'm excited to gain more knowledge, experience and awareness about the next stages of life," says Patterson.

The academy is part of a more extensive program hosted by Millersville University to aid students in successful careers in education. Other programs include the Color of Teaching Mentoring program and the Side-by-Side program, both active at MU. Middle school students start by joining the Color of Teaching program, then participate in the Side-by-Side seminars as underclassmen in high school, attend the Future Educator Academy as juniors and complete dual enrollment as seniors. The overall program has helped students make connections and land jobs in schools upon graduating college. "These folks are now school leaders. Lena Cordero just got her doctorate, and she's a principal. Jassinya Alvarado-Padilla is back at McCaskey as a central office administrator," says Witmer, referencing former attendees who found success in their careers and benefited from the program. The program is exclusive to Millersville's campus, but students from school districts all over the state travel to participate in this experience. These districts include the Harrisburg Academy, the School District of York City, the School District of Lancaster, the Pottstown School District, the Central Bucks School District and the Lower Dauphin School District.

At the week's conclusion, students completed a "3-2-1 reflection," which allowed them to recall three things they learned from the experience, two practices they will continue with, and one thing they will immediately implement. Along with this reflection, students received awards for their achievements



and a keepsake "challenge coin" inscribed with "Stars of the Future" and a motivational quote to take with them on their journey to becoming educators.

## IMPACT OF POSITIVE ENERGY FUND

Millersville University receives money each year from utility rebates created by the University's energy-conserving Lombardo Welcome Center. The Lombardo Welcome Center is the first building in Pennsylvania to be certified as a zero-energy building by the International Living Future Institute and only one of about 100 zero-energy buildings in the country.



The rebates fund [faculty, staff and student-led projects](#) up to \$2,500 that contribute positively to local and global communities using the Global Goals for Sustainable Development structure. Called the "Positive Energy Fund," faculty, staff and students are welcome to propose any project that addresses one of the global goals of sustainable development.

This past week, I was honored to represent Millersville University at the 8th NYC Green School Conference hosted by Green Mentors. The conference was part of Climate Week NYC, a key gathering focused on advancing sustainability in education and shaping a greener future for schools worldwide. My conference presentation focused on the Lombardo Welcome Center and showcased the extraordinary outcomes of the Positive Energy Fund. The 'Ville continues to lead the way in creating the next generation of sustainability leaders, and we have a great story to tell.