

INSIGHTS AND INNOVATION

Summer 2026

As the inaugural Dean of Elizabethtown College's School of Sciences and Health, I am pleased to welcome you to this edition of our newsletter celebrating the remarkable achievements of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters. This publication highlights the outstanding work occurring across our academic programs in Biology, Chemistry, Exercise Science, Occupational Therapy, Physician Assistant Studies, and Psychology. Together, these programs embody our commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service while preparing the next generation of scientists, healthcare professionals, and community leaders.

At the heart of every success story featured in these pages is the enduring importance of the basic sciences. Biology, chemistry, psychology, and related scientific disciplines provide the foundation upon which clinicians build their expertise, researchers make discoveries that improve lives, and community members develop solutions to complex societal challenges. Whether our students are learning in laboratories, conducting original research in the field, serving local communities, or preparing for careers in healthcare, they are applying scientific knowledge to make a meaningful difference. The stories in this newsletter demonstrate how the School of Sciences and Health is fulfilling Elizabethtown College's mission of Educate for Service by integrating rigorous scientific inquiry, transformative teaching, and compassionate engagement with the world around us.

I invite you to explore these accomplishments and join me in celebrating the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and board members whose dedication continues to shape the future of the School of Sciences and Health. Together, we are building a community where scientific discovery, professional preparation, and service to others work hand in hand to improve the health and well-being of our communities and beyond.


In Health,

Alan Utter, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Dean, School of Sciences and Health
Elizabethtown College



BIOLOGICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

- The Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences is grateful to alumni who presented as part of the department's weekly seminar series. Students and faculty appreciated hearing from alumni **Kristen Lutzkanin, M.D. '19**, **Matthew Berzenty, D.O. '18**, **Ph.D. candidate Marquise Henry '18**, and **Rileigh Hudock '22**. Alumni interested in coming to speak about their experiences applying their scientific background in patient care, environmental science, biomedical research, education, or other areas can contact [Dr. Diane Bridge](#).
- At the Biology Department's Spring 2026 Celebration, **Dr. Natalie Dutrow '01** was named as the recipient of the Dr. Charles S. Farver-Apgar and Dr. Bessie D. Apgar Biology Alumni Award. Dr. Dutrow graduated with a Bachelor's in Biotechnology from Elizabethtown College, a Master's in Secondary Science Education from Westminster University, and a Ph.D. in Oncological Science from the University of Utah. For the past 20 years, Natalie has taught biology and chemistry to high school and undergraduate students, designed and facilitated professional learning for educators across the country, and supported the development and implementation of the Utah Science and Engineering Standards. Currently, Dr. Dutrow is a program lead for high school initiatives for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) BioInteractive Ambassador Academy, a senior fellow with the Knowles Teaching Initiative, and a science coach for the Salt Lake City School District.
- At the Student Awards Ceremony this year, **Alyse Smith '26**, Biology-Health Professions major, won the Senior Points of Distinction Award, the highest Student Life honor a student can receive at Etown. She also served as Elizabethtown College's 2026 Commencement student speaker. **Izzy Johnston '28**, Biology-Health Professions major; **Sanya Dedhia '28**, Biology-Health Professions major; and **Malak Moussaid '27**, Biology-Health Professions major, each won Distinguished Student Awards. **Avonlea Lechleitner '28**, Biotechnology major, won the Leader on the Horizon and RA of the Year Award. **Logan Woodward '26**, Biology-Health Professions major, won the RA Legacy Award. **Juriel Diaz '26**, Environmental Science major, won the Ubuntu Excellence in Equity and Distinguished Mentor awards. **McKenzie Laity '27**, Biology-Health Professions major, won the Center for Community and Civic Engagement Student Service Learning Award. **Luke Fischer '27**, Biology-Health Professions major; **Hali Homer '27**, Biology major; **Asher Landrum '26**, Biology-Health Professions major; **Makenzi Reed '26**, Environmental Science major; and **Will Veith '26**, Biology-Health Professions major, won Student Employment Awards.
- At the department's Spring Celebration, **Thatcher Baney '26**, **Benjamin Kenien '26**, **Lauren Heidelbaugh '26**, and **Maegan Wingert '26** were awarded the Baer Six Pre-Medicine Scholarship. **Thatcher Baney '26**, **Asher Landrum '26**, and **Elizabeth Wasylk '26** received the Service Award in recognition of the "unsung" work they have done for the department. The Outstanding Student Teacher this year was **Jared Charles-Cirilo '26**. Seven graduating seniors were awarded Honors in the Discipline for maintaining a 3.5 GPA in their major and completing an original research project: **Callie Asper '26**, **Anika Hodgdon '26**, **Caitlyn Jensen '26**, **Kirra Johnson '26**, **Makenzi Reed '26**, **Alyse Smith '26**, and **Maegan Wingert '26**. Thirty-four first-year students received a Departmental Academic Achievement Award for earning a minimum 3.0 in their Biology, Biochemistry &

Molecular Biology, Biotechnology, or Environmental Science majors. Twenty-five sophomores received this recognition for earning a major GPA of 3.25 or higher. Twenty-six juniors and 11 seniors were recognized for earning a major GPA of 3.5 or higher.

- **Prof. Sarah Noveral, Dr. Robert Northington, Dr. Elizabeth A. Newell, and Dr. Debra Wohl** were all nominated for distinguished mentor awards.
- At this year's Emergent Scholars Ceremony, **Prof. Sarah Noveral, Dr. Debra Wohl, Dr. Robert Northington, and Dr. Anya Goldina** were identified as mentors by emergent scholars **Brendan Yatsko '28, An Tran '27, Omar Saif '28, Emily Kozemchak '28, Gage Patterson '27, Mercy Rao '27, Ella Scholes '28, Sarah Avenarius '27, and Avonlea Lechleitner '28**. **Dr. Elizabeth A. Newell** was named as a mentor by Momentum student Jackie DeLorimier. **Dr. Diane Bridge, Dr. Anya Goldina, Prof. Sarah Noveral, Dr. Elizabeth A. Newell, Dr. Robert Northington, and Dr. Debra Wohl** were recognized as mentors by Stamps Scholars **Callie Asper '26, Simone Ervin '27, Ryan Kraychik '27, Avonlea Lechleitner '28, Mercy Rao '27, Paula Palacios Arvizu '28, and Laasya Reddy Pesaladinne '28**.
- **Prof. Sarah Noveral** hosted a student Q&A session with Lefever Lecture Speaker Carl Zimmer. Before the session, students in Honors Cell Biology read one of his books and prepared questions for the science journalist. During the session, they discussed topics including science writing, using AI to model protein structure, and viruses.
- **Caitlyn Jensen '26, Alysse Smith '26, and Maegan Wingert '26** presented their research at the Pennsylvania Academy of Sciences. Maegan Wingert's presentation received Honorable Mention.
- **Dr. Anya Goldina and Nicholas Kuhn '26** had their case study, "Accommodating the things that cannot be changed: a tale of diagnosis and treatment of Multiple Sclerosis" accepted for publication at the National Science Teachers Association Case Collection.
- **Dr. Anya Goldina** co-authored the manuscript, "The gift remembered: the human anatomy and physiology society (HAPS) anatomical donor stewardship's ethical and practical guidelines for anatomy donor tributes", which was accepted for publication in the Anatomical Science Education Journal.
- **Dr. Anya Goldina** and eight students, **Nicholas Kuhn '26, Callie Asper '26, Olivia Heil '27, Simone Ervine '26, Claire Grau '27, Sierra Plummer '27, Sara Birner '27, Madelyn Nichols '26, and Lauren Heidelbaugh '26** hosted a science class about the nervous system for the third graders of Bear Creek Elementary.
- **Dr. Anya Goldina** hosted the Medical Careers Club from Mifflin County High School for a tour of Etown's Anatomy Lab.
- **Dr. Anya Goldina** was re-elected to serve as the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society Director for the Eastern Region.
- **Dr. David Bowne and Dr. Robert Northington** accompanied seven students to the Mid-Atlantic Ecological Society of America meeting at Towson University. **Anika Hodgdon '26, Makenzi Reed '26, Elizabeth Wasyluk '27, and Kirra Johnson '26** all gave presentations based on their Honors in the Discipline research.





- Dr. Robert Northington, academic advisor for the Tri-Beta Biological Honor Society, held a Spring Induction for new members of the Rho Lambda Chapter at Etown. Twenty-three new students were inducted into the chapter. Graduating seniors were also awarded their honor cords at the ceremony.

- **Dr. Robert Northington** was the recipient of a

National Science Foundation Arctic Systems Science research grant to investigate water quantity and quality for sheep farmers in South Greenland. He will be accompanying his colleagues from the University of Maine, along with **Elizabeth Wasyluk '27** (an Etown undergraduate student), to South Greenland this summer to begin work on the project.

- **Dr. Robert Northington** continued working with the Elizabethtown Borough on stream cleanup with his Aquatic Ecology course. Additionally, Rob gave a guest lecture on climate change in Greenland at the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren.
- **Dr. Elizabeth A. Newell** received a \$4,000 Faculty Grant for her project, "Evidence of Disease among Copenhageners from the Medieval Period: Paleopathological Diagnoses in the Sankt Clemens Skeletal Collection." These funds will allow her to continue her collaborative research with the Museum of Copenhagen in Denmark.
- **Dr. Elizabeth A. Newell** was interviewed for a news segment on WGAL News 8 about the Jonathan Gerlach case. Gerlach is a 34-year-old man from Ephrata who was arrested in January 2026 for a massive grave-robbing scheme at the historic Mount Moriah Cemetery & Arboretum in Yeadon and Philadelphia.
- **Kate Wellons '27** is performing research advised by **Dr. Diane Bridge** through the Etown Summer Creative Arts and Research Program. Her project addresses the effects of the microbiome on heat-stress resistance in the invertebrate *Hydra oligactis*.
- Members of the SEEDS Ecology Club and the Biology Club planted native trees on campus on Earth Day as part of a project associated with the Lancaster Clean Water Partners' Watershed Leadership Academy. The planting used the Miwayaki method, which is designed to create a self-sustaining mini forest.



CHEMISTRY & BIOCHEMISTRY

- Students nominated all five Chemistry faculty members (**Dr. James MacKay**, **Dr. Kristi Kneas**, **Dr. Lauren Toote**, **Dr. Amy Defnet**, and **Dr. Jeffrey Rood**) for Distinguished Mentor Awards, recognizing those who have made an impact on students' lives.
- **Dr. Lauren Toote** presented, "Simple and Inexpensive Test for Detection of Heavy Metals in Drinking Water," at the Lehigh Valley American Chemical Society Section Meeting held at Albright College in February.
- **Dr. Amy Defnet** presented "Hormone Havoc: Estrogen-Induced Exacerbation of Asthma Through the MAPK Pathway" at the Binghamton University Chemistry Research Conference in April.



- **Dr. James MacKay** led a group of nine students to the Seventh Annual Binghamton University/Elizabethtown College Ribonucleic Acids (RNA) Workshop. This three-day workshop, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, allowed Etown students to learn about MacKay's collaborative research on RNA with Rozner's group at

Binghamton and gain valuable exposure to graduate-level research.

- **Dr. James MacKay** published a research article with Grant Walby (postdoc), **Brandon Tessier '21** (now grad student at BU), Eriks Rozners (Binghamton University collaborator), Martins Katkevics and Vladislavs Baskevics (Latvian collaborators from Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis), and five undergraduate coauthors (**Tristan Mabee '24**, **Jennah Hoke '25**, **Hallie Bleam '25**, **Angelina Giglio-Tos '25**, and **Emily Harding '23**):
 - "Isoorotamide-based peptide nucleic acid nucleobases with extended linkers aimed at distal base recognition of adenosine in double helical RNA" Walby, G.D.; Tessier, B.R.; Mabee, T.L.; Hoke, J.M.; Bleam, H.M; Giglio-Tos, A.; Harding, E.E.; Baskevics, V.; Katkevics, M.; Rozners, E.; MacKay, J.A. Beilstein J. Org. Chem. 2025, 21, 2513-2523. (DOI: 10.3762/bjoc.21.193)
- **Kellie Simon '26** presented her research carried out with Dr. Amy Defnet at the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.
- **Cameron Snelbaker '26** submitted an abstract and was selected to present research at the 2026 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR). Cameron presented his work regarding mercury detection in drinking water, carried out with Dr. Lauren Toote.
- **Dr. Lauren Toote** organized our chemistry seminar course and hosted Carsten Milsman from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Delaware and Matthew C. T. Hartman from the Department of Chemistry at Virginia Commonwealth University for research presentations.
- On April 10, the Chemistry Department hosted its annual Chem-a-thon event. Six local high schools, with a total of 35 students, came to campus to complete a lab experience and quiz bowl competition. This year, ALS Environmental served as a corporate sponsor for the event. Hempfield High School was the team winner.
- The Etown Rho Eta chapter of Gamma Sigma Epsilon, the national chemistry honors society, inducted five new members in March. **Robert Lynch '27**, **Camdyn Buohl '27**, **Ava Becker '27**, **Olivia Rissling '27**, and **Caityln Jensen '26** were recognized for their outstanding achievement in our programs.
- Working with four research students, **Dr. Kristi Kneas** has developed ongoing research partnerships with Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions and Carlisle Construction Materials. These industry-partnered research projects provide students with valuable experience applying chemistry to industry-relevant problems, working within professional constraints, strengthening technical and professional communication skills, and contributing to work with direct industry impact.
- The Chemistry Department was saddened by the passing of **Dr. Charles D. Schaeffer, Jr.**, A.C. Baugher Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus, who passed away in March. Dr. Jeffrey Rood attended the 89th Intercollegiate Student Chemists Convention (ISCC) held at Ursinus College, where he recognized Dr. Schaeffer and his contributions to this meeting in various capacities for well over 50 years. Learn more about Dr. Schaeffer's remarkable [legacy](#). The College recognized Dr. Schaeffer with a posthumous honorary Doctor of Science degree at the Class of 2026 Commencement ceremony.
- In March 2026, several Chemistry and Biochemistry students presented at the 271st American Chemical Society National Meeting. In addition to sharing their work, students had the opportunity to engage with leading chemists and biochemists, including Jennifer Doudna, Nobel Laureate and co-inventor of CRISPR

technology, who delivered a plenary address on, “The Chemistry of Genome Editing: Transforming Human and Planet Health with CRISPR.” Students attended presentations and poster sessions; participated in professional development sessions, including mock interviews and a graduate school fair; and explored the meeting exposition, where they connected with industry leaders and discovered new tools and technologies.

- At the Student Communities Award Ceremony, officers of the Etown Chapter of the Student Affiliates of the American Chemical Society (Chem Club) accepted the Outstanding Student Chapter Award, the highest level of recognition awarded to only 90 undergraduate and graduate chapters worldwide for excellence in programs and activities. Participating students and their research projects included:
 - **Isabell Anderson '26** (Co-authors Dr. James MacKay, Gabriel Sczesniak)
 - Progress toward the synthesis of a 6-amino-5-triazolylpyridin-2(1H)-one PNA nucleobase (JTr) to improve PNA-RNA-RNA binding affinity and selectivity through pi-pi stacking
 - **Lauren Berger '26** (Co-author Dr. Amy Defnet)
 - Hormones & heavy breathing: The effects of progesterone on protein kinase signaling in lung epithelial cells
 - **Emma Caszatt '26** (Co-author Dr. Amy Defnet)
 - Mechanistic approach to thyroid receptor activity in cancer models
 - **Jacqueline Hammond '27** and **Arianna Lepratto '28** (Co-author Dr. James MacKay)
 - Synthesis of 1,2,3-triazoles with acid-cleavable protecting groups via a one-pot azide substitution and copper-catalyzed cycloaddition
 - **Matthew Lamb '26** (Co-author Dr. Jeffrey Rood)
 - Microwave-assisted synthesis and luminescence of polypyridyl zirconium complexes for inclusion into metal-organic framework
 - **Robert Lynch '27** (Co-author Dr. Jeffrey Rood)
 - Microwave-assisted synthesis and photophysical characterization of rhenium and osmium complexes for inclusion into luminescent metal-organic frameworks
 - **Maxwell Marra '26** (Co-author Dr. James MacKay)
 - Synthesis of an O-linked isoorotamide PNA extended nucleobase (IR1) targeting uracil for recognition of double-helical RNA
 - **Spencer Mefford '26** (Co-author Dr. Amy Defnet)
 - Characterization of estrogen-induced exacerbation of asthma through the MAPK pathway
 - **Samantha Small '26** (Co-author Dr. Amy Defnet)
 - Effects of kinase inhibitors on cell viability & protein expression in lung cancer cell lines of different ethnic origins
 - **Cameron Snelbaker '26** (Co-author Dr. Lauren Toote)
 - Development of a nanoparticle-based lateral flow assay for the detection of mercury in drinking water
- A group of nine Elizabethtown College students and two alumni served as judges for the annual Classical Conversations Science Fair held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Elizabethtown on Feb. 20. The group of judges, organized by Elizabethtown College A.C. Baugher Professor of Chemistry **Dr. James MacKay**, consisted of students from a variety of STEM disciplines. “This experience is such a great opportunity for our students and Elizabethtown College,” MacKay said. “In addition to us having the chance to use our expertise in science and share it with the community, we also have the privilege to



share our talents in a way that exemplifies the College's Educate for Service motto." The event is hosted annually by the local section of Classical Conversations, an international classical Christian homeschool organization. Twenty-five junior high students from the Elizabethtown, Harrisburg, and Mechanicsburg areas showcased their work at this year's event. Etown judges included current students **Ryan Bennett '28, Whitney Davis '27, Ceinwyn Erb '28, Munia Kamal '27, Isabella La Face '27, Avonlea Lechleitner '28, Gage Lucas '28, Noah Lynch '28, and Sacha Prasad '27**, along with alumni **Jannah Hoke '25 and Kaylynn Leap '23**. "Judging the Classical Conversations Jr. High Science Fair for the past two years has been a meaningful experience because it allowed me to see science from a younger student's perspective," Bennett said. "As someone who plans to become a high school chemistry teacher, this experience felt especially relevant and helped me grow in giving constructive feedback and encouraging curiosity, as these skills will be essential in my future classroom." As students presented their work, Etown judges provided meaningful feedback and relevant insight. After deliberating, the judges awarded first, second, and third place to the top projects. "Being able to serve and engage with the community I am so thankful to be part of has been and continues to be an incredible source of fulfillment," Lucas said. "Elizabethtown College has given me not only a comprehensive education, but opportunities to bond with my professors in ways I never dreamed of when coming out of high school."

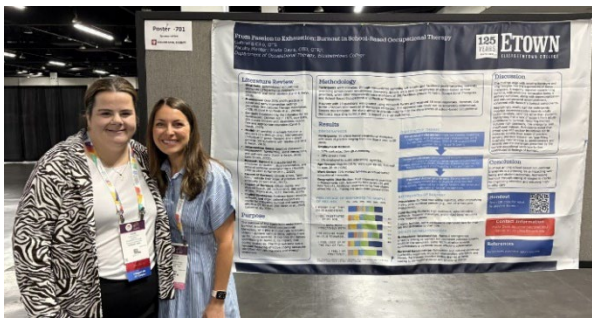
EXERCISE SCIENCE

- Elizabethtown College is expanding its academic offerings to meet growing workforce demands by launching a new major, [Nutrition & Human Performance](#), beginning in fall 2026. A science-based, interdisciplinary program, Nutrition & Human Performance will prepare students for careers that promote healthier individuals and communities and enhance athletic performance across diverse populations. Students will explore how nutrition, exercise science, and human physiology work together to optimize performance, preparing them for entry-level careers or graduate study, including a pathway to becoming a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN). With a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition & Human Performance, graduates will be equipped for a variety of careers in health, wellness, and nutrition-related industries. Employment of dietitians and nutritionists is projected to grow six percent from 2024 to 2034, faster than the average for all occupations, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Approximately 6,200 openings are projected each year, on average, over the decade.
- Expanded services are now provided in our state-of-the-art [Human Performance Lab \(HPL\)](#). Elizabethtown College's HPL, in partnership with Orthopedic Associates of Lancaster (OAL), LTD, is a premier facility specializing in health, fitness, and performance testing and training. HPL offers services to athletes striving for peak performance and individuals looking to improve overall health and fitness and provides valuable insights that help individuals reach their goals.



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Occupational Therapy celebrated its 50th anniversary during the 2025-26 academic year, an amazing milestone for one of the leading OT programs in Pennsylvania. In honor of this milestone, the College developed a scholarship campaign during the March Power of One Day giving campaign. We are excited to announce that we met the fundraising goal, and this new scholarship will begin generating scholarship funds for students in 2028. Thank you to everyone who donated. You may continue to donate to this scholarship fund, generating even more funds to support students.



- Gabriella Cilio, '25, OTD '27**, attended the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference (April 23 to 25) and presented her undergraduate honors scholarship project. Gabbi's poster was titled, "From Passion to Exhaustion: Burnout in School-Based Occupational Therapy." Gabbi was joined by her project mentor, **Marla Davis, OTD, OTR/L**.
- Julianna Guzzo '25, Keira O'Sullivan '25, and Gabrielle Oliphant '25** attended the conference to represent students from Etown's Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA). Thanks to Lancaster AMBUCS for their financial assistance with students' travel expenses.
- Etown is launching an additional entry-level OTD option to our robust entry-level degrees. Designed for students who have already earned a bachelor's degree, students may enter the three-year OTD program, pending admissions requirements. This program will require two full years of coursework, followed by six months of level II fieldwork and then the doctoral capstone. We will continue to offer our first-year entry program, where students can earn their B.S. degree in Health Sciences at Etown and then complete either the entry-level M.S. or OTD in Occupational Therapy. [Learn more.](#)
- The Occupational Therapy Program inducted nine new students into its Honor Society, Pi Theta Epsilon (PTE), on March 22. The PTE ceremony was led by the current PTE officers, all of whom are currently enrolled in the OTD program: **Josie Hunter '25, OTD '27; Gabbi Cilio '25, OTD '27; Cheyenne Lewis '25, OTD '27; Liz Petlick '25, OTD '27; and Bella Kurpis '25, OTD '27.** Congratulations to these newly inducted PTE members from the current senior cohort: **Callie Beyer '26; Ellie Fasick '26; Gabrielle Oliphant '26; Kiera O'Sullivan '26; Emma O'Toole '26; Kaitlyn McDermott '26; Makenna Mummert '26; Mackenzie Watts '26; and Ava Wilson '26.** Many thanks to **Gina Fox OTD, OTR/L**, for her service as the faculty advisor.



- In February, **Nancy Carlson, Ph.D., OTR/L**, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy, presented a poster at the World Federation of Occupational Therapy Congress in Bangkok, Thailand. Dr. Carlson's poster was entitled, "Enhancing Quality of Life Metrics: Leveraging the Occupation Perspective" and highlighted the important role that OT has in helping achieve better quality of life.
- The OT faculty and staff held their annual holiday gift exchange at the end of the fall semester. Instead of giving gifts to each other, the department selects a charitable organization to receive gifts. In past years, OT has donated toys to the Johns Hopkins Children's Center and the Bell Family Services Shelter. This year's recipient was Conestoga Valley SEEDS for their families' housing needs. Gifts included kitchen essentials and other household items for families as they move into permanent housing. **Diane Martin, OTD, OTR/L** delivered the gifts after our departmental gathering in December.
- The 2026 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Conference will be held at Etown. The conference is scheduled for September 26 to 27, with pre-conference institutes on September 25. Our faculty, staff, and students are serving as the local conference committee under the leadership of **Gina Fox, OTD, OTR/L**. We are excited to host our Pennsylvania colleagues this fall.



- Five undergraduate students completed their Honors in the Discipline scholarly research projects this year. Topics included the role of OT in post-partum depression, aquatic therapy for older adults, adapted physical education in school, best practice in juvenile arthritis, and increasing knowledge about cystic fibrosis and its impact on daily life. This year's honors students are **Mackenzie Watts '26; Audrey Bower '26; Hannah Lupfer '26; London Cerullo '26; and Gabrielle Oliphant '26**.

- On March 28, Occupational Therapy (OT) received the 2026 #GenerationG Award from the nonprofit Gigi's Playhouse. The award recognizes the OT program's dedication to meaningful service and profound generosity. Gigi's Playhouse provides individuals with Down syndrome and their families with free educational, therapeutic, and career development programs. **Erica Wentzel, OTD, OTR/L**, Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, initiated a collaboration with Gigi's Playhouse in 2023, hoping to connect students in her fourth-year pediatric OT courses with meaningful, community-based learning opportunities. The initial collaboration has grown into a full-scale partnership, with more than 160 Elizabethtown College students serving as tutors or volunteers. Students can enhance their skill set as future practitioners by applying classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios and building authentic connections with program participants and their families. Fourth-year OT students are required to complete volunteer work at Gigi's Playhouse during their fall and spring semesters. Many students have chosen to remain involved with the organization after their initial course requirements through internships and collaboration on Senior Capstone projects.

- The OT program held a hooding ceremony in April at the conclusion of the OT Graduate Research Symposium that featured doctoral students' scholarship and capstone projects. Thirteen students received their entry-level OT doctoral degrees at the



College's Commencement ceremonies in May: **Leah Thomas, Cara Jandzio, Kambrie Hepler, Grace Costenbader, Alyssa Eckstein, Madi Drumheller, Nicole Ringwald, Maureen Nagle, Ella Longenecker, Kylie Fair, Kylie Evoy, Gillian Blades, and Hailey Biesiadecki.**

- Congratulations to **Diane Martin, OTD, OTR/L,** and **Laura Cunningham, OTD, OTR/L,** who were approved for promotion to Associate Teaching Professor, effective July 1.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

- **Daria Indeck, MSH, PA-C** has been selected as the recipient of the SWSC 2026 APP Award for her presentation entitled, "Which Brain Injury Guidelines Are Really Big on Safety? A Retrospective Comparison and Cost Analysis at a Level 1 Trauma Center." This award is given to the highest-scoring abstract by an Advanced Practice Provider author.
- The Physician Assistant program also completed the final provisional accreditation site visit (results not shared until November 2026).

PSYCHOLOGY

- At the Student Awards Ceremony this year, **Paula Palacios Arvizu '29,** Neuroscience & Biology Health Professions major, won a Distinguished Student Award.
- M.A. in Counseling Psychology graduate student **Jenna Hornibrook '25, MCP '27,** was awarded the John F. Steinman Foundation Fellowship in support of her graduate education.



- M.A. in Counseling Psychology alumni **Jorge Morgado Lopez '25, Gretchen Wade '22, MCP '24, Jocelyn Kosik '23, MCP '25, Kristen Fickes '25, and Sara Palatnik '19, MCP '25** participated in an alumni panel discussion with current graduate and undergraduate pipeline students in November. They shared wonderful insights, advice, and encouragement with current students.
- **Dr. Elizabeth Dalton** participated in a panel discussion entitled, "The Role of Master's-Level Clinicians in Expanding Access to Evidence-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapies" at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Conference in New Orleans, in November.
- In April, **Dr. Jennifer Wittmeyer,** Assistant Professor of Psychology, presented a talk entitled "Studying Rare Brains: Insights from 8p" at the CombinedBrain Patient Advocacy Group Advisory Board Meeting. Dr. Wittmeyer's involvement with Project 8p and the CombinedBrain consortium has led to some exciting opportunities for students! In June, **Makenna Snyder '25** began a full-time position as a Research Coordinator for CombinedBrain, while **Jack Hulse '25** is continuing the data visualization work he began through a Neuroscience internship via a contract position with Project 8p.
- In March, **Dr. Jean Pretz** traveled to Omaha, to present at the annual meeting of Division 10 of the American Psychological Association. Dr. Pretz presented research she had conducted with **Melany Bedoya '25** entitled, "How Do Academic Achievement and Creativity Predict Meaning in Life and Life Satisfaction?"

- **Dr. Jean Pretz** had two new publications coming out in May:
 - Pretz, J.E. Infusing creativity into a college course: A pilot study. *Frontiers in Psychology*.
 - Pretz, J.E. Am I creative? Challenges to accurate assessment of creative self. In Z.I. Pringle (Ed.) [The Creative Self](#).
- Ten Psychology and/or Neuroscience majors – **Cassie Drumheiser '26, Percy Lachman '26, Cameron Snelbaker '26, Conor O'Brien '26, Leandra McMahon '26, Makenna Snyder '26, Natalie Alexander '26, Madie Cannon '26, Julie Brelsford '26, Chloe Haldeman '26** – traveled to Richmond, to present their individual research projects at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research (April 13 to 15). They were accompanied by **Dr. Evan Smith** and **Dr. Jennifer Wittmeyer** from the Psychology Department.



HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING COMMITTEE (HPAC)

- **Veronica Ruiz '21, D.O.** and **Collin Griffiths '21, D.O.** graduated from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.
- **Suzie Al-Absi '18, M.S., D.O.** graduated from AT Still University.
- **Brinley Beveridge '23** is in Alaska with Colorado State University's collaborative veterinary medicine program with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In her first year, Beveridge had the opportunity to work with reindeer and sled dogs, as well as to run a half marathon through the rolling hills of Fairbanks.

