

# Muhlenberg

Magazine

SPRING 2026

## Mascot Mania!

A definitive history of mascots at Muhlenberg, from children, dogs, and live mules to the Marti we know and love today



### **More Is More**

The benefits of studying two seemingly unrelated subjects

### **Congrats, Grads!**

Honoring our newest alumni from the Class of 2026



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**FEATURES**



**Putting the Mule in 'Berg** 32

The journey from the college's early mascots (which included dogs and children) to the Marti we know and love today



**Sometimes, More Is More** 42

The unexpected benefits of choosing to study two seemingly unrelated subjects at Muhlenberg

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**ON THE COVER** Marti the Mule jumps for joy during a photoshoot with Marco Calderon. Fun fact: This particular student can do a cartwheel in the suit! The stunt doesn't photograph well, but it gets the crowd going at a game.



## A Message From President Kathleen Harring

The cover of this issue of Muhlenberg Magazine pays tribute to our mascot, Marti the Mule, and the feature starting on page 32 details the history of mascots at Muhlenberg. It's an interesting trip into the past and the changing perspectives on our institution. The mule has many positive attributes, among them intelligence, toughness, inquisitiveness, and independence. While an unusual choice for a mascot, the mule makes a lot of sense for us.

This spring, I had the honor of addressing the Muhlenberg Class of 2026 at commencement. I spoke not just about the accomplished young people in front of me, who are without question intelligent, tough, inquisitive, and independent — among many other things. I also spoke about the remarkable moment we are all living through together.

We are in a year of significant anniversaries. Two hundred and fifty years ago, delegates gathered in Philadelphia to debate and refine the Declaration of Independence — enduring an airless room and sweltering summer heat to set down the foundational ideals of a new nation. The founders were just human beings — flawed individuals and products of their time — but they did hard things and took great risks in service to the common good.

Indeed, they were imperfect people who, like our new graduates, had reached a pivotal moment and asked themselves how they would lead, how they would serve, and how they would forge a new future. They answered the call with tenacity, toughness, and intelligence, and in light of this, I like to think of them as honorary Mules.

It's fitting because these questions are at the heart of a Muhlenberg experience, and I charged our graduates with answering them for themselves as they venture into professional life and post-baccalaureate study. They already are well on their way.

For examples of how Mules are rising to the challenges of our world, please have a look at Sophie Tomov '26 (page 18) or Cuong Tran, D.M.D. '91 P'25 (page 10) or Associate Professor of Education Katie Bucher (page 16) — all examples of our students, alumni, and faculty transcending the complexities of our world to lead and serve our society for the common good.

The founding of our nation in 1776 was a fundamentally human event focused on the rights, responsibilities, and potential of a free people. Like the liberal arts, it was a product of the American Enlightenment and its values — free inquiry, compelling communication, civic responsibility, and much more.

I am proud to be a part of this community of Mules and all that it stands for. Thank you for all you do for Muhlenberg College.

**Kathleen E. Harring, Ph.D.**  
President

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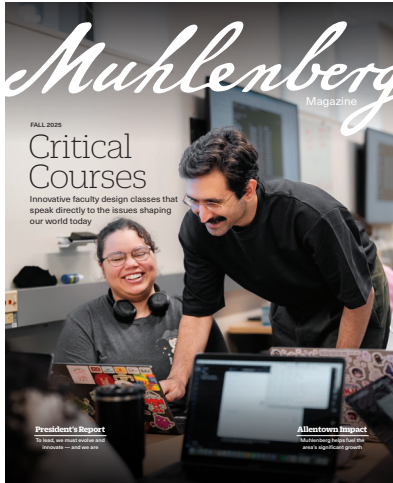
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you see a story you like (or don't like), put your thoughts into an email to [magazine@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:magazine@muhlenberg.edu). We deeply appreciate reader feedback and take it into consideration as we plan future issues. Thanks for reading!

### It's the Rosenthals?!?

Folks on Facebook were delighted to learn that Emma Rosenthal '18 (Fall 2025, "Comic Relief," at left below) is an alum.

"THEY'RE A BERG FAMILY?!? I had NO idea! They're phenomenal on TikTok!"

—Danielle Gleason '08

"I had NO IDEA [the Rosenthals] were Mules! Their videos started showing up on my feed after my dad passed away last spring and I found so much comfort in their humor! Love it!"

—Courtney Stanek Reinl P'27



PHOTO BY MAGGIE ZERBE '17

"LOVE their videos! And I had no idea one could earn a master's in comedy writing!"

—Clare Kilpatrick Benz P'14

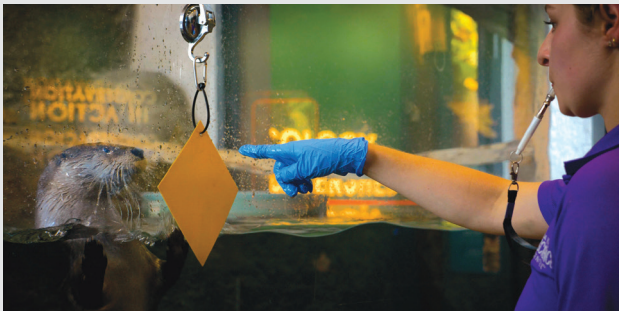


### This Is the Time to Remember

Scan the code to read comments from alumni reminiscing about "The Music of Memorial Hall," including Billy Joel. "I washed his shirt and went out with the band after the concert!" wrote Natalie Hand '78 P'07.

## ONLINE STORIES NOT TO MISS

Check out these features on Muhlenberg's news and magazine sites.



### Meet Molly Laury '22

Laury, an environmental science major at Muhlenberg, works as an animal care technician at the new Da Vinci Science Center in downtown Allentown. You really *otter* watch her video at [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/molly-laury](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/molly-laury).



### Two Mules, 2,653 Miles

In 2025, Ali Calamoneri '18 and Noah Fulcomer '19 spent five months hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, which stretches from Mexico to Canada. See stunning photography from their epic journey at [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/pct](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/pct).



Celebrating the **Class of 2026**



**O**n Sunday, May 17, Muhlenberg College's Class of 2026, along with their families, their friends, and Muhlenberg faculty and staff, gathered in Allentown's PPL Center to celebrate the class's 431 graduates.

President Kathleen Harring, Ph.D., presided over the ceremony. Honorary degree recipient Rajiv Vinnakota, a pioneering social entrepreneur and president of the Institute for Citizens & Scholars, as well as leader of the institute's College Presidents for Civic Preparedness coalition, delivered the commencement address. In addition to Vinnakota, Kassie Hilgert, president and CEO of ArtsQuest, and Zachary Mannheimer '99, founder and board chair of Alquist 3D, received honorary degrees.

Vinnakota's speech drew upon his experience co-founding the SEED Foundation, the nation's first network of public, college-preparatory boarding schools. He talked about how this was only possible because other people believed in his vision and worked, as a community, to make it a reality, contradicting conventional wisdom for his generation — to distinguish yourself as an individual instead of collaborating with others.

"I've watched young people from completely different backgrounds come together to solve a real problem facing their community. And something changes in those moments. People stop performing and start listening," he said. "The good news is: all of you have experienced what this looks like here at Muhlenberg. You've lived, learned, argued, celebrated, struggled, and grown up alongside people who see the world differently than you."

He encouraged the graduates to get off the sidelines and the internet and to start making real change, even small change, in their own communities.

"My hope is that your generation is defined not by what you posted, but by what you built," he said. "Not what you tried individually, but what you did as a community. Not by those who critiqued, but those who participated. Together."

The two graduates who addressed their classmates were Vishmitha Dsouza, a business administration and media and communication double major, and Kristin Heiss-Erbick, who received a master's in organizational leadership from the School of Graduate Studies.

Dsouza, an international student from Mumbai, India, reflected on how she and her classmates, with the support of faculty, staff, and alumni, embraced the idea of turning their dreams into real, tangible things, including the college's new interfaith space and an effort to label campus trees with their Lenape names. She expressed gratitude for the access she had at Muhlenberg — to knowledge, to opportunities, and to connections.

"A liberal arts education is one of the most quietly dangerous things you can carry into the world. Dangerous to apathy. Dangerous to ignorance. Dangerous to the idea that the way things are is the way things have to be," Dsouza said. "You don't need a title to change a room. You have something far more powerful — the ability to think critically, to listen deeply, to hold complexity without flinching. That is soft power. And soft power, wielded with intention, has always been what actually moves the world."

Heiss-Erbick, a project manager for Jefferson Health and a mom

of four who completed a bachelor's degree through Muhlenberg's School of Continuing Studies in 2024, shared that she almost canceled her interview with the School of Graduate Studies. Then, her aunt and uncle gave her a gift — a copy of "The Little Engine That Could." It gave her the push she needed to start the master's in organizational leadership program.

"Today, I'm not just walking out of those big red doors with a degree," Heiss-Erbick said. "I'm walking out as someone my younger self needed to see. Someone my children can look up to. Someone who finally believed ... I could."

In her closing address, Harring noted that this class's milestone coincides with America's 250th anniversary. American history was shaped by the Muhlenberg family, including Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who led the establishment and growth of the Lutheran Church in America, and his descendants, who included the nation's first speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, a world-renowned botanist who also was a college president, and a famous revolutionary war general. The history lesson was given in part to inspire the day's graduates to think about how they might go on to lead and serve.

"Your liberal arts education means freedom — the freedom to think, to reason, and to act ethically. The freedom to transcend the trends and technologies that seem to define this moment. The freedom to understand your larger role and place in history," Harring said. "And it means responsibility — using your talents for the betterment of the world. To live the values you have cultivated here. To be exactly what our world needs — extraordinary Mules."

Thirteen members of the Class of 2026 were co-valedictorians: Cheyanne Beaumont, an English and creative writing and media and communication double major; Collin Boldt, a history major with minors in Asian studies and German studies; Erin DiSandro, a biology major and public health minor; Sophia Jacobson, a public health and business administration double major; Justin Khoury, a philosophy/political thought major; Grace Lessig, a mathematics and computer science double major; Dina Maltser, an English and Spanish double major; Sana Nauman, a neuroscience major; Jason Rackas, a mathematics and Spanish double major and music minor; Philip Reiner, a psychology major and creative writing and journalism minor; Danielle Sautner, a psychology major who also earned a pre-K-4 teaching certificate; Avi Soussan, a public health major and biology minor; and Cathy Tran, a biology major.

Lyam Shook, a business administration major, and Shanice Williams, a political science and international studies double major, received Alumni Association Future Alumni Leader Awards.

Christine Ingersoll, Ph.D., professor of chemistry, received the Paul C. Empie '29 Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award is given in memory of the Rev. Paul C. Empie, graduate of the Class of 1929, a member of the college's board of trustees for many years, and its chair from 1972 to 1979.

Lanethea Mathews-Schultz, Ph.D., professor of political science, received the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Award. The award is given in recognition of a professor whose distinguished teaching makes a profound contribution to the intellectual growth of their students. —*Meghan Kita*

*Clockwise from top: Isabella Damaso (center) and others leave the ceremony; commencement speaker Rajiv Vinnakota; Tiffany Perez, Gianna Hernandez Smith, and Julie Amon after the ceremony; master's student Matthew Rosa '24 with Dean of Graduate Studies Bruce Anderson; Elie Khalil, Trevor Mikuta, Sebastian Tis, Omar Lopez, and Taye Edwards after the ceremony*

# Muhlenberg Adds Education Major, Minors



PHOTO BY JOE ROMANO '23

Associate Professor of Education Katie Bucher teaches Educational Psychology: Child Learning and Development in spring 2026.

**S**tarting this fall, students pursuing teacher certification can choose an elementary education major or a secondary education minor, which requires a major in the intended teaching subject. Students who aren't pursuing teacher certification can choose to minor in education studies.

"Muhlenberg has always been known for its strengths in preparing future K-12 teachers," says Provost Laura Furge. "Many of our alumni are award-winning teachers, and we are thrilled to continue to educate the most well-prepared, passionate teachers. Our program builds on our liberal arts strengths, giving future educators a rich foundation in critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Simply put, studying education at Muhlenberg gives our students the tools, field experiences, and mentorship to grow into the kind of teachers who inspire lifelong learning in others."

Muhlenberg previously had only an education certifica-

tion program, in which aspiring teachers would choose a major while also pursuing either elementary or secondary teacher certification. In 2023, Muhlenberg added a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) 4+1 program, which allows current undergraduates to obtain a bachelor's degree with teacher certification and a MAT in five years.

"Our certification programs are rigorous and time-intensive and demand a great deal of work. We also hold high expectations for our students as they prepare to enter the teaching profession," says Cathy Kim, chair of Muhlenberg's education department. "In developing the new programs, we wanted to ensure that our commitment to teacher education, rooted in the core values of a liberal arts education, remained central. The education department feels confident that we could adopt this model without compromising the integrity of our work." —MK



PHOTO BY JOE ROMANO '23

## Seegers Expansion Update

The more than 35,000-square-foot expansion to Seegers Union, the Gateway at Fahy Pavilion, is approaching completion. Gerry '79 and Cathy Fahy provided a leadership gift necessary to bring this project to fruition. It will include a welcome center for campus guests (including prospective students), a new home for career services and global education, space for alumni engagement, classrooms, a large event space, and flexible use spaces for students.



Scan the code to see a  
livestream of the construction site.



PHOTO BY SIERRA ADDY '27



PHOTO BY JOE ROMANO '23

# LIVING THE 'BERG LIFE

Clockwise from top left:  
the student-run music festival Muhlalooza,  
the first Through the Red Doors  
admitted student event, therapy dogs  
at the Student Government Association's  
Community Day, and Greek Week's  
Greek Sing competition



PHOTO BY KATIE JAMES '29

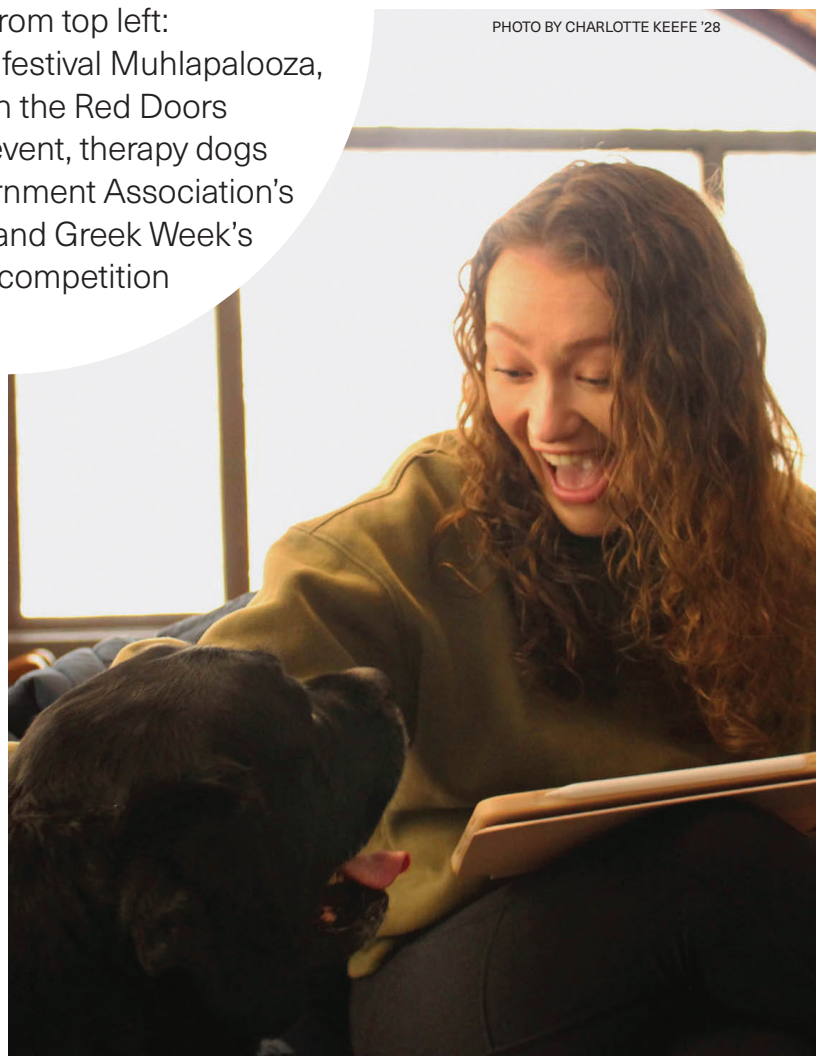


PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE KEEFE '28

# Muhlenberg Launches Online Bachelor's Degree in AI

Muhlenberg announced a new Bachelor of Arts degree in applied artificial intelligence, designed to meet the growing demand for professionals who can develop and apply artificial intelligence responsibly across a wide range of industries. Built for adult learners, the program is delivered in a fully online, cohort-based format and culminates in a hands-on capstone experience that integrates learning across the curriculum. Applications are now being accepted with classes beginning in fall 2026.

Artificial intelligence is transforming how organizations operate, make decisions, and serve people. Muhlenberg's new program blends technical foundations with critical thinking and ethical reasoning, preparing students to navigate the complexities of AI development and deployment in a responsible, human-centered manner.

"As artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in everyday life and work, we have an obligation to help learners understand both the promise of these tools and the responsibility that comes with using them," says President Kathleen Harring. "This new program reflects Muhlenberg's commitment to a rigorous education that prepares students to think critically, communicate clearly, and lead thoughtfully in a changing world."

Students in the B.A. in applied artificial intelligence will build knowledge of core AI principles and applications while exploring the ethical, social, and cultural implications of emerging technologies. Graduates will be prepared for careers that require both technical proficiency and a nuanced understanding of AI's impact on society. —*Carey Manzollilo*

## Why I Study ... the delivery of anti-inflammatory drugs to the brain Associate Professor of Chemistry Sherri Young



I always had an affinity toward the sciences and math. I took chemistry and biology in high school, and I

liked chemistry a lot more. Dissecting was not something that I enjoyed. I love baking, and I feel like chemists are good bakers and vice versa. I was also able to take a forensic chemistry class, which was a lot of fun. That was around the time when all the "CSI" shows were getting popular, so I thought, "Maybe I'll go into forensic chemistry." Not many schools had undergraduate forensic chemistry programs at that time, so I chose to study chemistry at Albright College.

Because I did not enjoy general chemistry, I thought about switching my major, but one of my coworkers at the restaurant where I worked convinced me to stick with it. I'm glad I did, because I took organic chemistry

and had a really great experience. I had a phenomenal professor, and we still keep in touch and collaborate. I thought to myself, "I want to teach organic chemistry."

As I pursued my Ph.D. in chemistry at Lehigh University, I became fascinated by medicinal chemistry. You get to make molecules that have a purpose.

My dissertation was on non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) derivatives that are also inhibitors of acetylcholinesterase, an enzyme that plays a role in Alzheimer's disease and also in inflammation. I was synthesizing molecules that would target both inflammation and acetylcholinesterase. Some of these molecules have progressed to at least preclinical trials, so it was an exciting project.

I'm still studying NSAIDs, specifically for Alzheimer's disease. We're looking at more effectively delivering NSAIDs to the brain. Molecules have certain properties in common if

they're permeable to the blood-brain barrier, so we make molecules that have those properties. There is also what's called plasma protein binding: If a molecule is extensively bound to plasma proteins, that will prevent it from entering the brain, because the blood-brain barrier restricts passage of large molecules. There's also efflux: Even if a molecule were to get into the brain, some transporter proteins could transport it out — that happens with some NSAIDs as well.

Since one minor structural change can impact a variety of other molecular properties, drug design is very much a balancing act and an art. We make NSAID derivatives and link them to what we call a shuttle. That linkage has to be stable, but not too stable, because we want the NSAID to be released once the molecule is in the brain. We assess the stabilities of these molecules in the lab using human plasma. It's very early-stage drug discovery. It's rewarding to see students move the research forward.

# Plenty to Smile About

In addition to owning a dental practice, Cuong Tran, D.M.D. '91 P'25 serves as team dentist for the Lehigh Valley Phantoms, helps run a Vietnamese restaurant, and supports Muhlenberg students interested in dentistry.



PHOTOS BY JOE ROMANO '23

**C**uong Tran, D.M.D. '91 P'25 came to the Lehigh Valley from Vietnam when he was six years old: “We got out of the country a month before the fall of Saigon,” he says. “April 30, 1975, is when it officially fell. We got out in March, so we were very fortunate.”

St. Thomas More Church, a couple miles from campus, sponsored his parents, their six children, and a cousin as they moved to the area. (Tran’s family later sponsored his cousin’s siblings and parents as they moved to the Lehigh Valley.) He grew up in Allentown and eventually attended Muhlenberg thanks to a

scholarship available at that time to local high school students.

Another formative childhood experience was getting braces to fix his “summerteeth — you know, some are here and some are there,” he jokes. “It built a lot of confidence in me, and I thought to myself, ‘I want to do that for somebody someday.’” So, he studied natural science and biology at Muhlenberg before attending the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine.

In 1996, he moved back to the Lehigh Valley and became a general dentist because he wanted to be able to help his extended family with their

dental needs. His office is across the street from Dorney Park, and there, he does it all — “fill and drill,” root canals, extractions, orthodontics, and beyond.

“My philosophy is: Treat every patient like a family member,” he says. “What would you do if they were your brother, your sister, your dad,



***My philosophy is: Treat every patient like a family member. What would you do if they were your brother, your sister, your dad, your cousin? ... I can't go wrong when I do that.***

— CUONG TRAN, D.M.D. '91 P'25

your cousin, whatever? That's how I treat everybody, and I can't go wrong when I do that.”

Through the professional organizations he belongs to, Tran heard about and volunteered with MOM-n-PA (Mission of Mercy in Pennsylvania) when it launched in 2013, and he's continued every year since. The nonprofit brings two days of free dental services to a different city annually; this year's event took place at the Allentown Fairgrounds. The volunteer dentists, hygienists, and oral surgeons see more than 1,000 patients in 48 hours and provide more than \$1 million in dental services pro bono.

“It's exhausting, but it's a lot of fun, and it's rewarding,” says Tran, who also helps plan and advertise the events. “It's a small way for us to give back to the community and help out people who need it.”

When the Lehigh Valley Phantoms launched in Allentown in 2014, Tran became the official team dentist through a connection he had with the team's trainer. He's part of the home medical staff, treating players from both teams when the Phantoms are in town.

“We see things that are very critical, injuries where patients have been sent to the hospital with broken jaws and lost teeth and broken hands and ankles,” he says. “Our main purpose



is to make sure they're cleared to go back on the ice.”

As if that weren't all enough, he opened a Vietnamese restaurant with his brother and cousin called PHO·NOM1NAL in a plaza near his office in 2021. He is president of the Pennsylvania Academy of General Dentistry. And he has remained involved with Muhlenberg: Students interested in dentistry are welcome to shadow him, and he also helps conduct mock interviews for students applying to dental school.

“I owe Muhlenberg — it gave me such a great background. I had such a great education there,” he says. “Everything about Muhlenberg for me was a great experience — the social life, the academics, everything. I want to give back. I'm very proud to have a degree from this school.” —MK

## Four Faculty Receive Tenure and Promotion



**Katie Bucher** has been promoted to professor of education. Bucher teaches courses in educational psychology, early childhood education, and teaching English to speakers of other languages. Her scholarship interests primarily focus on environmental education. Bucher holds a doctorate in education policy from Indiana University.



**Gregory Collins** has been promoted to associate professor of business. Collins teaches courses in analytics, operations, and sports management. His research focuses on child care and early childhood education finance and economics. Collins holds a doctorate in education policy from the University of Pennsylvania.

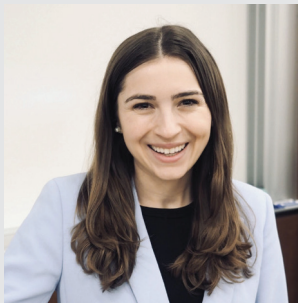


**Michael Buozis** has been promoted to associate professor of media and communication. His teaching focuses on media ethics, history, and journalism. His research examines journalism, history, and technology from a critical and cultural studies perspective. Buozis received his doctorate from Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University.



**Sarah Runcie** has been promoted to associate professor of history. Runcie is a historian of modern Africa, with particular interests in public health and decolonization in West and Central Africa. She teaches courses that span ancient African history to the modern day. She holds a doctorate in African history from Columbia University.

## Department of Accounting, Business, Economics, and Finance Hires New Faculty



**Grace Simon will join the college as an assistant professor of business.**

Simon comes to Muhlenberg from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. She will be defending her dissertation in management and organizational behavior this summer. Prior to that, she earned a master's degree in management from Wharton and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Haverford College. Her research interests include prosocial behaviors, emotions, and interpersonal support at work, and she's looking forward to mentoring students as they develop their own research projects or become involved with hers. Her industry experience includes roles with M&T Bank and Domino's Pizza corporate headquarters.



**Rupsha Dey will join the college as an assistant professor of finance.**

Dey recently defended her dissertation in economics at the University of New Hampshire's Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics. Prior to that, she earned a master's degree in economics from the University of Calcutta and a bachelor's degree in economics from Scottish Church College (both in Calcutta, West Bengal, India). Her research interests include financial economics, macroeconomics, macro-finance, and international economics, and she's looking forward to collaborating with colleagues on a way to thoughtfully incorporate AI as a learning tool. Her industry experience includes research positions at NielsenIQ and the Centre for Development Research, Sustainability and Technical Advancement.

# Muhlenberg in the Media

**The New York Times mentioned Muhlenberg in an article about the use of AI in college searches.**

In “Hey, ChatGPT: Where Should I Go to College?,” the author mentions a parent whose son “received his first acceptance to Muhlenberg College”.

**Chris Borick (political science) was quoted in several national and local outlets.**

Borick, the director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, lent his expertise to AP, the Miami Herald, MSN, PennLive, the Pennsylvania Capital-Star, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Politico, Reuters, U.S. News & World Report, USA Today, Yahoo! News, and The Morning Call.

**Paul McEwan (media and communication and film studies) was quoted by the BBC in a piece on tech and cinema.**

In “‘A Force for Alienation’: How The Social Network Predicted the Future of Tech,” McEwan discussed the film’s examination of the contradictions between capitalism and social obligation.

**President Kathleen Harring discussed campus development with LehighValleyNews.com.**

In “Student Union Expansion Will Provide ‘Perfect First Impression’ for Muhlenberg Hopefuls,” Harring noted that the Seegers Union expansion would serve as the college’s new “front door.”

**Benjamin Carter (anthropology) was featured by WFMZ for a historical presentation.**

During Black History Month, Carter presented on the Six Penny Creek Settlement, highlighting Black Americans who provided “incredible aid” to the Underground Railroad.

**Kate Richmond (psychology) discussed the college’s Inside/Out program on the “Mindbridge” podcast.**

In the episode, Richmond explored prison reform and the impact of providing education within the carceral system.

**Brian Mello (political science), Erika M. Sutherland (Spanish), and Chris Borick (political science) participated in a community forum for LehighValleyNews.com.**

In “A Community Conversation: President Trump 2.0, One Year In,” the faculty members discussed the effects of the second Trump administration on the Lehigh Valley.

## UPCOMING SHOWS

**June 12-27**

**“Seussical”**

Musical theatre returns to Muhlenberg’s summer stage with the beloved Dr. Seuss musical that brings to life Dr. Seuss characters including Horton the Elephant, The Cat in the Hat, Gertrude McFuzz, Mayzie, and Jojo — a little boy with a big imagination.

**Tickets:** \$17-32, [muhlenberg.edu/tickets](http://muhlenberg.edu/tickets)

**Location:** Trexler Pavilion, Baker Theatre

**October 1-4**

**“Doctor Faustus”**

Aerial choreography will be one of the highlights of this production of the Elizabethan tragedy about a man of science whose longing for knowledge and power leads him to make a deal with the devil.

**October 28-November 1**

**“Carrie: The Musical”**

The theatre program will celebrate Halloween with this cult-favorite musical adaptation of Stephen King’s all-time horror classic, the story of an awkward teenage girl whose nightmarish life changes when she discovers she has telekinetic powers.

**November 21**

**“Uncle Vanya”**

A staged reading of Chekhov’s classic will set the stage for the spring production of “Life Sucks,” Aaron Posner’s modern adaptation of the play. Life on a rural Russian estate unravels when a pompous retired professor returns with a beautiful young second wife.

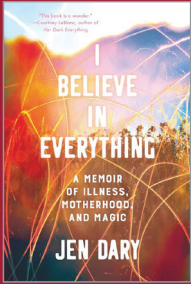
**December 3-5**

**“Reset: New Dances”**

This showcase for Muhlenberg’s advanced choreography students offers world-premiere works that explore a wide range of subjects, moods, and dance styles.

**Tickets for fall productions go on sale in August.**

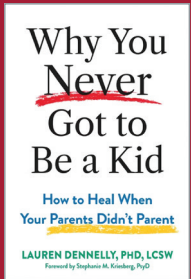
**Visit [muhlenberg.edu/seeashow](http://muhlenberg.edu/seeashow) for more information.**



**Jen Epting Dary '03**  
 “I Believe in Everything: A Memoir of Illness, Motherhood, and Magic”  
 Daring House LLC,  
 260 pages

Dary’s memoir details her experiences after

she developed a brain tumor at age 35, from the chaos of brain surgery to the challenges of parenting, from building a coaching business to leaning into a new-found spiritual safety net.



**Lauren Denny '06**  
 “Why You Never Got to Be a Kid: How to Heal When Your Parents Didn’t Parent”  
 New Harbinger Publications, 176 pages

Denny, a licensed clinical social worker, writes about “parentification,” being forced to take on adult responsibilities too soon, and how those who experienced it as children can move forward.



**Raymond Salani III '07**  
 “Iconic and Hidden Gems of the Appalachian Trail: 20 Unforgettable Hikes”  
 Schiffer Publishing, 296 pages

This large-format, photo-heavy guide book is Salani’s second about the Appalachian Trail; the first, “The Appalachian Trail: Four Seasons Along the Trail,” was released last fall.



# Dramatic Reading

Helen Laser '16, whose work spans theatre, film, television, and commercials, is perhaps best known for her audiobook narration, which she describes as “a lot of time in a box by yourself.” Sometimes that box is a booth in a book publisher’s office and sometimes it’s the booth she had custom-made for her New York City apartment after four years of recording inside a wardrobe. “It had no ventilation, no door — it was kind of janky, but it got the job done,” says Laser, who was a theatre and English double major at Muhlenberg. The summer of 2023 pushed her over the edge: “I was sweating and tired and getting dehydrated. I was like, ‘This is bordering on dangerous.’”

By that time, Laser had established herself in the world of audiobooks. Her best-known titles include “Yellowface” by R. F. Kuang, “The Wedding People” by Alison Espach, and “Suspect” by Scott Turow. This year, she was a finalist for an Audie award — the Oscars of the audiobook industry — for her work on “Heartwood” by Amity Gaige. She has spoken with Muhlenberg students more than once about this career path and has also set them up to audition with Audible.

**Muhlenberg Magazine** What does your recording process look like?

**Helen Laser '16** You’re in a booth for hours and hours, and you’re spending a lot of time with the material. I like to do a long day to have an easier end of the week. If it’s a nine-hour title, it might take me two to three days. That’s Monday, Tuesday, maybe a little bit on Wednesday, and then Thursday, Friday, I’m sitting pretty. I can take care of myself, the house, and admin tasks. My voice does not get very tired. Everyone’s got a different process, but I like to sit down and just bang it out.

**MM** What’s the most challenging thing about this work?

**HL** It takes a great deal of focus, stamina, and patience. It can be very lonely — you’re by yourself a lot. Also, you never know if your booth is going to stop working, or there’s going to be construction on your street. It’s taught me that I just have to let things go. I can’t control everything. I can’t make everything perfect, and that’s all right.

**MM** What’s the most rewarding?

**HL** Sometimes I’ll open my Instagram and see that I have a DM request from someone I’ve never met and it’ll be an author saying, “Hey, I just heard the recording of my book that you narrated. It hasn’t gone out yet, but they sent it to me for approval, and oh my gosh, you did exactly what I hoped you would do and more.” There’s no greater feeling of contentment and fulfillment than to know that you took someone’s dream and you brought it to life.

PHOTO BY YELLOWBELLY PHOTOS

# Muhlenberg Earns Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

*Giovanni Merrifield '24 volunteers for the Office of Community Engagement's Field Day in spring 2023.*

Muhlenberg was awarded the 2026 Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, a distinguished honor announced by the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. One of only 277 institutions nationwide to receive this recognition in the current cycle, Muhlenberg has maintained the classification since 2010.

The elective classification is not an automatic award; it is a rigorous process that requires institutions to provide comprehensive evidence of their commitment to community engagement. Muhlenberg's successful application documented a deep alignment between the college's mission and its institutionalized practices, showcasing how the campus

leverages its resources to address urgent societal challenges through reciprocal community partnerships.

Valid until 2032, the classification reinforces Muhlenberg's position as a leader in the liberal arts, where students are encouraged not only to learn in the classroom but to apply their knowledge as active, engaged citizens.

"We are heartened to see our collective work to strengthen all of our communities validated on a national stage," says Beth Halpern, director of community engagement at Muhlenberg. "This achievement is a celebration of the exciting things that can happen when people come together in education as a powerful means to advance the common good." —CM

# Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers

Associate Professor of Education Katie Bucher is helping to build a community of critically minded educators who will support one another even after they've embarked on their teaching careers.



PHOTOS BY JOE ROMANO '23

*Associate Professor of Education Katie Bucher teaches The Arts in Education in spring 2026.*

**A**ssociate Professor of Education Katie Bucher began her teaching career at an under-resourced elementary school in North Philadelphia. The school's outside space was almost entirely covered in macadam, with a thin strip of grass running along the fence. At recess, Bucher found that her kindergarteners all gravitated to that tiny patch of green space.

"I've always been sort of a nature person. I've gardened since I was a kid," Bucher says. Her students' interest in that patch of grass inspired her: "I did some gardening activities with them. It was an entry point to making connections across content areas, but also, they enjoyed it. It brought them joy to see seeds that they had planted growing."

She ultimately realized that her passion was for working with pre-service teachers — that is, educating future educators — and went back to school to obtain a master's degree in international and comparative education and a doctorate in education policy. Her dissertation focused on school garden programs in Philadelphia and Havana, Cuba.

"Pennsylvania unfortunately does not have a lot of environmental education expectations for pre-service teachers, but I incorporate that focus where I can in my early childhood education coursework," she says. "I talk about the mental and emotional benefits of spending time outdoors in a couple different courses."

Prior to joining Muhlenberg in 2024, Bucher

taught at the Community College of Philadelphia. She teaches courses in educational psychology, early childhood education, and second language acquisition. At the elementary school where she started her career, 75% of the students spoke Spanish as their primary language, and she taught in both English and Spanish. Bucher and her colleagues in Muhlenberg's education department recently launched an English as a Second Language (ESL) certification program through the School of Continuing Studies.

"Thinking about equity in schools is an important part of our coursework," Bucher says. "It's not just about strategies of teaching. It's about being a critically minded educator."

An education student's time at Muhlenberg culminates in a "professional semester" in which they're student-teaching full-time in two different placements. It's an incredible amount of hours in the classroom and the field. Muhlenberg recently approved an elementary education major and a secondary education minor (learn more on page 6)



***A teacher education program like this ... it can be a support network beyond graduation. Teachers feeling like they have a community of people who know what it means to teach is important.***

— KATIE BUCHER (EDUCATION)



"ESL is an area of high need," she says. "Our job working with pre-service teachers is to do everything we can to make sure that the next wave of teachers is well prepared to support and work with multilingual learners."

One of the strengths of Muhlenberg's education program, Bucher says, is how early and often students are getting fieldwork experience. By the second semester taking education courses, students are in the field as active observers — not yet student-teaching, but "engaged in the life of the classroom, interacting with students, working one-on-one or with small groups," she says. These early experiences help students learn whether teaching is a good fit for them.

If it is, as students progress through their time at the college, they're given increasing amounts of responsibility in multiple educational settings. Muhlenberg has relationships with several local districts that are resourced very differently. Students are able to experience teaching in these unique environments and to learn from the full-time educators there about the challenges and opportunities inherent in their districts.

as a significant addition to its certification programs, "essentially recognizing the amount of work [students] were already doing," Bucher says.

Bucher is working to involve students as she continues her research at Muhlenberg. One of her projects is a collaboration with the Mindful Child Initiative, a nonprofit that provides mindfulness activities to Allentown School District students. The organization has collected lots of data that needs analyzing, and Bucher is hoping that she and Muhlenberg students can work to assess the mindfulness programming the group has offered in outside spaces and its effects on elementary students' health and well-being.

Bucher loves teaching at Muhlenberg, where the small class sizes are an additional advantage: "When students graduate from a teacher education program like this, where there is this sense of community, it can be a support network beyond graduation. Teachers feeling like they have a community of people who know what it means to teach is important," she says. "For me, teaching is always relationship-driven, whether you're working with preschoolers or adult learners." —MK

# Sophie Tomov '26 Awarded Fulbright for Research in Bulgaria

Sophie Tomov '26 experienced the Bulgarian health care system firsthand during her grandmother's hospitalization. Tomov's family is from Bulgaria, and she was able to see the system's strengths and shortcomings up close. When it came time to apply for postgraduate fellowships and awards, she proposed a research and service project in Sofia, Bulgaria, in partnership with the For The Good Foundation, which works to improve health care and education for children.

"The project is designed to strengthen pediatric health care practices by addressing reported gaps in practitioner training and fostering collaboration with American health care professionals," says Tomov, a pre-med biology major, French minor, and Shankweiler Scholar who has conducted undergraduate research at Muhlenberg and New York University. "In addition to facilitating this exchange, I plan to systematically assess these gaps and explore their underlying cultural factors. On the service side, I aim to contribute to the renovation of pediatric and family wards, helping to create more open, functional environments better suited to the needs of children and their families."

This spring, Tomov learned that she earned a Fulbright U.S. Student Program research award, making her the first Muhlenberg student to have won a Fulbright for research in 25 years. Tomov will arrive in Bulgaria on September 1.

"Muhlenberg was invaluable in receiving this award," she says. The Career Center assisted with her CV, her professors wrote recommendation letters and helped inform her research proposal, and Associate Dean of Academic Life Kammie Takahashi set up mock interviews to practice



for her commission interview. "I could not have done this without the Muhlenberg community."

"As a pre-medical student, my academic training has prepared me well to undertake this public health project," she adds. "As a Shankweiler Scholar, I developed a strong foundation for viewing medicine as a human-centered endeavor, while also gaining experience in understanding and conducting public health research. My additional research experiences across both the sciences and humanities have further strengthened my ability to engage in academic inquiry and design a cohesive, interdisciplinary project." —MK

## Muhlenberg Earns Military Friendly School Designation

Muhlenberg's Division of Graduate and Continuing Education earned recognition as a silver level 2026-2027 Military Friendly School. Institutions earning the designation were evaluated using both public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. More than 3,200 organizations participated in the 2026-2027 survey with 878 recognized as Military Friendly. The designation shows Muhlenberg's ongoing commitment to supporting student veterans and

military-affiliated learners with flexible, high-quality academic programs and dedicated support services that are tailored to their unique needs. Muhlenberg participates in the Yellow Ribbon program, helping eligible Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket tuition costs. The college also offers a 20% tuition scholarship for active-duty service members, reservists, and veterans (retired or separated). Learn more at [muhlenberg.edu/gce](http://muhlenberg.edu/gce).

# Exploring Our Lutheran Roots

In 2024, Muhlenberg embarked upon Red Door Roots, an institutional saga project inspired by the college's red doors, a symbol of welcome rooted in Lutheran tradition. The project, supported by a grant from the Council of Independent Colleges through the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), examined how fundamental Lutheran values — human flourishing, social responsibility, and personal vocation — have shaped Muhlenberg's evolution over the past 50 years. The grant supported a speaker series, learning communities, alumni interviews, and the creation of digital and print scholarship, including a culminating video exploring how the college's Lutheran identity continues to shape its mission, values, and student experience. See it by scanning the code or visiting [muhlenberg.edu/reddoorroots](https://muhlenberg.edu/reddoorroots).



*If you have material you'd like to contribute to Muhlenberg's archives, please reach out to [scca@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:scca@muhlenberg.edu).*

# Personally Speaking...



# Ava Mattson '26

*Theatre and economics double major, Plainsboro, New Jersey*

## **In high school, she traded the soccer field for the stage ...**

"I played soccer my entire life, but in high school, I attended a small private school where a lot of athletes also did theatre. I found the theatre environment to be way less competitive with everyone supporting each other. I was kind of growing out of [soccer]. I wasn't loving it as much, and I found theatre as a different interest that I became passionate about very quickly. I just thought it was so much fun. I knew immediately coming into [Muhlenberg] that I wanted to study theatre, and getting to audition for things since freshman year just reinforced my interests."

## **... and at Muhlenberg, she discovered a surprising interest in economics.**

"Initially I was looking at a public policy major, and a part of the prereqs for that are the introductory economics courses. I don't know if it was just the way [Associate Professor of Economics Lindsey] Nagy taught it, but these classes just seemed connected to everything that you do day-to-day. Economics is about your cost-benefit analysis — for example, if I'm going to go to the gym, that takes time I could be spending on homework and I'm going to be more tired, but I'm going to go because the benefits outweigh the costs. I decided to double major because it was so different from theatre. Theatre was definitely piquing the creative parts of my brain, but econ was more grounded. There was a right and wrong answer you could get to. I like working that part of my brain as well."

## **She chose to study abroad in France in the fall of her junior year ...**

"Most theatre majors go to Arezzo, Italy, but I didn't want to feel like I was tied to any specific [discipline] there — I just wanted to travel a lot. I had taken French in high school and college, and my parents lived in the south of France in their 20s for a year. I've heard my whole life about traveling and how fun it was. I lived in a homestay in Aix-en-Provence — I was the only Muhlenberg student there that semester — and my host mom had been a chef. Every night I got a four-course meal. The whole bread-and-cheese moment was happening every night. I think I traveled to a total of 10 different countries [during my four months abroad]. You learn a lot about yourself meeting all these new people and doing all these new things alone."

## **... and the next spring, she got an internship with a local nonprofit, the Fine Feather Foundation, through the Office of Community Engagement.**

"I applied for the internship while I was abroad — I was looking at ways to get back into theatre right away. During the internship, I would go to two Allentown School District schools that had [Fine Feather Foundation] afterschool programs. For one, I was with middle schoolers who were putting on a production of 'Winnie the Pooh.' I would lead them through theatre games and help distribute snacks or help with costumes. It was nice to be a support system for them. I'm really interested in the health care and early childhood development parts of economics. If we're giving these kids from low-income households more opportunity to grow their brains and gain more skills, then we're setting them up for more success in the future. That's how I think it connects to economics."

## **After appearing in student-produced theatre and short films, she had a mainstage role as Max Bennett in "The Play That Goes Wrong" last fall.**

"It was probably the most fun theatre experience I've ever had, because it was a comedy and I had never acted in a role like that in my life. Every day I got to go to rehearsal for four hours and we were just laughing the entire time, playing around with the crazy characters. I had a mustache — it was a whole thing. [In a mainstage show], you really get to use what you've learned over the past couple of years. It was definitely hard to balance everything, though. I found myself exhausted a lot of days. I had never bought coffee every single day for that amount of time in my life. Prioritizing sleep was my main thing, especially as we got closer to the performances, because if you're tired and trying to play a character, you're not going to do your best work. I definitely had to work on my time management, but it was very rewarding at the end. Because of 'The Play That Goes Wrong,' I'm way more interested in doing theatre professionally."



PHOTOS BY JOE ROMANO '23

# Professional Organization Spotlights Career Center Program

The National Association of Colleges and Employers, a professional association for college career services, highlighted Muhlenberg's new Sophomore Career Accelerator program in a March article on its website. In the article, Director of Career Coaching and Education Caitlin Bach shared the story of how she came up with the two-day immersive career development experience and why she thought it filled a gap in programming for students in their second year of college. The first Sophomore Career Accelerator took place in January and featured interactive discussions with alumni and site visits to local employers B. Braun and United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. The experience was fully funded by the Benjamin Katz '21 Fund in Support of the Career Center. In a post-event assessment, all of the students who responded said that they had left the program with specific, actionable next steps for the upcoming semester to advance their career development.

## Muhlenberg Scores 96/99 on Princeton Review Green Colleges Scale

Muhlenberg College earned placement on The Princeton Review's Top 50 Green Colleges list, earning a green rating score of 96 out of 99 for 2026. The Princeton Review ranks Muhlenberg No. 3 in Pennsylvania and No. 31 in the country. The rating follows The Princeton Review's analysis of more than 25 data points from college student and administrator surveys over the past year. Schools publicized in the 2026 edition of the Guide to Green Colleges earned Green Rating scores of 80 or higher. Last fall, The Princeton Review named Muhlenberg to its Best 391 Colleges in the country list and recognized the college for its impressive return on investment, outstanding theatre program, and delicious food.



## SELECTED SPRING SPEAKERS AND EVENTS

### “American Solitary Confinement: Origins, Developments, and Potential Paths Forward”

The University of Michigan’s Dores M. McCree Collegiate Professor of Law Margo Schlanger examined the history and explosive growth of solitary confinement in American prisons.

### “AI and the Dream of Freedom”

During the Sue Curry Jansen Honors Lecture, New York University Vice Provost Charlton McIlwain proposed a vision for AI rooted in the Black freedom struggle to advance justice and liberty.

### EcoFest

The college’s annual Earth Day celebration brought students, faculty, and staff out onto the College Green for food, fun, and community.



PHOTO BY ALEXANDER PALMER '27

### “Exaptation: Or, What ‘Star Trek,’ ‘Supernatural,’ Dinosaurs, Birds, Contemporary Poets, Evolutionary Biologists, Wordsworth, Virgil, and the Iliad Have in Common”

Harvard University’s Donald P. and Katherine B. Loker Professor of English Stephanie Burt discussed the intersections of pop culture, evolutionary biology, and poetry during the 37th John D. M. Brown Lecture.

### “Digital Prescriptions: The Impact of Social Media on Modern Medicine”

The Shankweiler Scholars hosted a panel of experts to explore how social media affects public health and the critical evaluation of medical information.

### “Fear and Fury: The Reagan Eighties, the Bernie Goetz Shootings, and the Rebirth of White Rage”

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Heather Ann Thompson discussed her new book about an infamous 1984 subway shooting and its connection to modern racial resentment.



PHOTO BY GIAVAUGHN HENRIQUEZ '26

### Gladie Concert

WMUH welcomed this Philadelphia-based indie rock band to Seegers Union with special guests Noun and Hello, Operator?

### Marshall Allen’s Ghost Horizons Concert

This centenarian saxophonist and his ensemble played Egner Memorial Chapel as guests of WMUH.

### Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion 25th Anniversary Celebration

This reception commemorated 25 years of nationally recognized public opinion research and looked ahead to the institute’s future.



PHOTO BY KATHRINE TERRIBLE '27

### “Twelfth Night”

The Department of Theatre and Dance’s spring musical brought this colorful Shakespearean adaptation to Baker Theatre.



PHOTO BY MARCO CALDERON

# Retirement Reflections

After 25 years as the head coach of Muhlenberg women's basketball, the special feeling that comes from being part of a team is what I'll miss the most.

BY RON ROHN



Rohn cut down the nets at Johns Hopkins in 2011 in the fourth season of a five-year run in which the Mules won 20 games and played in the NCAA Tournament each year. Including prior stints at Hofstra University and Colgate University, Rohn reached the 500-win mark for his career in 2025 at Bryn Mawr.

During my first few weeks at Muhlenberg, in the fall of 2001, a reporter asked one of our players, Sue Marchiano '04, what she thought of the new coach. Her immediate reply was, "Well, he can talk!" I guess it's only fitting that, instead of being interviewed, I'm writing my own remembrance of my 25 years at Muhlenberg.

So where do I start? I guess the beginning is always a good place. I came to Muhlenberg from NCAA Division I and had never seen a D3 game. I figured it would be less intense, not as much pressure, a more relaxed atmosphere. We opened that first season winning our first 13 games while rising to a top 10 national ranking, ultimately finishing that season 21-4.

I remember thinking, "You have totally ruined this for yourself. Now everyone is going to expect this every year."

The wonderful group of women on that 2001-2002 team established everything that Muhlenberg women's basketball would become for the next 24 years. They were hardworking, successful, and ultra-competitive, and most importantly, they had an unselfishness and team chemistry

that was unlike anything I had ever experienced as a coach. The players on that team, and all of those up to and including the 2025-2026 team, still have a remarkably close bond with each other. I thank those women on that first team for that gift and also each and every player who followed behind them in upholding that tradition. It is really what has made Muhlenberg women's basketball so special.

I am exceptionally proud of how our players have excelled in the classroom during my time at Muhlenberg, often sporting overall team GPAs near or above dean's list. Even more impressive has been what my players have accomplished after Muhlenberg. More than 20 are health care professionals (doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, athletic trainers), while many others have made their mark in business, education, communications, and community service. Several run their own businesses. What more can you ask for, to have players you watched grow into adults wind up successful and happy?

Along the way, Muhlenberg women's basketball did win 437 games and eight Centennial Conference Champi-

onships, and we played in nine NCAA Tournaments (including two Sweet 16s). The memories are too plentiful to be told in anything short of a multi-volume book. I have a lifetime of stories that make me smile, from every single season with “my team.”

Many of those mental photographs include the looks on players’ faces as they storm the court to celebrate a big win with each other. Most of my favorite memories, though, are from practices, bus rides, team meals, the locker room before and after a game, and our many team trips to Europe. Those times together — away from the scrutiny of the video stream, opponents, and fans — are something most people don’t get to see. Those are the times and moments that are just ours, just the team’s.

What will I miss the most? It is that feeling of *team* — of going through the ups and downs together, with and for each other. Of being part of something much bigger than yourself, and doing it with people you sincerely care about. Because that is what will endure. It is the smiles, the laughter, the stories, and, of course, the adrenaline rush of winning and losing ... and being able to share all of it with people you truly love. That is something that can never be fully explained, only felt in the heart.

*Ron Rohn is the winningest head coach in Muhlenberg College athletic history. He recorded the 500th win of his collegiate coaching career during the 2024-2025 season.*

*At top, Rohn (pictured with Class of 2014 members Katy Mitton, Erin Laney, Colleen Caldwell, and Leeann Lanza) earned his 250th career win at Muhlenberg against Gettysburg in 2014. His 437 wins in 24 seasons on the bench are the most by any coach in any sport in Muhlenberg history.*



## MULE ROUND-UP

Muhlenberg will have new head **BASKETBALL** coaches for both teams next season. Sadie Nelson will take over for the retired Ron Rohn after serving as associate head coach. Taking over the men’s team is Quinn Newton, who was previously head coach at University of Maine at Farmington. ... Christopher Short ’27 (**TRACK AND FIELD**) broke or contributed to to seven school records and won gold in the 400 meters at the Centennial Conference Championships, both indoors and outdoors. He earned first-team All-America honors in the indoor 400, posting the second-best finish ever (seventh place) by a member of the Muhlenberg men’s team in an open event at the NCAA Championships. ... Sylvyn Parham ’29 (**WOMEN’S WRESTLING**) qualified for the first-ever NCAA Championships and finished the season with a 25-7 record. ... **WOMEN’S LACROSSE** had one of its best seasons, finishing at 12-5 and earning a spot in the national top 25 after an 11-5 home win against 10-time national champion The College of New Jersey. ... **MEN’S LACROSSE** reached double digits in victories and earned a CC playoff berth for the fourth straight season, finishing with a 10-8 record. Muhlenberg scored at least 21 goals in a game twice, something it did only twice before in program history, including a record-setting 23-5 defeat of McDaniel. ... Like **SOFTBALL** (whose historic season is detailed on page 29), the **BASEBALL** team debuted a new home facility in 2026. The Mules set a school record with 15 runs in one inning against Dickinson, with Steven Dimovski ’28 becoming the 13th player in Division III history to record three hits in an inning, and scored nine runs in the bottom of the ninth to stun Swarthmore, 15-12. ... **WOMEN’S TENNIS** finished with a 9-9 record for their most wins since 2011.



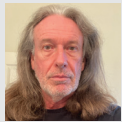
PHOTO BY NICO KLEMENTZOS

# Muhlenberg Honors 19 Departing Faculty

Together, this group has served the college for more than 525 years.



**Sharon Albert**  
Senior Lecturer of Religion Studies  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2004



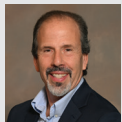
**Ray Barnes**  
Professor of Art  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1979



**Donna Bergenstock**  
Associate Professor of Business and Economics  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2000



**Jim Bloom**  
Professor of English and American Studies  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1982



**Chris Borick**  
Professor of Political Science  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2000



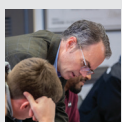
**Ted Conner**  
Professor of Music  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1997



**Karen Dearborn**  
Lentz Endowed Professor in Dance  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1993



**Susan Kahlenberg**  
Professor of Media and Communication  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1998



**Trevor Knox**  
Associate Professor of Accounting  
and Economics  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2000



**Roland Kushner**  
Professor of Business  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2006



**Michael London**  
Associate Professor of Business  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2006



**James Marshall**  
Professor of Economics  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1975



**Elizabeth McCain**  
Professor of Biology  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1994



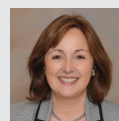
**Linda Miller**  
Associate Professor of English  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1991



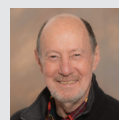
**Amelia Moreno**  
Lecturer of Spanish  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2015



**Paul Murphy**  
Professor of Music  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2015



**Camille Qualtere**  
Lecturer of Spanish  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2009



**Art Raymond**  
Professor of Economics and Finance  
Joined Muhlenberg in 1991



**Mike Stehlin**  
Lecturer of Business  
Joined Muhlenberg in 2013

# Muhlenberg Names Amy Becher Vice President for Enrollment Management



Following a national search, Muhlenberg College President Kathleen Haring appointed seasoned higher education admissions professional Amy Becher as the new vice president for enrollment management. As a key member of the president's cabinet, Becher oversees Muhlenberg's admissions and financial aid teams as well as institutional research and collaborates closely with partners across campus.

"Amy is a strategic and collaborative leader who brings a deep understanding of the evolving landscape of higher education," Haring says. "She joins us at a pivotal time, with a proven record of driving enrollment growth through data-informed strategies. I am thrilled to welcome her to the Muhlenberg community."

For more than a decade, Becher served as vice president for enrollment management at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, where she played a pivotal role in enrolling the largest classes in the institution's history at the undergraduate level and helped sustain strong graduate enrollments. Her experience also includes leadership roles at

Thiel College; Concordia University; and The Hartt School of Music, Dance, and Theatre at the University of Hartford.

Becher holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and administration from Concordia University and a bachelor's degree in music therapy from the University of Minnesota.

# Muhlenberg Expands Transfer Opportunities for Community College Graduates

A new transfer policy at Muhlenberg College has created a seamless pathway for community college graduates to earn Muhlenberg bachelor's degrees. Under this agreement, graduates holding an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree from any regionally accredited community college can now transfer directly into Muhlenberg's residential or accelerated degree completion programs.

The policy significantly reduces barriers for traditional-aged and adult learners by considering all general education requirements fulfilled for qualified graduates.

"Our region is incredibly fast-growing and dynamic," says President Kathleen Haring, "and it's powered by tremendously talented people. This agreement is a vital step in making higher education more accessible and equitable to them. By simplifying the transfer process, we are empowering motivated students to continue their educational journeys with fewer barriers and greater flexibility."

In addition to the college's full slate of majors and minors, students can choose from several accelerated majors designed



PHOTO BY JOE ROMANO '23

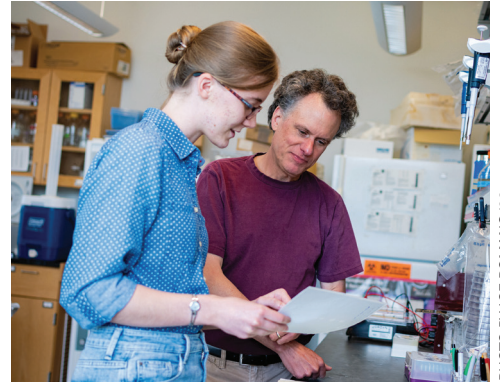
for working professionals, including business administration and information systems management. Muhlenberg's cohort-based, online model allows accelerated students to complete their degrees in fewer than two years while also balancing work and family commitments.

# Isabella Van Der Weide '23 to Attend Harvard Medical School

Isabella Van Der Weide '23, a pre-med biochemistry major at Muhlenberg, was recently accepted into Harvard Medical School's Health Sciences and Technology (HST) M.D. program. She will begin her studies in the fall.

"I was interested in the HST M.D. program because the curriculum is uniquely focused on teaching the biological mechanisms underlying health and disease," says van der Weide, who has been working as a research assistant in the Cepko Lab at Harvard Medical School since graduating. "Learning mechanisms helped me retain information as a student and teach it as a tutor and makes it easier for me to apply my knowledge in my current work as a researcher. I am thrilled to have been offered this opportunity to continue thinking mechanistically as I train to be a physician, a career in which I plan to keep learning, teaching, and synthesizing information."

At Muhlenberg, van der Weide conducted research in the labs of Professors of Biology Bruce Wightman and Erika Iyengar. She credits Professor of Chemistry Keri Colabroy for teaching her how to analyze scientific papers and Director of Health Professions Advising Cailin Cordon-Waldman for being "an amazing resource and sounding board" while she applied to medical schools. —MK



Isabella van der Weide '23 conducts summer research with Professor of Biology Bruce Wightman in 2022.

PHOTO BY JOE ROMANO '23

## Muhlenberg Announces Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2026



**Bobby Torphy '11**  
(track and field,  
cross country)



**John Scally '73**  
(men's soccer)



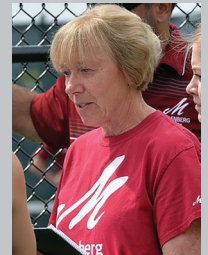
**Chris Peischi '86**  
(baseball, football)



**Mike Nolan '09**  
(football)



**Heather Dreby  
Dunlap '00**  
(softball)



**Coach Linda  
Andrews**  
(women's tennis,  
cross country,  
volleyball)



**The 2001 Women's Soccer Team**

They are scheduled to be inducted into the Hall of Fame as part of Red Door Weekend festivities on Sunday, October 18.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LAST

## One for the Record Books

Muhlenberg softball enjoyed a historic season, winning its first ever NCAA Division III regional title and setting a school record for most wins by any team in any sport (35 at press time). The Mules also set school records for hits, stolen bases, shutouts, and strikeouts in a season. At press time, the team had just advanced to the NCAA super regional round to play a best two-of-three series against defending national champion Trine University.

# Longevity Hacks

Plenty of influencers want to sell you their secrets to a longer, healthier life. Here's what you actually need to know.

By Howard J. Luks, M.D. '85 and Brad Moore, M.D. '85

Read the news or open social media and you're likely to see an "expert," an influencer, or a tech CEO claiming that they've found the secret to longevity. Maybe it's eating only one meal a day or sweating out "toxins" in a sauna or taking some protocol of expensive supplements. While some of these "biohacks" are new, seeking ways to live longer is not. Ancient Greeks thought about this, as did the Romans. People throughout history have looked for the fountain of youth because we humans have an expiration date.

Realizing that we do have some amount of control over the life we have left in our years can be empowering.

What the ancient Greeks and Romans didn't have was extensive scientific research on what actually works to extend not only lifespan but healthspan — the years in which you are living your life without being limited by chronic disease. Today, we know that most chronic illnesses share similar root causes that are all tied to metabolic health (or lack thereof). People who are metabolically healthy have bodies that efficiently convert food into energy. When your body doesn't do that, it puts you at greater risk for chronic disease (including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and dementia) and death.

Lab testing lets doctors find markers of metabolic trouble before a patient has developed chronic disease, but not all providers are proactive about the results. Training in the U.S. tends to prepare doctors to be more reactive — to prescribe a drug to treat a disease that's already developed.

Take hemoglobin A1C, a measure of the average amount of sugar in your blood over time, as an example. Labs determine their range of what's normal for any given test based on an average range of values found in the American population. When you've got a largely unhealthy population, normal may be average, but it's not healthy. A score of 5.7% or higher might be read by the lab as "normal," but it would be a signal to us to intervene with lifestyle changes right away to prevent progression toward diabetes.

Everyone knows the most common interventions for a healthier, longer life — improving your diet and getting more physical activity. If they were easy, everyone would do them. Humans evolved in an environment in which we had to move to find food and we had to rest to conserve energy until it was time to find more food. Now that we have grocery stores and cars, finding food and conserving energy are both exponentially easier. However, we haven't lost the evolutionary pressure to rest when we don't need to exert ourselves, one of many evolutionary mismatches that have not been kind to the trajectory of human health in modernity.

Eating a diet rich in whole foods, mostly plants, begins by asking yourself what you can add to your diet to make it better. Maybe that's starting lunch and dinner with a salad or snacking on fruit before you have something else. And if you don't buy your favorite ultra-processed snack at the grocery store, you can't accidentally binge on it at home. The goal is to make it easier to make healthy choices. Same with exercise — patients should begin with a goal that's easy to achieve even on the hardest days. Walking for 10 minutes daily to build consistency and confidence is a great place to start.

Being physically active factors into the next pillar of a healthy lifestyle: managing stress. If you find a way to move your body that you enjoy, it can help you decompress after a tough



ILLUSTRATION BY ISTOCK.COM/ID-WORK

day. Meditation works too, or even simple breathing exercises. Some stress is inevitable, but avoiding optional stressors (cable news, for example, or social media) benefits your health and well-being. Cognitive inflammation is just as bad for us as systemic inflammation associated with chronic diseases. Finding strategies to manage stress makes it easier to uphold another healthy lifestyle pillar: avoidance of risky substances. You might feel less inclined to reach for a second or third glass of wine with dinner if you've already worked through the day's stress some other way.

Exercise, managing stress, and limiting alcohol all support another key to health: restorative sleep. Some of us wear not sleeping enough as a badge of honor, but getting enough quality sleep is a huge longevity hack. It not only makes us feel better; it's critical to adaptation and healing from exercise, as well as a functioning immune system. One study compared people who got less than six hours of sleep each night in the week leading up to their flu shot to people who got more than six hours. Those who slept less had a 50% lower antibody response. The human body loves things to stay the same, so going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day is the easiest way to develop a healthy sleep habit.

Finally, social engagement and connection supports health and longevity. People are wired for connection, and chronic loneliness has the same mortality risk as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. We're not more connected by social media because, for some people, it has replaced seeing

their friends in real life. They're sending a thumbs-up on a birthday instead of making a phone call. These tech companies are demanding our attention, but we have agency. We can choose to prioritize interactions with people over interactions with screens.

This kind of knowledge isn't the only thing people need to make meaningful lifestyle changes. They also need to have the right attitude. One of our mentors liked to say, "I know I'm going to die from something. I just don't want it to be my fault." Realizing that we do have some amount of control over the life we have left in our years can be empowering. Patients also need to find internal motivation. Some want to get off their medication. Others want to be able to continue doing the activities they enjoy, whether that's running marathons or playing with their children or grandchildren. Finding your "why" will help you succeed.

At the end of the day, longevity comes down to a focus on the basics — diet, exercise, sleep, stress management, social connection, and avoiding harmful substances. People want a shortcut, but there are no shortcuts to a long, healthy life.

*Howard J. Luks, M.D. '85 is an orthopedic surgeon in Dobbs Ferry, New York, and the author of "Longevity ... Simplified: Living A Longer, Healthier Life Shouldn't Be Complicated." Brad Moore, M.D. '85 is executive director of lifestyle medicine and healthy longevity at Complete Concierge Care in Washington, D.C.*

# PUTTING THE *Mule*



# *in 'Berg*

The journey from the college's early mascots  
(which included dogs and children)  
to the Marti we know and love today

BY **Meghan Kita**

PHOTOS BY **Marco Calderon**



IF YOU'VE BEEN  
ON CAMPUS  
IN THE LAST DECADE FOR A  
HOMECOMING  
FAIR  
OR A  
FOOTBALL  
GAME,  
YOU'VE LIKELY ENCOUNTERED



*Marti*  
*the Mule*



2026

**MARTI IS GRAY**, furry, and sometimes a little disoriented. (It is *really* hard to see out of that mule head.) But, more than anything, Marti is the ultimate cheerleader for Muhlenberg — bringing smiles to the faces of fans of all ages, doling out high fives and hugs, and generating a sense of team spirit the way only humans wearing ridiculous costumes can.

It wasn't always this way. Alumni from the 1950s and earlier may remember a time before the advent of costumed mascots, when live mules attended both home and away football games. Go back further in the archives and you'll find that Muhlenberg's athletic

teams weren't always known as the Mules and that early teams had dogs and even children as their mascots.

"Who doesn't love a mascot?" says Director of Athletics Lynn Tubman. "Mascots always seem to elevate the energy and school spirit at every event they attend, and Marti does that so well. Our student-athletes and fans are always excited to see Marti at our contests, rallying the crowd and bringing our community together."

If the Muhlenberg mule also sparks joy in you, join us as we explore how we came to have such a distinctive and memorable mascot.



1912

## Living Things (Not Mules)

In an 1899 article in the student publication that was then called just *The Muhlenberg* (it became weekly in 1914), G. Wellington Lutz, Class of 1901, wrote, “A mascot is anything that brings good luck — if there is such a thing as luck.” At first, what brought teams luck seemed to be children. Archives of the *Weekly* and the *Ciarla* yearbook document more than one child serving as the football team’s mascot from the late 1800s through the early 1940s, including Truman Koehler Jr. ’52, the then-10-year-old son of then-Professor of Mathematics Truman L. Koehler Sr., Class of 1924.

“The two things my father talked about in connection with this were how many broken noses there were due to not having a face mask — just leather helmets — and how many ‘new words’ he learned,” says Truman Jr.’s son Jeff Koehler ’79, who is currently a Muhlenberg trustee.

Dogs were also popular as mascots in the early 1900s, and not only at Muhlenberg: Yale University was the first American college to have a mascot, a dog they called Handsome Dan who attended all football and baseball games. (Today, Yale has Handsome Dan XIX — that is, 19 — one of the now less common live animal mascots still in the business.) Muhlenberg’s first dog mascot on record was a Great Dane named Dutch (pictured above), who joined the college for the 1911 football season. Another dog, King Solomon, was the athletics mascot in the early 1920s. Canine mascots weren’t only for athletic teams, either: Muhlenberg fraternities in this period frequently had dogs as mascots, and in 1945, a unit of the Navy attending Muhlenberg had a Chesapeake Bay retriever named Rusty as its mascot.

A 1926 *Muhlenberg Weekly* article laments the lack of a mascot at that time and proposes a new one: “Our school colors suggest a very likely symbol, for our benefit, even if it should be a little difficult to use for a mascot. The Cardinal is a very pretty bird ... and even if its habitat does not suit it for use in these climes as a mascot, its figure would do very creditably on banners and other insignia.” The writer suggests a mounted cardinal — nothing excites sports fans like taxidermy! — and concludes, “We can in no wise afford to be behind others who have symbols or other objects of admiration. Let’s have the Cardinal for our standard.” And we did, at least for some time, as evidenced by baseball team photos with the word “Cardinals” emblazoned on the jerseys.

## Living Mules

The first recorded mention of using a mule as a mascot comes from the October 6, 1927, issue of *The Muhlenberg Weekly*: “There is a mule in Muhlenberg. So our opponents on the gridiron after feeling our kick tell us. Why not buy one and have it as our mascot. Besides there are plenty of freshmen who know how to handle them.”

The first time students actually implemented this idea was two seasons later, in 1929, with both *The Muhlenberg Weekly* and *The Morning Call* referring to a live mule, named “Paddock Schneck” according to the *Call*, attending football games. John Hollenbach ’34 donated a photo album to the Trexler Library archives that contains a photo of a live mule tied to a fence on campus.

In a confusing juxtaposition, the October 6, 1937, edition of *The Muhlenberg Weekly* contains a photo of fifth Muhlenberg College President Levering Tyson meeting “the mule” — unclear whether it was the same one — on the same page where the main headline reads “Cardinals Trounce Larries 18-6.” The same article also refers to the team as the Mules.

The college would cycle through several live mules in the next few decades. The Muhlenberg archives include a receipt dated October 16, 1947, that reads, “Received from Muhlenberg College the sum of fifty dollars (\$50.00) cash as payment in full for one mare mule.”

Two years later, Lewis Trumbore ’49 wrote “the story of the only co-ed at Muhlenberg” — the college wouldn’t become coeducational until 1957 — in the *May 19 Weekly*. It was all about Judy, this first mule that the college had purchased (prior mules had been rented). During the football season, Trumbore wrote, Judy lived in a stall at the fairgrounds at a cost of \$1 per day — \$13.87 in today’s dollars. In the off-season, “rather than raise the tuition again, the college felt that some better arrangement had to be made.” A groundskeeper’s brother took Judy to his farm and kept her in exchange for her work. She served one more football season and was replaced by another mule named Jingo in 1950 for reasons unclear.

In 1952, the student body purchased a new live mule and held a naming contest. Albert Schrum ’54 came up with the winning name — General Pete — and won several prizes, including free dry cleaning, a fountain pen,



1952



1981



1982



1960



1983

and a “choice sirloin steak dinner.” Other name options included Boots, Avalanche, Surprise Attack, Winberg, and Bergermeister. The Weekly wrote more than once about needing to raise funds to send the live mule to away football games. An October 1, 1953, story in the Weekly — headlined “GENERAL PETE IS EXPECTING” — indicates that Pete was not a mule but a donkey. (Mules, which are a cross between a horse and a donkey, are sterile.)

General Pete was the last live mule mentioned extensively in the Weekly. Local newspapers referred to two more — Mr. Henry in 1957 and Pancho in 1959 — before the era of costumed mascots began.

## The First Three Mule Costumes

The February 11, 1960, edition of the Weekly includes a small box that begins, “Student council is organizing a Mascot committee to operate Muhlenberg’s newly acquired Mule costume.” A student in that costume appeared on the cover of the February 1960 issue of Muhlenberg News, that era’s alumni publication, lurking

behind a cheerleader and holding a mop-like pom-pom.

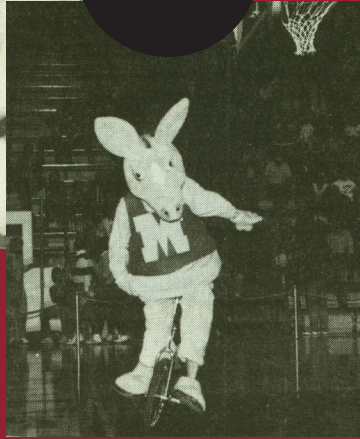
Muhlenberg was on the leading edge of the move toward costumed mascots. An article by Jeff Vrabel in the summer 2017 edition of the NCAA’s Champion magazine dives into the history of college sports mascots. Vrabel writes, “The early ‘60s also began a shift from live to costumed mascots, the first of which were (probably) Brutus Buckeye and Major League Baseball’s Mr. Met, who both debuted in 1964.” Mascots



**In 1952, the student body purchased a new live mule and held a naming contest. Albert Schrum '54 came up with the winning name — General Pete — and won several prizes, including free dry cleaning, a fountain pen, and a ‘choice sirloin steak dinner.’”**



1986



1994



2009



1987



took off at the professional level in the 1970s, with the San Diego Chicken in 1974 and the Phillie Phanatic in 1977.

This first mule costume was heavily used: It lasted from 1960 to 1982, freshened up by at least one new paint job around the eyes and snout along the way, among other repairs.

"The original mule costume was on its last legs," recalls Mark Paris '80 P'16, a former Muhlenberg mascot who's now managing partner at Creative Climate Capital and an emeritus trustee. "It was

stitched together in some places and looked more like a mule that had been starved and neglected. Having one's head inside a costume that trapped the steam of many heads of hair was not pleasant. It required frequent breaks to run next to the stands and remove my mule head to catch a breath."

An October 28, 1982, article in The Morning Call debuted a new mule costume, a pear-shaped, bunny-eared version that cost the athletic department \$2,000. Posing in the body of the suit was Diana Megna '84 and, in the head, Linda McMullen '83.



**I was class president and senior grad speaker ... and I did a lot of other things. I would've traded all those things for the mule."**

**— Mitch Brill '86**

This mascot featured prominently at sporting events, college milestones, and elsewhere — it even went to Harrisburg to meet then-Governor Richard Thornburgh — and many alumni fondly remember their time inside this costume.

Mitch Brill '86, now a partner/founder at Altium Wealth, became known for his ability to ride a unicycle from one end of the basketball court to the other while in costume. He remembers mascotting as “a license to pick on anyone you wanted to without any repercussions,” usually the referees. He'd point to an imaginary stain on their shirt and bonk them on the nose when they looked down, or take a Polaroid photo of them and, after it developed, drop it on the ground and stomp on it.

“I was class president and senior grad speaker ... and I did a lot of other things,” Brill says. “I would've traded all those things for the mule.”

Randi Schweriner '87, now CEO of Campus Innovation, had to be the mule for the second half of football and basketball games during the years when Brill had seniority. It was harder for her to do tricks as the mule — “I'm only 5-1, so I was a little short for the suit,” she says — but she enjoyed jumping around, cheering, and being anonymous.

“The most fun was when people didn't know who it was,” she says. “I could walk up to somebody and give them a big hug or whatever and they wouldn't know what to do because they didn't know it was me. It's really fun not to be you for a while.”

Michael Lefkowitz '91, who was the mule during his sophomore-year orientation and that football season, is a full foot taller than Schweriner: “When I [was the mule], my friends would laugh because you could see my wrists. It didn't always cover my body,” he recalls.

Lefkowitz, who's now general counsel for the real estate equity fund Penzance, mostly remembers how hot and unpleasant the costume was. He quickly learned to wear a bandana to keep the sweat out of his eyes. And he certainly wasn't riding a unicycle: “I think I rubbed my belly a little bit, and I would run up and down when we would score touchdowns, but there was no signature

move,” he says. “This is not a position that people were begging for, so I did not need to have those skills.”

Sometime between September 1997 (the last Weekly to contain a photo of the 1982 mule) and October 1998 (the first to contain a photo of the next one), the college acquired a new costume. This mule had a shock of gray hair, floppier ears, and dead eyes. It wore the same cardinal-red tank top with a gray M on it as the previous mule. This was the costume Marc Gollob '05 borrowed for his winning turn in the 2005 Mr. Muhlenberg competition, which was “basically a male beauty pageant,” he says.

He wore the costume for the introduction portion of the evening, to really make an entrance. He came on stage as the mule, carrying his girlfriend at the time. Then, he left the suit in the locker room for the remainder of the approximately 90-minute contest. After he'd been declared the winner, he returned to the locker room to discover that the mule head was gone.

“Initially, I was probably the suspect, but I was, like, in tears,” says Gollob, now an executive director within the gaming division at Wells Fargo in Las Vegas. The costume would've cost \$1,100 to replace, as the head wasn't available for purchase alone. After a few days of Gollob becoming increasingly panicked, the head appeared on the statue of General Pete outside Haas. The responsible party never came forward.

“If you're in a networking group and they ask, ‘What's something we wouldn't guess about you?’, one of the ones I draw on is, ‘Oh, I won a male beauty pageant when I was in college, and I wore the mascot costume,’” Gollob says.

## The Modern Marti

In 2016, the college replaced the dead-eyed mule with the costume we know and love today. Pierre's Mascots & Costumes in Philadelphia — which also designed the North Carolina Ram, the Villanova Wildcat, and, appropriately, an anthropomorphic Tastykake — custom-made the \$6,500 suit. Muhlenberg also decided that it was time for the mascot to have a name other than “the Mule.” A Name That Mule contest was held in early 2017 in conjunction with Mule Madness, the annual athletics fundraiser that takes place each February.

A Facebook post solicited ideas that were narrowed down to six that people could vote on, including some that had been used in the past: Pete (as in General), Henry, Hank, Mel (as in Melchior), Chewy (as in Chew Street), and Marty/Marti. (Some options that did not make the cut included Muley McMuleface, Mule N. Berg, and Bartholomule.)

In the post's comments, Eli Russ '17 asks, “Is it not

Marty? Lol,” and tags a Facebook page of unknown origin for Marty TheMule. The page appears to have launched in March 2013 and was last publicly updated in August 2013 with a post that says, “get at me on twitter @MartytheMule,” an account that no longer exists. Russ, who is now a senior public safety planner at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, doesn’t know who was behind the account, but “based on posts and engagement, I think it was a student-athlete-created account, maybe Class of 2017 or 2016,” he says.

In the comments of the post soliciting name ideas, a Facebook user named Alice Keiner suggested the spelling “Marti ... that way it fits male or female.” A parent of a Class of 2009 athlete emailed the athletic department to say, “Mules, technically, are sterile, and should have a name that could be either male or female.” While it’s true that mules are sterile, they are born with reproductive organs and can be identified as male or female ... but no one is interested in doing that for a one-of-a-kind mascot like Marti.

“We haven’t really discussed Marti’s gender,” says Associate Athletic Director Megan Patruno. “The students have never brought it up, nor has Marti.”

One of the most consistent Martis in Patruno’s memory was Michael Colasurdo ’23, a theatre major who is now part of the Carnival Cruise Line Fun Squad. He approached the athletic department early in his time at Muhlenberg because he wanted to sing the national anthem at football games. Patruno and Tubman liked his

energy and asked him to be Marti.

“Not knowing what I was getting myself into, I said, ‘Heck yes, I want to be the mascot,’” Colasurdo says. “It was a very interesting outlet for me. As a mascot, you can’t talk. You have to be silent. It was interesting only performing with my physicality.”

Colasurdo remembers the same challenges as alumni who came before him — battling extreme heat, the stench of the suit — but he has, perhaps, put the skills he developed as a mascot to more use than anyone else. Last December, for example, he was at sea with the Carnival Jubilee, and he was again putting on a suit — a Santa suit. Beyond that, though, his day-to-day work running activities for people on vacation requires similar skills.

“Your job is to entertain people. You get out there and you are the best you you can possibly be. You have to be friendly. You have to be on all the time,” he says. “That is what I think Marti the Mule helped me achieve.”

Now, there are three students who take turns in the Marti suit as their schedules allow. They attend games and major college events (look for Marti at Red Door Weekend, October 16-18 — learn more on page 52). They project excitement, enthusiasm, and happiness even as their nostrils are burning, their bodies are sweating, and their field of vision has narrowed to the inches-wide mesh circle inside Marti’s mouth. They’re hardworking, just like the animal they’re portraying.

Now, if only the *suit* were sterile.

2019



# THE MULE, BY THE NUMBERS



**4.8**

*Weight,  
in pounds,  
of Marti's  
head*

**3**

*Number of students  
who played Marti  
during the 2025-2026  
academic year*

**11**

*Number of  
pieces the  
costume  
comes in*

**5-10**

*Pounds of water weight  
former mascots claim to  
have lost while performing  
during half of a football or  
basketball game*

**1-2**

*Number of times  
per year the suit  
is sent to be  
professionally  
cleaned*

**23**

*Marti's shoe size in  
human shoes*

# Sometimes, More Is More

The unexpected benefits of choosing to study two seemingly unrelated subjects at Muhlenberg

BY MEGHAN KITA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIN MCKNIGHT

**R**aise your hand if you came to Muhlenberg because you knew you wanted to study two ostensibly incompatible subjects that you couldn't combine anywhere else.

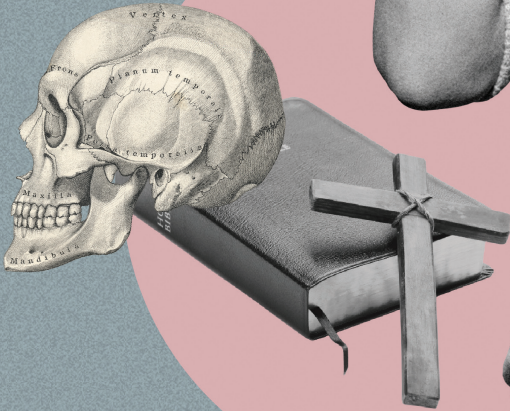
Now, raise your hand if you *thought* you knew what you wanted to study coming in but discovered a new passion as you explored your options as a student (like Ava Mattson '26, featured on page 20).

Muhlenberg's liberal arts foundation and culture of exploration make it a welcoming place for students with a broad range of interests. Some students choose Muhlenberg because it's the only institution they found that not only allowed but encouraged an unconventional pairing of interests (dance and neuroscience, for example). Others choose Muhlenberg for its strength in a particular area — pre-med, maybe, or the performing arts — and find another

passion that has nothing to do with their first as they work to complete their curricular requirements.

"The magic of Muhlenberg is in its interdisciplinarity," says Provost Laura Furge. "Our curriculum requires all students to explore the connections between different areas of study. Our faculty serve as role models, embodying curiosity and encouraging cross-disciplinary thinking and collaboration. There's nowhere better than Muhlenberg to pursue multiple passions."

Studying seemingly disparate subjects engages all parts of a student's brain. It produces well-rounded graduates with eye-catching, conversation-starting resumes. And most importantly, as these seven alumni demonstrate, it sets students up for success as they pursue further education and meaningful careers.



...ent I hear word ...  
in Washington said ... to ...  
transported again so ...  
which is needed. ...  
to get transport again.  
And I would like to have ... talk  
with Mr. Sargent and Mrs. ...

# Theatre and Political Science

## Lacey Holloman, J.D. '10

*Criminal Defense Attorney in Texas*

Lacey Holloman, J.D. '10 worked as a prosecutor for the district attorney in Midland County, Texas, for a decade before beginning work as a defense attorney in 2024. Her background in acting informs her approach to both roles.

"I view trials as a mini-performance — as their own little play," says Holloman, who studied theatre and political science at Muhlenberg. "I'm telling the story to the jury. They're my audience. It's my job to make sure they understand what's going on and to keep them engaged. We're selling a story just like you would on stage."

Holloman, a Texas native, chose Muhlenberg for its renowned theatre program. She didn't set foot on campus until move-in day. Fortunately, she liked the school and liked the theatre program but she realized quickly she didn't like acting enough "to try and make it — to do that struggle," she says.

She sought a second field of interest and found it in law. She spent a summer interning for her dad's cousin, a personal injury lawyer in Houston: "I really enjoyed even what I considered the boring parts of law — the very repetitive parts," she says. She took the LSAT as a senior and chose to attend South Texas College of Law Houston.

says. "Prosecutors in Texas, we take an oath that our job is to seek justice, not convictions. I always felt like I took that very seriously and I tried to treat every case with that in mind. Justice doesn't mean just one thing — you take into account what's best for the defendant, what's best for any victims, and what's best for society as a whole. I always wanted to do my job with the utmost professional responsibility."

In her current role as a defense attorney with Dunham & Jones Law Firm, P.C., Holloman has a smaller caseload than she did as a prosecutor (120 instead of 200). She also handles more misdemeanors; by the time she left the DA's office, she had worked her way up to being its felony chief.

"I was doing a lot of the serious offenses, like sexual assault cases, child abuse cases, murders, because we had a big uptick in murders over COVID," she says. "This has been a nice break because the DWIs, while they're serious and we take every case seriously because these are people's lives, it's much less intense than a child sexual abuse case."

Holloman has used some of her Muhlenberg training very directly in her work. For example, when she was in the DA's office, she designed an anonymous email survey to send to jurors after trials. She used what she learned from working with Professor of Political Science Chris Borick, in class and as a student worker in the Institute of Public Opinion, to inform her questions so she would get honest and accurate feedback. And she puts her performance skills to work whenever she's in court.

"I've tried close to 100 jury trials and it's always a performance," she says. "I think of the courtroom as my stage now."

*"I view trials as a mini-performance — as their own little play. I'm telling the story to the jury. They're my audience. It's my job to make sure they understand what's going on and to keep them engaged. We're selling a story just like you would on stage."*

She finished law school in 2013, a time when the market was overflowing with graduates who'd gone back to school because of the recession. She didn't think she would like being a prosecutor, but a personal connection got her on the radar of the Midland County DA, and that office was hiring. She ended up really enjoying the work.

"I'm not a true believer in the [criminal justice] system, but I am a true believer in me," she



# Biology and Music

## Jose-Luis Riera, Ph.D. '99

Vice President for Student Life at the University of Delaware

Like so many others, Jose-Luis Riera, Ph.D. '99 came to Muhlenberg intending to become a doctor. As a sophomore, he took organic chemistry (which he loathed) and became a resident advisor (which he loved). He sought out his advisor, Professor of Biology Rich Niesenbaum, for guidance.

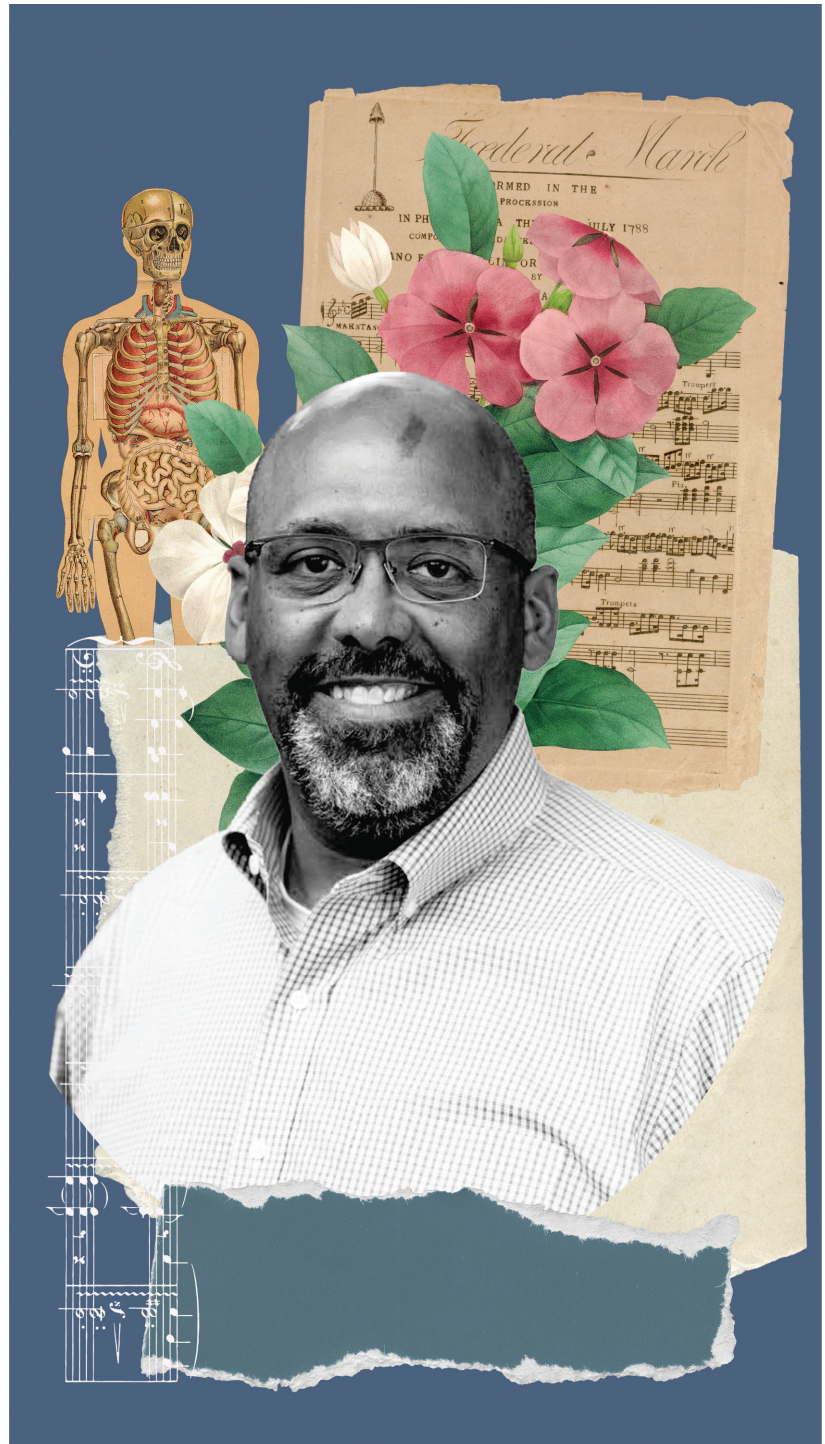
"We had this super pivotal conversation," recalls Riera, who's now vice president for student life at the University of Delaware. "I loved science, but he said, 'You're going to have to do a lot more of it, and it should jazz you — it should get you excited.'" Biology did, but the other pre-med science requirements largely did not.

One of Riera's other mentors on campus, then-Associate Director of Residential Life Mary Beckwith, saw how much he loved working with the students on his floor and said, "You know, you can do this full-time." Then, his only question was whether he'd go into student affairs or campus ministry. He chose to drop the pre-med path — though he still conducted biology research with Niesenbaum — and that freed up space in his schedule.

"I knew I could finish my bio major, and I could go up to a music major [from a minor], which totally excited me and jazzed me — no pun intended," says Riera, who played the trumpet but whose major centered in music history.

As a senior, Riera interned with the Office of Admissions, helping to plan and execute that year's Through the Red Doors admitted student event. Beckwith recommended graduate school programs to which he could apply, and he went on to earn a master's degree in higher education student affairs from Colorado State University. He spent a year doing campus ministry then spent four in residence life at Drexel University before pursuing a Ph.D. in college student personnel administration from the University of Maryland.

He's been at the University of Delaware since 2010, where his role overseeing all things student life might seem unrelated to his studies at Muhlenberg. However, Riera says, "There is an art and a science to education, and both are vitally important." In his role, he makes data-driven decisions about policies and programming (the science) and he helps facilitate the relationships and communities that make



college such a powerful experience (the art).

"The only frustrating thing is that I have passions and interests that I feel like will never be fulfilled," he says. "For example, I want to be a better musician, but I don't have the time or the space to do that. ... The cool thing about being on a college campus is that I get to live vicariously through our faculty and our students and all the amazing things they're doing, which is super fun."

*But I hear word from Mr. Sargent  
in Washington said gone to have me  
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*To talk  
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andulosa, 639.  
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ta, 659.

# Biology and Philosophy

## Benjamin S. Wilfond, M.D. '81

*Professor, Divisions of Bioethics and Palliative Care and Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine, Department of Pediatrics at Seattle Children's Hospital*

**B**enjamin S. Wilfond, M.D. '81 gets choked up when he talks about Chris. Chris was a teenager with cystic fibrosis, a genetic condition that causes thick mucus to build up in the lungs, digestive system, and elsewhere in the body. Wilfond met Chris at a camp for children with cystic fibrosis, between the first and second years of his pediatric pulmonary fellowship at the University of Wisconsin. It was his first time interacting with cystic fibrosis patients outside a hospital setting. At the time, treatment options for cystic fibrosis were fairly limited, and patients typically died in their 20s. Chris's case was particularly advanced.

"What I remember was talking to this 14-year-old boy who's literally at the end of his life, and he was just the nicest kid," says Wilfond, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington. "It completely changed how I viewed my role as a doctor and how I viewed patients. What families go through with any illness is just incredible. I have a lot of appreciation and admiration for what they do. They've got a really hard road in life, and my motivating question is, is there anything I can do to make their life better?"

Wilfond retired from seeing patients in 2023, but his primary focus was supporting children with chronic lung disease of prematurity (and their families). Today, his focus is on research, and he's most passionate about a project called the Trisomy Collaborative. It provides grants to study Trisomy 13 and 18, genetic conditions that are usually described as fatal, and the educational materials available to clinicians and families about these conditions. In reality, with interventions, 10 to 20% of patients live more than a year, and some reach the teenage years or adulthood.

"Our mission is really to try to improve the way the health care delivery system interacts with these families, making sure doctors and families have adequate, balanced information," Wilfond says.

Wilfond's career-long interest in complex medical questions was forged at Muhlenberg, where he was a biology and philosophy double major. He came in knowing he wanted to be pre-med; the second major came from an introductory course with Emeritus Professor of Philosophy Ludwig Schlecht.

"I thought, 'Well, I can get three credits for thinking about the meaning of life, and if I do this every semester, I'll be a major,'" recalls Wilfond, who was also heavily involved in theatre as a student. "I like this class. I like this teacher. I'll just keep taking more classes."

Wilfond didn't see the connection between the two disciplines until he shadowed a medical resident as a junior, when he saw in action that the practice of medicine was as much about the social interaction between doctor and patient as it was about the science. This morphed into an interest in bioethics, which the college helped foster through an independent study opportunity and funding for a subsequent trip to an undergraduate bioethics conference.

"What was so cool about Muhlenberg was not just the double major but the support and caring of faculty in letting students explore what they're interested in," says Wilfond, who spoke and received an honorary degree at Muhlenberg's 2022 commencement. "It really, truly got me going and gave me an incredible, meaningful start."

*"What was so cool about Muhlenberg was not just the double major but the support and caring of faculty in letting students explore what they're interested in. It really, truly got me going and gave me an incredible, meaningful start."*

# Environmental Science and Religion Studies

**The Rev. Jessica Chicka, Ph.D. '05**

*University Chaplain for International Students at Boston University*

**T**he Rev. Jessica Chicka, Ph.D. '05 is a Lutheran pastor, but she supports students of all faith traditions from all over the world in her role at Boston University.

"While my title is university chaplain for international students, that really has defaulted to the chaplain for multi-faith things on our campus," says Chicka, who began her role in an interim capacity in mid-2015. For example, many of the institution's international students practice Islam, so Chicka oversees the part-time Muslim chaplains and advocates for Muslim student needs. She helps organize chapel programs, like meals and art nights, that welcome all students, whether they're religious or not. She also works with the university's Marsh Fellows, undergraduates from different faith backgrounds who are selected for a year-long internship exploring faith and spirituality.

"That's been a really rewarding experience, seeing students who feel like they can't talk about religion with their friends have a place where they can have those kinds of conversations," she says.

*"The [religion studies] professor that I had at the time approached me about halfway through the semester and said, 'You know, you're very good at this — have you considered majoring or minoring in religion?' It's nice to have someone approach you and tell you that you're good at something."*

Chicka always had a place to have religious conversations: Growing up, her father was a Lutheran pastor. She came to Muhlenberg eager to leave the frequent faith talk behind. As a first-year student in her first semester, Chicka signed up for a religion studies course to fulfill her religion requirement and get it out of the way.

"The professor that I had at the time



approached me about halfway through the semester and said, 'You know, you're very good at this — have you considered majoring or minoring in religion?'" Chicka says. "It's nice to have someone approach you and tell you that you're good at something."

She was most interested in science, but she signed up for another religion course because she enjoyed the first one. As she explored different disciplines, she came upon environmental science.

"That major was so interdisciplinary — political science and history plus chemistry and physics and biology and ecology," she says. "I didn't really see any connection between [religion and environmental science] when I started majoring in both of them."

That changed during her senior year, when she chose to write her religion studies thesis on theodicy, or "the question of why does God let terrible things happen," she says. She found that certain sects of Hindus considered the land itself in India to be one of the goddesses and, therefore, worthy of protection. She wanted to explore other ways in which ecology and environmental science connected to religion, ethics, and personal values, and she found Boston University's graduate programs. She earned a master's in philosophy, theology, and ethics before pursuing a master's and then a doctorate in ecological and social ethics.

Her professional career at the institution began in 2012 when she was a Ph.D. student, as a quarter-time Lutheran campus minister. She discovered a passion for working with students, encouraging their religious and personal growth and supporting them in their most difficult times. She stepped into her current role more than a decade ago and was ordained as a minister in September 2021. She brings her environmental consciousness into her preaching and programming, especially during Earth Month, and serves as a sustainability liaison for the university.

"Working with young adults, it's such an interesting time during students' development," she says. "That's really the best part of my job, that I get to walk alongside people as they become their own person."

# Theatre and Neuroscience

**Ellen Herschel, Ph.D. '15**

*Postdoctoral Faculty Fellow at the University of Southern California*

**A**fter Muhlenberg, Ellen Herschel, Ph.D. '15 spent a few years as a working actor and theatre educator. She enjoyed it but she really missed science, so she spent a few years working for a lab in Chicago that was studying Parkinson's disease. She enjoyed it, but she really missed the arts.

"At that point, I had explored being an artist and being a researcher, but I hadn't put them together yet," says Herschel, who was a theatre and neuroscience double major at Muhlenberg. "I was like, 'There has to be people doing these two things together at the same time.'"

She applied for 10 doctoral programs that combined her two passions and landed at the University of Southern California Brain and Creativity Institute, where she just completed a doctorate in brain and cognitive science. In May, she successfully defended her dissertation, which draws upon

work she's done in USC's Brain and Music Lab. She has worked on brain imaging projects with subjects of all ages, from elementary schoolers (studying the impact of arts education) to older adults (studying how music training might be a protective mechanism against cognitive decline).

"I ultimately decided to have my dissertation focus on the ways in which musical and artistic experience impacts our well-being across the lifespan," she says. "How does this ubiquitous thing that's around us all the time, music, impact our health and social connection with others?"

Herschel began laying the foundation for her interdisciplinary doctoral studies early on. She attended Michigan's Interlochen Arts Academy — a top boarding school for artists of all kinds — where she also had terrific science teachers and experiences. She chose Muhlenberg over Bachelor of Fine Arts programs because she knew that she "loved both artistic work and scientific work — they filled my cup in different ways," she says.

She knew she'd be a theatre major at Muhlenberg but found neuroscience through exploratory coursework across the sciences. Taking an introductory class with Stanley Road Professor of Neuroscience Jeremy Teissere hooked her on the discipline.

"So much of performance is about how you embody a character," she says. "A lot of that has to do with tapping into your own personal experience — what do our bodies do when we get upset, angry, happy, sad — and how do you bring that emotion to bear by incorporating it into the way you move physically through the world? ... I really wanted to understand, from a scientific point of view, how do we do that? How do we come to experience an emotional response? What's actually happening in our brains and bodies to make that happen?"

At Muhlenberg, Herschel explored this in various ways, including through her senior thesis research. The project explored the impact of arts and dance therapies on patients with Parkinson's disease. She found role models for cross-disciplinary curiosity in her fellow students and her professors (Teissere, for example, majored in English as an undergraduate and has a background in dance).

"Seeing that complexity of existence in the professors makes a big difference in realizing that you can hold the multitudes of yourself that way, too," says Herschel, who accepted a post-doctoral faculty fellow position at USC to teach interdisciplinary courses and will be continuing her research in the Brain and Music Lab. "And having the option to really dig into both [disciplines] during my undergrad experience gave me the opportunity to actually see how they were connected."



# Chemistry and English

## Benjamin Liebov, Ph.D. '11

Market Access Writer for a Pharmaceutical Consulting Company

At Muhlenberg, Benjamin Liebov, Ph.D. '11 took a beginner jazz-tap dance class, a class in printmaking, a 200-level political science course called Utopia and Its Critics, and guitar lessons. He studied abroad in Spain. He came in wanting to be a pre-med music major — “I really wanted to go to med school, and I thought having an oddball major would help me get in,” he says — but he ultimately landed on a dual degree in chemistry and English. Still, he never stopped explor-

ing, and there are still classes he wishes he'd had time in his schedule to take.

“I've never been an exceptional, straight-A student, but I just love to learn,” says Liebov, who's now a market access writer for the pharmaceutical consulting company Evidera. “I knew I was only going to be at Muhlenberg for a short period of time. I wanted to soak in as much as I could.”

As a first-year student, he took an EMT course atop a full course load in order to join Muhlenberg EMS and quickly discerned that medicine was not for him: “It nearly killed me,” he says. “I was so stressed out.” He also didn't love biology, but he found a passion for a subject that strikes fear into the hearts of many students.

“I have never loved a class the way I loved organic chemistry,” says Liebov, whose English major came about just because he kept finding classes that sounded interesting and taking them. “Organic chemistry was one of my favorite classes in all of college. It was the first time in my life that something came naturally to me.”

He conducted summer research with Professor of Chemistry Joseph Keane and ultimately chose to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Virginia, studying under the same mentor Keane had. He missed the variety he'd enjoyed at Muhlenberg and found ways to create it himself, taking an extracurricular drawing class and getting into triathlons.

*“I've never been an exceptional, straight-A student, but I just love to learn. I knew I was only going to be at Muhlenberg for a short period of time. I wanted to soak in as much as I could.”*

His path since grad school has been a winding one — “when you start out your career nowadays, it's very unlikely that's where you're going to end up,” he says — but after trying out various research, project management, and writing roles, he found his current position in 2023.

“My job now is a nice balance,” he says. “I can be creative, but I'm still using my scientific background.”

In his free time, Liebov writes science fiction and fantasy for fun. He credits his time at Muhlenberg for providing a strong starting place for where he is now.

“Muhlenberg was a safe place to write badly and learn from it. It made me less afraid to make mistakes,” he says. “And it really developed the chemistry side of things — Muhlenberg was a good foundation that left me ready to go learn more.”



# Studio Art and Psychology

## Tongyao Su '19

Law Student at the University of New Hampshire

**T**ongyao Su '19 had a friend at Muhlenberg who approached her one day and said, "I bought one of your mugs!" The friend had found a mug online decorated with one of the floral paintings Su had shared on her Instagram account.

"I was like, 'What? I don't sell any mugs,'" recalls Su, an international student from China who studied studio art and psychology at Muhlenberg. "It turns out that the store was using my floral painting without my permission, and that my art was in all sorts of places that it was not supposed to be."

She tried to remove the infringing links, but more and more kept popping up, "an endless game of Whac-A-Mole," Su says. After graduation, she trained as a paralegal, hoping to learn more about intellectual property law and what recourse was available to her. She quickly realized that she needed more schooling to really understand this, so she chose the University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law, one of the top IP law programs in the country.

"Without a Muhlenberg degree, I would not have picked [law] up," Su says. "Muhlenberg [taught] me about interdisciplinary thinking and how my knowledge can transfer."

She's found that her art background comes in handy when she needs to do trademark or copyright analysis, comparing two different works. Her psychology background has carried her through law school, helping her stay steady in a stressful environment. And the hands-on experiences she had at Muhlenberg — conducting undergraduate research with Associate Professor of Psychology Kenneth Michniewicz, exhibiting her artwork — still feature prominently on her CV.

After Su completes her J.D., she is planning to head to the University of Washington for its top-ranked law librarianship program. She realized in law school that "I enjoy writing my briefs, but I don't like arguing with people," she says. She also became friends with the librarian, who has exhibited the art she has made as a law student in the library, and she is pursuing law librarianship as a pathway to stay in academia. She describes



her entry into higher ed, her time at Muhlenberg, as the best four years of her life.

"I met my mentors there in both fields, and we are still in touch," she says. "I feel capable of stepping into areas that I never thought I could do."

# ALUMNI EVENTS CHANGE SHAPE

This year, Muhlenberg is making changes to its two largest annual alumni events — THAW (or Toast Heard Around the World) and Alumni Weekend — to generate more participation and excitement and better meet the needs of alumni. THAW moved from January to March, and this fall, Alumni Weekend will combine with Family Weekend to make a larger celebration, Red Door Weekend.

“As we evaluated programs and schedules for our alumni events, we wanted to ensure that our events were balanced throughout the year and that they were as engaging as possible,” says Executive Director of Alumni Affairs Brad Ludwig. “Previously, only a few months separated when alumni would return to campus for a weekend and when they’d toast to Muhlenberg closer to home. Only a few weeks separated Alumni and Family Weekends. We hope these changes will generate more excitement and participation than ever before.”



## THAW Thrives in Spring

THAW historically has happened when the northeast U.S., at least, is very much still frozen — in mid-January. This year, for the first time, it was held in early March: March 5 to be exact.

“Alumni and hosts had provided thoughtful feedback regarding THAW,” Ludwig says. “While planning the 13th celebration, we looked to minimize common winter weather disruptions that often affect our northeast locations, help mitigate the impact of seasonal illnesses, and create a more balanced program schedule throughout the year.”

For the first THAW held on the cusp of spring, there were 41 events with more than 750 attendees. Visit [magazine.muhenberg.edu/thaw-2026](http://magazine.muhenberg.edu/thaw-2026) to see photos from the festivities.





## Alumni Weekend Becomes Red Door Weekend

This year, for the first time, Alumni Weekend and Family Weekend will be combined for an all-out fall celebration, Red Door Weekend, which will bring together the entire 'Berg community. This expanded annual event, which will be held October 16-18, will unite alumni, families, donors, faculty, staff, and students for a weekend filled with connection, pride, and celebration.

“No one has more Muhlenberg pride than our alumni, our current students, and their families,” says Vice President for Advancement Rebekkah Brown '99. “By combining these two events, we will be able to celebrate our college in an unprecedented way — as one community, over one weekend, because we are one Muhlenberg.”

The weekend will include reunions; the homecoming fair, tailgate, and football game (among other athletic events); 'Berg Bash; the annual Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work; Classes Without Quizzes; a Presidential State of the College; and more. Registration opens in July. Find more information at [alumni.muhlenberg.edu/reddoorweekend](http://alumni.muhlenberg.edu/reddoorweekend). —*Meghan Kita*



# CLASS NOTES

## WE NEED YOUR UPDATES!

We know because you've told us: You love to read about what your former classmates are up to now. Your classmates are curious about you, too, so send in your note today!

Class Notes can take many forms, and *all* of them are important:

- Work updates (job changes, promotions, retirements)
- Family updates (weddings, births, anniversaries)
- Personal updates (achievements, travel plans, alumni get-togethers)



Send your notes to [bergalum@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:bergalum@muhlenberg.edu) or scan the code by Friday, October 16, for inclusion in the fall issue.

Scan the code to tell us what's new!

BUT WAIT, THERE'S  
**MORE**

Be on the lookout for extra content about our alumni!

 Podcast

 Video

 Web Story

## 1954

**Jim Skidmore** was honored as a Hometown Hero by the town of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. Jim also was recognized as Veteran of the Year by Sea Girt, New Jersey. Jim served with the U.S. Marine Corps, attaining the rank of captain.



### Harry Berg and Robert P. Leighton

enjoyed a casual lunch in Florida. Robert is retired from the practice of law and lives in New York City with his wife. Harry is retired after 60 years in his family-run confectionery business and he resides in Boca Raton, Florida, with his wife, Susan.



companies in the med-tech arena.

From 2000-2021, he was the chief executive officer of the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM). Prior to assuming his position with SHM, Larry was the founder and senior manager of an integrated medical group, IPA, and management services organization in Southern California that managed the health care of hundreds of thousands of patients and contracted with 570 physicians and more than 20 health plans. He was also a founder and senior partner in MedQuest Partners, LLC, a national consulting practice, specializing in the integration of physician groups, hospitals, and/or health plans. Over the last several years Modern Healthcare Magazine has named Larry to its 50 Most Influential Physician Executives list. Larry lives in Dana Point, California, with his wife of 53 years, Sharon. He has three grown sons, three grandsons, and four granddaughters.



## 1958

**Robert P. Leighton, Arnold Markoe, and Neil Fabricant** met at a New York City restaurant to reminisce about their time at Muhlenberg. Neil, who fondly remembers the verse "putting on the old gray bonnet with Muhlenberg upon it," reflected on the life lessons he learned while in college. Robert is a retired criminal defense attorney who lives with his wife, Elizabeth, in New York City. Arnold retired from Brooklyn College in 1999 as a professor emeritus. He and his wife, Karen, enjoy the benefits of living in Manhattan but also spend time in Washington, D.C., where they maintain an apartment. Their daughters, Lauren and Nancy, and their families call D.C. home. Neil retired after a long legal/political career and is happily married with kids and grandchildren.



## 1961

**Don't miss your 65th reunion!**  
October 16-18

## 1966

**Nancy Rupnik Fiedler** began doing puzzles after the COVID-19 pandemic and currently has 23 of her favorite puzzles framed throughout her home, most of them 1,000 pieces.



## 1969

**Larry Wellikson** is currently an active member of Tech Coast Angels, a group of seasoned high-net-worth investors who invest in and support early-stage new companies, in Orange County, California. In this role, he has become a deal lead and board member for several emerging

## 1970

The Class of 1970 celebrated its 55th reunion on October 4. An enthusiastic group of alumni shared memories of their days at 'Berg along with their activities now that they are mostly retired: **Jack and Diane (Schmidt) Ladley, Bill and Pam (Hodge) Garver, Jim and Liz (Purcell) Powers, Glenn Kratzer, Ned Rahn, Jeff Gilbert, Barry Burkhardt, Don Hayn, Cheryl Desmond, Peggy Bolz Shaffer,**

**John Ondov, Larry Fox, and Bob Teeter.**

The group also enjoyed the company of six spouses. Jeff, Ned, and Larry are still practicing law in some capacity. Liz and Jim live a block from campus. All who attended had interesting retiree pursuits: painting on canvas, skiing, playing the



piano, golfing, yoga, enjoying their grandchildren, travelling, playing pickleball and tennis, and volunteering their time to help others. The group decided to plan a 60th reunion for 2030.

**Ronald Tuma, Ph.D.**, was honored with an official portrait ceremony from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University on November 13. Ron has dedicated more than five decades to Temple University as a scientist, educator, and leader. He has served as chair of the department of physiology, senior associate dean for research, senior associate dean for education, and assistant dean for admissions. Ron has published more than 125 papers and five books and has been honored with multiple awards in excellence and distinction.

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**1972**

**KeriLyn Burrows**

channeled her inner archaeologist on a two-week trip of a lifetime to Egypt and a few days in Jordan, including Petra. In addition to the usual sites — pyramids, Sphinx, Valley of the Kings (where a fellow explorer recognized her 'Berg Alumni hoodie during a hot air balloon ride), Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel — she toured the newly-opened Grand Egyptian Museum with the contents of King Tut's tomb, cruised the Nile for five nights on a dahabeya, saw the mummy of King Tut in situ (something she never expected), stayed at the Winter



Palace and Old Cataract hotels, and had the opportunity to spend time with several local families and craftspeople. Thanks to 'Berg's Senior Scholar program in 2024-2025 and Fatma El-Turky, she was able to introduce herself in Arabic and hold a few very basic conversations.

**Frank Scagliotta** spent more than 30 years as a Division I college basketball official, worked three Final Fours, and earned the 1998 Naismith Award for the nation's top official. While he retired from running the floor in 2012, for the past 10 years, Frank has been one of only four individuals in the country charged with evaluating officials for the NCAA Tournament.

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**1973**

**Kathy Dittmar Joslyn and Arthur (Jeff) Rank III**, along with their spouses, Pam and Bob, continue to enjoy international trips together with other mutual friends. This past October, they rented a villa in Bucine, Italy, part of Tuscany, for the second time. Ciao!



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**1974**

**Richard Krieger** retired in July after being in medical practice, in infectious disease, for 42 years. He now spends more time with family (including five grandchildren), traveling, and writing (working on his fifth novel). The previous four are available on Amazon in Kindle and paperback format.

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**1975**

**Jane Watts Frank and Gene Frank** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last summer along with attending their 50th reunion at Muhlenberg in October.



**Charles Wray**, now retired from The Press of Atlantic City, has returned to woodworking. He was featured in Shore Local News,

discussing the creation of his exquisite wood art pieces.

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**1976**

**Don't miss your 50th reunion!  
October 16-18**

**Eric Wachspress** retired after practicing intellectual property law for 45 years.

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**1978**

**Paul Silverman** was recognized by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation and Hudson County Community College at the inaugural New Jersey Creative Communities Conference for his dedication to the arts and public art and the inclusion of artists' work in his projects. Paul is co-founder of SILVERMAN, a real estate development company focusing on restoring historic landmarks and redeveloping mixed-use buildings.

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**1979**

**Mitch Goldblatt** received the Ma'asin Tovim ("Virtuous Deeds") Award, the highest recognition bestowed by the International Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs. Mitch currently serves as president of Congregation Or Shalom Men's Club.



**Leonard Zon, M.D.** has been awarded the prestigious 2026 March of Dimes Richard B. Johnston Jr., M.D. Prize in Developmental Biology. Len is director of the stem cell research program at Boston Children's Hospital and the Grousbeck Professor of Pediatric Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

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**1980**

**Phillip Rittenhouse** was elected to the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board and will serve a four-year term.

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**1981**

**Don't miss your 45th reunion!  
October 16-18**

**Linda Letcher** was elected to a second four-year term on the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board.



**Todd Pretz** and **Brian Marron** performed at Dogfish Head Brewery in Delaware as part of an alumni gathering, Muhlenberg Day.

## 1982

**Raymond A. Fritz Jr., DPM**, celebrated the 40th Annual Muster at the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida. Raymond was joined by his sons, **Daniel Fritz, DPM '14** and **Nicholas Fritz '15**, and **Jim Skaff, DMD '14** who enjoyed celebrating and walking through the history of the Navy frogmen to the modern-day SEALs.



**Robert Heary** was elected to the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board and will serve a four-year term.

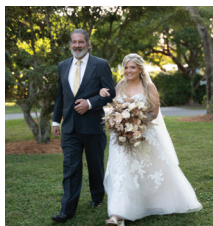
**Andrew Rubin, M.D., James Pezzi, M.D., Steve Adamo, and Ken Deutsche** attended the wedding of **Robert Doidge's** older son in West Palm Beach, Florida, in March. It was great to see ATO brothers again and to celebrate this important day.

## 1983

**David Jenkins** and **Rick Sayles** enjoyed their recent golf trip to St. Petersburg, Florida.



**James Salerno** celebrated the marriage of his daughter Emma.



## 1984

**Brooke McDermott** was recognized as one of the most influential people in the Lehigh Valley. Brooke is currently a lead organizer for the progressive group Invisible Lehigh Valley-Bethlehem.

## 1985

**Valarie Basheda** was a guest on the "2400 CHEW" alumni podcast. Find episodes at [2400chew.transistor.fm](http://2400chew.transistor.fm) or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Brad Moore, M.D.**, has been recognized as the 2025 Top Doctor by Washingtonian magazine. Brad was also included in the Washingtonian Top Doctors Hall of Fame, which recognizes physicians who have been named at least five times in the past 10 years. After 32 years as a full-time faculty member at The George Washington University, Brad is now executive director of lifestyle medicine and healthy longevity at Complete Concierge Care in Washington, D.C. Brad also received the 2025 Sol Katz Memorial Teaching Award from the District of Columbia Chapter of the American College of Physicians.



## 1986

**Don't miss your 40th reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

**Arthur J. Dichter** is now a tax principal, international, with Baker Tilly Advisor Group in Miami.

**Christie Svec Maniscalco** illustrated a children's book written by a friend. "Have You Seen Sam?" is the



story of a small star struggling to find his shine. It is currently available on many sites including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Walmart.

## 1990

**Karen Bleakley Hasterok** graduated from UConn's School of Public Policy with a Master of Public Administration as well as a certificate in nonprofit management, receiving an academic achievement award for a 4.0 GPA. Karen was admitted to both the nonprofit management and public policy honor societies.

## 1991

**Don't miss your 35th reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

**Eric Brickman** has been appointed as chief product officer for Quility, an award-winning insurtech company transforming insurance distribution through technology and innovation.



## 1992

**Aaron Ramson White** was elected as a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Aaron is currently serving as the president of the Penn Club of Philadelphia, which was founded in 1875 to recognize accomplishments in the learned arts and sciences. Aaron had the honor of presenting Ted Schick, Muhlenberg emeritus professor of philosophy, with the club's award at its 2026 annual meeting.





## Weddings

Top to bottom, left to right: Lucille Barchitta '94, Lindsay Quinn '05, Kelly Kirkley '12, Meredith McAllister '16, Tim Carroll '15, Ginelle Wolfe '16, Jaimie Berube '19, Patrick Moren '16 and Julia Baker '19, Sarah Theurer '19 and Colin Cunningham '19, Marek Tomanek '18 and Shannon Hubert '19, Kayleigh Scott '20 and Summer Paris '19

## 1993

**Kate Kinney Lubenesky** was elected to the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board and will serve a four-year term.

**Russ Racine** has been named to the Legal 500 U.S. City Elite in Charlotte, North Carolina, for intellectual property. Russ is a partner at Cranfill Sumner LLP and serves as chair of the firm's intellectual practice group.

## 1994

**Lucille Barchitta** was married in the Sussex countryside in England. Lucille was joined in celebration by **Jackie Indelicato**, **Francesca Diaco**, **Karen Carlucci**, **Heather Skilton Giampapa**, **Meredith Friedman**, **Samantha Salcedo**, **Jaynthi Gandhi '93**, **Colleen Scollans '93**, **Bret Kobler**, and **Mike Doyle**. From the floors of Prosser to a 16th century castle, these are lifetime friendships that continue to grow as we create new memories together.

**Janet Ross Macreery's** novel "The Falls" was named the gold medal winner in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards and

the Colorado Independent Publishers Association EVVY Awards, both in the juvenile fiction category.



## 1996

**Don't miss your 30th reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

**Andrew Kaplan** has been named co-chair of Baker Donelson's real estate group. Andrew will maintain his legal practice while serving in this leadership role.

## 1997

**Christopher Baylor** published a book with Palgrave MacMillan called "The Case Against Political Parties."

**John Dowgin** won the third annual 37-Hour Challenge at Smodcastle Cinemas in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, which is owned by writer/director Kevin Smith ("Clerks," "Dogma"). The event tasks

entrants with writing, filming, editing, and submitting an original short film based on certain criteria entirely within a 37-hour window. John's film, "Desperately Seeking Alyssa," was selected from 39 finalists, streamed on Smith's YouTube channel, and ran ahead of the theater's screenings of "Project Hail Mary" and "The Mummy Returns" for a weekend.



## 1998

**Matthew Daly** was elected to a second four-year term on the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board.

**Audra Goach** received Monmouth College's Academic Excellence Award for Distinguished Teaching on October 17 after being nominated by her students. She has been a member of Monmouth's faculty for 20 years and was recently named chair of the School of Health and Natural Sciences.

There's always something **new**  
for Muhlenberg **alumni** to do!



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## Clifford Horowitz

published his first book, a cyberpunk/urban fantasy novel called “Daemones Ex Machina” under the pen name Russell Anders. It spawned a tabletop role-playing game (also by Clifford), which led to an actual play podcast of the same name and an art exhibit with pieces inspired by the story and setting. It’s also the initial book in a new sub-genre called soulpunk, which highlights the soul’s struggle to remain human inside of a dehumanizing societal machine.



**Jeffrey Skumin** has been promoted to chief financial officer at Embassy Bancorp, Inc., where he will continue to oversee Embassy’s finance department and play a key role in guiding the organization’s financial strategy and growth.

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## 1999

**Amanda Gevens** has been named a 2026 Spudman Impact Award winner, recognized for her leadership in plant pathology, disease management, and mentoring the next generation of scientists. Amanda is currently a professor and extension specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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## 2000

**Ashley Kistler** has been named provost and chief academic officer at the College of Wooster (Ohio). She will start the role July 1. Ashley currently serves as dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Rollins College (Florida) and will bring to Wooster more than 18 years of experience as an educator, scholar, and faculty leader.



**Michael Moir** has been named chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages at Georgia Southwestern State University, where he has been a professor of English since 2012.

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## 2001

**Don't miss your 25th reunion!  
October 16-18**

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## 2002

**Selena Moretz Lavonier** was appointed vice president of development at the State Theatre Center for the Arts in Easton, Pennsylvania.

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## 2003

**Jeff Baird** was elected to a six-year term on Phi Kappa Tau’s National Council (board of directors) at the fraternity’s national convention in Orlando in 2025.

**Jen Epting Dary** published a memoir titled “I Believe in Everything: A Memoir of Illness, Motherhood, and Magic.” The book is a story of her experience through brain surgery and the challenges of parenting, from building a coaching business to leaning into a newfound spiritual safety net.

**Tracie Rosenbaum Serebrennikov, Audra Ain Levey '06, Amanda Heiberger Wolchock '12, Joely Winnick '19, Emily Sinensky Langer '21, and Alexa DiNorscio '22** hosted a mini-meetup for L’Oreal USA’s resident Mules to celebrate their shared alma mater. The group works across human resources, marketing, merchandising, and creative operations.



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## 2004

**Jill Friedman Crosson, D.O.**, opened her own medical practice, All-In Precision Wellness LLC, in the Lehigh Valley. The practice is focused on overall wellness and sports optimization.

**Matt Meyers** was honored by the Philadelphia Business Journal as one of its Most Admired CEOs for 2025. Matt has served the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology (PIT) as president and chief executive officer since January 2021 following more than a decade of executive leadership at the college. The recognition reflects PIT’s rapid enrollment growth that has significantly outpaced national trends, its strengthened financial stability, its evolution from a two-year to a four-year college, and its deep commitment to aca-

demical excellence, student support, and regional workforce needs.

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## 2005

**Greg Adams** was elected to a second four-year term on the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board.

**Lindsay Quinn** married Alex Holowach in August. Their Brooklyn reception was attended by many Mules!

**Mitchell Reading** completed his tenure as a member of the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board. Mitch served for four years and was a member of the nominations and governance committee.

**Joseph Stefanelli**, along with his sister Sarah, concluded their podcast, “The Sibling Sitdown: A Sopranos Podcast.” The series explored the iconic HBO show through the lens of lifelong New Jerseyans, blending cultural insight with thoughtful analysis. Joseph also brought his 20 years of experience as a high school English teacher to the conversations, offering literary perspectives that enriched discussions of character, theme, and storytelling.



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## 2006

**Don't miss your 20th reunion!  
October 16-18**

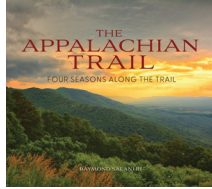
**Lauren Dennelly** wrote a book with New Harbinger Publications entitled “Why You Never Got to Be a Kid: How to Heal When Your Parents Didn’t Parent,” due out August 1. Find a Q&A with Lauren at magazine.muhlenberg.edu/lauren-dennelly. 📖

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## 2007

**Beth Irwin Johnson**, associate teaching professor, director of academics for the science B.S./MBA program, and director of the integrative science major for the Penn State Eberly College of Science, has been named the James and Alvina Balog Faculty Fellow of Science. The fellowship supports an outstanding faculty member in the Eberly College of Science working with the science B.S./MBA program by providing resources to support their contributions to teaching, research, and public service.

**Raymond Salani III** will have four photography books published by Schiffer Publishing by the spring of 2027.



The first, "The Appalachian Trail: Four Seasons Along the Trail," was released in November. The second, "Iconic and Hidden Gems of the Appalachian Trail: 20 Unforgettable Hikes," was released in March. Find a Q&A with Raymond at [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/raymond-salani](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/raymond-salani).

## 2008

**Kristina Lucarelli Koppeser** was elected to a second four-year term on the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board.

**Jackie Patino Polk** and her husband, Les, welcomed Caroline Claire on December 16. Julia and Luke are great big siblings and very excited!

## 2009

**Hannah Votta Coleman** was recognized as one of the most influential people in the Lehigh Valley. Hannah was recognized for her work with the nonprofit Joyful Giving.

**Alyson Williams Duncanson** and her husband, Noah, welcomed their first child, Ayla Jane Eileen, on December 18.

**Veronica Sanchez Gonzalez** was named the 2025 ATHENA Emerging Professional Leadership Award recipient by the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's

Business Council on October 30. Veronica is the CEO of Valley Health Partners Community Health Center (VHP), where she collaborates with the board of directors to establish long-term strategic goals for delivering high-quality health care to underserved populations. Under her leadership, VHP was named a gold-level health center quality leader, awarded to the top 10% of health centers in the country. She brings over 16 years of health care administration experience with expertise in process improvement, leadership, fiscal responsibility, and community-based program management.

**Jason Tenenbaum** was promoted to director at Accenture, a global professional services firm that helps organizations transform how they oper-



## Births

Clockwise from top left: Caroline to Jackie Patino Polk '08, Ayla to Alyson Williams Duncanson '09, Wyatt to Andrew '10 and Sami Unger Horrow '10, to Angela DeAngelo '12, Ryan to Carly Lyon Herbine '16, Sophia to Joey '15 and Sam Swire Adams '15, Cole to Marissa Levy Schwartz '14

ate and deliver value. In his role, Jason leads strategic change programs for his clients, helping them modernize legal and contracting processes by leveraging technology to drive business impact.

**Ryan E. Paskin** has rejoined the firm CohnReznick as a partner in its Value360 advisory practice. With extensive merger and acquisition experience, Ryan will lead a new value creation practice that will help alternative investment firms develop, execute, and accelerate value creation strategies to unlock the full growth potential of their portfolio companies.

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## 2010

**Amy Bauer** was cast in a professional production of "Our Town" at the DMK Theater in Union Township, New Jersey, and at the Sieminski Theater in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Amy directs the performing arts program at Morris Catholic High School in Denville, New Jersey.

**Jonathan Falk** was selected to the inaugural cohort of the Grinspoon Amber Awards from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. The Grinspoon Amber Award recognizes professionals who have made exceptional contributions to the Jewish world. Jon currently serves as Hillel International's vice president for Israel engagement and confronting antisemitism.

**Sami Unger Horrow** and **Andrew Horrow** are happy to announce that their newest Mule, Wyatt, was born in August.

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## 2011

**Don't miss your 15th reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

**Dori Lewis**, founder of Reflective Healing, a psychotherapy group practice, became one of the first practitioners licensed to offer the therapeutic use of psilocybin mushrooms in Fort Collins, Colorado.

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## 2012

**Laura Baehr** was a guest on the "2400 CHEW" alumni podcast. Find episodes at 2400chew.transistor.fm or wherever you get your podcasts. 📻

**Angela DeAngelo** and her husband, Darin, welcomed their first child on November 14, 2024.

**Kelly Kirkley** married Brian McAvoy in September in the Poconos surrounded by his closest friends from his time at Muhlenberg.

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## 2013

**Matthew Parker** has joined CSG Law as an associate in the firm's surety and fidelity and litigation groups.

**Vijaysinh Sindha** has been named district assistant business administrator for Berkeley Heights Public Schools in New Jersey.

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## 2014

**Nate Boateng** was a guest on the "2400 CHEW" alumni podcast. Find episodes at 2400chew.transistor.fm or wherever you get your podcasts. 📻

**Rachel Halpern, DDS**, opened Excel Endodontics, a new specialty dental practice in Marlboro, New Jersey (732endo.com). The practice was established in 2025 to provide advanced endodontic care with a focus on saving teeth, relieving pain, and creating a comfortable patient experience.

**Marissa Levy Schwartz** and her husband welcomed their second child, a baby boy named Cole, born on January 3.

**Naomi Leslie**

founded Rogue Cocktail Society after years of living and working in hospitality across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and now New Jersey — bringing her events throughout the tri-state area. Rogue Cocktail Society offers immersive cocktail experiences that go beyond traditional classes, guiding guests to create their own original recipes with a balance of creativity and technique. The result is a dynamic, personalized event where every guest leaves not just with a drink but with a deeper understanding of how to build one from scratch for their future gatherings.



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## 2015

**Sam Swire Adams** and **Joey Adams** welcomed their daughter Sophia Quinn on May 2, 2025.

**Tim Carroll** got married in Rochester, New York, on May 24, 2025, with Muhlenberg alumni **Kevin Mitchell** (groomsman), **Amanda Sullivan-Weiss**, **Ben Nassau** and his wife **Moriah Benjoseph** (with future Mule Abby Benjoseph Nassau), his aunt **Patrica Carroll Swanson '80**, and **Raphael Ades-Aron** in attendance.

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## 2016

**Don't miss your 10th reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

**Liuba Seaboyer Bigelow** and **Daniel Bigelow** welcomed a daughter, Bella Liuba Bigelow, on October 30.

**Carly Lyon Herbine** and her husband, Karl, welcomed a son, Ryan Wesley, in December.

**Meredith McAllister** married Stephan Pendleton in Austin, Texas, on December 5. Meredith and Stephan were joined by **Stacy Leinfuss** and **Katherine Dalldorf**. They currently reside in Chicago.

**Patrick Moren** and **Julia Baker '19** were married at Wandby Landing in Kennebunk, Maine, on September 20. Several fellow Mules joined them in their celebration. Patrick and Julia currently live in New York City with their tuxedo cat, Tommy Lee Jones, who celebrated his 18th birthday in February.

**Samuel Wechsler** earned a Ph.D. in neuroscience at Drexel University. Sam was also awarded a significant National Institutes of Health grant and is currently doing a postdoc with Jing Wang, Ph.D., at the Shenzhen Bay Laboratory in China.

**Ginelle Wolfe** and Nathan Bitecofer were married on October 5 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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## 2017

**Jessica Sperber** graduated with a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Columbia University last year, then moved



to Berlin, Germany, to work as a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. Her research examines the biological embedding of social inequality via epigenetic pathways

in childhood. She hopes her research can help reveal the social determinants of health and identify mechanisms that can help improve the developmental trajectories of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. In between writing her dissertation and planning an international move, Jess also ran the NYC Half-Marathon!

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## 2018

**Ali Calamoneri and Noah Fulcomer '19**

spent last summer hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, a 2,655 mile endeavor from the Mexican border to the Canadian border. Ali was hired as a blogger for The Trek, a social media platform dedicated to all things nature in the United States. Read their story at [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/pct](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/pct). 📖



**Marek Tomanek and Shannon Hubert '19** were married in September at The Wilbur Mansion in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Fellow Muhlenberg alum **RJ Olski** served as the officiant.

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## 2019

**Jaimie Berube** and her husband, Connor Morse, were married on September 27 at the Water Witch Club in Highlands, New Jersey. Several Mules were in attendance to celebrate.

**Sarah Theurer Cunningham and Colin Cunningham** were married on August 23.

**Cynthia Silva** joined the New York Times as a video journalist, covering breaking news on weekends. She is sourcing and pitching video clips for news stories, editing and scripting text-on-screen videos, setting up and monitoring live video feeds, and collaborating with desks across the newsroom.

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## 2020

**Alden Roberts II** was elected to a second four-year term on the Muhlenberg College Alumni Board.

**Kayleigh Scott** married **Summer Paris '19** on November 15 at the German Society of Pennsylvania. Kayleigh and Summer met at Muhlenberg in 2017 through Phi Mu.

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## 2021

**Don't miss your fifth reunion!**  
**October 16-18**

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## 2022

**Molly Laury**, who works as an animal care technician at the new Da Vinci Science Center in downtown Allentown, was featured in a video. Find it at [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/molly-laury](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/molly-laury). 📺

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## 2023

**Tova Granowitz** was promoted to vice president, Citi/AAdvantage digital acquisitions at Citi.



**Lauryn Graves** was a guest on the "2400 CHEW" alumni podcast. Find episodes at [2400chew.transistor.fm](http://2400chew.transistor.fm) or wherever you get your podcasts. 📻

**Jose Rivera** was recognized as one of the most influential people in the Lehigh Valley. Jose is currently a community engagement coordinator with the United Way of the Lehigh Valley.

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## 2024

**Paige Majewski** made her Broadway Palm debut in "Cats" this spring. Previously, she performed as Maggie in a revival of "A Chorus Line."

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## 2025

**Benjamin Allan** started a new position at Vanguard as a client relationship associate.

**Marci Martinez-Howey G'25** was a guest on the "2400 CHEW" alumni podcast. Find episodes at [2400chew.transistor.fm](http://2400chew.transistor.fm) or wherever you get your podcasts. 📻

**Keanna Peña** was sworn into the Peace Corps as a volunteer in the Dominican Republic.

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## 2026

**Don't miss your first reunion!**  
**October 16-18**



# IN MEMORIAM



Stanley W. Wise | 1948  
 Donald E. Seeger | 1948  
 Edward C. Schaeffer | 1950  
 Ross M. Stuart | 1950  
 Edward P. Edinger Jr. | 1950  
 George S. England | 1951  
 Frank G. Stefkovich | 1952  
 Karl E. Ringer | 1952  
 David N. Kistler | 1954  
 Richard I. Tredinnick | 1954  
 Kenneth M. Trexler | 1955  
 Rodger A. Krause | 1955  
 Eugene L. Shiffer | 1955  
 Harry W. Otto | 1955  
 Ernest H. Christman | 1956  
 J. Frederick Walk | 1956  
 Wolfgang W. Koenig | 1957  
 Robert A. Tust | 1957  
 William S. Griesmer | 1957  
 John Magan | 1958  
 Elmer H. Eisenhower | 1958  
 Russell G. Jenkins | 1958  
 James A. Skelton Jr. | 1958  
 Donald P. Huber | 1958  
 Paul Schmier | 1959  
 Penn B. Chabrow | 1959  
 Richard W. Stephan | 1959  
 Melvin Kleinfeld | 1959

Errol Lam | 1959  
 John Coscia | 1959  
 LeRoy E. P. Reitz | 1960  
 Earl S. Vollmer | 1960  
 Ann Fraley Carroll | 1961  
 James J. Reid | 1961  
 Frederick J. Kerr Jr. | 1962  
 Lawrence A. Kratzer | 1962  
 Helen Hlatky Ayers | 1962  
 Frederick J. Schatzle | 1962  
 Fred E. Hossler | 1963  
 Roy H. Koehler Jr. | 1964  
 Michael G. Merkel | 1964  
 William R. Cooper | 1964  
 Andrew T. Patterson III | 1965  
 Kenneth A. Sweder | 1965  
 Susan Champlin O'Donnell | 1966  
 Frank J. Stefanick | 1966  
 Cynthia Porter Johnson | 1967  
 James L. Heidecker Jr. | 1968  
 S. William Snover | 1968  
 Carl J. Pletenyik | 1968  
 Joseph E. Rich | 1968  
 Jon J. Mertis | 1968  
 Anthony B. Capobianco | 1968  
 Margaret E. Rocheleau | 1968  
 Kathleen M. Mosig | 1969  
 Milton M. Sholley | 1969

Roger N. Smith | 1969  
 Carol V. Crown | 1970  
 Peggy Cooper Poindexter | 1971  
 Nan Robbins Rush | 1973  
 William C. Gable Jr. | 1973  
 Eugene E. Laigon Jr. | 1973  
 Calvin D. Corvaia | 1974  
 Paul E. Zimbar | 1974  
 David B. Cooper | 1975  
 Joseph B. Hoffmeier Sr. | 1975  
 Frederick L. Becker Jr. | 1976  
 Donna Miedama Carr | 1976  
 Joseph Bavonese | 1976  
 Stephen R. Folger | 1976  
 Raymond Schilling III | 1976  
 Edward W. Ruisz | 1977  
 J. Randall Davidson | 1978  
 Derek C. Pretz | 1978  
 Steven M. Rose | 1979  
 Sherry Lerner Barret | 1979  
 Keith D. Cacciatore | 1980  
 Jean C. Schmoyer | 1985  
 Joseph P. Kovacs | 1990  
 Andrew S. Perrin | 1992  
 Hildred L. Dungan | 1998  
 Charles J. Lentine | 2013  
 Patricia A. Santiago | 2015



## R. DALE LECOUNT JR.

R. Dale LeCount Jr., who served as a Muhlenberg administrator for 25 years, died on March 25. LeCount came to Muhlenberg in 1973. He worked in several roles, including dean of educational services, dean of students, and dean of continuing education. Even after he left the college, many alumni from the 1970s and 1980s remained connected to him. Survivors include his wife of 61 years, Peg; three children (Melinda, Andy, and Scott); and two grandchildren.



To find links to published obituaries (where applicable), scan the code or visit [magazine.muhlenberg.edu/memoram](http://magazine.muhlenberg.edu/memoram)



## Candy 'Gram

An unexpected social media following has sprung up around my journey to open a small-town sweet shop.

BY KATE BOLGER '10, AS TOLD TO MEGHAN KITA

*Kate Bolger '10, a media and communication major and anthropology minor, spent 15 years as a filmmaker. Now, she is opening a candy store, The Village Confectionery, in Sleepy Hollow, New York, and documenting her work on Instagram. Her account, @thevillageconfectionery, gained 53,000 followers in less than three months.*

I definitely did not have on my life bingo card that I would be opening a candy store. I knew the moment I stepped through Muhlenberg's red doors that I wanted to be a filmmaker, so that's what I did. I worked my way up in the New York production scene, but it was impossible to ignore what the economy was doing to the industry. The streaming boom preceded a huge contraction that we're in right now. It has become impossible to be creative in that space.

One Friday a couple years ago, I was stressed, and I was like, "I want to take my kids to a candy shop and say, 'Go wild!' and see them just light up." I opened up Google Maps, and I couldn't find what I was looking for. I wasn't necessarily chasing a product. I was chasing a feeling — that neighborhood shop experience.

I started looking into it before I was let go from my job last spring. I looked at multiple locations and landed on Sleepy Hollow. Of course I should open a candy shop in a Halloween town. It gets tens of thousands of tourists in the fall. My husband, Andrew Porter '12, told me, "Just keep going until you hit a roadblock and it no longer feels worth it." I haven't hit that roadblock yet. I have been on a high-speed insanity train since I signed the lease on my shop December 1. Entrepreneurship is what a liberal arts education is for. I'm using every corner of my brain.

I knew the shop would need a presence on social media. I'm not a social media person in my normal life, so I leaned on an old colleague of mine to learn the platforms, algorithms, and what works and doesn't on the tech side. I spent a long time trying to

figure out how I could show up authentically in that space. I'm not somebody who can turn the camera on myself easily.

I did a lot of trial and error before I came up with the quirky concept for the first video, a tour of the shop as I found it. It was shot by Carolyn Martin '09. She's my best friend. She was there the day I signed the lease and had a panic attack. She deserves a cinematography Oscar. I posted it on Instagram on February 24 at 7 a.m. with 24 followers, most of whom were Muhlenberg alumni. Within the first hour or two, it was clear that something was not normal. It had over 2,000 views. I don't know 2,000 people.

What's sticky is the emotional hook. I've got high stakes already set in my story. It goes back to the basics of screenwriting and filmmaking: If the audience isn't rooting for you, then what are we doing here? I'm bringing them along for the ride. I haven't paid to boost anything; I haven't done any trends. It's purely organic.

I am planning to open my doors June 13. The town wants to do a block party. People have expressed that they want to fly here for this. I was like, "I don't believe that, but oh my gosh, if they do, I want to make sure they're having a good time."

I named this place The Village Confectionery because I wanted it to feel like all of ours. What I didn't realize at the time was that it would quite literally take the whole village to make this happen. It's been really eye-opening, just realizing how wonderful and powerful it is to connect in your own community with your own community.



PHOTO BY ANDREW PORTER '12



# Red Door Weekend



# One Community, One Weekend, One Muhlenberg

This year, for the first time, Alumni Weekend and Family Weekend will be combined for an all-out fall celebration, **Red Door Weekend.**

This expanded annual event will unite alumni, families, donors, faculty, staff, and students for a weekend filled with connection, pride, and celebration.



Scan the code or visit [alumni.muhlenberg.edu/reddoorweekend](https://alumni.muhlenberg.edu/reddoorweekend) for more details.



**Plenty to  
Smile About**

In addition to owning a practice, Cuong Tran, D.M.D. '91 P'25 serves as team dentist for the Lehigh Valley Phantoms, helps run a Vietnamese restaurant, and supports students interested in dentistry. **p. 10**