

A photograph of a classroom with several students seated at wooden desks. In the foreground, a young boy with dark skin and short dreadlocks, wearing a blue and green striped sweater, has his right hand raised high. Behind him, a girl with long blonde hair is also visible. To the right, another student's hand is raised. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the classroom environment.

# PittEd

University of Pittsburgh School of Education **Summer 2023**

## Cultivating Relationships

Partnerships Are Flourishing with  
the Pittsburgh Public Schools

## Contents

# PittEd

### Editor



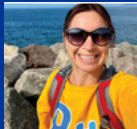



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	<b>Up Front:</b>	
	Pitt Alum Is Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year	2
	A Conversation with Gina Garcia	4
	Book Briefs	5
	Highlights from Student Activities	6
	<b>Learning Spotlight:</b>	
	Learning Intertwined with Health and Wellness	7
	Inviting Play Back into the Classroom	10
	<b>Student Spotlight:</b>	
	Connecting Ecology to Psychology in Iceland	12
	<b>Cover:</b>	
	Cultivating Relationships	14
	Celebrating the Genius, Joy, and Love in Students of Color	18
	Equitable Pathways to College	20
	Inviting School Leaders to the Table	22
	<b>School Impact:</b>	
	Expanding Community College Leadership and Partnerships	24
	<b>Alumni News &amp; Notes</b>	28
	In Memoriam	29
	Remembering IISE Founder Seth Spaulding	29
	Falk Lab School Receives Transformative Gift to Support the Arts	30
	Thomas Allison Goes the Distance in Global Medicine	32



## Sparking Change, Forging Connection

Community connection is vital to the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. We strive to learn with and from communities, and it is through these relationships that we can effectively support the well-being and success of children, youth, and families. Our community-engaged work takes shape everywhere, spanning our academic programs, faculty- and community-led research, service and engagement projects, and special initiatives. We are continually guided by one question: How can we further push ourselves to ignite learning in ways that strengthen, uplift, serve, and empower multiple communities?

This edition of PittEd magazine highlights our connections with communities. The cover story focuses on our expanding partnerships with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and Superintendent Wayne Walters as well as with other districts across the region. Our district partners are conduits for our school's efforts to ignite learning and to transform inequitable educational structures into systems, practices, and engagements in which students are safe to learn and to dream; where they are cared for and loved; and where oft-quoted principles like equity, justice, and innovation are more than just words but are realities that we honor and practice in ways that are real, essential, life-giving, and driven by desires for freedom.

This spark to ignite learning originates from our school and through the hard work of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. In fact, this spark catches fire through our community and school partnerships.

Stories in this edition highlight additional glimpses into connections. We see ways that alumni, like Ryan Hardesty (MAT '09), 2023 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, are leading the way in their profession. We see how students



like Meghan Orman are traveling to far-off international locations to dig deep into the science of learning. And we see how Assistant Professor Veena Vasudevan is reimagining how something fundamental to our humanity, the act of play—something children know how to do instinctively—is a practice educators should deploy across all ages as we, in our adult lives, commit to relearning the value, promise, and joy of play.

As you read the stories in these pages, I invite you to consider joining these efforts with Pitt Education or creating new ones with others. It is my hope that we can collectively work to encourage, support, and value

educators as they lead with courage, as they innovate in pursuit of freedom, and as they cultivate other people's humanity and sense of justice—and as we support them to do so. Together, let us spark change and forge connections with communities.

All my best,

Valerie Kinloch, PhD  
Renée and Richard Goldman Dean  
University of Pittsburgh  
School of Education



Editor's note: After six years of outstanding leadership, Dean Valerie Kinloch will step down to become the 15th president of her undergraduate alma mater, Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, effective August 1, 2023. Her legacy at Pitt will be recognized in a future edition. Learn more at [news announcement story](#).

## Pitt Alum Is Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year

By Kaitlyn Zurcher

**R**yan Hardesty is the type of person who gets excited about post-Halloween costume sales at Spirit Halloween.

"I typically raid the store looking to find anything that connects to my lessons, even if it's not super accurate," says Hardesty (MAT '09), who teaches seventh- and eighth-grade social studies at Highland Middle School, located in the Blackhawk School District in Beaver County, Pennsylvania.

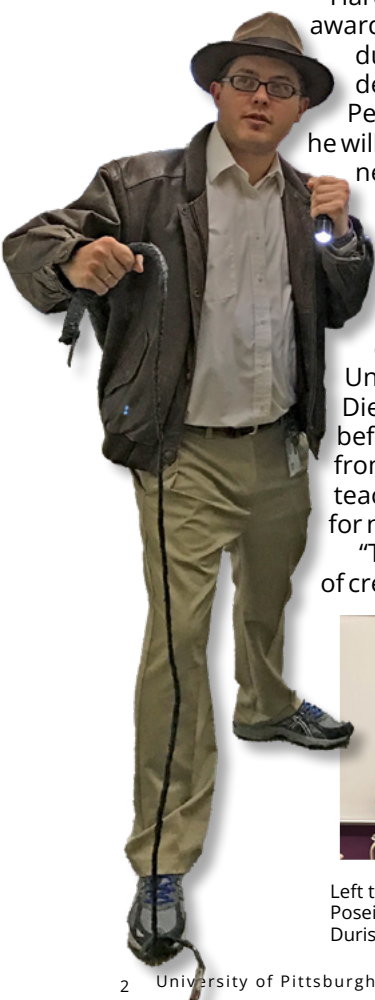
Whether he's donning a pharaoh costume for a lesson on ancient Egypt or creating a music video with historical figures rewriting the lyrics to an Adele song, Hardesty knows how to excite middle schoolers about learning, and it's one of the reasons he was named 2023 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year.

As part of the Council of Chief State School Officers National Teacher of the Year Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) issues the award to honor exemplary teaching and classroom practices across the commonwealth. The award recognizes a teacher who inspires students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn; who has the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues; and who plays an active and useful role in both school and community.

Hardesty was one of 12 finalists for the award, which was presented Dec. 5, 2022, during PDE's annual professional development conference. As Pennsylvania's Teacher of the Year, he will travel across the state over the next year to meet and collaborate with other educators. He also will represent the commonwealth in the National Teacher of the Year competition in 2024.

Hardesty earned his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Pittsburgh Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences before obtaining his teaching degree from Pitt's School of Education. Now he teaches his students valuable lessons for navigating the world around them.

"Teaching social studies allows a lot of creative freedom," he says.



Left to right: Hardesty teaches dressed as Indiana Jones, the Greek god Poseidon, and the Greek god Apollo (with learning support teacher Amanda Durish as the Greek god Artemis).



Ryan D. Hardesty (right) of Blackhawk School District was named 2023 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on December 5, 2022.

In addition to incorporating costumes and music videos into his teaching, Hardesty encourages collaboration in his classroom to make students take ownership in what they're doing.

"I try to be creative with the lessons to spark their interests, make class more engaging, and make it different from what they see all day every day," says Hardesty. "With middle school, I feel like they're old enough for me to talk to them like more of an adult, but they're still young enough to think that the goofy things we do are fun."

Hardesty credits his time in Pitt Education's MAT program and his student teaching experience for preparing him for his career as an educator.

"The ability to student teach for an entire school year was invaluable to me," he says. "That gave me a whole new level of experience and confidence going into that first year of teaching."

He adds, "Anyone who asks me, I recommend that they go to Pitt. I loved my time at the University."

### The Best Educators Come from Pitt

Other Pitt Education alumni have received the top educator awards in their state:

- **Brianna Ross** (BS '14, MEd '15), 2021-22 Maryland Teacher of the Year
- **Timothy Wagner** (MS '09, EdD '13), principal of Upper St. Clair High School, 2023 Principal of the Year
- **Sean McComb** (MEd '08), 2013-14 Maryland Teacher of the Year and 2014 National Teacher of the Year



## Head of the Class

**T. Elon Dancy II**, Helen S. Faison Endowed Chair in Urban Education and executive director of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, received the 2022 Derrick Bell Legacy Award from the Critical Race Studies in Education Association.

Renée and Richard Goldman Dean **Valerie Kinloch** was ranked 152nd in the 2023 Rick Hess Straight Up Educator Public Influence Rankings, which evaluate the scholars who have the biggest influence on educational practice and policy. Additionally, Kinloch was ranked 34th on City & State Pennsylvania's 2023 Higher Education Power 100 list.

The Genius, Joy, and Love Summer Academy, created by Kinloch, received a University of Pittsburgh 2023 Partnerships of Distinction Award (see p. 18).

Assistant Professor **Heather McCambly** received the 2022 Outstanding Dissertation Award from the American Educational Research Association Division J for her dissertation, "Change Agents or Same Agents?: Grantmakers and Racial Inequity in U.S. Higher Education Policy."

Associate Professor **Darris Means**

was named a 2023 emerging scholar by the publication *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. He was recognized for his scholarship in racial and class inequities in rural contexts.

Assistant Professor **Esohe Osai** received a 2023 University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award. The honor recognized her work in leading the Justice Scholars Institute (see p. 20).

Professor and Associate Dean for Equity, Justice, and Strategic Partnerships **Eboni Zamani-Gallaher** was appointed an American Educational Research Association fellow. Additionally, she was recognized as a scholar diplomate by ACPA (American College Personnel Association)-College Student Educators International.

**Marialexia Zaragoza**, a PhD student in higher education, was named a 2022-23 American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education Graduate Student fellow. She is one of only 18 students selected nationwide for this fellowship.

Assistant Dean for Student Engagement **Andrea Zito** received the University of Pittsburgh 2022 Chancellor's Staff Award for Student Impact in recognition of her work to continually improve the student experience at Pitt Education.



T. Elon Dancy II



Esohe Osai



Valerie Kinloch



Eboni Zamani-Gallaher



Heather McCambly



Marialexia Zaragoza



Darris Means



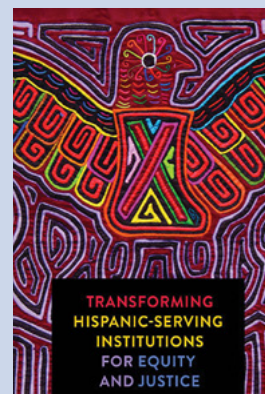
Andrea Zito



Associate Professors **Sharon Ross** and **Christopher Kline** (at left) were named fellows of the American College of Sports Medicine and were recognized during the organization's annual meeting in summer 2022.

## A Conversation with Gina Garcia

**A**s an associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, Gina Garcia\* centers her research on equity and justice in higher education, with an emphasis on understanding how Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) embrace and enact an organizational identity for serving minoritized populations. She continues to explore these themes in her newly published book, "Transforming Hispanic-serving Institutions for Equity and Justice."



### **Tell us a little bit about your new book.**

In this sequel to my first book, "Becoming Hispanic-serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities," I explore the theoretical framework to help HSIs transform into spaces of liberation that promote racial equity and social justice.

### **How did writing this book differ from writing your previous book?**

With this book, I had more leeway, and I felt like I could write what I wanted to, as opposed to my first book, which is grounded in a more traditional structure. I didn't hold back through my writing process, and it comes across in a very powerful manner and tone in this book.

### **What's changed since writing your first book?**

New research has emerged, making it a critical topic to be explored for educators in higher education. We're seeing that HSIs are not producing different outcomes from what they were before. There are still inequities in educational outcomes for Hispanic Latino students.

### **What do you hope readers take away from this book?**

Organizational change is multifaceted, and it's a process! We can't become more effective HSIs without a collective effort.

\* Garcia has accepted a new position as a professor at the School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley.

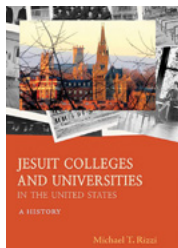




## Book Briefs

Pitt Education faculty members and alumni recently released the following new books:

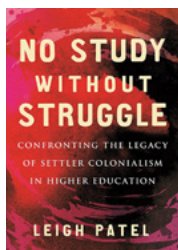
### **"Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History"** (The Catholic University of America Press, 2022)



By Michael Rizza  
(EdD '17)

Traces the complex history of Jesuit-run colleges and universities in the United States and examines the history of the American education system

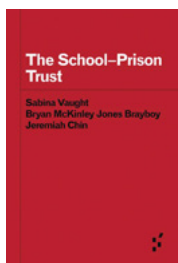
### **"No Study without Struggle: Confronting Settler Colonialism in Higher Education"** (Beacon Press, 2021)



By Leigh Patel

Explores how student protests can push back against structural inequalities and seeks to provide an understanding vital for societal improvement

### **"The School-Prison Trust"** (University of Minnesota Press, 2022)



By Sabina Vaught,  
Bryan McKinley  
Jones Brayboy, and  
Jeremiah Chin

Asks important questions about the impact of colonial boarding school and juvenile prison models on Native and Indigenous populations



## 2022-23 Schoolwide Read

Each academic year, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education selects a book for the entire school community to read and discuss to address pressing education topics. The book selected for the 2022-23 academic year was "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent" by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson. This thought-provoking book explores how America has been shaped by a hidden caste system that influences people's lives and behavior as well as the nation's fate.

"Caste ties into our school's mission and vision of igniting learning and our commitment to equity and justice in education," says Valerie Kinloch, professor and Renée and Richard Goldman Dean at Pitt Education. "Through our schoolwide reads, our community comes together to engage in these important conversations to initiate change."

During the spring term, the Pitt Education Office of Student and Career Services hosted a discussion series for students to engage in conversations about the book.

"Isabel Wilkerson focuses on the persistence of a caste system, stating that the legacy of slavery and racism in America is not a mere thorn in history but something that still causes bleeding today," says Isaac Anaya, a master's student in higher education. "I appreciate the author's unique way to present the subject of racism and the caste system that has been imposed on American society."

"As a lens to understand systemic racism in the United States, Wilkerson's argument highlights some of the ways that racism permeates our society while obscuring some of the nuance that is essential," says Sierra Stern, a PhD student in education policy. "Engaging in critical discussion of this text has been productive, but we've only scratched the surface."



## Highlights from Student Activities



The School of Education's Office of Student and Career Services offered many enriching activities for students to enjoy outside the classroom in the 2022-23 academic year. From academic lectures and career panel discussions to social paint nights and Pittsburgh Pirates games, we've ignited learning and fun for our students.



# Learning Intertwined with Health and Wellness

School Receives “Gold Standard” in Health Education Accreditation

By Kaitlyn Zurcher

**The University of Pittsburgh School of Education Bachelor of Science program in exercise science and Master of Science program in clinical exercise physiology have been awarded national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).**

**C**AAHEP-accredited programs undergo a rigorous review to ensure that they are preparing students for careers as health professionals.

“This accreditation signals to students that our programs meet a gold standard,” says Kelli Davis, associate professor of practice at Pitt Education and director of the MS program in clinical exercise physiology. “It demonstrates that we are teaching them the things they need to know for their certification exams and future careers.”

The undergraduate exercise science program trains students to apply exercise science to the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases and conditions, to the improvement of human performance, and to the enhancement of health and well-being. CAAHEP accreditation includes a strength and conditioning focus to support students pursuing athletic and clinical roles.

## Learning Spotlight

The master's program in clinical exercise physiology prepares students for clinical, applied, or research careers focused on preventing and treating chronic health-related conditions. The graduate program is one of just 13 in the United States that is accredited by CAAHEP, according to Davis.

"Accreditation from our field's most highly regarded association indicates that students will receive the highest-quality training to best prepare them for health/fitness and clinical careers related to exercise science," says Elizabeth Nagle, associate professor of practice at Pitt Education and director of the BS program in exercise science.

The job outlook for the exercise and health sciences field is strong. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the exercise physiology field is expected to grow by 9% by 2031. Additionally, the

American College of Sports Medicine's certifications for exercise physiologists and clinical exercise physiologists will require students to graduate from a CAAHEP-accredited program beginning in 2027.

"More jobs are requiring certifications now," says Nagle. "We want to give students the knowledge and tools to successfully earn them."

Anna Moser (BS '21, MS '22) knows how important certifications are. A graduate of both the exercise science and clinical exercise physiology programs, Moser is preparing to pursue her clinical exercise physiology certification.

"As a student at Pitt, I learned not only about different clinical populations but also how to perform clinical skills, such as exercise prescription, graded exercise testing protocols, and electrocardiogram interpretation," says Moser.

"Having a variety of experienced faculty who worked clinically in the field and who took this certification helps students understand how all this information is applied in a clinical setting."

Moser says that the CAAHEP accreditation will make Pitt graduates to further stand out in the professional world.

"This accreditation will show that our students are adequately prepared to work with clinical populations in any setting," says Moser. "Also, being accredited will help students be prepared for the certification examination if they desire to take it. I believe this is a huge step for this program and is happening at a great time as this field continues to grow."

### [Ignite Fitness Sparks a Lifelong Passion for Wellness](#)

Ignite Fitness, a fitness center located in Trees Hall, invites University of Pittsburgh faculty and staff and UPMC and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs employees to skip the crowds at other gyms and add exercise to their daily on-campus routines.

Created in September 2022 and run by the Pitt School of Education's Department of Health and Human Development, Ignite Fitness offers open gym hours and small-group exercise classes such as cycling, yoga, and strength training.





The exercise classes are taught by two Pitt Education graduate students with degrees in exercise science and training in health, fitness, and wellness. Additionally, four Pitt Education undergraduate students are earning their Health-Fitness Practicum experience by managing the open gym hours and assisting with the classes.

Kevin McLaughlin, a clinical instructor at Pitt Education and program coordinator for Ignite Fitness, says that the program is giving students beneficial knowledge in teaching and operating a fitness center while providing a first-class gym experience to members.

“Our students are gaining firsthand experience in the work that goes into daily operations of the fitness facility as well as the advertising, marketing, and recruitment of new members,” says McLaughlin. “This provides valuable experience toward developing a skill set directly related to their career paths.”

As Ignite Fitness finishes up its first year, plans are in the works to add more fitness class options and extend gym hours.

“We are excited to see members enjoying the space and participating in the group classes,” says Laura Fonzi, a clinical instructor at Pitt Education and a program coordinator for Ignite Fitness. “We look forward to using their feedback to expand, improve, and grow the program.” ●

**“Accreditation from our field’s most highly regarded association** indicates that students will receive the highest-quality training to best prepare them for health/fitness and clinical careers related to exercise science.”

— Elizabeth Nagle, *associate professor at Pitt Education and director of the BS program in exercise science.*

A student participates in an aquatics education exercise at Trees Hall.





## Inviting Play Back into the Classroom

By Kaitlyn Zurcher



Veena Vasudevan

On the first day of Veena Vasudevan's Digital Literacies and Learning across Educational Contexts class, she asked her students to think about a joyful moment in their lives when they were learning. After reflecting on that moment in their journals, students used art supplies to create physical objects that represented that memory.





“When you looked around the room, there was a visual display of different moments of joy rendered through basic art supplies,” recalls Vasudevan, an assistant professor of digital media and learning at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. “It turned into a mini museum exhibit that we could revisit and use to think about different ways we can communicate our ideas.”

The class was held in Imagination PLAYce, a new maker space in Wesley W. Posvar Hall that invites Pitt Education students to envision how play, creativity, and making can be used across different learning environments.

“Play is something that’s dissipating from our everyday teaching and learning,” says Vasudevan, the creator and facilitator of Imagination PLAYce. “There’s a level of erasure of what childhood and adolescence learning experiences are supposed to be about, which is a playfulness in the sense of exploring, discovering, trying, and tinkering.”

While the term “maker space” might evoke images of high-tech 3-D printers and laser cutters, Imagination PLAYce runs on more accessible creative tools: construction paper, colored pencils, pipe cleaners, and the like. The space also integrates technology with tools like cameras and audio recorders; Scratch, a free open-source coding software; and Makey Makey, a circuit kit that can, for example, use conduction to turn a banana into a functioning keyboard.

“Typically, maker spaces have a certain connotation of who belongs and what kind of projects can happen there,” says Vasudevan. “We wanted something that felt more open and playful.”

That focus on play inspired Holly Plank to bring her class of Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) students to Imagination PLAYce last fall. The students used six stations that integrated computational thinking skills—which are foundational in



Holly Plank

STEM education—into play and problem solving.

Plank, a PhD student in the learning sciences and policy program at Pitt Education, says that Imagination PLAYce encourages student teachers to explore how tinkering and play can empower and liberate their students.

“I am excited for student teachers to be able to use the space outside of course work to plan dynamic learning experiences for their students,” says Plank. “As more and more educators play and reimagine learning in this space, its influence will reach far beyond its walls to students in classrooms across the region.”

Jennifer Nguyen is an MAT student in mathematics education who not only participated in Plank’s class but also helped to design the activities as a graduate assistant for Imagination PLAYce. “Imagination PLAYce is a place to create things and try new things without the fear of



Jennifer Nguyen

failure,” says Nguyen. “Students can learn about the things that are possible in learning and creating that can be taken into their classrooms or practice.”

Having been both a facilitator and a student in Imagination PLAYce, Nguyen enjoys seeing her fellow students embrace the learning experiences in the space.

“A lot of students have not had these opportunities in their years of schooling until now,” she says. “I hope they will bring play, making, technology, vulnerability, and creativity into their practice as a future teacher.” ●



# Connecting Ecology to Psychology in Iceland

By Kaitlyn Zurcher

**As a U.S. Fulbright Student Program grantee conducting research in Iceland, Meghan Orman heeded the advice she received from former Fulbright scholars: Say “yes” to as many opportunities as possible.**



“An important part of this experience was getting to know the local community,” says Orman, a doctoral student in applied developmental psychology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. “I tried to meet as many people as I could, and I spent a lot of my time exploring the natural and cultural beauty of Reykjavík and the surrounding areas.”

Learning Icelandic, taking a dip in a local geothermal pool, and starting an unofficial Buffalo Bills Backers group in Reykjavík were just a few of the extracurricular activities that she pursued when she was not occupied by her research.

Orman received a Fulbright/National Science Foundation Arctic Research Grant for nine months to study Icelandic preschoolers’ connection to nature and how they think about the natural world.

“I am trying to understand how children think and feel about nature, which is a very complex and abstract thing to study,” says Orman. “Interviewing children can be an important—and heartwarming—part of psychological research. They have such a unique perspective of the world, and tapping into this perspective can provide valuable insights into their experiences.”



## Exploring Connections between Nature and Education

As a researcher with both bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy, Orman is interested in infusing science and philosophy into education and learning.

"I want to understand what the connection to nature looks like and means to people, both philosophically and psychologically," she says. "I want to understand how educational settings use this knowledge to support learners of all ages across contexts."

Many of Orman's days were spent on the University of Iceland campus, splitting her time between its School of Education and School of Health Sciences and meeting with her mentors, Kristín Norðdahl and Freyja Birgisdóttir, to discuss project development, planning, and improvement.

She also spent a lot of time in the field visiting preschools to collect data. Because Orman does not speak Icelandic, she worked with several undergraduate students from the university who assisted with data collection.

The preschool children were asked to draw pictures of themselves in nature and then were interviewed about what they drew and how it made them feel. One question they were asked was whether they felt like they belonged in nature.

"While it's an abstract concept, we wanted to understand when these types of reasoning skills come online in young kids," Orman says. "Some children offered a very concrete response to this question, for example, 'No, I belong at home!' Others said, 'Yes, because it feels so good.'"

Orman's research also included written surveys for teachers and parents to learn how they use nature in the classroom and at home.

"We were looking at how teachers connect to nature and how Icelandic preschool classrooms support children's connection to nature," she says. "I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know some of the preschool teachers and school directors and their pedagogical approaches."



## Thinking Locally and Globally

Orman's own connection to nature is a big inspiration for her interest in the field of ecopsychology. Ecopsychology, as defined by author Valerie Harms, is an emerging field that attempts to integrate psychology and environmentalism, focusing especially on the relationship that the Earth has with the behavior of its inhabitants.

"I grew up in a small rural village in central New York and was always close to nature without realizing it," Orman says. "In my 20s, when I really needed support and growth, I would turn back to nature through hiking, gardening, beekeeping, and exploring."

Now Orman is driven by the desire to ensure that all children have opportunities to access and connect with nature.

"Access to nature is political in the United States, and there are racial and socioeconomic inequities in who has access to it and under what conditions," she says. "This also means leaning into community-engaged scholarship and ensuring that real people are always at the center of any scholarly work I'm doing."

While Orman's time in Iceland came to an end in May 2023, her research on early childhood ecopsychology will be the basis for her dissertation as she completes her PhD program at Pitt Education. She looks forward to diving into how her findings can be applied to early

childhood learning beyond Iceland.

"Whether young children in Iceland are more or less connected to nature than children in other places like the United States remains to be seen, but I hope it is a next step in my research that I can explore." ●

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is the United States' flagship international education exchange program and is among the largest and most diverse exchange programs in the world. In partnership with more than 140 countries worldwide, it provides opportunities for students and young professionals to pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad.

The University of Pittsburgh was named a top producer of Fulbright scholars for the 2022-23 academic year by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

# Cultivating Relationships:

Partnerships Are Flourishing with the Pittsburgh Public Schools

By Greg Latshaw

**F**rom being the largest site for student teaching placements to being a partner in multiple efforts to recruit more Black teachers into the profession, the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) works closely with the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. More collaboration is on the horizon under new Superintendent of Schools Wayne Walters.

“The partnership is strong, and we’re going to make it stronger,” says Valerie Kinloch, professor and Renée and Richard Goldman Dean at Pitt Education.









Superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools Wayne Walters and Valerie Kinloch, professor and Renée and Richard Goldman Dean at Pitt Education, speak at a town hall meeting.

Kinloch is working closely with Walters to make that statement a reality. Walters, who has more than 30 years of experience at PPS, was appointed superintendent of schools in August 2022 following a national search.

“Equity and justice are foundational to our partnership and inspire everything we have done, everything we are doing, and everything we will do in the future,” says Kinloch. “I am proud to have a partner in PPS that is equally committed to undertaking the important work of providing all students with a high-quality, equitable, and future-focused education that prepares them to be leaders who can change this world for the future.”

Together, Pitt Education and PPS are collaborating on a variety of initiatives, including:

- **The Genius, Joy, and Love Summer Academy** (see p. 18), which encourages Black students in PPS to pursue the teaching profession to help close the employment gap for Teachers of Color in the city’s schools
- **The Justice Scholars Institute** (see p. 20), which enhances college pathways for PPS students from underrepresented schools while also equipping them with tools to evaluate education systems from a social justice lens
- **The Ready to Learn program**, offered through the school’s Center for Urban Education, which is an after-school and summer math mentoring initiative that blends

“I am proud to have a partner in PPS that is equally committed to undertaking the important work of providing all students with a high-quality, equitable, and future-focused education that prepares them to be **leaders who can change this world for the future.**”

—Valerie Kinloch

## Student Teaching Success

There were **92** student teaching placements in PPS for the 2022-23 academic year, accounting for **51%** of Pitt Education placements across all school districts.

tutors and technology while preparing students to critically examine social justice problems impacting their community

- **Advisory support** through Kinloch’s being invited to participate in PPS strategic planning organizations and Walters’ being invited to join the school’s newly formed Superintendent Thought Partners Group (see p. 22)
- **The HealthyCHILD program** through the school’s Office of Child Development, which provides on-site support to address the impact of trauma and chronic stress on children in PPS



In November 2022, Pitt Education cohosted an event with A+ Schools and the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative that featured a moderated conversation between Kinloch and Walters. More than 75 people were there to hear the two discuss the future of K-12 education and the specific challenges and opportunities within Western Pennsylvania schools.

In March 2023, Walters and his chief academic officer, Jala Olds-Pearson, attended a schoolwide meeting at Pitt Education. They spoke of the challenges and opportunities facing PPS, which, with more than 20,000 students, is the second-largest district in Pennsylvania.

"I challenge us to work together in ways that, in the words of the [Pitt Education] mission-vision statement, are innovative, that transform, that disrupt, and that challenge," said Walters at the school meeting.

## Building on Excellence in Student Teaching

PPS schools are among the top student teaching placement sites for Pitt Education students. In the 2022-23 academic year, they accounted for more than half of all placements.

"No single district has a bigger impact on our student-teacher experiences than the Pittsburgh Public Schools," says Michelle Sobolak, associate professor of practice and director of teacher and professional education at Pitt Education.

Pitt Education student John Jendrzewski, who is earning dual certification in special education and French language, is completing his student teaching experience at

Pittsburgh Allderdice High School. He spends half of his day teaching French and half of his day in an autistic support classroom for math and chemistry.

While teaching high school French, Jendrzewski incorporates lessons on famous People of Color and women from France.

He also uses the French language's use of gendered subject pronouns—and efforts under way to shift to gender-neutral pronouns in French—to teach his students about respecting every person's gender identity.

"One thing I have loved about the School of Education is it does not shy away from social justice education. They pride themselves on teaching teachers how to become social justice educators. It's been really easy [for me] to apply what I've learned in my class into the curriculum in what I'm teaching at Allderdice," says Jendrzewski.

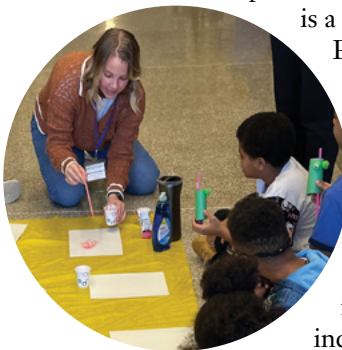
Hayley Keys, a Pitt Education student earning a dual certification in special education and English, is a student teacher at Pittsburgh Carrick High School. She has a hard time deciding which she enjoys more: teaching 10th grade English or her time in a special education classroom for students with high-incidence disabilities.

"I feel like I've gotten double what other students have gotten. I have friends from other universities who say they feel unprepared," says Keys.

Pitt Education student Kelsey Thompson, who is earning her master's in Pre-K-12 special education, is a student teacher at Pittsburgh Colfax K-8 and previously



John Jendrzewski



Hayley Keys



## Alumni Spotlight: Guiding World and Heritage Languages Across the District

Ameeta Schmitt (MAT '13, EdD '20) is the world language curriculum supervisor at PPS. She is one of many Pitt Education alumni who are employed by the district as teachers, principals, and curriculum supervisors.

Schmitt provides districtwide instructional support to foreign language educators in planning, instruction, assessment, and teacher evaluation. One of her goals is to develop a curriculum centered on culturally relevant and responsive practices.

"Introducing and learning languages in the younger grades enables students to potentially pick more specialized programming in high school and beyond," says Schmitt.

completed an assignment at Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5. She is in a K-3 learning support classroom.

"As a whole, just working with the Pittsburgh Public Schools, there's such a sense of community. The staff really works together. There is a large sense of community within the staff and the administration," says Thompson. Her goal is to get a teaching position at PPS. ●



A group of Genius Scholars pose outside the Manchester Youth Development Center.

# Celebrating the Genius, Joy, and Love in Students of Color

By Kaitlyn Zurcher

When Vaughn Bryant thinks about his experience in the Genius, Joy, and Love Summer Academy at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, he is more inspired than ever to pursue his goal of becoming the math teacher that he never had.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t see one Black male teacher,” says Bryant, now an undergraduate student at Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania. “I want to be a positive role model who’s there for my students.”

Bryant was one of 14 students from the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) who took part last year in the inaugural summer academy, which was created and designed by Valerie Kinloch, professor and Renée and Richard Goldman Dean at Pitt Education. The program encourages

Students of Color to pursue education as a profession.

“Our goal is to ensure that our students—or ‘genius scholars,’ as we call them—feel inspired, energized, and supported as they embark on their journeys to becoming educators,” says Kinloch. “I know that they will positively and productively transform education through their own genius, joy, and love.”

The program, which will be held again this summer, complements The Pittsburgh Promise’s Advancing Educators of Color scholarship. The initiative provides a full scholarship to PPS students who pursue an education degree and then a job within the district after graduation, with the goal of adding at least 35 Black educators to PPS over seven years.

Katie Daley, a teacher at Pittsburgh Brashear High School in the school’s Teaching Academy Magnet program, says that the

perennial shortage of Black teachers draws some students into the education field.

“Many of them share that they are underrepresented in the classroom and feel they can be the change they wish to see by becoming the Black teacher they never had,” says Daley, who served as co-program coordinator for the summer academy. “I believe the positive experiences they’ve had in this program will resonate with them for many years, and Genius, Joy, and Love has propelled their interests even further.”

## Preparing Students to Transform Education

Held over four weeks in July and August 2022, the inaugural summer academy featured a packed schedule of field trips; workshops; and guest speakers who provided the genius scholars with advice, inspiration, and insight into the college experience and into becoming a teacher.

“I’ve always wished to see more People of Color, and specifically Arabs, as teachers in public schools,” says Maysam Suhail, another genius scholar, who is now majoring in secondary education at Duquesne University. “The program pushed me to be one of those teachers rather than just sitting around and waiting for change.”

Suhail says that the program prepared her for college by providing her with lessons about working with others and advocating for herself.

“The biggest lesson that stuck with me is how important working with, relying on, and building on the ideas of the people around you really is,” says Suhail. “I also learned how to be independent and rely on my own opinions. I left the program knowing how to speak up and add my thoughts.”

Throughout the summer program, Daley watched her students find their voices and envision themselves as leaders in the classroom.



“My hope is that they take all they have learned and experienced and walk a little taller, a little prouder, and more purposefully,” says Daley, “that they own their spaces and exude Black excellence in all they do, making our world a more understanding, empathetic, positive, and united place for all.”

## Invigorating and Inspiring Current Educators

In addition to the summer academy for PPS students, Pitt Education partnered with the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh to design and offer an eight-day institute for educators to help them engage in transformative visions of education.

Throughout the institute, which Kinloch named Genius, Joy, and Love: Liberating Educators’ Creative Capacities for Change, 11 Pittsburgh-area educators explored questions about how to center racial justice and equity through creative, innovative, and relevant curricula.

A highlight of the institute was the day when the 14 genius scholars from the summer academy joined the educators for a joint workshop on engaged pedagogies in schools and communities.

“Bringing our student scholars and educators together was intentional and was driven by a desire for them to think and talk with each other and to design the future of education that centers equity and justice not only in theory but also in practice,” says Kinloch.

Karing Coyne, a visual arts teacher who works at Pittsburgh Obama 6-12, took part in the institute because she wanted to discover new ways to demonstrate her own belief in her students’ inherent intellectual gifts. She says that spending a day with students who will be teachers was an invigorating experience.

“After 20 years of teaching, in all the ways the failing of our educational system had begun to dishearten and break me personally, this institute has mended my broken heart and breathed new life into me and my outlook on my teaching,” says Coyne. ●



Maysam Suhail (left) and Taliah Baldwin

“I’ve learned how to be an educator and how to advocate for myself. I’ve learned **how to speak up for myself for what I believe in or what I think is wrong.**”

—Taliah Baldwin, 2022 graduate of Pittsburgh Brashear High School, now attending the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg

# Equitable Pathways to College:

## Justice Scholars Institute Expands Its Impact

By Kaitlyn Zurcher

When Mae Knight was a high school student at Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6-12, she took part in the Justice Scholars Institute (JSI), a college preparatory program at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. Through JSI, high school students in underserved Pittsburgh Public Schools take courses for college credit through Pitt's College in High School (CHS) program.

Knight took an introduction to social justice course, and she says that the lessons learned in that class stuck with her as she earned bachelor's degrees in special education and early elementary education from La Salle University.

"Through that class, I learned that social work and education have so much in common, and the lessons I learned became a major part of my education program," says Knight, who is now a high school autistic support teacher at Hill-Freedman World Academy in Philadelphia.

"The connections I made in JSI have helped me throughout my life, from right after high school and into young adulthood and my teaching career. The connections are really priceless," says Knight.

Founded in 2016, JSI partners with students and teachers at Pittsburgh Westinghouse Academy 6-12, Pittsburgh Perry Traditional Academy, and Pittsburgh Millions 6-12 University Preparatory School. More than 230 students have participated in JSI since the program began, with 84 students participating during the 2022-23 school year.

In addition to taking courses for college credit, JSI students also complete learning experiences that help them understand the college transition, engage them in their communities, and train them in research skills that support understanding and addressing societal inequities.

"The most important thing is that students see that they have amazing

potential and that they have the ability to pursue their dreams and ambitions academically and professionally," says Esohe Osai, an assistant professor at Pitt Education and founder and director of JSI. "Our goal is to be a scaffold to say that college is something that can be in your future. If you have a desire and the commitment to go to college, we want to make sure you have everything you need to do that successfully."

## Grant Funding to Further Impact

JSI is growing thanks to several recent grants, including a \$540,000 grant from the Henry L. Hillman Foundation and a \$35,000 grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

### JSI participants have enrolled in the following colleges:

- Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
- Community College of Allegheny County
- Duquesne University
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- La Salle University
- Morehouse College
- Pennsylvania State University
- Pennsylvania Western University California
- Pennsylvania Western University Clarion
- Robert Morris University
- Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
- Stanford University
- Temple University
- University of Pittsburgh







**"The college journey can be complicated and difficult at times, and we want students to feel empowered in their own abilities and identities as learners who belong in a university setting."**

*—Angela Flango, a CHS teacher at Pittsburgh Westinghouse*

"This is an exciting expansion of our work," says Osai. "These grants will enhance our efforts to support the partner schools in providing students with options for more rigorous courses, which will give them a better chance at success once they get to college."

The new funding enables JSI to hire additional program coordinators and to develop a strategy for academic support to help students in the CHS courses. Throughout the past seven years, the JSI team has identified patterns of students' needs as they engage in these rigorous advanced courses.

"There are many barriers to success in these courses, and our goal is to create a strategy to mitigate those barriers through centering students' individual needs," says Osai. "We already have amazing partner teachers who do great work with the students. By adding program coordinators, we will provide students with the additional layer of another adult relationship that can enhance their development in a focused and culturally responsive way."

Osai also received a \$576,000 grant from the Wallace Foundation to establish a research collaboration with the Forum for Youth Investment's David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. The 18-month study will explore how community-based organizations leverage the arts to serve Youth of Color, and its findings will impact future funding and policymaking related to youth arts.

### Extending Support Beyond Graduation

Angela Flango, a CHS teacher at Pittsburgh Westinghouse, has been a JSI partner for the past six years. As someone who saw the program develop, she says that the goal is to deepen the impact of these academic experiences that challenge the scholars to grow as students and learners.

"I want students to feel supported through their journey, while in the program as high schoolers and after graduation," says Flango. "The college journey can be complicated

and difficult at times, and we want students to feel empowered in their own abilities and identities as learners who belong in a university setting."

JSI also is developing a strategy to extend support to its participants after they begin college.

"In the past, many students reached out to us for help once they got to college," says Osai. "Now we will have a better infrastructure to proactively support the students in that college transition."

As JSI expands, Osai says that success will be marked not just by how many students are served but also by the quality of their experiences.

"Our work aims to transform systems, and that doesn't always mean an immediate, drastic increase in the number of students served," says Osai. "As the schools are able to expand course offerings, we want to make sure more students are able to find success in those advanced courses and be more prepared to pursue their college aspirations." ●

# Inviting School Leaders to the Table

By Greg Latshaw

“People want to have their expertise and opinions valued and listened to. It helps to shrink the gap between the community and the University. The School of Education has worked hard to **prioritize community-engaged partnerships, and we realized we were missing an opportunity to connect with part of our community.**”

—Cassie Quigley, *associate professor and chair of the school's Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading*

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education is in the process of revamping its teacher certification and school leadership programs. The enhancements include a new Bachelor of Science in teacher education program launching in fall 2023, revisions to its long-standing Master of Arts in Teaching program, and adjustments to the curricula and delivery formats of its principal and superintendent certification programs.

With so much change afoot, Cassie Quigley, associate professor and chair of the school's Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading, sought input from superintendents in Western Pennsylvania, as their school districts are the end users most likely to be affected by the changes.

This past fall, she helped the school to create the Superintendent Thought Partners group. Made up of superintendents from 12 districts in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, and Washington counties as well as the superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the group is providing input on the proposed changes and, in some cases, going so far as to help develop curriculum.

“This was our opportunity to check in with school leaders,” says Quigley. “People want to have their expertise and opinions valued and listened to. It helps to shrink the gap between the community and the University. The School of Education has worked hard to prioritize community-engaged partnerships, and we realized we were missing an opportunity to connect with part of our community.”

Michelle Miller (EdD '04), superintendent of the South Fayette Township School District, a fast-growing district in Pittsburgh's South Hills region, participated in the Superintendent Thought Partners meetings on program needs in



student teaching and field placements and on K-12 principal certification. She says that the things she learned put her in a better position, as a graduate of Pitt Education, to recruit for the programs within her own district and throughout the region.

“It is so nice that higher education faculty and staff, who train and prepare our leaders for the principals’ program and superintendency, reached out to talk to those of us in the role as practitioners. I don’t know if that has been done [before]; at least I have not experienced it,” says Miller.

Sue Mariani, superintendent of the Duquesne City School District, says that she enjoys participating in the advisory group because it helps districts to break out of their silos and demonstrates that all districts, regardless of socioeconomic status, face many of the same issues.

“We’re looking at how we better prepare teachers coming into the profession. These conversations have been suggestions, especially around Pitt’s programming, on what things we are thinking about and what would we recommend.”

The members of the Superintendent Thought Partners group also participate in two other educational leadership organizations offered at Pitt Education: the Tri-State Area School Study Council and the Forum for Western Pennsylvania School Superintendents. Tom Ralston, forum executive director and visiting assistant professor at Pitt Education, helped to recruit the members and, along with Quigley and faculty members Michelle Sobolak, Emily Rainey, and Patrick O’Toole, has helped to facilitate the meetings.

So far, the group has met twice in person. Future meetings will address Pitt Education’s superintendent certification program and new undergraduate teacher certification program, support mechanisms for mentor teachers, and free professional development opportunities.

Quigley has been blown away by the level of support from the group so far.

“These are very busy people, and they wanted to come to campus and think with us about how our priorities are aligned and how we can collaborate more authentically and creatively,” she says. ●



Cassie Quigley



Michelle Miller



Tom Ralston

### Superintendent Thought Partners Member Districts

- Avonworth School District, Jeff Hadley (MEd ’08, EdD ’17)
- Baldwin-Whitehall School District, Randal Lutz (BS ’90, MEd ’96, EdD ’04)
- California Area School District, Laura Jacob
- Duquesne City School District, Sue Mariani
- Elizabeth Forward School District, Keith Konyk
- Fox Chapel Area School District, Mary Catherine Reljac (EdD ’16)
- Hampton Township School District, Michael Loughhead (EdD ’09)
- New Brighton Area School District, Joseph Guarino (EdD ’09)
- Northgate School District, Caroline Johns (EdD ’17)
- Pittsburgh Public Schools, Wayne Walters
- Seneca Valley School District, Tracy Vitale (EdD ’09)
- Shaler Area School District, Sean Aiken
- South Fayette Township School District, Michelle Miller (EdD ’04)



# EXPANDING Community College Leadership and Partnerships

## Setting a Bold Trajectory at Pitt Education

By Greg Latshaw

**W**hen Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher was earning her doctorate in higher education administration in the 1990s, she took an elective seminar on community colleges. The experience changed her perspective on higher education.

“In that class, I was asked what I was passionate about. I said, ‘Students of Color and particularly Black and Brown students’ trajectories and wanting them to have more access and to complete college,’” says Zamani-Gallaher.

“As I got into the literature, it was obvious that community colleges were the tier where the masses of Black and Latinx students were located. I also saw reflections of myself as a first-generation college student.”

From then on, Zamani-Gallaher devoted her scholarship to expanding knowledge of and support for community colleges, which play a vital and irreplaceable role in America’s higher education system. It is part of her broader study of marginalized student

populations with regard to access, completion, and sense of belonging.

She joined the University of Pittsburgh School of Education faculty in July 2022 as professor of higher education and associate dean for equity, justice, and strategic partnerships. From the outset, she has worked to expand the school’s emphasis on community colleges. In quick order, she has created new research grants about access and postsecondary pathways with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, established new organizational partnerships with community colleges in the region, and evaluated the school’s admissions practices for receiving transfer students from community colleges. Next on the horizon is a new 12-credit graduate certificate program in community college leadership at Pitt Education for professionals seeking to advance their careers within the industry.

Zamani-Gallaher is organizing this growing portfolio under the umbrella Community College Research, Praxis, and Leadership at Pitt Education. It reflects the scholarly activities, initiatives, and professional preparation programming and resources focused on community colleges.

“Why do I do this work? It’s about moving from marginality to mattering,” says Zamani-Gallaher, who also serves as executive director of The Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC), a national organization of university-based researchers and community college practitioners who further scholarship for community colleges. CSCC is now headquartered at Pitt Education, where it will create new opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.

“Community colleges often have been at the margins of the larger higher education discourse, yet they are a centerpiece of the higher ed landscape and play a critical part in the success of so many students.”

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, there are more than 10 million people enrolled in community colleges nationwide. Compared with four-year institutions, people enrolled in community colleges are older, more racially diverse, and have greater economic need. Additionally, many of the students have disabilities, are parents, and are working full- or part-time while taking classes.

“Community colleges are game changers in bridging the opportunity gap in our society,” says Zamani-Gallaher.



## Gateway to the American Dream

Christopher Reber (PhD '87) is president of Hudson County Community College (HCCC) in Jersey City, New Jersey, located just across the river from New York City.

HCCC is one the most diverse community colleges in the nation. By Reber's estimate, 87% of HCCC's students are non-white and 56% are Latinx. One-third of the students



Christopher Reber

were born outside the United States and require English-language learning support. The vast majority come from modest to extremely challenging financial means.

"Education is the gateway to the American dream. It's not lost on me that from our campus we [can] see the Statue of Liberty, which is a metaphor for our mission. We don't select our students; they select us. And we are partners with them in reaching their goals and dreams," says Reber.

Reber has spent 42 years working in higher education, including most recently as president of the Community College of Beaver County. He chose his current position because he wanted to work for an institution that is highly diverse and committed to erasing

generational equity gaps through open-access education.

Enrolling approximately 18,000 students annually, HCCC offers for-credit degrees and certificates and noncredit short-term credentials based on industry-recognized standards. Instead of a traditional college campus, its buildings are high-rises integrated into the urban landscape. Reber is proud of the fact that, during his tenure, students coined the phrase "Hudson Is Home," which then became the college's official tagline.

"We are at the nexus of the K-21 spectrum. We work collaboratively with K-12, four-year, and graduate institutions to maximize our students' pathways and opportunities," says Reber.

Reber is a graduate of the higher education PhD program at Pitt Education. Back then, he was employed at Penn State Behrend in Erie, Pennsylvania, and had to commute to campus. It was the time before cell phones, and several times he encountered snowstorms that left him stranded in his car. But Reber persevered.

"I received an education and a degree that have made all the difference for my career, enabling me to help lead and support students and institutions for the rest of my career," says Reber.

## Coming Soon to Pitt Education

### Certificate in Community College Leadership

- 12-credit graduate certificate
- Online format with optional in-person experiences
- Curriculum in organizational administration, student development, and embedded internship

## A Community-wide Resource

As president of Montgomery County Community College (MCCC), Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez (MEd '90, EdD '95) aims to be a visionary leader guiding an institution that is for all learners at all stages of life.

"It's about truly being their college, the communities' college, so that when they need us—whether it's for education, workforce development, or cultural learning—we are here for them."



Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez









(continued from page 25)



Bastecki-Perez (center) at the MCCC student radio station

**“My inspiration each and every day is our students. Many are first-generation college students like [I was]. People should know how talented our students are, how resilient they are as learners, and how they balance complex lives with grace.”**

**—Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez**

Founded in 1964 and located in Blue Bell and Pottstown, Pennsylvania, about an hour from Philadelphia, MCCC offers a range of associate’s degrees, programs, and credentials. In May 2022, it celebrated its largest graduating class to date: 1,606 graduates.

“My inspiration each and every day is our students. Many are first-generation college students like [I was],” she says. “People should know how talented our students are, how resilient they are as learners, and how they balance complex lives with grace.”

Bastecki-Perez says that MCCC is a community hub of resources. In fall 2022, it opened the first Challenger Learning Center in Pennsylvania on its Pottstown campus. The immersive space simulator is for all middle school-aged children and is intended to accelerate their interest in STEM

careers and higher education. Nearly 2,000 children visited in the center’s first seven months of operation.

The college also helps in times of crisis. In response to Hurricane Ida in 2021, which spawned tornadoes and deadly flooding, MCCC served as a Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Recovery Center. During COVID-19, MCCC was the first testing site in the county and later served as a vaccination site.

Bastecki-Perez credits her Pitt Education degrees with setting her up for success in her career in higher education administration.

“The School of Education provided me with a strong foundation to explore possibilities and to dream big,” she says. ●

### Joeshph J. Barron

(MEd '83), director of human resources at Kennywood, retired in June 2023 after 51 years of working at the amusement park.

### Ying-Tung "Ivy" Chou

(BS '19, MEd '22)

### Xiaoxu "Bliss" Hou

(MEd '17)

### Kaitlyn Livingstone

(MEd '21)

Three of the international enrollment service managers in Pitt's Office of Admissions and Financial Aid are School of Education alumni.

### Vernon Franklin

(EdD '18) is the author of "Blueprint for Diversity: Laying the Foundation for Success." He is a retired diversity and inclusion program manager at Pitt.

### Ann C. Gaudino



(EdD '07) was promoted to full professor at Millersville University of Pennsylvania in Lancaster County. She also is the coordinator of the doctoral program in educational leadership in the College of Education and Human Services.

### Ronald Gray



(EdD '73) was appointed vice president for student life at Manhattan College in the Bronx, New York.

### Valerie Howard

(EdD '07) was appointed dean of the University of North Carolina School of Nursing. She is leading the school in preparing future nurses and strategizing ways to address challenges in the field, including a nationwide nursing shortage, a lack of diversity in the nursing population, and unequal access to health care.

### Diane Kirk

(PhD '89), former superintendent of the Peters Township School District and retired clinical associate professor at Pitt Education, received the 2022 Educational Excellence Award from the Pennsylvania Principals Association.

### Lynnea Lombardi

(MEd '21) was hired as a program manager for global programs in the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing. She advises students about global experiences and study abroad programs.

### Ayisha Morgan-Lee

(EdD '20) was named to the 2022 Pittsburgh Magazine and PUMP 40 Under 40 list. Morgan-Lee is founder, CEO, and artistic director of the Hill Dance Academy Theatre in Pittsburgh.

### Milsha Reid

(BS '14, MEd '15, PhD '22), an assistant professor of special education at Carlow University, received the 2023 Dissertation Award from the Council for Exceptional Children.

### Michael Rizzi

(EdD '17) is the author of "Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History." The book traces the complex history of the many colleges and universities that the Jesuits have operated in the United States.

### Nathaniel Sams

(EdD '21) is the associate director of programming and development for the National Youth Science Academy in Charleston, West Virginia.

### Ameeta Schmitt

(MAT '13, EdD '20) was appointed world languages curriculum supervisor for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The position oversees districtwide instructional support for foreign language educators in all aspects of planning, instruction, and assessment as well as teacher growth and evaluation.

### Megan Eakin Skidmore

(BS '14, MEd '15) became a national board-certified teacher as an early childhood generalist in December 2022. She teaches first grade in the Hampton Township School District.

## Share Your News

Have you changed jobs or received a promotion? Let us know. Email us at [soenews@pitt.edu](mailto:soenews@pitt.edu). In addition to printing updates in the magazine, we share alumni news on the School of Education social media channels and through articles on the school website at [education.pitt.edu/news](http://education.pitt.edu/news).

To update your alumni information, please contact Michael Haas, director of development and alumni affairs at Pitt Education, at [mbh26@pitt.edu](mailto:mbh26@pitt.edu).



## In Memoriam

### Herb Douglas



(BS '48, MEd '50), a University of Pittsburgh emeritus trustee, passed away on April 22, 2023, at the age of 101. Douglas had been the oldest living U.S. Olympic medalist,

having won the bronze medal in the long jump at London's 1948 Summer Olympics. Additionally, he was a successful businessperson and philanthropist.

### Emeritus Professor William Bonds Thomas

died on Feb. 19, 2023, at the age of 84. He taught sociology in the School of Education from 1977 to 2009 and served as an H.J. Heinz Endowed Professor in religious studies. He was the author of two books: "Nine Speeches by Three Great Americans: John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr." and "No Wind for Their Sails: The Betrayal of America's Urban Youth."

### Jane Konrad



died on Aug. 19, 2022, at the age of 94. She was a former science education instructor and ran an institute for science teachers, both at the Pitt School of Education.

### James J. Kostra II

(BS '06, MS '08, EdD '21), an exercise physiologist who ran the GeroFit program at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, died on Nov. 12, 2022, at the age of 44.

### Ann M. Ruben

(BS '61, MEd '66, PhD '69) died on Jan. 21, 2023, at the age of 98. She started the Mima Bozzi Endowed Student Resource Fund at Pitt Education in memory of her aunt.

## Remembering IISE Founder Seth Spaulding

By Greg Latshaw

Professor Emeritus Seth J. Spaulding, founder and former director of the Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE) at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, died on Jan. 6, 2023. He was 94.

Throughout his long career, Spaulding contributed to Pitt's prominence in the field of international development education. He developed the School of Education's first graduate programs in that emerging discipline, and his legacy continues today with the school's acclaimed master's and doctoral programs in education policy. Spaulding also founded IISE in 1987 and served as the group's director from 1993 to 2000. Additionally, he helped to create Pitt's University Center for International Studies (UCIS), which has grown into a global hub for internationally focused research and teaching and study abroad.

"Seth's career in the School of Education was exemplary," says Maureen McClure, professor and director of IISE. "During the 1960s, he was one of the founders of the field of international development education. It differed from the then-existing academic fields of comparative and international education in that it focused on professional planning, policy, and its consequences."

Aiming to improve education systems in developing nations, Spaulding's work took him all over the world and even at times to conflict zones. He was a pioneer in radio education in remote areas and was an early adopter of the use of the internet. Spaulding developed policies to improve education systems in Bangladesh, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru, Tanzania, Uganda, and many other countries.

"He worked collegially to help design national education policies for access; quality; and, where possible, in a democratic fashion," says McClure.

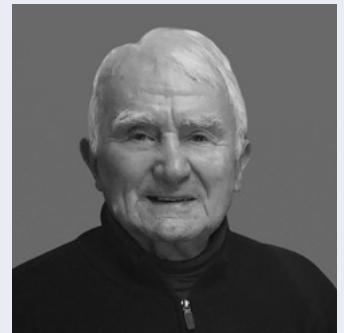
Scholarship also was central in his life. Spaulding helped to found and develop multiple peer-reviewed journals. Many of the students and colleagues he mentored are now senior education officials in ministries of education, universities, the United Nations, and other global and regional agencies.

"Seth's contributions reached beyond sharing traditional knowledge and skills to demonstrating the importance of the profession's establishment of sincere personal and mentoring relationships. He continually reminded us that collegiality remains central to the achievement of enduring professional success in international settings," says McClure.

In the 1950s, Spaulding began his career as an education program specialist for the Pan American Union. He then joined the Ford Foundation as a senior program advisor, where his work impacted the United States, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Rising through the ranks of the U.S. Department of Education, he became chief of its educational research and service section. Later, he spent time abroad as director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) education bureaus in Paris, France, and Geneva, Switzerland.

"His work at UNESCO helped bring to the University a broader global view through UCIS," says McClure.

Friends and colleagues remembered Spaulding during a memorial panel at the 2023 Comparative and International Education Society annual conference in Washington, D.C. ●



## Falk Lab School Receives Transformative Gift to Support the Arts

By Adam Reger

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education's Fanny Edel Falk Laboratory School has received a \$75,000 gift to provide ongoing support for the arts from Rob Marshall, an award-winning film and theater director and a 1974 Falk graduate, on behalf of his family: his sisters, Maura Marshall Powell (Class of 1974), a successful architectural designer, and Kathleen Marshall (Class of 1976), a Tony Award-winning Broadway director and choreographer, and their parents, Robert and Anne Marshall (MEd '67, PhD '72).

The Marshalls' gift will update the school's multipurpose room/theater space, which was renamed the Marshall Family Theater in recognition of the donation. Generations of Falk students, including the Marshalls, gave their first performances on that stage in Falk School plays and musicals as well as attended music and physical education classes in the space.

"It was a wonderful space," says Rob. "It was everything—our cafeteria, graduation space, and theater. It was very special to us."

Recalling Falk productions of "Fiddler on the Roof," "Oliver!" and Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, Kathleen adds, "Those were really the first shows that my brother and sister and I did. Our love of theater and of performing came from that."

Twins Rob and Maura attended Falk School from 1965 to 1974, while their younger sister, Kathleen, attended from 1967 to 1976. Today, Maura owns a design-build firm in the Washington, D.C., area, while Kathleen has won numerous awards, including three Tonys, for her work as a director and choreographer on Broadway. Rob began his career in theater before transitioning to film, directing blockbuster films such as the Oscar-winning "Chicago," "Memoirs of a



Geisha," and "Mary Poppins Returns."

Robert "Bob" Marshall, a professor of English, served as dean of what is now Pitt's Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences for a number of years, while Anne Marshall completed her career as the coordinator of elementary education at Pitt's School of Education.

"They always wanted to go to school," says Bob Marshall of his children. "They just loved it."

"As they grew older, Falk seemed to fit more and more because of this strong arts program and the teachers who were there," adds Anne.

### Nurturing Curiosity through the Arts

Learning to work well with others is a Falk School skill that's been critical to the Marshalls' successful careers. Working together with classmates in one of the school's project rooms helped them learn how to communicate with others and to accommodate a range of strengths and perspectives, attributes that have been vital in the heavily collaborative worlds of theater and film.

"I remember going into those project rooms and having so much fun," says Maura. "They were a place for us to be creative, and I loved that."

The Marshalls' gift will be used to make immediate upgrades to the theater space, including updating its sound system.

"The things that are showcased onstage come from a place in the heart as much as the mind," says Falk School director Jill Sarada. "When the students are onstage demonstrating these things, the audience can be transported to another place. By upgrading the sound system, we hope to make the experience more enchanting for families and for the performers themselves."

The gift is a celebration for a family with close ties not only to Falk but also to the University of Pittsburgh. In 2011, Falk honored all three Marshall children with its Distinguished Alumni Award.

"It was a wonderful and nurturing environment, and I'm so happy I went there," says Kathleen. "I learned how to learn and to see being curious as a fun thing to do, and I think that philosophy carried throughout the school."



## Creating Opportunities to Participate

The Marshall family traveled to Falk School for a ceremony honoring them and their gift on Feb. 17, 2023. They toured the updated facilities, met with students in the performing arts program, and were treated to musical performances by students and one by students in the school's Giant Puppet Dance Club.

"One of the most meaningful pieces of this gift is that the family has vivid memories of Falk being part of their origin stories, a place that set them on a path," says Sarada.

"It's also incredibly powerful to reflect on the way that Falk created a space for the Marshalls to take risks in a supportive environment," she adds. "Giving students the freedom to explore who they are and what they're passionate about remains absolutely central to the Falk experience."

Asked about the family's hopes for the gift, Maura says, "I just hope it continues to be as it was when



we were there. You don't have to be headed to Broadway to participate in the arts. Participate, whether it's onstage or backstage, front of house, back of house—however you can contribute. It's the group experience that's important."

"I'm very excited about being able to name this theater in honor of our family," says Rob. "It's rare that you're able to do something so special and lasting. Falk really shaped all of us, and that's why this honor means so much."

The renamed space is only the second location within Falk School to be renamed in recognition of a philanthropic gift, with the school's Ann and Henry Fisher Library being the first. The school itself was named in memory of Fanny Edel Falk, whose children, Leon Falk Jr. and Marjorie Falk Levy, purchased the land the school sits on and arranged its charter with the University of Pittsburgh. ●





## Thomas Allison Goes the Distance in Global Medicine By Greg Latshaw

In November 2022, Thomas Allison (MA '76, PhD '78) received an honorary doctoral degree from Semmelweis University in Budapest, Hungary. He had traveled more than 4,500 miles to accept the degree in person. Yet his true journey covered a greater distance, starting in the early 20th century, when his grandparents emigrated from Hungary to the United States, ultimately settling in Monongahela, Pennsylvania.

"Neither my grandmother nor my mother could have imagined I would be here today," Allison told the audience in the university's assembly hall.

Allison estimates that he has at least 85 relatives in Hungary on his maternal grandmother's side of the family alone. Not surprisingly, he had a strong showing of supporters at the honorary degree ceremony.

"The audience was a small group, and the ceremony was in the middle of the afternoon. There were maybe about 30 people—and 25 were for me. My family, my students, and my colleagues were there," he says.

For the past 35 years, Allison has practiced medicine at the

world-renowned Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where

he is an associate professor of medicine and a consultant in the Department of Cardiovascular Diseases and Cardiovascular Surgery. He also is the director of the Cardiopulmonary Exercise Testing Laboratories, which perform the world's highest volume of complex stress tests on the heart and lungs.

"My area is sports and exercise cardiology. Most of what I'm doing now is reading the stress tests. This is on a wide variety of pediatric, young adult, and older patients with every form of cardiac disease you can imagine and some you can't imagine," says Allison.

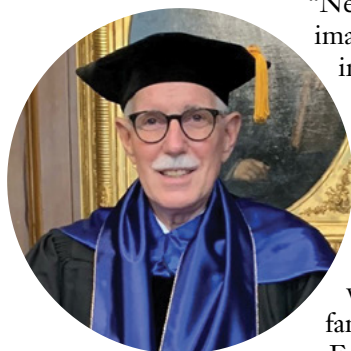
Raised in Pittsburgh, Allison is a global ambassador for cardiopulmonary medicine who has given more than 450 presentations in 30 countries across all six inhabited continents. He also regularly invites cardiologists from other countries to travel to the Mayo Clinic, freely giving his time in extended training sessions.

"People come to the Mayo Clinic because we have a lot of interesting things to teach, and I'm willing to spend the time with them," says Allison.

He has helped to train Semmelweis University students at the Mayo Clinic and has given numerous talks at meetings of the Hungarian Society of Cardiology and the Hungarian Medical Association of America. In addition, in recognition of his work training doctors from Venezuela, Allison was previously named an honorary professor of cardiology by the Asociación Cardiovascular Centro Occidental and an honorary fellow of the Venezuelan Society of Cardiology.

Allison credits his education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education with preparing him to be successful in medicine. He earned his MA in health, recreation, and physical education and PhD in exercise physiology from Pitt Education before earning his MPH from Pitt's School of Public Health.

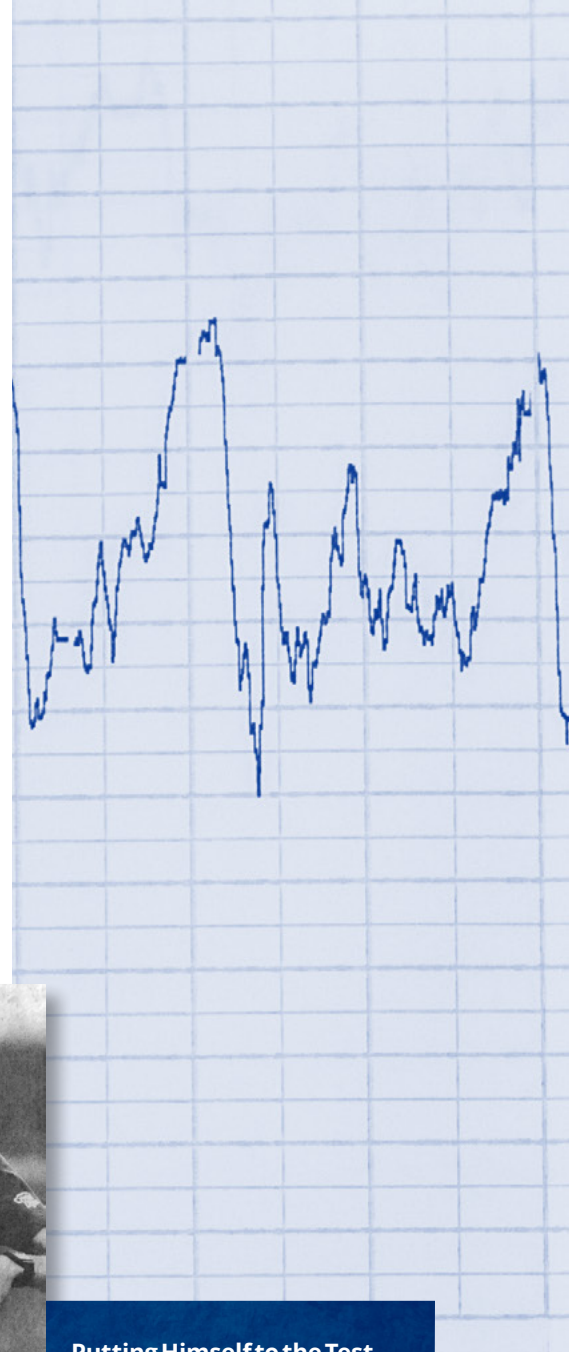
"One could not have sat down and created a better program. Everything I needed or wanted was right there," says Allison. ●



### Putting Himself to the Test

Today, Allison performs sports cardiology tests in a lab. Years ago, he gave himself the ultimate stress test as a long-distance runner. In 1980, he qualified for the U.S. Olympic trials in the marathon with a time of two hours, 21 minutes, and 54 seconds—a blazing pace of five minutes and 25 seconds per mile.

Every second counted in that race. Recalls Allison, "As I reached the 23-mile mark, I realized I had to speed up the last three miles. I came in and saw the clock ticking away. The last 300 meters was a dead sprint, and I made it by two seconds."





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