

# the collage

Kutztown University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Newsletter



**Dr. Michael Gabriel**

"Live free or die; death is not the worst of evils."

Dr. Michael Gabriel's favorite quote, the state motto of New Hampshire, coincidentally aligns with his own decisions in life, particularly his career choice.

As an undergraduate, Dr. Gabriel had studied and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Biology with plans to become a dentist or a biologist. After a year of graduate work, however, Dr. Gabriel realized neither career interested him.

"That's when I decided I shouldn't do this long-term because it doesn't make sense...I should do something that I really love as opposed to something that was employable," said Dr. Gabriel.

What Dr. Gabriel loved was history, a subject that had interested him since childhood. As he prepared to make the switch, he was heeded against it, even by professionals in the field.

"A history professor said, 'Don't do this – go back to...biology – you have a much higher upside,' ...He later told me the fact that I ignored his advice told him that I was probably pretty serious," said Dr. Gabriel.

After obtaining his master's degree, Dr. Gabriel began studying for his doctorate degree at Penn State University. While there, he learned of a one-year position in KU's History Department. The rest, as they say, is history.

"It's pretty neat that something you really love... you get paid to talk about. That's a pretty good job, you can do way worse," said Dr. Gabriel.

For Dr. Gabriel, there is more to his career satisfaction than discussing history: interacting with his students.

According to Dr. Gabriel, "I once had a student tell me... 'I was watching "Jeopardy" last night and I could answer a bunch of the questions because of your class.'"

One of his most memorable experiences was in 2006, when a former student nominated him for the Wiesnerberger Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching. To support Dr. Gabriel's nomination, several of his past students wrote letters of recommendation, which led to him receiving the award.

"After the whole thing...they give you the letters. That's when you really get a sense that

you helped people way more than you ever would have guessed," said Dr. Gabriel.

Dr. Gabriel has experienced similar revelations as an historical nonfiction author. Occasionally, he receives letters from readers, thanking him. One of Dr. Gabriel's first books was "Major General Richard Montgomery: The Making of an American Hero," in 2002, which was based on his dissertation. Since then, he has authored three more books about the Revolutionary War and has started his fourth book, which will continue his exploration into the Battle of Bennington.

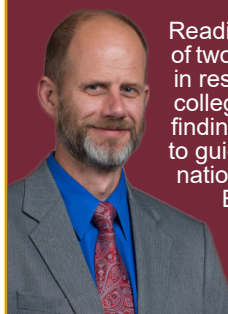
Dr. Gabriel's commitment to enriching his courses beyond the standard and his continued enthusiasm for his research projects demonstrate how suitable it was for him to pursue History instead of Biology.

"It [switching majors] was a bit of a leap of faith, but I think it was a really good one," remarked Dr. Gabriel.

## Faculty highlight

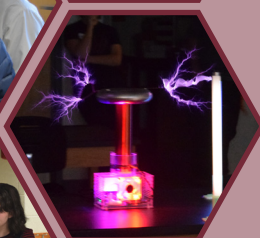
### DEAN'S CORNER

DAVID BEOUGHER, PH.D, DEAN



Reading through this edition of "The Collage," I was struck by the repetition of two themes – engagement and involvement. Our students are involved in research and individualized instruction in every department within the college. Students and their faculty mentors continue to present their findings at regional, national, and international conferences. In addition to guiding students and developing their potential, faculty have received national grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Members of our college have been recognized nationally for their public service and commitment to others and our graduates continue that tradition. It is an honor for me to be able to share their stories with you in this installment of our college newsletter.

## STEM OPEN HOUSE



One year ago, though, Jiao considered transferring to another college with a larger math program. Yet, when considering the options, she found it difficult to find another university that matched the ambience of Kutztown and the

Meanwhile, Dr. Zhou has proven invaluable as Jiao prepares for her exams to become a licensed actuary. Jiao became interested in the career after discovering her passion for probability. In turn, she undertook the Actuarial Science minor and founded the

From all of us here at KU, best of luck to Jiao and the rest of the KU Putnam Team!

## Student highlight







# DÍAS DE LOS MUERTOS



Over 200 students joined the Modern Languages Department and several student organizations on October 26, 2016 to celebrate the Mexican holiday, Días de los Muertos or Day of the Dead, with live music by the Rey Azteca Mariachi Band and performances by the Ballet Folklórico Yaretti, as well as craft tables for decorating sugar skulls.

## Faculty highlight

After sixteen years of working in the hotel and restaurant industry, following a brief career as a secondary music teacher, Dr. Robert Ryan decided to pursue psychology, thus beginning a 12-and-a-half year journey in pursuit of his master's and doctorate degrees.

At the time, Dr. Ryan was a recently divorced, single parent. Between his studies and a full-time job, he would work on his research assistantships in the evenings.

"So I said, 'Well I'm this close, if I can just get one more experience, get a letter, I can apply and if I can get in, I can get an assistantship [and] I can get paid again.' So, I quit my job, my company refused the unemployment, and I went down to the city of Pittsburgh and applied for welfare. I was on welfare for six months. And in that time I got another research [assistantship] and another job," said Dr. Ryan.

Soon after, Dr. Ryan was accepted into the University of Pittsburgh and became a graduate assistant. While he initially wanted to become a child psychologist, Dr. Ryan shifted from clinical to academic psychology after discovering the competitiveness of clinical

psychology and his passion for research, an interest that would eventually lead him to KU.

While teaching at Union College in Kentucky, he came across an ad for faculty interested in building the research program of KU's Psychology Department.

"By that time I really realized I wanted to build a research program...so I came here [to KU]...promoting myself as the guy who...could do that job," said Dr. Ryan.

And that is exactly what he did. Since arriving at the university in 2000, Dr. Ryan has built the Psychology research program through his work on the hiring committee, which has led to faculty being more involved in studies, thereby providing students additional research opportunities.

Dr. Ryan's current project is one example of the academic opportunities available to students. Since 2012, he has been preparing and refining his approach to studying immediate acquiescence and retention among college students. His focus is on basic and key concepts introduced in PSY 200: Statistics for Social and Behavioral Sciences and their retention in PSY 270: Experimental Psychology.

This year, he has begun the immense undertaking of running 300 subjects through his study; typically, psychology studies only have 30 – 40 subjects. With 300 participants,

Dr. Ryan has created a high-powered study, allowing for greater accuracy.

Given such a vast number of subjects, Dr. Ryan expects the project could extend into a second year. However, he anticipates the study methods introduced to the participants will result in a 100 percent retention rate on the post-test.

Once the results are analyzed and published, Dr. Ryan would like to see the study extended and replicated by other universities.

"I would love to see the 14 PASSHE schools get involved in a big project, where we try to reproduce this. It would be so apropos for a system of teaching universities," said Dr. Ryan.



Dr. Robert Ryan



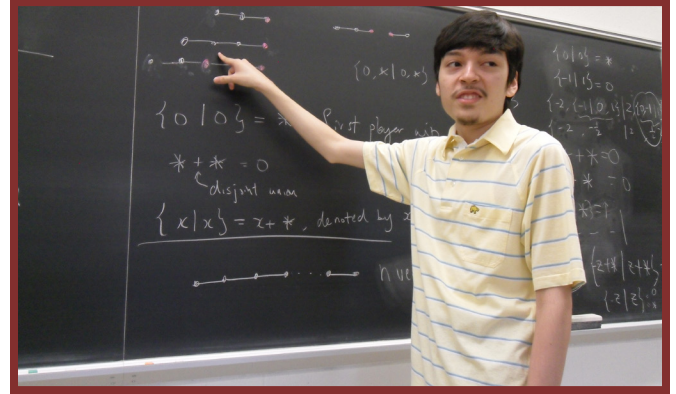


# KU BEARS

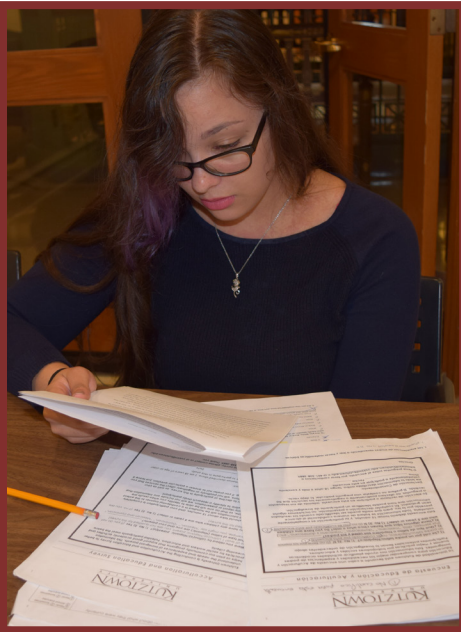
## Research Experience



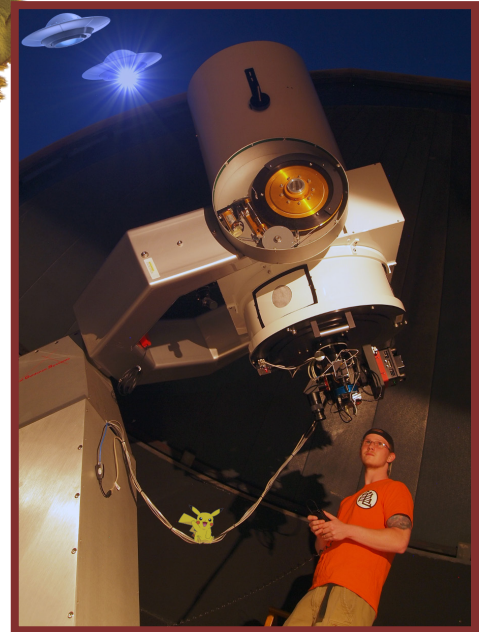
AUSTIN STOUDT, a Biology major, assisted Dr. Robyn Underwood in her research on organic and conventional beekeeping methods, with a focus on their effect on honey bee health. During the experience, Austin assisted with building hive equipment, extracting honey, and data entry. Austin also improved his beekeeping skills by encountering issues such as, honey robbing and beetle infestations.



DIEGO MANZANO-RUIZ, a Mathematics and Philosophy major, worked with Dr. Tony Wong on graph coloring, a research area of graph theory. In his role, Diego studied a graph coloring game where two players take turns coloring a graph vertex, but cannot use the same color on another vertex. Thus, Diego determined which player had a winning strategy.



ALEXANDRIA BLACKMAN, a Social Work major, aided Dr. Yoon Mi Kim by gathering data on the education experiences of Latino immigrants. In addition to distributing and conducting surveys, Alexandria also analyzed and coded the survey data. Based on her and Dr. Kim's research, Alexandria has written and submitted a conference proposal.



LUKE MARITCH, a Physics/Astronomy major, collaborated with Dr. Phill Reed in analyzing data from the Kilodegree Extremely Little Telescope or KELT exoplanet discovery project, of which KU is a member. Throughout the summer, Luke eliminated several false positives from the KELT database and discovered a mass likely to be confirmed as an exoplanet.

## WHAT IS KU BEARS?

**KU BEARS (Kutztown University Bringing Experiences About Research in Summer)** is a program designed to support and assist undergraduate students and faculty members. Together, students and faculty work on research over the summer, providing students the opportunity to gain valuable experience and faculty members the chance to have research assistants. Currently, the KU BEARS program supports ten projects each summer. In 2016, nine of the projects were within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



TOM NGUYEN, a Biochemistry and Mathematics major, helped Dr. Matt Junker in his research with Dr. Carsten Sanders on the chemistry behind the functions of CCHL, an enzyme involved in aerobic respiration. In his role, Tom was responsible for finding a way to remove CCHL from cells and purify it separately. In addition, Tom was responsible for testing the function of CCHL outside of the cell.



MICHAEL TOOLAN, a Biology major, assisted Dr. Kaoutar El Mounadi in her research on fungal pathogens. Michael identified three novel plant defensins and tested them against devastating plant fungal pathogens, finding that all (except one) of the defensins had high antifungal activity. The work done by Dr. El Mounadi and Michael will serve as an initial step towards designing strategies for fungi resistance in plants.



SARA WINGERT, an Anthropology major, helped Dr. Gregory Hanson by transcribing and proofreading a Pennsylvania German radio play series, "Asseba un Sabina," which aired during the 1940s and 1950s. Sara was tasked with reviewing 100 episodes and selecting 24; episodes were chosen based on their theme and coordination to each month of the year. These plays will later be translated by Dr. Hanson.



RICHARD WARD, a Computer Science major, aided Dr. Ko-Hsin Hsu's research on street drug markets. Specifically, Richard examined drug activity hot spots in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, searching for forty-two physical variables, such as homelessness and graffiti. Richard conducted his work through Google Street View, which is considered a suitable alternative to in-person observations.



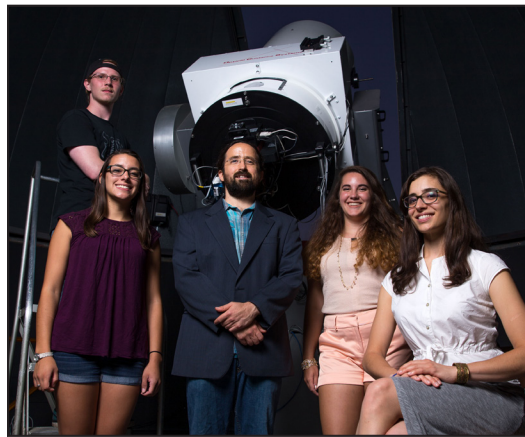




Nikolai Aleksandor Blichar, a Political Science major, has been selected to serve on the 2016–2017 student advisory committee for “It’s On Us,” a public awareness campaign for sexual violence. Nikolai was one of 28 students selected from universities across the country.



Biology major Cathryn Pugh (pictured right with Dr. Gregory Setliff, Associate Professor of Biology) won first place in the President’s Prize student competition at the International Congress of Entomology for her research on the invasive spotted lanternfly.



Dr. Phill Reed, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy, has been awarded a \$250,000 collaborative grant from the National Science Foundation, in conjunction with two professors outside of KU. The grant will fund the exoplanet discovery project of Dr. Reed and six KU students, and provide these students the opportunity to complete research and internships at universities abroad.



Sociology majors Kaylie Shambo and Yue Zhang, pictured here with Dr. Albert Fu (L) and Dr. Jason Crockett (R) were selected to participate in the American Sociological Honors Program alongside 25 other college students. Kaylie and Yue’s attendance places KU in the top four schools in the nation for ASA Honors placements.



Dr. Christine Saidi of the History Department has been awarded a \$200,000 Collaborative Research Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. Saidi will use the grant to conduct research with three colleagues outside of KU on gender history in countries within Africa.

# KU

# STAND OUTS



**Theresa Gassert**

Since graduating from KU in 2014, alumna Theresa Gassert has remained busy.

In addition to her full-time job at P.R.O.B.E., a non-profit organization that provides career development counseling, Theresa also volunteers at the Church World Service's Immigration and Refugee program and at her local polling place as an election judge.

A Sociology graduate, Theresa has continually used her education from KU in both her career and in her volunteer work.

"Working in human services, I apply both

the theoretical and practical knowledge I gained at Kutztown almost daily," said Theresa, continuing, "What I learned as an undergraduate in Sociology directly informs and influences my work."

As an assistant counselor at P.R.O.B.E., Theresa's work encompasses an array of tasks, including counseling, grant writing, public relations, fundraising, and advertising. For Theresa, working for a small organization like P.R.O.B.E. has provided her the opportunity to earn experience in a variety of fields.

In turn, she has been able to apply this knowledge to her community service at the Church World Service in Lancaster. Aside from assisting with fundraisers, like the organization's upcoming "Run For a Refugee" event, Theresa also collects donations and welcome kits for incoming refugee families.

"Understanding the persecution and hardships these individuals face makes volunteering with CWS [Church World Service] so incredibly rewarding. I get to personally help these families take their lives back. It is a great thing to take part in," said Theresa.

Being able to help people, whether while working or volunteering, is one of the reasons

Theresa pursued a Sociology major at KU.

"I have always had a passion for social justice...However, I never intended for these beliefs and interests to mold my career," said Theresa.

In fact, Theresa initially started her education at an art school, before attending KU as an Advertising major. It was through advertising that Theresa discovered sociology.

"I thought understanding society a bit more would help in my advertising career...I took a few sociology courses [and]...it was 'love at first sight,'" Theresa said, remarking, "I would be a sociology student forever if I could."

Eventually, Theresa plans to resume her academic career in graduate school. In the meantime, she is working on growing as a career professional, with hopes to join the Lebanon Valley Young Professionals, while still actively volunteering in her community.

## Alumni highlight

## interesting Internship

Criminal Justice major Andrea Erwin may only be in the fourth week of her internship at the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office, but she has already learned more about herself and her career aspirations than she did previously.

"It [has] showed me that I most likely don't want to work for a district attorney...I really want to be in the courtroom," said Andrea.

Specifically, Andrea would like to work as a healthcare lawyer, representing leading hospitals. As an intern though, the majority of her work takes place within the confines of a cubicle.

In addition to filing and handling court documents, Andrea writes extensions and entry of appearances. She also assists office staff, lawyers, and in some instances, detectives. One recent encounter proved memorable for Andrea.

"The other day, another intern [and I] had to go through 12 boxes of evidence...even though it

was painstaking...I actually got to learn about the case and see evidence," said Andrea.

According to Andrea, the case will be used as a plot line for the upcoming season of "How to Get Away with Murder," a television drama series on ABC.

Crime shows, like "Law and Order" and "CSI," initially piqued Andrea's interest in criminal justice. While her internship has not dampened her enjoyment of these shows, it has given her insight into the reality of the justice system.

Though not as sensationalized as television, the cases taking place in the Lehigh County Courthouse have shown Andrea the challenges the local community faces.

"The amount of heroin cases that there are in Lehigh County actually surprised me, because you don't think that there's a heroin issue here, but it was case after case," said Andrea.

While the subject of the cases is at times disheartening, sitting-in on these cases in the courtroom has been invaluable to Andrea, confirming her interest in undertaking a career in law.

To pursue her passion, Andrea plans to attend law school after graduation. So far,

she has begun the application process for the University of Georgia and the University of South Carolina, with plans to settle down in either area after obtaining her law degree.

"I grew up my whole life in PA, so...I'm ready to spread my wings," said Andrea.

Whether she becomes a University of Georgia Bulldog or a University of South Carolina Gamecock, Andrea will always be a KU Bear to us.



**Andrea Erwin**







*Dr. P. Colin Bolger*  
*Criminal Justice*



*Dr. John Carelli, Jr.*  
*Computer Science and*  
*Information Technology*



*Dr. Moira Conway*  
*Geography*

## KU ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL



Since 2015, students from the KU Archaeology program have had the opportunity to attend the KU Archaeology Summer Field School in Stoddartsville, Pennsylvania, which is home to the remains of a 19th-century milling village.

Taught by Dr. Khori Newlander, students learn archaeological techniques, such as excavation, site mapping, and artifact recording and analysis.

During the 2016 season, students discovered thousands of artifacts from the remnants of the Stoddart mansion, the general store, and the worker cabins.

Students also assisted the Stoddartsville Preservation Society by conducting geophysical surveys at the Stoddartsville cemetery to help in the society's efforts to both document the cemetery and restore broken or buried grave markers.



The Fall 2016 edition of "The Collage" was designed and written by  
Sarah Berry '16, professional writing major,  
under the supervision of the CLAS Dean's Office.

