April 20, 2015

Dear Mercersburg Faithful,

I always take great pleasure in providing you this time of year a brief review of the major events and accomplishments—both on and off campus—since the 2014 edition. Not only does this little publication allow me the chance to give these individuals a “gold star” for their respective accomplishments, it also gives me an excellent opportunity to thank each and every one of you for all you do for our great school. Mercersburg’s ongoing success is a collective endeavor. Everything mentioned in this report occurred only as a result of your support for which all of us are truly appreciative.

**Student Academic Accomplishments ...**

The 2014–2015 academic year officially began with the school’s 122nd Convocation on September 7 in the Irvine Memorial Chapel. This year’s student body includes 437 students representing 30 American states and the District of Columbia and 40 nations of the world, a remarkable diversity that we cherish and celebrate.

Two prizes were awarded at Convocation:

- **The Robert H. Michelet ’30 Prize** was awarded to **Alex Jackson ’15** of Greencastle, Pa. The award is presented to the student who, during the upper-middler (11th grade) year, most distinguishes himself or herself in scholarship, character, and school spirit.

- **C.J. Walker ’17** of Fairfax, Va., was named this year’s recipient of the **Culbertson Prize**, in honor of the late **John H. Culbertson ’24**. The prize recognizes a student entering the 10th grade who gives evidence of exceptional promise and who has already demonstrated outstanding accomplishment.

Twenty-four members of the Class of 2015 were elected to membership in the Academy’s chapter of the **Cum Laude Society**.

Honorees are elected as seniors by faculty members of Mercersburg’s chapter in recognition of excellence in academic work. Students elected include **Erica Borger, Seth Caplan, Rachael Ditzler, Clara Edwards, Max Furigay, Rebecca Glass, Camille Gotera, Alex Jackson, Alec Jones, Hugh Kim, Kate Kistler, Yulia Lomakina, Andy Mangham, Nathan Marinicic, Linh Nguyen, Allen Ren, Emily Schoenberger, Danny Shapiro, Sam Strauss, Charles Thao, AnnaBeth Thomas, Lillian Wilkins, Newell Woodworth**, and **Alisher Yerzhanov**.

**David Taylor**, a documentary filmmaker and winner of both the Emmy and Peabody Awards, gave the Cum Laude address to the full student body on March 20.

Three Mercersburg seniors (**Max Furigay, Alex Jackson, and Erica Oh**) were recognized as Commended Students in the **2015 National Merit Scholarship Program**. Those honored as Commended Students placed among the top 3 percent of the more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2015 competition by taking the 2013 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).
Fellow senior Kam Undieh was honored as an Outstanding Participant in the National Achievement Scholarship Program. He scored in the top 3 percent of more than 160,000 Black Americans who requested consideration in the 2015 National Achievement Program when taking the 2013 PSAT/NMSQT.

A total of 80 Mercersburg students earned recognition as Advanced Placement (AP) Scholars in four different categories: National AP Scholar, AP Scholar with Distinction, AP Scholar with Honor, and AP Scholar. Of this year’s award recipients, 26 are members of Mercersburg’s current senior class.

This group of AP Scholars includes six students who qualified for the National AP Scholar Award by earning an average score of 4 or higher on eight or more exams. They are Vincent Hsu ’14, Anna Qin ’14, Gun Ho Ro ’14, Josh Setliff ’14, Christopher Thomas ’14, and Philip Yang ’14. Hsu attends the University of California, Los Angeles; Qin is enrolled at Columbia University; Ro is a student at Johns Hopkins University; Setliff attends the University of Virginia; Thomas is enrolled at Rice University; and Yang is a student at the University of California, Berkeley.

Also on the list are 25 students named AP Scholars with Distinction after earning an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, as well as scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. These students include James Boggs ’14, Maggie Collins ’14, Merrill Echevarreta ’14, Clara Edwards ’15, Margarita Fedorova ’14, Robin Fisher ’14, Jack Flanagan ’14, Max Furigay ’15, Alex Jackson ’15, Andrew Kim ’14, Hugh Kim ’15, David Lee ’14, Duy Mai ’14, Phillip McGloin ’14, Rose Pennington ’14, Allen Ren ’15, James Rinfold ’14, Katie San Filippo ’14, Jordan Shihadeh ’14, Elizabeth Stern-Green ’14, Keegan Sullivan ’14, Delaney Taylor ’14, Charles Thao ’15, Alisher Yerzhanov ’15, and Tommy Zhou ’14.

Fifteen students qualified for the AP Scholar with Honor Award by earning an average score of at least 3.25 of all AP Exams taken (and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams), and 34 additional students received the AP Scholar Award by completing three or more AP Exams with scores of 3 or higher.

A total of 18 Mercersburg students of German were recognized by the American Association of Teachers of German for their performances on the 2015 National German Exam. The group includes Yulia Lomakina ’15 and Elliot Hicks ’16, who placed first and seventh, respectively, among 200 students in Pennsylvania that took the Level 3 exam.

The 2013 edition of Mercersburg’s KARUX yearbook earned a second-place award from the American Scholastic Press Association. It marks the fourth year in a row that the KARUX has earned an award from the organization in the under-500 students category. Phoebe Moore ’13 and Miranda Lang ’13 were co-editors of the 2013 KARUX; Tom Thorne is faculty adviser to the yearbook.

An essay submitted by Andrew Kim ’14 as part of his successful application to Swarthmore College was published in the Fiske Real College Essays That Work, Fourth Edition.

**Irving-Marshall 2015**

Irving swept all three places at Declamation to rally for a thrilling 1100–900 win in this year’s Irving-Marshall competition. It marks Irving’s first win in the annual event since 2011. Jan Smilek ’16 earned the Scoblionko Declamation Cup as the first-place declarer; Tatiana Purnell ’16 was second and Nikki DeParis ’15 placed third.
Mercersburg faculty and students expanded their classrooms to the world around them, ultimately bringing back to campus new, hands-on knowledge and insights, which they transfer to future course study and, as always, their growing maturity as global citizens.

Brazil

In July, a Mercersburg robotics team was chosen to represent the United States at the 2014 International RoboCup Junior competition in João Pessoa, Brazil. Accompanied by Academic Dean Julia Stojak Maurer ’90 and faculty member Jeff Cohen, students Michael Collins ’14 and Sakyi Hylton-Dei ’14 competed in the lightweight league soccer competition.

Costa Rica

In its fifth year, this June academic trip focusing on tropical biology was a great opportunity for study, service, and cultural immersion, in Nosara, Costa Rica. Led by faculty Nikki Walker, Ray Larson, Dan Walker, Frank Rutherford ’70 and Debbie Rutherford, the group engaged in turtle research as well as bird watching, cattle ranching, horseback riding, collecting various indigenous specimens, community service, exploring tidal pools, night hikes through the jungle, visiting butterfly gardens, and observing howler-monkey rehabilitation.

A second journey to Costa Rica—the annual “Service in the Sun” community-service trip—was offered this March, and 12 students joined faculty members Trini Hoffman and Jeff Cohen for Costa Rican culture, hands-on language study, community service, sightseeing, and adventure.

France

Students immersed themselves in French language and culture through an exchange with Mercersburg’s sister school, Collège-Lycée Saint-Joseph, in Thônes, France. The trip continued the partnership established between the schools in 2012–2013 and was led by faculty members Heather Prescott and Katherine Thompson. Thônes is located in the western French Alps, about an hour south of Geneva, Switzerland. For the first two weeks, the five Mercersburg students lived with host families in Thônes; they spent the final week traveling in and around Montpellier.

The John H. Montgomery Award for Senior Field Study in France permits advanced-level students of French to immerse themselves in French language and culture. Recipients of the Montgomery Award this year were Nathan Marincic ’15, Celine Hylton-Dei ’15, and Max Conrad ’15. Students traveled to France in March with Prescott.

Germany

As part of Mercersburg’s long-standing exchange program with the Gauss Gymnasium in Worms, the trip emphasized the use of German language and knowledge of the culture, literature, music, and history of Germany. The 11 students on the trip also visited Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Bacharach, as well as Salzburg, Austria. They enjoyed a cruise on the Rhine River and explored medieval castles and fortresses. Students attended classes and were fully immersed in the lives of their German host families. Faculty member Peter Kempe and staff member Lena Eckstine led the trip.
Haiti

Faculty members Laurie Mufson and Matt Maurer joined seven students on Mercersburg’s first school trip to Haiti. The group worked with the Na Sonje Foundation in Gwo Jan (just outside the capital city of Port-au Prince). While there, group members provided arts-based English and math tutoring for local students and committed to a service project benefitting the local community. As part of the trip, each Mercersburg student worked with a “twin” of a similar age from the community.

India

Faculty members Frank Rutherford ’70 and Jennifer Miller Smith ’97 and staff member Coleman Weibley accompanied six students on a two-week adventure to India, which featured a sampling of several distinctly diverse regions of the country. The group visited Delhi, the Taj Mahal, Vizag, and Darjeerling. Community service was included among the sightseeing and cultural experiences.

Poland

Nine students traveled with faculty members Marshall Carroll and Lauren Echko on the school’s first official trip to Poland. Among the locations and activities the group experienced were the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp; Schindler’s Factory in Krakow (which was featured prominently in the Academy Award-winning film Schindler’s List and is now a museum); a “communism tour” that included a visit to a communist-era restaurant and an apartment in the communist utopia of Nowa Huta; and the town of Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II.

South Africa

Ten students joined faculty members Erin and Sydney Caretti for a journey that began in Johannesburg and included visits to the Apartheid Museum and Soweto; the capital city of Pretoria; the village of Shatale, where students partook in an authentic weeklong homestay experience; a two-day safari in Kruger National Park; and Angel’s Hope Orphanage, which received a donation of more than $3,000 from the Mercersburg swim team through a fundraiser last winter.

Spain

Faculty members Wendy Valenteen and Hope San Filippo accompanied 12 students to Valladolid, Spain, which is about 120 miles northwest of Madrid. While there, the students lived with Spanish families and attended classes at the Lourdes School. Students worked on long-term projects that they presented to the school when they returned to Mercersburg in the fall. The group took weekend excursions to the Spanish capital of Madrid and also to Vigo/Santiago de Compostela.

Utah (Mercersburg Outdoor Education)

Three students accompanied MOE faculty members Pete Gunkelman and Matthew Caretti on a cycling, hiking, and camping excursion to Moab, Utah. Participants tested their abilities at world-class mountain-biking trails featuring slickrock and canyon tracks, and hiked and camped in the stunning Arches and Canyonlands National Parks.

Exchange Programs

Students of all four spoken tongues offered by our Classical & Modern Languages Department (Chinese, French, German, and Spanish) have opportunities to immerse themselves in meaningful, real-world exchanges in their target language.
Collège-Lycée Saint-Joseph of Thônes, France, officially joined the Gauss Gymnasium (Worms, Germany), Colegio Alemán de San Felipe (San Felipe, Chile), and Nanjing Foreign Language School (Nanjing, China) as Mercersburg’s ongoing exchange partners. All exchange students live in dormitories alongside their Mercersburg hosts, attend classes, participate in various on-campus activities, and visit local attractions, including trips to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, and Baltimore as well as the Gettysburg and Antietam battlefields.

Eight students from each of the four above schools visited Mercersburg over the past 12 months. The group from Collège-Lycée Saint-Joseph spent two weeks here in April 2014; in October, eight students from the Gauss Gymnasium visited to mark the 16th year of the exchange program between the schools; another eight students from Colegio Alemán de San Felipe joined us for four weeks in January and February; and eight students from Nanjing Foreign Language School enjoyed their weeklong stay in February.

**General Academic Update …**

Every seven years, we welcome a team of five peer educators representing the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, which evaluates all facets of our school as part of our process to earn reaccreditation. I am pleased to report that we received a positive review from the Middle States committee and have officially been reaccredited.

In an effort to provide our students with quality standardized test preparation, Mercersburg is proud to continue our partnership with Marks Education in Washington, D.C., after a successful first year. Our 11th-grade students are benefitting from weekly, individualized, one-on-one tutoring via Skype. This pilot program is preparing students for the administration of the tests in this winter and spring.

The school hosted numerous authors, poets, speakers, musicians, and spoken-word performers on campus:

Actress, playwright, and social activist Anu Yadav visited last April as the second of two residents in the William C. Fowle Forum. She presented her one-woman play, Meena’s Dream, to the school and participated in a conversation with School Minister Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jones prior to our regular weekly chapel service (at which she also preached). As part of her Fowle residency, she held a workshop for students on using one’s own experiences as inspiration for writing and performance.

Last summer, 20 faculty members took part in one of two hands-on technology workshops focused on uses for the iPad in the classroom. One workshop focused on engaging ways to use the iPad in the classroom to enhance productivity and creativity (all newly hired Mercersburg faculty members were encouraged to attend this workshop). The second workshop guided faculty through the process of writing a digital textbook using iBooks Author. As a direct result of this workshop, faculty members authored and added to their own iBooks that are being used as textbooks in Mercersburg courses this year—including in Latin II, Human Geography, U.S. History, and Robotics. To this point, Mercersburg faculty members have authored more than 20 interactive, personalized textbooks that are used in our courses.

Gui Fang Zhang, a teacher of Tai Chi at the Monmouth Chinese School in Marlboro, N.J., was in residence at Mercersburg for four days in September. She worked with dance and physical-theatre students and led a community-wide Tai Chi event (featuring more than 500 students and faculty) during a school meeting.

Author, musician, and screenwriter James McBride delivered the Ammerman Family Lecture in October. McBride’s National Book Award-winning novel, The Good Lord Bird, was a 2014 summer reading selection at Mercersburg. In his presentation, which was based around and featured readings from The Good Lord Bird, McBride and his “Good Lord Bird Band” offered the powerful story of John
Brown by using gospel and spiritual music of the time to frame Brown’s life. McBride also held student workshops with students during his visit.

Eva Mozes Kor, a Holocaust survivor and founder of organizations dedicated to education, forgiveness, and reconciliation, addressed the student body at a December school meeting. Kor’s father, mother, and two older sisters all died at Auschwitz; she and her twin sister, Miriam, survived but were among 1,500 sets of twins subjected to horrifying genetic experiments under the direction of Dr. Josef Mengele. After becoming a U.S. citizen, Kor founded an organization that reconnected more than 120 survivors of the experiments on four continents.

The Schaff Lecture on Ethics and Morals featured author Sheryl WuDunn in December. WuDunn is the first Asian-American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize; her book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, which she co-authored with her husband Nicholas Kristof, was a 2014 summer-reading selection. WuDunn held a workshop for students the day following the lecture on how they can get involved in world issues in productive ways.

Immaculée Ilibagiza, who survived the 1994 Rwandan genocide and is now a best-selling author, gave a talk on her experiences to the student body in January. Ilibagiza survived the genocide by huddling for 91 days with seven other women in the small bathroom of a local pastor’s house. She wrote about her experience in *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*, which will be made into a motion picture.

Also in January, Walter H. Burgin Jr. ’53, who spent 31 years on the faculty (including 25 years as headmaster), was interviewed at a school meeting by Academic Dean Julia Stojak Maurer ’90. The topics included nonviolent protest and his own involvement as a participant in the 1963 March on Washington. The event was the start of the school’s observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which included an all-school trip to see the Oscar-nominated film *Selma*.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Robert Brooks addressed the faculty in January on the topic of “The Power of Mindsets: Nurturing Motivation and Resilience in Students.” Dr. Brooks has lectured nationally and internationally to audiences of parents, educators, mental health professionals, and business people on topics pertaining to motivation, resilience, family relationships, the qualities of effective leaders and executives, and balancing our personal and professional lives.

As part of the Jacobs Residency, California-based Marshall Davis Jones is spending the entire spring 2015 term on campus performing a multitude of roles: teaching a senior-elective poetry course, training 11th-grade students in leadership skills, preaching at Sunday Chapel and assisting with Spoken Word events, and performing as part of the Monday Evening Lecture Series on March 30.

In accordance with our new graduation requirements, all seniors starting with the class of 2016 will be required to take part in one of two new innovative senior capstone experiences, MAPS (Mercersburg’s Advanced Program for Global Studies) or Springboard (senior capstone courses based on Challenge Based Learning). MAPS and Springboard have been offered as optional opportunities for students since the 2013–2014 school year.

Twelve seniors comprise the inaugural MAPS class. The two-year, application-only program begins in the 11th-grade year and utilizes academic and co-curricular opportunities to challenge students in deliberate ways. This spring, the students are presenting their SEARCH projects, which are documented in 40–50 page research papers. The students include McQuire Allen-Hall, Leah Cook, Julia Gledhill, Camille Gotera, Sarabeth Henne, Morgan Matsuda, Katie Miller, Emily Schoenberger, Annabel Taylor, Charles Thao, Reed Widdoes, and Newell Woodworth.
An equally impressive group of upper middlers populates the second class of MAPS students who are now taking the Thought, Knowledge, and Belief MAPS core course and preparing for their study-abroad experiences this summer. Faculty member Phil Kantaros serves as the MAPS program director and Peter Kempe is the assistant director.

For the first time, Springboard students gave public presentations to their classmates in April 2014. The event, known as Springtalks, was a public unveiling of work by members of the senior class who have accepted the challenge of completing an independent-study project in one of the three Springboard offerings available this year: Entrepreneurship, the Global Food Chain, and 3D Design. More than 45 members of the Class of 2014 opted to take one of the new Springboard courses in the program’s first year. Springboard takes the principles of Challenge Based Learning and applies them to course selections designed around the passions of faculty members. Faculty member Emily Howley is the Springboard director. A total of 10 different Springboard classes are available to seniors during the 2015–2016 academic year.

In December, students in Mercersburg’s algebra I, algebra II, geometry, precalculus, and select other courses took part in the Hour of Code, an international initiative that challenges students to dive into the field of computer science and programming. Each class devoted an entire rotation to the project, and in doing so joined tens of millions of students worldwide in a test-drive through the world of programming.

Mercersburg hosted the Student Leadership Symposium: Renewable Energy for more than 60 students from nine schools around the globe in March. The symposium was the seventh of its kind attended by Mercersburg student ambassadors since 2007, and the second such event Mercersburg has hosted. Students immersed themselves in relevant global topics through dialogue, excursion, speakers, and activities. Nathan Abel ’17, Kaufman Butler ’17, Emma Shapiro ’17, Carol Tang ’17, C.J. Walker ’17, Mia Wang ’17 participated in the conference and faculty members Will Willis and Renee Hicks spearheaded its planning. In addition to Mercersburg, the symposium included schools from Germany, China, Oman, Argentina, Belgium, South Africa, United Kingdom, and Texas.

Several innovative field experiences have happened in connection with courses since the 2014 edition of the Head of School’s Review, including:

Last spring, U.S. District Court Judge John E. Jones III ’73 invited students from Mercersburg’s fall-term and winter-term Constitutional Issues courses to visit him at the U.S. District Court in Harrisburg, Pa. to observe as he imposed sentences on three defendants. Judge Jones joined the students for lunch. In addition, both Jones and an experienced federal prosecutor spoke with the students and answered several questions after the second sentencing. After the third sentencing, Jones invited the students into his chambers to further discuss the day’s proceedings.

Last April, five Mercersburg robotics teams competed in the national RoboCup Junior competition in New Jersey. Sakyi Hylton-Dei ’14 and Michael Collins ’14 placed first in the lightweight soccer division. Hylton-Dei and Collins also received an award from the judges for creating the best algorithm as part of the programming process. (Each team was required to undergo a 20–30 minute technical interview with professional programmers and engineers from the field of robotics; team members explained all aspects of their design and program in the interview.) The team of James Boggs ’14, Rachel Rosa ’14, and Pearce Bloom ’14 placed third in the lightweight soccer category. In the physical search-and-rescue category, the team of Juan Tomás Leal ’14 and Kaston Wong ’14 took third place, giving Mercersburg three teams of top-three finishers.

In May, AP Environmental Science and biology students joined faculty members Ray Larson and Frank Rutherford ’70 in Slaughter Beach and Lewes, Del., to study beach profiling, beach erosion, salt marshes, and local wildlife. The group helped with a late-night horseshoe-crab population count, visited the DuPont Nature Center, and conducted an annual beach profile for the third-straight year. The location is an excellent field laboratory for an ongoing capstone project for the AP Environmental Science students and an introduction to field work for younger students.
In October, students enrolled in the 3D Design Springboard course visited the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where they toured the campus, visited with professors, and investigated the school’s various departments. Then in November, the class, which is taught by Pete Gunkelman and Amy Kelley, traveled to Greenwich, Conn., to tour Blue Sky Studios, a computer-animation company that has produced several popular animated films (including *Ice Age*, *Rio*, and *Epic*). Each student shadowed a professional in an animation department of individual interest.

Faculty members Nate Jacklin ’96 and Todd McGuire took students in their Entrepreneurship Springboard course to visit with several entrepreneurs and chief executive officers in the Washington area. The group met with CEOs and toured businesses ranging from startups to established businesses in various fields.

Springboard’s Global Food Chain students and faculty member Emily Howley traveled to Hanover, Pa., to visit the headquarters of Utz Quality Foods, which is the nation’s largest independent, privately held snack brand. While at Utz, the students met with Molly Jones Mancini ’79, the company’s technical services manager, and discussed product development, marketing, and the politics of issues surrounding food. The group toured three of the company’s Hanover production plants and witnessed the production of potato chips, pretzels, and other snack foods.

Students enrolled in U.S. History, AP U.S. History, and American Studies courses attended a performance of *Our War at Arena Stage* in Washington. The play, which is part of the National Civil War Project, is a collection of monologues that brings new understanding to one of the most significant periods of American history. The following morning, the same group of 15 students and faculty departed for an all-day excursion to nearby Gettysburg National Military Park. Each student received the name of a soldier who fought in one of the regiments on the pivotal day of the Battle of Gettysburg, as well as that soldier’s regiment, state, and limited additional information (such as whether the soldier was wounded in battle, etc.) Each individual student was then charged with creating a work of historical fiction surrounding the soldier’s experience before, during, and after the battle.

Also in October, members of the Applied Human Anatomy & Physiology class taught by Nikki Walker toured the Grove-Bowersox Funeral Home in Waynesboro, Pa. In addition to the viewing area and arrangement room, the group toured the morgue and cremation chamber and discussed the equipment and tools necessary for embalming and cremation with owner/operator Jeremy Bowersox.

Student delegates represented Mercersburg at Model United Nations conferences held at the University of Virginia, Columbia University, and Georgetown University.

Mercersburg hosted two Washington-based researchers in December. Dr. Ted Grand, an anatomist from the National Zoological Park, discussed the evolutionary origins of humans and displayed skeletons of various mammals. A Mercersburg group visited Grand at the National Zoo December 7. Dr. Colin Aitken, a research scientist from the National Institutes of Health, investigates how cells interpret the genetic code to assemble the molecules responsible for life. Both guests presented to biology classes and spoke at brown-bag lunches open to interested students, faculty, and staff.

Students in the Quinn-Ferguson Honors Seminar visited Washington in December for an in-depth discussion over lunch with former secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

Sixteen Mercersburg students and faculty member Phil Kantaros heard oral arguments January 21 at the Supreme Court of the United States. The students—all from Kantaros’ Constitutional Issues course—sat in the gallery during arguments in the case of *Rodriguez v. United States*. It is the third time in the past four years a group from Kantaros’ class has been invited to be present while the nation’s highest court is in session.
Through support from Andrew Ammerman ’68 and his late mother Josephine Ammerman, students traveled to Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., to see theatre productions connected with curricular work in their classes, including:

- U.S. History, American Studies, AP U.S. History — Our War
- American Plays — The Shoplifters
- Fall Theatre classes and school community — Fiddler on the Roof
- Honors World Literature and Winter Theatre classes — Baskerville
- AP English Language and American Studies — King Hedley II
- Constitution classes — The Originalist
- Spring Theatre classes — Vonya and Sonia and Masha and Spike

We are fortunate to have alumni and friends who have given at significant levels to permanently endow a faculty chair in their family’s name or in honor of someone else. Below are the names of the chairs, the faculty who currently hold them, and their years of appointment:

- Robert R. Black Chair: Eric Hicks (2014)
- David F. Chapman Chair: Tom Thorne (2001)
- Marilyn and Robert M. Kurtz ’52 Chair for American Studies: Karl Reisner (2001)
- Mary Keeler Lawrence Distinguished Teaching Chair: Peter Kempe (2014)
- Margery and Edgar Masinter ’48 Chair for the Outdoor Education Director: Pete Gunkelman (2013)
- Marjorie McCrae McCulloh Chair for Library Director: Marshall Carroll (2008)
- Regenstein Chair in British Literature: Chip Vink ’73 (2014)
- Archibald H. Rutledge Chair: Frank Rutherford ’70 (2001)
- Palmer Chair for the Fine Arts: Laurie Mufson (2008)

Other faculty awards, accomplishments, retirements, and appointments include:

- Nikki Walker received the Zern Excellence in Teaching Award, which is funded through the generosity of Board of Regents Vice President Allen Zern ’61 and his wife, Judy. Hope San Filippo earned the 2014–2015 Ammerman Distinguished Teaching Award for Religious & Interdisciplinary Studies, which was established by Regent Emeritus Andrew Ammerman ’68 and his late mother, Josephine.

The Board of Regents bestowed the title of “Faculty Emeritus” on four faculty members who retired from the Academy at the close of the 2013–2014 academic year. The quartet, which includes Mark Flowers (fine arts), Brent Gift (science), Kristy Higby (fine arts), and Ron Simar (athletics/physical education), gave Mercersburg a combined 114 years of service dating back to 1971.

Mercersburg faculty members Allison Stephens and Katherine Dyson spent six weeks in summer 2014 working with students, teachers, and administrators at the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA), a boarding school for Afghan girls in the capital city of Kabul. The school serves approximately 40 girls from all over Afghanistan who board on the school’s compound and attend classes there while also attending public schools in Kabul for a portion of each class day.

Sally O’Rourke was named Mercersburg’s director of college counseling. She arrived here after serving most recently as the college counselor, AP coordinator, and team leader for the college advising program at Andover High School in Andover, Mass. O’Rourke has experience with a variety of educational institutions and organizations, including Northeastern University in Boston; Campus Bound in Lexington, Mass.; McLean High School in McLean, Va.; Our Lady of Nazareth Academy in Wakefield, Mass.; the Forman School in Litchfield, Conn.; and the non-profit organization Andover A Better Chance.
O’Rourke is one of **12 new faculty members** who joined us in the fall. Others include **Jay Bozzi** (history), **Sarah Bozzi** (mathematics), **Grace Buckles** (admission), **Sydney Caretti** (fine arts), **Tamara Harris** (fine-arts intern), **Ben McNeil** (classical & modern languages), **Jillian Nataupsky** (college counseling/history), **Glenn Neufeld** (director of aquatics/college counseling), **Kristen Pixler** (fine arts), **Brett Potash** (director of dormitories/history), and **Abby Schindler** (dormitory dean).

A total of nine Mercersburg faculty members—both classroom teachers and administrators—were featured speakers and presenters at the 2014 **The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) Conference** in December in Washington, D.C. Five sessions were chaired or co-chaired by Mercersburg faculty. The presenters included **Julia Stojak Maurer ’90** (academic dean), **Emily Howley** (Springboard director), **Amy Kelley** (mathematics faculty) and **Jennifer Miller Smith ’97** (science department head), who presented “E-Textbooks: The Next Big Thing”; **Quentin McDowell** (senior associate director of admission & financial aid) and **Mike Conklin** (associate director of admission & financial aid), who spoke on “Beyond the Viewbook: Re-Envisioning Traditional Marketing”; **Mike Conklin** and **Tommy Adams** (assistant head of school for enrollment), who moderated a round table on value and affordability; **Ryan Bennett** (director of technology/mathematics faculty), whose topic was “Managing Classroom Distraction in a 1:1 World”; and **Brett Potash** (director of dormitories/history faculty), who teamed with **David Fitzgerald** of The Webb Schools on “Making Space During the Day; Adding Choices at Night.” In all, 17 Mercersburg faculty and staff attended the three-day conference.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION UPDATE …**

**Prentiss Alumni and Parent Center at North Cottage**

Mercersburg officially broke ground in October for the **Prentiss Alumni and Parent Center at North Cottage**. North Cottage will serve as the focal point of the Prentiss Center, which is named in honor of **John K. Prentiss ’65** (longtime chair of the Board of Regents’ Buildings and Grounds Committee) and the entire **Prentiss family**. The Prentiss Center will adjoin new office space for the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations and the Office of Strategic Marketing & Communications. Construction will begin this spring.

**Additional Faculty Housing**

Construction began last fall on four duplexes located along faculty row on back campus. The residences will allow eight additional faculty to live on campus. Designed to blend well with other campus architecture, the new residences will be completed this summer to allow their first faculty residents to move in prior to the 2015–2016 school year.

**New Field House**

Plans for the new field house have been approved by the Board of Regents. As of this writing we expect to hold a groundbreaking in May, and construction will begin by late summer.

**ATHLETICS UPDATE …**

Over the past 12 months (in the time since last year’s **Head of School’s Review** was published), Mercersburg’s varsity athletic teams have captured a total of eight Independent-Parochial School League titles (in softball, boys’ tennis, boys’ outdoor track & field, and girls’ outdoor track & field last spring, as well as in boys’ cross country, golf, boys’ soccer, and girls’ soccer this past fall) and two Mid-Atlantic Prep League championships (in baseball and boys’ soccer).

The MAPL title for the baseball team was its fourth in as many years, while the boys’ soccer team earned its first MAPL crown during a season for the ages, in which it compiled the best record in the program’s history
(18–1–1), outscored its opponents 122–10, and advanced to the championship game of the Pennsylvania Independent Schools Athletic Association (PAISAA) State Tournament.

In the spring and fall seasons, Blue Storm athletes received a total of 44 All-MAPL awards and 56 All-IPSL honors. Individual highlights included Peter Katsarakes ’14 setting a state record in the 300m hurdles and a MAPL record in the 400m hurdles (boys’ outdoor track & field); Tatiana Purnell ’15 breaking a school record in the 300m hurdles (girls’ outdoor track & field); a sweep of the MAPL and IPSL titles by Gabriel Allgayer ’16 (boys’ cross country); medalist honors for Ruichi Zhou ’16 (golf) at the IPSL Championship; David Coly ’15 (boys’ soccer) being named the area’s co-player of the year by the [Chambersburg] Public Opinion; and Katie Miller ’15 (girls’ soccer) finishing her four-year career as the school’s all-time leading scorer.

Winter individual highlights included Lauren Greenberg ’15 (girls’ swimming) breaking a 24-year-old school record in the 100-yard butterfly; Ben Carter ’16 and Matt McPheters ’15 (boys’ swimming) winning individual events (the 50 freestyle and 100 butterfly, respectively) at the Eastern Interscholastic Swimming & Diving Championships; Purnell (girls’ indoor track & field) qualifying for the Pennsylvania Track & Field Coaches Association State Championship for the second-straight year and setting school records in the 55m hurdles and triple jump; and Cody Frost-Eisenberg ’15 and Alex Olajide ’15 (wrestling) qualifying for the National Prep Championships.

As of now, four members of the senior class have signed or committed to continue their athletic careers at the NCAA Division I level: David Coly (Washington, boys’ soccer), Boo Jordan (Davidson, football), Malik Miller (Fairleigh Dickinson, boys’ basketball), and Brice Sydnor (Bucknell, football). More senior athletes will commit later this spring.

Overall, approximately 60 percent of the student body participated in athletics each term, while more than 80 percent of students participate in at least one sport over the course of each year.

Arts Update …

Senior dance students Rebecca Glass, Brianna Howland, and Lillian Wilkins were featured in a concert at the Regional High School Dance Festival in March in Norfolk, Va. More than 1,000 of the top high-school dancers in the country attended the festival and its gala concert. The student trio performed The Space Between Words, a modern dance piece choreographed by Director of Dance Denise Dalton that originally premiered at Mercersburg’s Fall Dance Concert in November. A total of eight Mercersburg dancers attended the festival.

Mercersburg’s annual Fall Dance Concert featured a Chinese fan dance set by guest Tai Chi artist Gui Fang Zhang, as well as student-choreographed works, a quintet by ballet instructor Hans Nelson, and two contemporary pieces choreographed by Dalton. For the first time, a Winter Dance Showcase was held to highlight student choreographers in February. The top pieces will be included in the Spring Dance Concert April 25.

Stony Batter Players productions this year have included a Tony Award-winning musical, a play adapted by faculty member Matt Maurer from a short story by Ken Liu (who visited campus to meet with the cast), and a play specially commissioned for a British young-adult series.

Taking Breath, directed by Director of Theatre Laurie Mufson, was the year’s opening production in October and was written for the British Telecom National Connections Scheme for Young People. Actors engaged in physical training with Anne Reeder Bertram ’00, a physical-theatre artist and choreographer, as part of their preparation for the show. Also in October, Maurer directed Liu’s The Perfect Match and brought Liu (a Chinese-born author, translator, lawyer, and programmer) to campus for two days to visit with the cast, attend a rehearsal, and meet with different classes at the school.
In February, Stony Batter presented *Urinetown: The Musical*, a satirical comedy featuring an ensemble cast that won three Tony Awards on Broadway. Mufson directed the production, which also featured music direction by Richard Rotz, the school’s director of music; sets by Director of Technical Theatre Steve Crick; and choreography by Mary Robare (a professional dancer and choreographer who teaches at Shenandoah University). Jim Brinson was the vocal director, Lindsay Owen served as vocal coach, and Walt Dowling was the guest lighting director. The cast also worked with special guest Kathryn Armour, an adjunct voice professor at New York University who works with classical and Broadway singers out of her New York studio.

Late last spring, the cast of Stony Batter’s 2014 production of *Legally Blonde The Musical* captured four awards in the inaugural Totem Pole Playhouse Awards, which recognize excellence in area high-school musical productions. Winners included Caitlin Cremins ’14 (Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role), James Riford ’14 (Outstanding Performance by a Featured Male Ensemble Member), and Alex Jackson ’15 and Kate Kistler ’15 (Jean Stapleton Awards for Outstanding Contributions to a High School Musical).

This year’s renewal of Stony Batter’s annual Classical Scenes is set for Saturday, May 2.

“Small Bowl,” a ceramic work by Ryan Geitner ’17, was chosen for display at the 2015 National K-12 Ceramic Exhibition in Providence, R.I. The event is the premier juried ceramic competition for U.S. school students. Geitner is the 10th Mercersburg student since 2009 to have her work selected for the national exhibit.

Annabel Taylor ’15 won a Gold Key Award while Henry Asher ’15 and Andy Mangham ’15 earned honorable-mention laurels for their works submitted in the 2015 Scholastic Art Awards. Taylor’s award was for her mixed-media piece, “Weightlessness,” while Asher and Mangham received honors for design and drawing/illustration, respectively.

During the past year, recitals and performances by our music groups have entertained the campus and surrounding community. The Chorale, String Ensemble, Band, Jazz Band, Octet, and Magalia perform frequently at seasonal campus concerts, weekday Community Gathering events, and special school weekends including Alumni Weekend and Family Weekend. Other events include Chorale and Band concerts at Quincy Retirement Center in nearby Waynesboro, Pa.; the String Ensemble’s performance of The Star-Spangled Banner as Mercersburg hosted the Pennsylvania Independent Schools State Wrestling Tournament; and Magalia and the Octet raising their voices in song at several varied venues on- and off-campus during the year.

The Band, String Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Chorale will again participate in the Music In The Parks adjudication event in May in Hershey, Pa. In 2014, the groups earned “Excellent” and “Superior” ratings at the annual event.

French horn player Alec Jones ’15 was selected for the prestigious All-Eastern Honors Band by the National Association for Music Education. The audition-only group includes approximately 150 students from 11 Eastern states, plus the District of Columbia and U.S. Department of Defense schools in Europe. He is the first Mercersburg student to be selected for the ensemble and one of just 16 French horn players chosen in 2015; he was also named an All-State instrumentalist for the second-straight year when he was chosen for the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association’s All-State Orchestra.

Rebecca Li ’17 was chosen by audition as a flautist in the PMEA Region V Upper Band. She also was named to the District 7 Upper Band along with Jones and Victor Burgess ’16 (tenor saxophone). Jones was also named to the Region V Orchestra and District 7 Orchestra; he was joined in the district ensemble by Rachael Ditzler ’15 (violin).
RESIDENTIAL UPDATE ...

Our new director of dormitories, Brett Potash, has hit the ground running since he arrived in August 2014. In addition to his many responsibilities, including working with the dormitory deans to ensure that student life in the dormitories runs smoothly, Brett works with the prefects and has added weekly Sunday-night leadership training, discussion, and planning sessions for all of the prefects.

In January, while the faculty met for a workshop with Bob Brooks, Brett and others put together and ran an Upper-Middler Leadership Day complete with workshops on personality type and leadership, leadership simulation exercises, communication sessions led by Mercersburg Outdoor Education (MOE), and a leadership round robin where upper middlers met with current senior leaders to understand their positions and responsibilities more thoroughly before they decide how they want to contribute during their senior year.

At the same time, our ninth and tenth graders participated in a program called “Food and You.” Jim Butler, director of food service for SAGE Dining Services, and Lesley Vogel, a nutritionist from SAGE, partnered with associate head of school Debbie Rutherford to focus on three main themes organized around Michael Pollan’s Food Rules: Eat Food, Mostly Plants, and Not Too Much.

The Peer Group program has been in existence at Mercersburg for 30 years. Each week during the first half of the school year, our ninth-grade students meet in small groups with well-trained senior leaders to acclimate to Mercersburg life, get to know each other, and discuss topics of importance. The Peer Group leaders also meet once a week with the program’s faculty advisers to plan the next week’s meeting and reflect on the previous meetings. It is one of our strongest leadership programs with “learning by doing” at its heart. Larry Jones began the program in the mid-1980s, and when he returned to Mercersburg in 2006, Larry stepped in as the main faculty adviser once again. We thank him for his contributions to this integral part of the Mercersburg community as he prepares to retire at the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

We invited Campus Outreach Services, which is run by Katie Koestner (a national expert on student safety and teen relationship culture) to host a workshop with seniors on college transitions, which focused primarily on healthy relationships and alcohol/other drugs.

In the fall, the faculty focused on several areas of safety including an opening workshop in August coordinated by Director of Counseling Susan Rahauser that included a session on QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), a suicide-prevention initiative; we also experienced a hands-on simulation of emergency responses as set out in the school’s crisis plan, and later this year we are hosting a group of experts who will conduct an outside safety audit.

In November, five faculty members attended the Mindful Leadership Summit in Washington. We recognize mindfulness as important to our students’ health and well-being, and the faculty are interested in leading the way in this area. A group of nearly 20 faculty members are continuing discussions and planning regarding the positive role we want mindfulness to play in the school’s program. In fact, in our recent reaccreditation report, the visiting team urged the school “to explore ways to schedule time for faculty, students, and staff for reflection/contemplation/meditation.”

Mercersburg Outdoor Education (MOE) instituted a new program in the winter term: ski mountaineering. In its first season, 32 students participated in the program, which teaches backcountry skills and allows students to take advantage of the nearby Whitetail Ski Resort. Sixteen students took part in MOE’s Endeavor program this winter, and 40 students spent the fall in MOE programs focused on biking, hiking, or rock climbing. This spring, 16 students are enrolled in the rock-climbing group led by MOE. In addition, MOE offers various all-day weekend excursions to students who may be involved in athletics, arts, or other activities during the week.
FINANCE UPDATE …

The financial forecast for the 2014–2015 school year has the school meeting its $29.7 million Board-approved budget with a balanced income statement. In the fall, our auditors (McGladrey LLP) issued an unqualified report after auditing the school’s financial statements for the 2013–2014 school year.

The 2015–2016 budget approved by the Board of Regents in January 2015 totals $30.9 million. The budget includes competitive increases to faculty and staff salary and benefits. Our faculty salaries continue to be comparable with like schools, and our staff salaries are also competitive and benchmarked to the regional job market. Other line items that increase in next year’s budget include endowed financial aid for the academic program and for international travel.

The careful management of the school’s endowment by the Board of Regents’ Investment Committee yielded another year of strong returns and growth. The annual operational draw to the school has remained at the conservative rate of 3.75 percent of the average of the prior 12 quarters’ market value for several years. This conservative approach facilitates growth in the endowment’s value to keep up with inflation and support programs in perpetuity. In December 2014, the endowment was valued at $242 million.

ADVANCEMENT & ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE …

The Daring to Lead Campaign continues to unite the entire Mercersburg community in support of our mission. To date, more than $246 million of the $300 million goal has been raised toward the school’s strategic priorities: financial aid, faculty support, program support, facilities, and annual giving. We have canvassed much of the country in 2014–2015, with 31 regional and Campaign events in a dozen states. The largest was a January Campaign gathering in Washington that attracted more than 350 alumni, parents, and friends—breaking last year’s record crowd in New York City as the largest off-campus event in school history.

Carolyn Griffin Yeager joined the department in July as director of development. Carolyn served for 17 years at nearby Dickinson College in various fundraising roles, most recently as associate vice president for development and director of leadership giving.

Membership in the Student Alumni Association has grown to 118. These student volunteers assemble care packages for our college-age alumni, participate in phonathons, give campus tours for visiting alumni, and assist with other outreach efforts.

The Mercersburg Match, announced last fall, has allowed leadership donors in the Daring to Lead Campaign to double the value of their gift to one of three endowment priorities—financial aid, faculty support, and program support.

The Mercersburg Annual Fund continues to be the school’s ongoing fundraising priority and the primary way alumni, parents, and friends support Mercersburg’s day-to-day work. More than 2,300 of you have given to the 2014–2015 Annual Fund, including 316 members of the William Mann Irvine Society. We are on pace to achieve 50 percent alumni participation in the Annual Fund by June 30—a benchmark few other institutions in the nation can claim.

Nearly 400 alumni and guests returned to campus last summer for Reunion Weekend, with classes ending in 4 and 9 celebrating reunions. In October, more than 250 alumni and guests attended Alumni Weekend, which featured a Stony Batter reunion.

In the fall, the Board of Regents welcomed three new members: Cynthia Davenport Borger ’83, Andrew Hall ’88, and Vanessa Youngs ’03. The Alumni Council also welcomed new members—Anne Curry ’02 and Sassan Emral Shaoool ’91—and the Loyalty Club welcomed Tom Heefner ’57 as its new chair, replacing outgoing chair
Jim McClelland ’55, who has our gratitude for his service. (The Loyalty Club is comprised of all Mercersburg alumni who have celebrated their 50th reunion.)

Admission Update …

Student and family interest in Mercersburg remains strong. Both admission interviews and completed applications have been consistent with our five-year average. By the end of the admission cycle, roughly 700 prospective students will have interviewed at Mercersburg.

This year, the Office of Admission hosted a large number of prospective students at the fall and winter Open House events. More than 150 prospective students and their families visited Mercersburg over the course of the two days. Two Revisit Days occurred this spring for accepted students.

Additionally, admission officers have journeyed far and wide to recruit the best prospective students to Mercersburg. Travel includes trips to 20 states and the District of Columbia. Officers also made visits to numerous traditional feeder schools across New England and the Mid-Atlantic. To continue to support the tradition of international diversity at Mercersburg (a record 40 nations are represented at the school this year), representatives ventured to Mexico, Switzerland, Germany, Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates to meet with prospective students, Mercersburg families, and educational consultants.

Last spring, the Office of Admission took a bold step and joined together with three peer schools in the Mid-Atlantic (Peddie School, Episcopal High School [Va.], and Blair Academy) to form the Mid-Atlantic Boarding School Group; in the fall, St. Andrew’s School (Del.) became the fifth institution to join. The goal of the consortium is to maximize travel efforts in the domestic (and eventually international) markets and to attract strong candidates to our schools. Successful receptions, preceded or followed by visits to private schools in the area, were held in Baltimore and Philadelphia. This spring, the group is presenting at the IECA Spring Conference, hosting several events, traveling together to Florida, and hosting a spring consultant tour.

Additionally, the Office of Admission hosted events in a several key locations this fall in partnership with current parents and alumni. Current families hosted admission receptions in their homes in both Reston, Va., and Hagerstown, Md. If you are interested in hosting a reception in your area, please contact the Office of Admission. There are also plans to expand to new locations with the Mid-Atlantic Boarding School Group next year. In addition to the receptions, Mercersburg hosted its second annual Business Leaders Event that brought several business representatives from across Franklin (Pa.) and Washington (Md.) counties to campus. It was an opportunity for local professionals to explore Mercersburg Academy as both a retention and recruitment tool for their employees.

Over the summer, we welcomed two new members to the admission team: Grace Buckles, a graduate of Westover School (Conn.) who assumed the role of assistant director, and Michelle Faust, who moved from the Office of Summer and Extended Programs to join us as an administrative assistant.

Coming Events/Mark Your Calendar

- Board of Regents meetings — May 8-9
- Baccalaureate — May 22, 7:00 p.m.
- Commencement — May 23, 10:30 a.m.
- End of year for underclass students — May 29
- Reunion Weekend — June 4–7

Alumni whose class years end in 5 or 0 and Loyalty Club members are invited to campus for Reunion Weekend this year. I always look forward to this time devoted to alumni. The campus is turned over to you,
and there are numerous opportunities for relaxing with friends. The faculty truly enjoys connecting with alumni, since they are completely free of any classroom responsibilities. We also celebrate during Reunion Weekend the winners of the various Alumni Council Awards.

- Convocation — September 6, 2:30 p.m.
- Family Weekend — September 25–27
- Alumni Weekend — October 16–18

I encourage you to check our website (www.mercersburg.edu) frequently for news and updates about life on campus. I hope to see as many families, friends, and alumni on campus as possible for Commencement on May 23. If you cannot attend Commencement, we will be streaming the entire event live on the website.

I trust you can see that exciting things are constantly happening at Mercersburg. Please know that we are thrilled to have you back on campus whenever you can take the time for a visit. And again, I thank all of you for all you do for this remarkable school.

Warmest regards,

Douglas Hale
Head of School