



## Kerrigan Ciocari | Environmental Science Student Highlight

Environmental science major Kerrigan Ciocari has a passion for analyzing the effect that chemicals have on the environment. Kerrigan went into environmental science because she had an interest in the environment and the factors that affect it. Since arriving at KU, Kerrigan has chosen to follow the chemistry track in the environmental science program.

She spent the summer of 2024 alongside Dr. Julie Palkendo working on a project where she studied the use of pesticides on common fruits and vegetables. Her project, "Expanding and Refining QuEChERS/LC-MSMS Method for Pesticide Screening of Notorious Fruit," used liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry.

The subject of Kerrigan's project was the "Dirty Dozen," a group of fruits and vegetables with the highest pesticide levels, that The Environmental Working Group puts out. The project analyzed nine of the twelve produce items on the Environmental Working Group's "Dirty Dozen" list with the highest pesticide levels: strawberries, grapes, blueberries, cherries, spinach, kale, nectarines, peppers, and apples.

One goal of this project was to expand upon the method that Dr. Palkendo already used and increase the number of pesticides they tested. Originally, the project tested ten different pesticides, but they tested an additional eleven and were

able to find at least one additional pesticide on each produce item.

From this research, Kerrigan gained great experience in the world of environmental research. "This was my first stop to figure out what I want to do," Kerrigan said. She is looking into post-graduate education to further her research into environmental analytical chemistry and this project helped her decide to pursue that field. One thing that keeps Kerrigan going is the passion of everyone in her major: "I just really like being around people that really care about what they do."

Kerrigan explained that while not every pesticide is bad for a person to ingest,

pesticides can harm the environment. She believes no matter the effect the pesticide has on the plants or people consuming the produce, it is still important to be aware of what goes into cultivating your produce. Dr. Palkendo's Environmental Analysis class is performing a lab in which they test the same kind of produce that Kerrigan analyzed for pesticides, and it reinforces the importance of her summer research.

## Student Shout-Outs to Professors

"**Professor Nurczynski's** great. I had her last semester for the first time for my Professionalization Seminar, and she really got me prepared for my internship...I honestly would not have gotten that internship if it wasn't for her."

-**Kylie Frain, Professional Writing**

"**Dr. Holoviak** gave a really good foundational understanding of not only how governments run, but the philosophy that they use when speaking with people that work for the government and being able to navigate difficult situations not only within employees, but also to constituents."

-**Alyssa Arndt, Political Science: Paralegal Studies**

"**Dr. Reed** is my research advisor and I have really enjoyed working with him as he is a great resource to talk to and he's funny when he wants to be. He's definitely been one of the professors here that have made me want to keep coming back to Kutztown and been a great resource as I'm applying to grad schools."

-**Evan Curtin, Physics: Astronomy**

"I can't speak highly enough about **Dr. Newlander**. He is amazing and he is as much my mentor as he is my teacher and as he is my friend."

-**Amarah Karlick, Anthropology**

"I feel like **Dr. Spiegel** teaches a lot more visual than other professors would. I came in computer science not knowing a thing about coding. He always just made time for students, so I thought that was one of the best aspects he has."

-**Lizmary Delarosa, Computer Science**

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# Women and Gender in Education

In honor of Women's History Month, the Spring 2025 issue of *The Collage* highlights the importance of inclusion and diversity in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



**Dr. Jason Crockett**  
Sociology



**Dr. Lyn McQuaid**  
Mathematics



**Dr. Lorin Basden Arnold**  
Provost

## **Q:** Why do you believe education about gender/women in certain fields is important in today's academic environment?

● **Dr. McQuaid:** If you asked the average person on the street to name a mathematician, I can almost guarantee that they will not name a woman. [That's why] I teach the course Women in Mathematics.

● **Dr. Crockett:** As a major element of social categorization, gender shapes our social institutions and interpersonal interactions in complex ways. You lack a key part of understanding both society at large and your own specific social context without an informed understanding of gender.

● **Dr. Basden Arnold:** I think it is well established that seeing the accomplishments of someone who looks or seems "like us" is important in our understanding of what is possible for us.

## **Q:** How does inclusive education contribute to the development of critical thinking and empathy among students in higher education?

● **Dr. Crockett:** Gender is one factor in why we do not all experience the same life chances, the same life choices, or the same social pressures. Understanding these differences, and the reasons for them, creates a foundation of knowledge for engaging in critical thinking about the world around us as well as building empathy for others.

● **Dr. McQuaid:** Mathematics is often presented as an independent entity, devoid of creative contributions. However, this portrayal is inaccurate. It is crucial to recognize that numerous creative mathematicians have been women.

● **Dr. Basden Arnold:** Life experience, education, and interaction with others is how we build the cognitive complexity that we need...which includes having empathy for others.

## **Q:** How does exposure to diversity-related content prepare students for success in global, multicultural workplaces?

● **Dr. McQuaid:** I hope that learning about underrepresented groups in mathematics builds empathy, which translates to inclusive workplace behavior and leadership.

● **Dr. Crockett:** To be a savvy citizen, consumer, and worker requires cultivating one's cultural awareness and cultural competency.

## **Q:** How can education about diversity be integrated into disciplines that might not traditionally focus on social or cultural issues?

● **Dr. Crockett:** One aspect is little things, like making sure textbooks or class slides don't just portray people from one social group. Many courses can discuss examples of work related to that field from people from a variety of social backgrounds and positions.

● **Dr. Basden Arnold:** Sometimes it takes creativity to ponder how social/cultural factors impact areas that we think of as immutable. It's less obvious in some fields, but not less interesting to consider how it's part of the process of discovery in that area!

## **Q:** What are some of the common misconceptions or resistances you've encountered regarding education about diversity?

● **Dr. McQuaid:** I encountered skepticism... that the [Women in Mathematics] course did not align with traditional mathematical curricula.

● **Dr. Crockett:** I think one of the most common misconceptions today is the idea that if we just ignore social divisions this will solve the problems associated with them.

## **Q:** How has your own background or experiences shaped your views on the importance of diversity topics in education?

● **Dr. McQuaid:** When [my mom] went to see the professor, she was told that "the A's are reserved for the boys in the class because they need them." This story has remained with me, inspiring me to encourage women to enroll in mathematics courses.

● **Dr. Basden Arnold:** [My experience] has made me more aware of the value of universal design learning strategies that support all students.



Rohrbach Library gained an archive of video games thanks to Hannah Katein and Kody Knight's summer project led by English professor Dr. Sandra Leonard. Hannah is a senior dual major in computer science and game development, and Kody is a senior computer science major. Both grew up playing video games and later found an interest in computer science related to game development.

Their catalogue so far includes Super Smash Bros. Brawl, Sonic Adventure 2: Battle, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, Kirby's Dreamland, Star Ocean: Until the End of Time, Okami, Elite Beat Agents, and The Orange Box for Xbox360. They are working toward making the entries part of the library's catalogue so that anyone can search for and use these games.

Hannah and Kody's goal is to help the university community recognize games as important literary and artistic media that should also be saved for future generations. They noticed that while textbooks and materials for other classes were being preserved and catalogued by the university, the game development

department was lacking in video game archives. Hannah points out that "you kind of interact with them the same way you would interact with a movie."

One of the most important aspects of this usable research space is that it is accessible to those with disabilities. It is wheelchair accessible, the posters have large fonts for those who have low vision, and there are headphones for the hearing impaired. It is a space made for everyone who has an interest in video games, so they wanted to have no barriers to prevent people with disabilities from accessing the video game archive the same as everyone else. "[We wanted to] make sure this is the space that not only looks good, but is also very usable," Hannah said.

They see this project as a starting point for something bigger in the future. "If we start something, write this paper to get other people to implement their own preserve, I can see this growing into something big and really important," Hannah said.

Whether or not their project inspires further preservation of digital media here at KU or at other universities, they hope it shows the importance of doing this kind of work.

## BONUS

Make sure to check out one of the highlights of the collection: a rare pre-order collector's edition of Lunar 2 Eternal Blue Complete for the Playstation which came with a "making of" DVD/documentary, a replica of Lucia's magical necklace, and a playable board game once the preservation is open to students.

**"Being able to do something that can either like uplift someone or comfort someone during a hard time is more impactful than people realize." -Hannah Katein**

Hannah and Kody's project, "The Creation of Video Game and Digital Literature Preservation Space at Kutztown University," provides a space in the basement of Rohrbach for anyone to use, study, and research approximately one hundred games. The consoles they have in the space so far are the N64, GameCube, WiiU, Xbox360, PlayStation 1, PlayStation 2, an Original Gameboy, Gameboy SP, DS, DS Lite, 3DS, and an Atari "flashback" console.

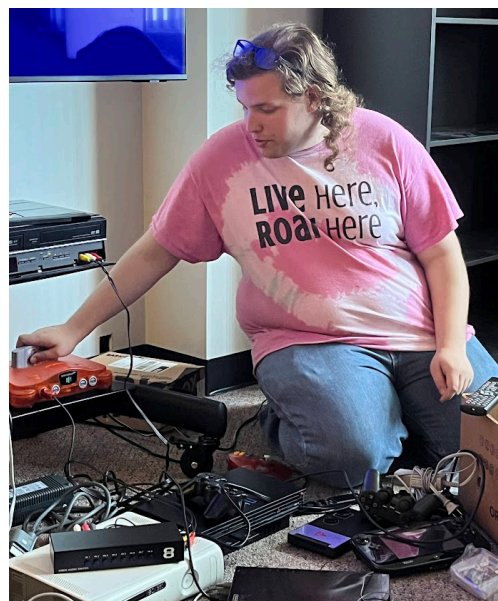


**Hannah Katein | Computer Science & Information Technology/Game Development  
Student Highlight**



**Kody Knight | Computer Science & Information Technology  
Student Highlight**

Besides acting as a preservation space and archive for gamers and researchers alike, their project is a place to connect with others. Kody and Hannah acknowledge that video games connect people and create bonds between friends and family. "Fostering that connection between other people was interesting to me," Hannah said. The community they have found in computer science, game development, and video games in general is set to last a lifetime for them.



**Kody testing game cartridges to ensure that the games and gaming system were working properly.**

# DEAN'S CORNER

"Commencement" means beginning, even though it often feels like an ending. Spring is the time of rebirth and new life, even though it also includes the end of the academic year. These liminal times of beginnings and endings are opportunities to catch our breath and consider where we've been and where we are going next. During summer, our CLAS Dean's office does exactly that kind of reflective work as we plan for the new academic year and the longer term. How will we improve in providing students with the knowledge and skills that help them lead lives of purpose and ongoing growth in an increasingly complex world? And how can we better connect our community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni? We see so much good work already happening, and we look forward to partnering even more as we head to commencement and beyond.



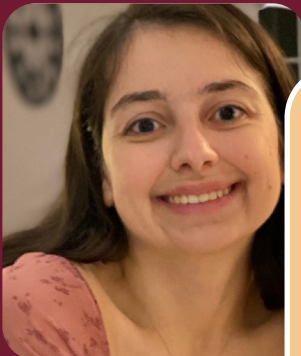
DR. LAURIE McMILLAN

## STUDENT SPRING BREAKS

"I have a trip planned down to South Carolina with me and one of my friends. I'll visit some family I have down there, and then, come back here, hang out with more of my friends and get some more quality time with some people that I might not get to see a whole lot in the future." -**Joshua Romig, senior, Biology: Allied Health major**



"I intend to do necessary spring cleaning around my hobby farm. I will spend the remainder of the week working at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary as visitation picks up with the warming temperatures." -**Sarah Grace Ferber, junior, Environmental Science: Biology and Marine Science: Biology dual major**



"Over Spring Break I will be doing homework. It gives me something to do, or else I'm like, just sitting around the house, not doing anything. But I have a lot of things due after break that I need to get done during break." -**Hailey Christ, senior, Biology: Allied Health major**



"Over Spring Break, I balanced work and relaxation to recharge and finish the semester strong. I also took a trip to New York to see Nell Mescal in concert, which was an exciting experience—especially since it was her first show in the United States." -**Megan Hughes, senior, Public Relations major**





The CLAS Dean's Scholar Reception was hosted April 1, 2025 in the Georgian Room to recognize and celebrate students who have gone above and beyond academically through their course work, research, or internships. Recognized students included those nominated for Stand-Out Students, KU BEARS, and the Syed R. Ali-Zaidi Award.

Student attendees had the opportunity to share an evening with their faculty mentors while also being recognized for all of their hard work.

The CLAS Dean's Office would also like to congratulate Dr. Carol Mapes on winning the Dean's Outstanding Faculty Award.

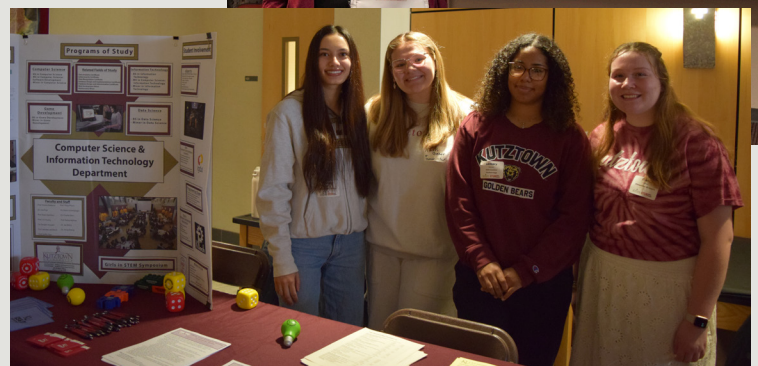


## Dean's Scholars Reception

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences hosted the STEM Open House on April 12, 2025, inviting high school students interested in science, technology, or math to learn more about the departments and faculty. They also had the opportunity to talk to undergraduates in the programs and get first-hand insight into the kinds of classes they would be taking.

Prospective students could walk around to tables staffed by students and faculty in the lobby of Boehm before being invited into the main lecture hall for a presentation by Dr. Laurie McMillan, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Afterwards, prospective students were free to take a campus tour or explore several of Boehm's labs which offered small group presentations by professors and and KU students.

## STEM Open House



# Sustainability

In honor of Earth Day, the Spring 2025 issue of *The Collage* highlights the importance of sustainability at KU



**Dr. Laura Sherrod**  
Geology



**Dr. Gregory Shelley**  
Psychology



**Dr. Albert Fu**  
Sociology

## Q: What does sustainability mean to you?

● **Dr. Sherrod:** Your impact on the natural world should leave the world in a state that can still be used in a similar manner even to your seventh generation.

● **Dr. Fu:** We should create systems that can endure and thrive over the long term, but we also need to repair a lot of the damage we've already caused.

● **Dr. Shelley:** Sustainability is about being able to meet my own personal needs from a consumption standpoint while also trying to do my best to be mindful of the impact of my behavior on future generations..

## Q: What can people do to live more sustainably?

● **Dr. Fu:** Certain industries have a disproportionate impact on climate change, which means regulation is important. So, I'd say voting is one of the most important things we can do.

● **Dr. Shelley:** I make an effort to contribute back to my local environment. I have a lot of varieties of native pollinator-friendly plants on my property and I keep honeybees.

## Q: How does climate change impact sustainability efforts?

● **Dr. Fu:** Many scholars have started using words such as adaptation and resilience more than sustainability because the damage has already been done and is getting worse, making us more reactive than proactive.

● **Dr. Shelley:** Climate change is tremendously disruptive to the local and broader economy, and it is displacing more and more people. A lot of resources are required to counteract these things which, in turn, take away from sustainability efforts.

## Q: How does your field of study contribute to spreading knowledge of sustainability?

● **Dr. Sherrod:** Geologists play a huge part in finding the resources that we all use as part of our daily lives...[and] as a hydrogeologist, I am particularly interested in the use, conservation, and protection of water resources.

● **Dr. Fu:** I'm a sociologist that studies cities. My book *Risky Cities* examines how sustainability has been commodified to justify more construction and urban growth. Endless growth cannot be sustainable.

● **Dr. Shelley:** There is something called a Commons Dilemma where, if all individuals in a group pursue their own self-interest, this eventually creates problems for the group as a whole...climate change and sustainability are Commons Dilemmas.

## Q: Why is Earth Day important, and what impact has it had since its inception?

● **Dr. Sherrod:** Earth Day started in the 1970s...and the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act were enacted in the years following the first Earth Day, holding industries responsible for the pollutants that they create.

● **Dr. Fu:** Earth Day is particularly impactful in educational settings, where it becomes a time of year when students engage in research and service projects.

## Q: How do Earth Day initiatives contribute to long-term sustainability efforts?

● **Dr. Sherrod:** They contribute to long-term sustainability by making a step each year toward the end goal of sustainable lifestyles. It is very challenging to make a complete change in the way we live, but if each year we can all take one or two steps toward a more sustainable life.

● **Dr. Fu:** They act as a yearly reminder, which can recharge efforts that are being made throughout the year. It also reminds us that social movements do make a difference.

## Q: What can/have people done here in Kutztown to be more sustainable?

● **Dr. Sherrod:** Several years ago, there was a Take-Back-The-Tap project that gave away metal water bottles to encourage the campus community to decrease the quantity of plastic water bottles that are thrown in the trash daily. Also, the Environmental Action Club is a student-run organization that is dedicated to taking action to protect the environment. Anyone interested should consider joining.

● **Dr. Fu:** I've been particularly impressed with students who have graduated from KU to work for Berks Nature and other organizations that promote conservation and sustainability.



Caitlyn Polter is a junior biology major who studies the importance of plants in ecosystems. Caitlyn has gained a great amount of knowledge about plants, and she plans to use this knowledge to advocate for plant conservation and research, which is important for the future of all ecosystems.

Caitlyn recalls her mother encouraging her to keep going and pursue the topics that interest her, like botany, and her professors have helped keep her love of biology alive. "A lot of my professors I think are very inspirational. I worked with Dr. [Christopher] Sacchi doing research over the summer and he's given me opportunities I wouldn't have had in other places," Caitlyn said. "And my advisor too, Dr. [Kaoutar] El Mounadi. She's very inspirational as a woman in science."

**"I really enjoy plants, and I think they're very underrated."**

Her favorite part of biology is working with plants. "I couldn't really see myself doing anything other than some sort of research outside," she said. Caitlyn takes every opportunity to learn about and be around plants, including filling her schedule with

plant-related courses, working in the greenhouse, and being the Treasurer of Plant Club. Caitlyn points out that "most people that are in my major focus on animals a lot, and I think more people need to appreciate plants, because we can try to save animal populations as much as we want, but ultimately protecting plants and protecting land is going to benefit all species overall."

Caitlyn worked with Dr. Sacchi to conduct research for the project "Pollination Biology of Four Milkweed Species." Caitlyn studied and compared the characteristics of both native and tropical milkweed plants.

She took part in this project hoping to spread awareness about the importance of the plant life we cultivate in the U.S. Caitlyn has noticed people do little research into the plants they cultivate, so an awareness about the type of pollinators that each plant attracts would improve the ecosystem since pollinators are a major part of it. Caitlyn believes that botany is just as important as any other side of biology when considering how to improve and preserve an ecosystem.



**Caitlyn Polter | Biology  
Student Highlight**

This research is important because if people were more knowledgeable about the kinds of plants they grew in gardens and how they affect pollinators, then the ecosystem would benefit greatly. "We need more native plants to help these pollinators in order to help the overall ecosystem, and I think we need more research on to prove why this is an important thing."

## Congratulations, May Graduates

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's office is proud to congratulate the spring 2025 graduates. You've encountered many obstacles and challenges over the years, but you always overcame them. All of you have come so far, and we can't wait to see what you do next. Whatever path you take in life, make it impactful and make it your own.

Embrace change. Seek discovery. Fulfill your potential.

**Congratulations Class of Spring 2025!**



# A Reflection of KU

In honor of the end of another school year, the Spring 2025 issue of *The Collage* highlights the experiences of new and tenured faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



**Prof. Reiley Walther**  
Computer Science & Information  
Technology



**Dr. Donato Fhunsu**  
English



**Dr. Carol Mapes**  
Biology

## Q: What have you gained as a result of being a professor at KU?

● **Prof. Walther:** I have gained a lot of knowledge in my transition from student to professor. I have gained the strong ability to manage my time and organize my content and weeks.

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** I have gained greater hindsight, insight, and foresight into the importance of transformative, critical, revolutionary education. I am a scholar of African American literature and African Diasporic literature and I have gained a fresh appreciation of the importance of the work I do.

● **Dr. Mapes:** I have gained a wonderful career that has given me the opportunity to teach, mentor, and collaborate with a large number of students over the 35 years I have taught at KU.

## Q: How would you describe your time at KU?

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** My time at KU has been both challenging and exhilarating. I began my position at KU just before the 2024 elections. Since then I have had to use my insight into African American and African Diasporic literatures and cultures to help my students put the new political climate in perspective.

● **Dr. Mapes:** Teaching at a University that emphasizes undergraduate education has been a very rewarding experience. Interacting

with individuals as they develop through their years as undergraduate students and then beyond, as successful alumni in graduate school and careers, is very gratifying.

## Q: How do you see your work or research contributing to the KU community?

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** My research contributes to the KU community particularly by demystifying the perennial issues related to human identity: belonging, citizenship, nationality, religion, class, gender, sex, sexuality, race, color, ethnicity, body image, age, ability, society, culture, and civilization.

● **Dr. Mapes:** I have given several presentations on my research to the KU community as well as several presentations and guided walks about cynipid wasp galls. Students and I have used the KU campus as a living laboratory, studying the plants and galls on campus.

## Q: How do you balance research with teaching and mentoring students?

● **Prof. Walther:** Teaching and mentoring have many different approaches and styles, so I enjoy working with students to find what works for them, and how I can find ways to incorporate that into my classes.

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** In sharing with students my passion for the literatures and cultures of people of African descent and the importance and relevance of this study. I inspire students

to find their own passions and pursue them.

## Q: What are some of the most exciting findings or breakthroughs from your work?

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** One is the Kongo-African concept of *Bumuntu*, a concept that means “Humanity,” but “Humanity” in a way that means developing the consciousness of World Citizens, a consciousness that is so big that it includes everyone and everything.

● **Dr. Mapes:** [My research students and I] were the first to show that the native bee, *Megachile montivaga*, can nest in goldenrod balls, publishing a paper to that effect. Other cool findings include the discovery of two novel kinds of galls on an oak tree on campus that have never been studied before!

## Q: How has working with students given you a new view on research or your field?

● **Prof. Walther:** The active minds of university students are always producing new and interesting ideas to investigate, and oftentimes they seek faculty assistance for research.

● **Dr. Fhunsu:** I have come to realize that African American and African Diasporic literatures are still “dangerous” because they imagine uncomfortable alternatives and thus challenge a certain status quo that certain socio-cultural forces would rather leave unexamined.

