Transforming Health Through Science

Dean’s Message

The end of the academic year is a time of transitions for students and faculty. This May we celebrated with our 300+ students who graduated and joined the more than 54,000 alumni of Mercy College. This is a time of opportunity for Health and Science careers and we wish our new graduates much success! We look forward to seeing them at future Mercy alumni events and hearing about their activities and careers.

We had faculty transitions this year with new faculty in several programs and the retirement of Dr. Gloria Schisselberg from Communication Disorders and Prof. Laurie Buell from Veterinary Technology. We wish them well in their retirement.

This Spring 2016 newsletter highlights just some of the activities within our School. Faculty and students engaged in many activities outside the classroom that were supported by internal College grants. They spent time in museums, botanical gardens, Broadway theatres, the NY State Legislature, and the Heifer International Farm. We continued our science seminar lecture series with prominent researchers from the local science community. Over 30 students and faculty participated in the Undergraduate Research Forum held at Mercy. We expanded our interprofessional health professions project using the new clinical simulation space in the Bronx. We remain one of the few smaller Colleges that are able to offer a Human Anatomy course for health profession students. At the end of the semester we paused to give thanks to the anatomical donors who support our students learning.

Students and faculty continued to serve the community both locally and globally through medical missions to Antigua, India, and Belize. Local community service and outreach included our second annual Conquer the Trail 5K run, CarFit educational events for senior drivers, and a health expo sessions at the Bay Plaza Mall and our Bronx campus.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our faculty and students. We wish you a safe and fun filled summer.

Joan Toglia Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA
Dean, School of Health and Natural Sciences
First Annual Tech Supports for Cognition & Learning

The first annual Tech Supports for Cognition and Learning conference took place at Mercy College’s Dobbs Ferry campus on March 31, 2016. The conference was a collaboration between Mercy College and Arc of Westchester. It was the first conference of its kind that focused on technology solutions for people with disabilities to help with tasks for independence in everyday life. The outpouring of community interest was evident with the larger than expected crowd of professionals, students and families, reaching over 150 attendees.

The schedule of the day included a list of exciting speakers who presented the most contemporary thinking about the use of technology. The conference explored currently available products that provide support for people with disabilities to be available with and without personal support.

The event’s keynote speaker was Sue Swenson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, Office on Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. A video conference from Wisconsin took place with Gregg Vanderheiden, Ph.D, University of Wisconsin. A panel of technology professionals from some of the largest providers held a discussion about emerging trends. Participants attended a total of 14 break-out sessions that explored topics ranging from technology for health and wellness to digital storytelling, mobile apps for the workplace and technology for everyday tasks. The day wrapped up with a presentation from Special Guest Randy Lewis, Author of the Best Selling Book “No Greatness Without Goodness”.

Giving Thanks to Our ‘Silent Mentors’

Mercy College’s School of Health and Natural Science (SHNS) hosted its first Anatomical Donor Appreciation Ceremony on April 7th. The Ceremony was an opportunity for students and faculty to gather to acknowledge and reflect on the gift they received from these individuals. As stated by Dean Joan Toglia, “our anatomical donors lived their lives with a spirit of generosity and service to others. . . These individuals are part of the Mercy College Community and we will forever be grateful for their noble legacy.”

5th Annual Westchester Undergraduate Research Conference

On April 15th, 2016, Mercy College co-sponsored the 5th Annual Westchester Undergraduate Research Conference with Manhattanville College at our Dobbs Ferry campus. This annual conference is an opportunity for students pursuing undergraduate research to share scholarly explorations with a broad community, hone presentation skills, network with other students and faculty, and attend exciting presentations by keynote speakers who are leaders in their fields. The day’s activities included two keynote speakers, two poster presentation sessions, a platform presentation session and a few words from Mercy College President Timothy Hall. Over 35 Mercy College students presented their research. The collaborative advisory committee included 24 members. The conference was also made possible in part by the US ED Ronald E. McNair Program and the US ED Title V STEM Program. The 2017 Westchester Undergraduate Research Conference will be hosted by Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY.
Many faculty and students in the SHNS enjoyed experiences outside the class that fostered greater engagement in learning through funding supported by Faculty Senate grants.

Dr. Irina Ellison, Health Sciences Program Head, took two groups of students to the Heifer International Farm in Rutland, MA on two separate weekends this spring. The trips were transformative and included many opportunities for learning about global sustainability, health, and the impact of empowering women in agriculture. The groups were immersed in farm life including births, goat milking and other farm chores, wagon rides, cheese making and more!

Dr. Renee Haskew-Layton from Natural Sciences and Dr. Amanda Gunning and Dr. Meghan Marrero from the School of Education received a grant to support a series of Science Cafés creating an informal gathering of students, faculty, and professionals from the scientific community to discuss their varied career paths. Café events were held at both the Dobbs Ferry and Bronx campuses with scientists from Columbia University, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Gotham Whale and the New York Academy of Sciences.

On April 6th, 23 Communication Disorders Program students from Professor Eileen Hoffman’s Multicultural Issues in Communication Disorders class attended Hamilton, the hottest show on Broadway. The class started with lunch at Daniela Trattoria, then attended the play. Student Evelyn Marin indicated that her favorite quote from the play was stated by Burr, "Get your education, don’t forget from whence you came, and the world is gonna [sic] know your name. What's your name, man?" This quote had an impact on me because I could never forget where my parents came from and the efforts they made to put me through college.

Dr. Shari Berkowitz from Communication Disorders and Prof. Cristina Dumitrescu from the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program took a group of 4 students to Antigua for a weeklong interprofessional, international clinical experience. Students and faculty spent time at the National Stroke Association Outpatient Clinic working with individuals who often has experienced their stroke several years ago. They also visited the American University of Antigua and the College of Medicine. The experience provided students the opportunity to work on their cultural competence and team collaboration skills.

Dr. Christine Kosky was awarded funds to support 3 communication disorders students’ presentation of their research Self-Perceptions of Communication by Deaf/HOH Adolescents as a Tool for SLPs & Audiologists at the New York State Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NYSSLA) Conference held in Saratoga Springs, NY on April 8-9.

Dr. Davida Smyth received funding to support several high-impact field trips targeting the resource rich urban environment of NYC to study genomics. Students went to prominent and world-class institutes including the New York Botanical Gardens, and the American Museum for Natural History Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics. These fieldtrips enabled students to see techniques and tools they used in the classroom in operation first-hand, to visit the very labs where the research is occurring, to speak with and meet the scientists involved and to get a glimpse into the translational and interdisciplinary nature of bioinformatics and genomics. Students received a VIP tours of the new exhibit “The Secret World Inside You” at the American Museum for Natural History.

The Occupational Therapy Assistant Program received funds to support the travel of over 20 Mercy College occupational therapy assistant students, Dr. Christine Sullivan, Professor Cristina Dumitrescu, and Jennifer Alves, Teaching Assistant and program alumna to Albany NY on March 2, 2016 to meet with legislators about pressing issues and pending legislation that will affect the Occupational Therapy profession.
Exercise Science Club Hosts 2nd Annual Conquer the Trail Race

The Mercy College Exercise Science Club hosted the 2nd annual “Conquer the Trail Race Series” event, which consisted of a 5k and a 10k run/walk, on Sunday May 1. The race started and ended in front of Victory Hall and had participants run along the Croton Aqueduct Trail for most of the race. Each of the 109 registered runners received a grab bag of water bottles, local business coupons and a race t-shirt. There were students, staff members and faculty among the runners. The sponsors included our key sponsor, Club Fit, from Briarcliff Manor, NY, whom the Exercise Science program has had a strong relationship with these past few years. The race was a collective effort, but was spearheaded by the club president, Steven Estremera. The race is a chance for students to gain experience organizing, advertising for and running an event within the field of exercise science. It is also a great way to get the community involved and expose our program and the College. The event allows the club to raise money for activities. Part of the proceeds will go to the Special Olympics. We are ready to begin planning and looking forward to next year’s race!

Student Scholarship Recipients

The Department of Natural Sciences selected five students from a pool of applicants to take part in the inaugural Research Scholars Program. Students received a stipend to work closely with faculty mentors Anthony Canger, Patrick Davitt, Renee Haskew-Layton, Davida Smyth and Geetha Surendran on authentic research projects. The research scholars presented their work at the Westchester Undergraduate Research Conference on April 15, held at Mercy College’s Dobbs Ferry campus. Congratulations to the five student recipients: Jackie Ballin, Steven Estremera, Stephanie Martinez, Margo McGrath and Natalia Plawiak.

The Communication Disorders Graduate Scholarship Fund is proud to announce the new recipients for 2016. Emily Beck, Gianna Calvitta and Kaylee Dinello (pictured above) were awarded academic scholarships. For the first time, the scholarship fund will assist students to attend a medical mission. Ashley Rivera and Lesly Sanchez received money towards their participation on a medical mission working with children with clef palate in Ica, Peru, in May, 2016.

Terra Botanica – Art in the Lab

On Earth Day, April 23, students, faculty and community members gathered in Lab 315 for an Art in the Lab event focused on plants. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon, windows were open with a slight breeze blowing in, music was playing, and the artists were intent as they shifted between looking in microscopes and focusing on their art work. Students attending the Accepted Students event on campus strolled by and President Hall stopped in to peek in a microscope. Founded in 2015 by Irina Ellison PhD and a colleague, Art in the Lab promotes organic collaborations between artists and scientists, students and professionals. The workshop provided the opportunity to create art inspired by interaction with scientific collections and engagement in active laboratory experiences. All workshop participants are also given the option of displaying their work in a professionally-curated, public exhibition, aimed at increasing scientific literacy in the community. The artwork was on display in the Mercy College Library gallery during the month of May.

Interprofessional Education Committee Pilot Activity

Students in the Communication Disorders, Nursing, OT, PT, and PA programs participated in an interprofessional educational activity on March 11, 2016 in the simulation lab on the Bronx campus. The Interprofessional Education (IPE) Committee developed a case scenario of a simulated patient (actor) following him over three days of an acute care hospitalization. The debriefing sessions, facilitated by faculty, were critical for the students to discuss the events and gain insight, as well as provide feedback to each other.

Students practiced the skills of: completing an initial assessment, performing a swallow evaluation, transferring the patient out of bed to a chair, ambulating with a cane, and putting on socks with the use of assistive equipment. Additionally, they completed a discharge planning session that included medication management, education for a home exercise plan, and safety at home. All activities were completed within the context of working as part of a collaborative interdisciplinary team.
**Local 2 Global Health Initiatives**

The mission of the School of Health and Natural Sciences Local 2 Global health initiatives is to educate compassionate and innovative leaders through interdisciplinary teamwork and service learning while improving overall community health and environments of at-risk and/or underserved populations both locally and globally. This past Spring we engaged in several health initiatives both far and near.

The Exercise Science Club volunteered at the Special Olympics State Winter Games held in Poughkeepsie, NY on February 20. The students created signs with encouraging words, greeted and cheered for the athletes, helped run score cards back and forth and passed out surveys. All of the athletes were hardworking and inspiring!

Graduate Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant and Undergraduate Health Science students and faculty conducted health screenings and health promotion activities at the Bay Plaza Mall in the Bronx, on Thursday April 7. While there they did: blood pressure screenings, blood glucose screenings, balance screening and sensation screenings. They also talked to mall patrons about health education on a variety of topics including childhood vaccination, fitness, healthy body weight management, HIV, nutrition and consumption of GMOs. This public service event was a success; students were professional, gained practical experience and were excited to share their knowledge with the community.

Graduate Occupational Therapy Students ran a CarFit educational event with senior drivers in Scarsdale on April 30th. During the event, senior drivers learned about the safety features of their vehicle and how find a better ‘fit’ with their cars for comfort and safety while students completed the 12 point checklist. Occupational therapy faculty members were on hand to provide consultation, if needed, to teach drivers how to maintain and improve aspects related to their driving health.

Dr. Helen Buhler and Dr. Shari Berkowitz from the Communication Disorders Program traveled to Pune, India in January 2016 for two weeks for a cleft lip/palate repair medical mission. The successful trip was a new site where 56 surgeries were performed to transform the lives of children who would otherwise not have access to surgical repairs. The faculty members also gave a workshop to Speech Pathology graduate students in Pune and invited them to join their team next January when they return to India.

Dr. Sabrina Timperman, Dr. Lisa Schenkel, and Instructor Sandy Bertholf took five Mercy College Veterinary Technology Program students and three alumni to Belize in Central America during January 6-17, 2016, to volunteer at the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic. Their work is part of an ongoing project at the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic.

**Spring Seminar Series**

Over the course of the spring semester, the Department of Natural Sciences and the Health Science Program have held numerous seminar series on a wide range of interests. Each installment provided an opportunity for Mercy College faculty and students to strengthen their relationship with these seminar speakers and the community as a whole. The Research Seminar Series hosted three speakers. Andrew Harken, PhD, spoke passionately about the Radiological Research Accelerator Facility: Radiation at the Micrometer Scale to Probe Basic Biological Responses. Jeffrey G. Reid, PhD, enlightened the crowd on the topic of the Genome Revolution – Resume Writing for the Future of Medicine. Paul Boni captured the room with a talk on Biotechnology – The Intersection of Science and Finance.

The Health Science Program’s new seminar series brought health science experts into Mercy College to share their research and expertise with students and to inform and educate the College and local communities on making data-driven, evidence-based decisions about health. John P. Richie, Jr., PhD, spoke about the Impact of Diet and Environment on Aging and Chronic Diseases: Highlights from a Career in Research.
**Speech & Hearing Clinic Receives TD Bank Grant**

Thanks to Phil Keefe, Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving at Mercy College, the CD Program was awarded a $15,000 grant to purchase equipment for their Speech and Hearing Clinic. The grant allowed them to purchase the following: an ultrasound probe, a video otoscope, a lateral airway management trainer and an Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

**Alpha Eta Induction Ceremony**

On April 4, 2016, the SHNS Alpha Eta National Honor Society, Mercy College Chapter, held its 7th annual induction ceremony. This year the chapter inducted our Associate Dean, Kathleen Golisz, OTD, OTR, and 38 undergraduate and graduate students from the following allied health programs: Clinical Lab Science, Communication Disorders, Exercise Science, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Veterinary Technician, Doctor of Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant. The ceremony took place in the Rotunda on the Dobbs Ferry Campus where family, friends and faculty joined in the honors and celebration. The ceremony was conducted by Chapter President Dr. Kathy Ryans, and Treasurer Dr. Shari Berkowitz. We were honored to have Mercy College President, Timothy Hall and Dean of the School of Health and Natural Science, Dr. Joan Toglia, present words of congratulations to the inductees and Alpha Eta Alumna, Jennifer Gabrynowicz, PT, DPT as our guest speaker.

**Gloria Schlisselberg’s Retirement**

The students and faculty of the Communication Disorders Program, along with the entire School of Health and Natural Sciences, bid a fond farewell to Professor Gloria Schlisselberg who is retiring in July. A few words from Gloria to the Mercy College Community:

“After 21 years, I am finally graduating from Mercy College on May 31, 2016. I send a fond farewell and a big thank you to a host of valued professional colleagues, including those in Exercise Science, Natural Sciences, Nursing, OT, OTA, PT, Physician Assistant, and Vet Tech. It has truly been my pleasure working with you in several capacities. I will recall our collaborations fondly as I join, sit, talk, read, visit and decompress from the ups and downs of being a faculty member and the Communication Disorders Clinic Director. My best regards to you all, Gloria Schlisselberg.”

**Welcome, New Faculty!**

Gillian Angliss-Glaser  
Veterinary Technology  

Deborah Dougherty  
Occupational Therapy  

David Jackowe  
Physician Assistant  

M. Allison Williams  
Exercise Science
Twenty faculty from the School of Health and Natural Sciences presented posters at the Mercy College Faculty Seminar Day held March 8 on the Dobbs Ferry campus. This event was an opportunity for faculty to share their research and special projects with their colleagues in the College.

**FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**PUBLICATIONS:**


**PRESENTATIONS:**

**Baraldi, C.** (2016, March 11). Agent orange: Lasting legacy of war: Healing the people. The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, San Antonio, TX.


**AWARDS:**

Fulbright Award, 2015-16 - **Renu Varughese**
Ruddy-Van Slyke Nurse Practitioner Award of New York (NPNY) - **Susan Moscou**
SENCER Leadership Fellow, April, 2016 - **Davida Smyth**
Yale School of Nursing Distinguished Alumnae Award, 2016 - **Miriam Ford**

**GRANTS:**

TD Bank Grant - **Communication Disorders Program**

**STUDENT-NOMINATED AWARDS:**

Movie Award for Outstanding Faculty Member, 2016 Mercy College Movie Awards - **Irina Ellison**
Online Teacher of the Year, 2016 Mercy College - **Lisa Martin**

> Dean Joan Toglia lecturing at the University of Haifa, Israel.
School of Health and Natural Sciences

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