

# the collage

Spring 2016

Kutztown University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Newsletter



**Dr. Robert Ziegenfus**

Dr. Robert Ziegenfus' appreciation for nature has been a part of him since childhood. Considering he grew up on a farm, that's only natural (no pun intended). While living on the farm, he was taught about the crucial elements to know for any farmer, such as soil and the weather, by his grandfather. But his fascination with the environment didn't come instantly. Rather, it remained dormant until a geography class at Kutztown rekindled his intrigue in the subject. Since then, Dr. Ziegenfus has managed to turn that fascination into a varied and successful career, and after more than 30 years of service at KU, Dr. Ziegenfus has officially declared his retirement.

A Kutztown graduate himself, Dr. Ziegenfus earned his bachelor's degree in geography and, what was then called social sciences, in 1965. He later graduated from Penn State with his master's degree in geography in 1967, eventually earning his Ph.D. from Rutgers in 1980. Dr. Ziegenfus then began working at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in the Office of Cancer and Toxic Substances. He recalls his time there as being, "very exciting work given the designation that New Jersey used to have as Cancer Alley." After a few months of working for the NJ DEP, a chance encounter with an agent from the United States Environmental Protection Agency led to Dr. Ziegenfus landing a job at

the EPA. As an environmental scientist, he was responsible for performing statistical and graphical analysis on air pollution data.

What makes Dr. Ziegenfus' work in geography so unique is his research specialty: medical geography; more specifically, the geographical distribution of diseases. He has published various papers on several topics such as cancer and heart disease in Pennsylvania, and is currently analyzing blood levels of Pennsylvanian children. Dr. Ziegenfus also served as member of the Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board from its creation in 1989 to 2013, with 15 of those years spent as the chairman. While that accomplishment alone is worth praise, it is what Dr. Ziegenfus did during his time there that is most impressive. He spearheaded the development of the Ranking System, a system now used by many counties in Pennsylvania to determine which farms are better suited for preservation.

By the time he developed the Ranking System, Dr. Ziegenfus had already been teaching at KU for 7 years. His desire to teach came from his very first geography class, in which his professor was "not particularly inspiring." Ironically, this inspired Dr. Ziegenfus to become a professor himself. He felt that he should help students succeed in life by truly testing their abilities, the way other professors

## Faculty highlight

had helped him. "I think that is one of the most gratifying experiences a professor can have: to see students who he or she has challenged become the individuals that you knew [and] felt they could become with perhaps a bit of encouragement."

His approach to teaching has definitely proven to be successful. In 2005, he was awarded the Arthur and Isabel Wiesenberger Award for Excellence in Teaching. The recipient of the award is determined by nominations made by previous students who have gone on to have successful careers. "[I] do what I think is important for [my] students to help them be successful...and this, I felt, was confirmation of the fact that I had accomplished that."

We would like to thank Dr. Ziegenfus for his dedication and time spent teaching the next generation of geographers. In retirement, Dr. Ziegenfus plans to continue his research. On a lighter note, he hopes to complete his quest for 50-50: visit all 50 states (only one left) and 50 countries (about a dozen needed).

## Josh Steinberg, Fulbright Winner



KU alumnus, Joshua Steinberg, has been awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship grant for Germany for the 2016-17 academic year. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is the largest U.S. exchange program, offering students the ability to study internationally, and to continue advanced research, primary and secondary schoolteaching or university teaching. This is a tremendous honor for Joshua, and we wish him all the best.



**Dr. Laura Sherrod, Associate Professor of Physical Sciences, has been elected President of the Environmental and Engineering Geophysics Society (EEGS). A non-profit organization, the EEGS is the premier society dedicated to near surface geophysics, with about 650 members around the world, and hosts the annual Symposium on the Application of Geophysics to Engineering and Environmental Problems (SAGEEP). Dr. Sherrod, along with a few of her undergraduate students, presented their work at the SAGEEP to an international audience.**



## Oyinate Salako

Oyinate Salako is a girl with a plan. She has her future mapped out for the next couple of years. A double major in psychology with paralegal studies and philosophy as well as a minor in economics, Oyinate certainly has a wide range of career opportunities, and although she has big plans for her future, she isn't waiting until then to make a name for herself.

For a sophomore, she has quite the resumé under her belt. Oyinate is actively involved in several organizations around campus, such as the Black Student Union, and participates in events in the community, such as the Walking in the Shoes of...program through the Frederick Douglass Institute. She also works for the Pennsylvania State Employee Credit Union (PSECU)

and is a student assistant with the Philosophy Department in addition to her six-class work load.

With plans of being a criminal or corporate lawyer someday, Oyinate has wasted no time in actually getting hands-on experience in her field. As the senior member of the Philadelphia Community Youth Court she has managed to work extensively with Philadelphia trial lawyer, Kevin Harden, Jr. on a Martin Luther King, Jr. scholarship competition. Before she came to KU, Oyinate was fortunate enough to work with Philadelphia Judge Jacqueline Frazier-Lyde on her high school senior project titled, "Desensitization of Gun Violence and its Effect on the Black Community." She's also had the opportunity to sit in on a few of Judge Frazier-Lyde's hearings.

All of this professional experience has certainly helped Oyinate become a better student as well. Having six classes has taught her how to manage time more effectively, and working for PSECU has helped in developing her people skills, which are crucial for any lawyer. As is the case for many students, Oyinate has had some tremendous help from the faculty and staff at KU. Psychology professor, Dr. Jason Lanter, is Oyinate's academic advisor, and has helped her out a great deal in choosing the right classes to prepare her for employment. Philosophy professor, Dr. Alan Bäck, who

Oyinate playfully refers to as "Grandfather," has been another important figure during her time here at KU. "[He is] one of the most influential people I've met. [A single] sentence [of his] is thought-provoking."

Although graduation is still a while away, Oyinate is nervous and excited. After she graduates from KU, she will head off to law school for her Juris Doctor degree, and afterwards, she'll study for her Master of Laws. If that doesn't work out, however, she has a contingency plan involving a Ph.D. in clinical psychology with a focus on autistic adolescents. The road ahead may prove to be difficult for Oyinate, but we are confident that regardless of what life throws at her, she will find a way to come out on top.

# Student highlight





**Jessica Banotai**

KU alumna, Jessica Banotai, graduated in 2012 with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Spanish. Since then, her career in politics has taken off and shows no signs of slowing. Currently, Jessica works for Congressman Charlie Dent as Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer of his campaign.

Jessicahasalways had an interest in government. "I really just enjoyed [political science], so I had been volunteering in local campaigns in high school and college," she says. Jessica's fascination and eagerness led her to participate in the Semester in Washington Politics program in 2011. Run by George Washington

University, Semester in Washington Politics is a semester-long program in which students participate in classes and internships in order to get a better understanding of the political process. Through the program, Jessica landed an internship working for the Republican State Leadership Committee, specializing in finances and fundraising, where she learned a great deal about the ins and outs of fundraising for political campaigns.

As Finance Director for Congressman Dent, Jessica is responsible for managing the campaign's inflow of cash, as well as reporting information, as per federal regulations, regarding quarterly deadlines, bills, etc. Jessica also maintains fundraising during non-election years in order to have a steady amount of money for the campaign.

One of the most challenging aspects about Jessica's position is the sheer amount of work involved. "I bring my work home. I get called on weekends. I get called at night [and] I work late." While Jessica mainly focuses on the financial side of things, she also assists in managing all aspects of Dent's campaign. "[I] work with the chief of staff to do messaging and stuff like that, [and] every logistical issue is my responsibility." Even with all of that pressure, Jessica tries to have fun and not get too stressed out. "[I] try not to take it too

seriously [and Congressman Dent] works really hard so that makes it easier."

Jessica's time at KU was extremely positive. "I had a wonderful experience [and] I felt like I had a great department." Jessica has some words of advice to students about their time at KU. "Put yourself out there and take risks. Try to meet new people...volunteer and put your time in and facilitate relationships." She stresses taking any opportunity that presents itself and to make yourself known in the community.

With a promising future ahead of her, Jessica is looking to advance her career in a way that will better improve her community. "I can see myself running for office if the timing and the environment is right. But I'm also really passionate about my local county government, so I could also see myself working in administration."

## Alumni highlight

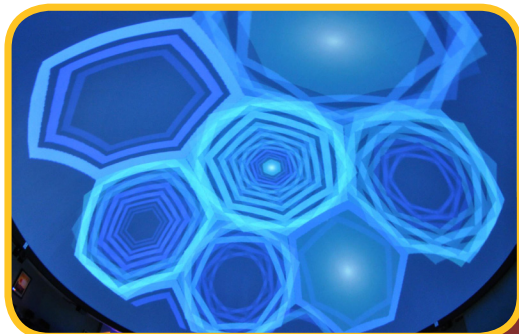
## PACISE PLANETARIUM DEMONSTRATION

The Pennsylvania Association of Computer and Information Science Educators held their 31st annual conference at Kutztown University in early April. The conference, which is hosted by a different state school every year, sees instructors involved in the Computer and/or Information Science Departments come together to present their work. This year's theme was "Women in Computing."

This year, KU's own Dr. Dale Parson, along with KU students Emily Hoch and Genevieve Smith, presented their work in a unique audio/visual presentation. Dr. Parson controlled audio feedback with mixers; Genevieve used a JAWS Reader (a screen-reading program designed to aid the visually impaired) to perform a spoken word portion, while Emily controlled the visualization aspect using software designed by Dr. Parson. The music used in the demonstration was represented graphically through Dr. Parson's software and made for an astonishing show.



**Presenting their work at the computer graphics and audio demonstration, from left to right: Dr. Dale Parson, Emily Hoch and Genevieve Smith.**



**An example of some of the visualization projected onto the planetarium dome using Dr. Parson's software.**



# Student highlight

Senior History major, Erich Lenz, has always had a fascination with Pennsylvania German customs and traditions. Hearing stories about Germany during World War II from his grandmother had a profound effect on Erich. Her stories left him wanting to know more about his ancestry as well as his local history. It was this same curiosity, and Kutztown's deep PA Dutch roots, that led Erich to KU. More specifically, the Kutztown folk festivals, which celebrate PA German culture, are what caught Erich's eye. Now, as a senior history major with a minor in PA German Studies, he is ready to graduate and pursue a career in public history.

In his earlier years at KU, Erich was not exactly an involved student. A tendency to procrastinate and personal family issues kept him from experiencing all that KU has to offer. But with some help from the History Department faculty, and personal

growth and maturity, he was able to become more engaged on campus. Through the efforts of Dr. Michael Gabriel and his "Introduction to Public History" class, Erich had a "watershed" moment where he realized what he wanted to do.

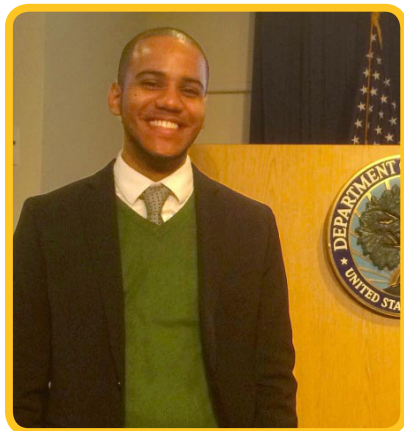
Dr. Gabriel's class taught Erich "nuanced ways to interact with [the] public," and gave him the "professional capacity to speak to people." Then, in his sophomore year, he worked closely with Patrick Donmoyer, Museum Preparator, in the Heritage Center restoring and preserving PA German artifacts. This was an exciting time for Erich; he was finally working directly with the very culture that brought him into KU. Both Dr. Gabriel and Mr. Donmoyer were crucial to Erich's time here. He considers them both his mentors, with Dr. Gabriel even providing career advice.

Erich has been able to turn that motivation into success. He received a grant for, and presented, his work, "The Light Shines On: How America Preserves Its Historic Lighthouses" at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association. He also presented that same information at the Higher Education Council of Berks County conference.

Erich shows no signs of stopping after graduation. He has already applied for a few different jobs at various organizations, including the National Park Service. He is also looking into completing his master's degree in applied history at Shippensburg University. We wish him luck as he explores new territory and forges a career in public history.



**Erich Lenz**



**Yorman De La Rosa**

Yorman De La Rosa, a senior Political Science and Spanish major, is living his dream. As of this past January, Yorman is completing his internship at the Council for Opportunity in Education in Washington, D.C. as a public policy assistant. Yorman has always had a fondness for international relations. Born in the Dominican Republic, his focus was always on Caribbean and Latin American affairs. Through his hard work and some help from the faculty at KU, he is doing what he loves most, while making a name for himself.

The Council for Opportunity in Education primarily serves to assist low-income students, veterans and students with disabilities in attending college in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia. As a public policy assistant to the council, Yorman has his hands full with quite a bit of work. His main responsibilities include assisting lobbyists with educational government relations; he also gathers information for meetings for a variety of representatives, as well as helps in drafting letters to Congress members. Mondays through Thursdays are like any other work day, working from 9 to 5, while Fridays, Yorman attends a colloquium on drafting resumes and career building in the Washington Center.

With only two Kutztown students ever to have participated in the internship, this rare opportunity is opening up doors for Yorman, and giving him a peek behind the scenes at some high-profile hearings and conferences. In February, Yorman was able to sit in on a hearing for the Education and the Workforce Committee regarding their new budget. This was Yorman's firsthand experience with what happens in Congress, and he loved it.

Yorman is very proud of the fact that he feels that he is "contributing and making the [council's] process easier." He is also very proud to have had Dr. Karen Rauch as his

academic advisor, who helped him adjust to his transfer from Lockhaven University. "[Her] wise counsel led [me] to where I am today."

Yorman's promising future is not just the result of hard work and determination, but also maturity. In his three years at KU, Yorman learned the importance of time management as well as setting goals for oneself. He strongly encourages all students to "take advantage of every opportunity thrown your way. Engage with classmates [and] professors because you never know where it might lead you." Yorman is currently keeping track of his internship through his blog [www.dreamchasingg.wordpress.com](http://www.dreamchasingg.wordpress.com), and encourages any student to check it out to see what he's up to.

## interesting Internship

# STEM OPEN HOUSE

KU's Science, Technology and Mathematics Open House, which is held twice a year, is designed to allow prospective students with an interest in the science, technology or mathematics disciplines to get some first hand experience in their desired major. Students can speak with faculty, alumni and current students, visit research facilities, and get a chance to tour KU's campus. The most recent STEM Open House took place on April 16, 2016.

Among the many attendees at the event, KU graduate, Aaron Brouse, and KU senior, Richard Lichtenwalner, showed up to give the parents and students a few words of wisdom, as well as some personal anecdotes about their time at KU.



## Faculty highlight

Professor of Anthropology, Dr. William Donner, has been enthralled by anthropology, the study of human culture throughout history, for quite some time. Throughout his career, he has traveled the world and seen, studied and researched different cultures and written various articles on everything from life in a Polynesian society to Pennsylvania German customs. Recently, Dr. Donner has had a book published that deals with the latter, *Serious Nonsense: Groundhog Lodges, Versammlinge, and Pennsylvania German Heritage*.

Dr. Donner's appreciation for anthropology began during his time at Haverford College. A class about religion in non-Western societies started his interest in the topic. Since Haverford lacked an anthropology degree at the time, Dr. Donner, through a special collaboration between Haverford and Bryn Mawr College, was able to major in anthropology at Bryn Mawr College and graduate with a bachelor's degree in anthropology. He then went on to complete his doctorate in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. For his doctoral thesis, Dr. Donner spent three years in the 1980s studying, observing and living among the people of Sikaiana, a small atoll (a ring-shaped island made of coral) in the Solomon Islands. His time on the atoll would later impact his research for his book.

Dr. Donner's new book explores the history of the Pennsylvania German custom of *versammlinge*—meetings held by the PA German community to celebrate their ethnic heritage with speeches, songs and plays, all in their Deutsch language.

Although he had Pennsylvania German ancestors, Dr. Donner did not become interested in German culture until later in life. "Driving through some small towns," he says, "I started thinking, well I lived on a little atoll and I wondered if little towns were like atolls." Having no idea where to start his research, Dr. Donner remembered his mother's stories of her grandfather, who lived in Womelsdorf in Western Berks County, and so he moved there. Eventually, he found a job at Kutztown University, and at the suggestion of Dr. Dave Valuska, then Director of the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center, Dr. Donner attended his first *versammling* in 1998, and he has been hooked ever since.

Much of the research for the book took place in 2005 during Dr. Donner's first sabbatical, when he noticed some similarities between the Sikaiana people and the Pennsylvania German culture that surrounds Kutztown today. "There was this sense of trying to maintain one's heritage and one's identity, and [the Sikaiana people] were doing it and it looked to me like these Pennsylvania Germans were doing it as well."

Then, during his second sabbatical in 2012, Dr. Donner took that time to write and complete a first draft of his book. Three and a half years later, in March of 2016, his book was published.

Dr. Donner believes the *versammlinge* are important in maintaining Pennsylvania German heritage and hopes that people will read his book.

As for teaching, Dr. Donner loves what he's doing and where he is. Kutztown's rich local culture has certainly aided him in his career. "I have to say, for this university, I really lucked out in the sense of the Heritage Center and learning about the PA Germans; [that's] something that's really valuable to me."

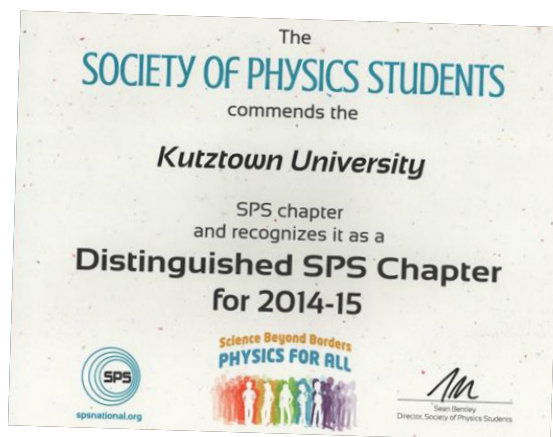


Dr. William Donner



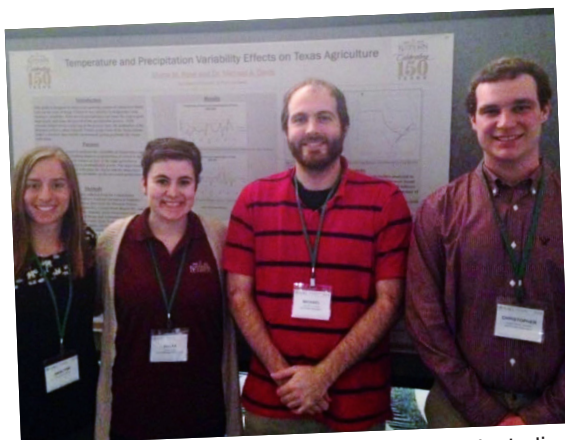


The winners of the 2016 Chambliss Academic Achievement Awards. Students from the CLAS are: Lisamarie Feliciano, Biology; David Grow, Environmental Science/Biology; Wesley Hartmann, Biology; and Danielle Sienko, Mathematics.

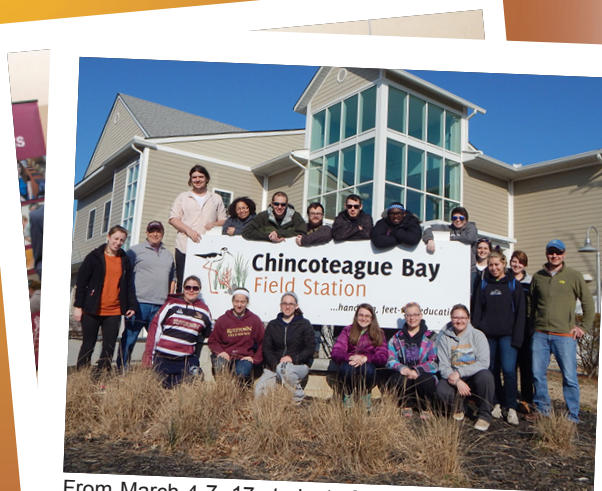


Kutztown's Society of Physics Students (SPS) has been recognized as a distinguished chapter for two consecutive years. The SPS is designed for students to become active and professional members in their society. The KU SPS chapter is responsible for both the annual laser light show and the annual "Cantalobber" contest.

# KU STANDOUTS



Members of the Geography Department, including Analyse Gaspich, Shana Rose, Dr. Michael Davis, Assistant Professor of Geography, and Christopher Madden, (from left to right) presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers in San Francisco, California.



From March 4-7, 17 students from several departments at KU ranging from Biology to Secondary Education travelled to the Chincoteague Bay Field Station in Wallops Island, VA to participate in an alternative spring break. During their stay, students engaged in a wide variety of activities such as: endangered species removal, landscape improvements, and roadside clean-up.

## interesting Internship

Like most incoming freshmen, Marla Weible didn't exactly know what she wanted to do when she got to KU. Instead of coming in as undeclared, however, Marla decided to major in business. After her first year, she realized that business just wasn't for her. So she switched her major to Political Science and Public Administration, with a concentration in paralegal studies. "It seemed interesting," she says. And, after three years as a PS/PA major and landing an internship at United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, she's realized that she loves what she's doing now.

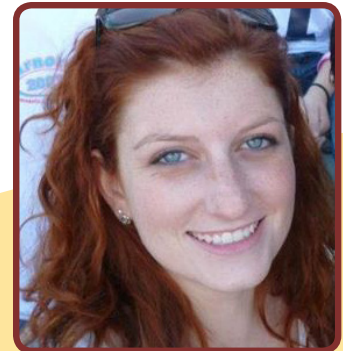
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley specializes in strengthening the community in three main areas: education, food access, and healthy aging. Marla works as an intern for 2-1-1, a health and human referral service run by United Way. By dialing 2-1-1, an individual is connected to a call center operator who refers that caller to various local organizations that offer health and human services. Marla also gathers information from the local organizations, such as a

brief description of their services, hours of operation, intake procedures, phone numbers and fees, and keeps track of it in a neat and easily accessible manner. Marla has even visited 2-1-1's most referred charities, such as the Easton Area Neighborhood Center and the Lehigh Conference of Churches to gather information, as well as observe the charities in action. "It was nice actually seeing what your work [does]," says Marla.

After developing database management as a skill and spending four days a week as of January in a "professional environment," as she describes it, Marla "[likes] it, surprisingly." She is proud of the work she is doing to help others in need, and she is determined to leave the 2-1-1 database better than when she found it. Not only is her internship teaching her new skills, but she is also networking and meeting new people. Her "internship friend," Kristina, who sits in the cubicle next to her, has been extremely helpful to Marla, so much so that she has adopted Kristina as something of a mentor. Kristina offers career advice as well as resumé suggestions. United Way has also allowed Marla to meet several high-profile individuals including the Lehigh Valley United Way President, David Lewis, as well as Kutztown's very own Andre Reed.

Marla is still not entirely sure what she wants to do after graduation, but her internship at

United Way has helped point her in the right direction. She has already begun job hunting, applying to several non-profit organizations in Maryland, where she plans to live with her cousin. Whatever Marla decides to do after graduation, we are sure she'll use her experiences and friendships from United Way to guide her along her path.



**Marla Weible**



**Matthew Smith**

Matthew Smith graduated from Kutztown in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in Computer Information Science with a concentration in Information Technology. Currently a co-owner and vice president of Radio Maintenance, Inc., Matthew is a businessman through and through. His determination, passion for his work, and long days spent at the office have made him extremely successful.

Matthew has been surrounded by computers his entire life. "I grew up on computers and around computers and I knew I wanted to do something in computing and technology," he says. It wasn't until his senior year of high school, when he decided to take a programming class using the fundamental Pascal programming

language, that he realized what computers truly are: big empty boxes that do what they are told based on their coding. This revelation drew Matthew into KU's recently revamped Computer Science Department.

After working for TuWay Communications, based out of Bethlehem, PA, as a wireless engineering support specialist for about four years, Matthew decided to return to work for his father's wireless communications company, Radio Maintenance, Inc., where he had worked part-time through high school and college. After one year at RMI, Matthew became a co-owner in 2012, and then vice president shortly thereafter in 2014. As vice president, Matthew "[wears] multiple hats," as he puts it, by overseeing several different aspects of the company such as processing payroll, negotiating insurance policies, sales, technical engineering, etc.

At first, it may seem as if Matthew's current position has little to do with his degree, but there's more to it than meets the eye. His background in computer science has helped him become a more "methodical" and "compartmentalized" thinker, which has in turn allowed him to develop the troubleshooting skills necessary for his position. "Troubleshooting is really, in essence, breaking things down, isolating things [and] ruling things out, which is what the concept of debugging code really is."

## Alumni highlight

Matthew cites Computer Science and Information Technology Department Chair, Dr. Lisa Frye, as a major influence on both his academic and professional careers. Matthew has had the pleasure of speaking in front of one of Dr. Frye's past Advanced Networking classes.

Matthew also oversees the hiring process at RMI, and, as a result, has seen a host of young applicants fresh out of college. Unfortunately, he has noticed a growing trend in the recent graduating classes. "I tend to see a lack of perceived drive, passion and enthusiasm." He also notes that self-entitlement is a popular attribute among interviewees.

Because of this, Matthew has a few words of advice for any graduating student looking for employment in any field of work. "Once you find something that you want to pursue... show potential employers that you are serious and eager to learn. Dedication, drive and passion are some of the qualities I look for in potential candidates, regardless of their level of experience. A positive attitude speaks volumes, sometimes even more so than qualifications [on a resumé]."





# DEAN'S SCHOLARS

The CLAS Dean's Scholars Awards is an annual ceremony that celebrates student achievement throughout the college. This year's reception took place on March 15th, and saw the introduction of the College's new Advancement Board, as well as the presentation of the second annual CLAS Dean's Outstanding Faculty Award. Here are a few highlights.



*From left to right: Diana Martin, Director of Communications, Rodale Institute; Julie Brinker, Director of Major Gifts and Research, KU Foundation; Dr. David Beougher, Acting Dean; Dr. Karen Rauch, Interim Associate Dean; Debra Powell, M.D., Chief of Section of Infectious Disease, Reading Health System; Maia Green, Ph.D., Associate Principal Scientist, Merck Laboratories.*

*Psychology student, Aston Rankins, accepts his award from Dr. Beougher.*



*Dr. Anita Meehan, Professor of Psychology, accepting the second annual CLAS Dean's Outstanding Faculty Award, which recognizes faculty who are committed to the success of their students both in and out of the classroom.*

*Psychology major, Jayna Snyder, posing with Dr. Beougher.*



*Criminal Justice major, Erica Yurvati, accepting her award from Dr. Beougher.*



*Physics student, Tiffany Visgaitis, posing with Dr. Beougher.*



The Spring 2016 edition of *The Collage* was designed and written by Julian Ruiz '16, professional writing major, under the supervision of the CLAS Dean's Office.