

Preparing Students for the Peace Corps Program Finds Success Since 2018 Launch

The Peace Corps Prep Program completed its first year at Shippensburg University at the end of the 2018 spring semester. While this is only its second year as an official program at Ship, it was in the works for a number of years.

Victoria Kerr, both the program coordinator and co-director, has worked to establish the Peace Corps Prep Program at Ship since she began as the director of the Career, Mentoring, and Professional Development Center in 2013.

"I come from an international background," Kerr said, "so travel has always been in my blood."

From her British mom and her father, who was a navy chaplain, she grew up



Sarah Kistner, a 2019 alumni, teaches students in Columbia English as a Foreign Language.

passionate about travel, for she had been exposed to it her whole life. It was her interest in the program as an undergraduate student at American University that fueled her desire to establish the initiative at Ship.

In 2013, Kerr and Dr. Jonathan Skaff, co-director of Peace Corps Prep and director of international studies, began their partnership with the prep program by inviting representatives from the world-renowned program to host a table at the Ship career fair.

This later was followed by an informational session, which according to Kerr, was well received by students.

Fast forward four years. It wasn't until 2017 that Kerr and Skaff refocused on the prep program, and said, "let's do this."

"We really stepped it up from the program's requirements and went above the basic prep program other universities have," Kerr said.

She views the program as having two elements: the academic side (which Skaff fulfills) and the career development, service learning, and leadership aspects (which Kerr manages).

"The prep program is an awesome blend of what Skaff and I do," Kerr said. "The education gives students a framework and, in the

career piece, we tie it together with the service aspect of the program."

Today, Shippensburg University is one of the five universities in Pennsylvania to offer the Peace Corps Prep Program.

Sarah Kistner, one of the first students to enroll in the program, graduated from Ship in May 2019 and, shortly after, left for Columbia to pursue a Peace Corps serving-learning project.

"The Peace Corps Prep program has allowed me to feel confident in creating lesson plans, working with counterparts, and being in front of the classroom," Kistner said.



She currently serves as a secondary English teacher where she works with Colombian counterparts to design, organize, and facilitate lesson plans. Kistner is also facilitating classes outside the classroom to enhance community assets.

While the prep program was not developed during his time at SU, Patrick Peck, a 2016 SU graduate who traveled to the Philippines after graduation, views the Peace Corps as a unique experience. "There are very few organizations out there that I know of that offer people with a strong sense of service to experience a new culture and new perspectives in such an immersive way," said Peck, who graduated with a degree in geo/environmental science.

Although the thirteen current students who are enrolled in the prep program at SU through the international development minor are not guaranteed a spot to travel abroad, about 75 percent of those who participate are accepted by the nationally recognized program.

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UPCOMING

events

Spring 2020

Color Me Fashionable
Fashion Archives and Museum

January 22–February 26

Pace Prints
Kauffman Gallery

April 8

The Easter Calendar and the
Spring Sky
Planetarium

April 21

Minds@Work
CUB

April 27–May 9

42nd Annual SU Juried
Student Art Exhibit
Kauffman Gallery

April 29

The Summer Sky and
Constellations
Planetarium

**For more information,
visit ship.edu/events.**



DEAN

Message from the

Focused on Student Success

Dear College of Arts and Sciences alumni, students, faculty, and friends,

I'm back! In our last newsletter, you may have noticed that the dean's comments were from Dr. Sherri Bergsten, who is a faculty member in our Biology Department. She was serving as interim dean of Arts and Sciences during my appointment last January as interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. It is with much gratitude that I thank Dr. Bergsten for her extraordinary service as interim dean. This is not a small job, and she was engaged with much depth and clarity of vision, continuing the work of our office, contributing new and insightful ideas, and continuing the vision and mission of the college with excellence.

My appointment as interim provost was a wonderful opportunity for me to work with our university leadership in a transitional role as we searched for our new provost, Dr. Tom Ormond, who began his tenure on July 1. During my time in that position, I worked to continue the Shippensburg University mission focused on delivering excellence for our students and faculty, raising the institutional profile through community outreach, and to promote the great work of our various units and faculty across all of Academic Affairs—including the College of Arts and Sciences!

This issue of our newsletter emphasizes the value-added propositions associated with a College of Arts and Sciences education at Shippensburg. Our faculty continue to assess and appropriately modify our curricular pathways so that they remain relevant and provide the basis for equipping students with disciplinary skills alongside highly demanded soft skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and communication. Continuous improvement assessments also help ensure that learning objectives are relevant and that students are challenged to learn the appropriate aspects of their disciplines. However, learning experiences and applications outside of the classroom really do work to deepen and provide relevance for what is being taught. The opportunities for student engagement in these activities have become a hallmark of our college and university.

There are a number of ways that our faculty and programs within the college work to integrate out-of-classroom learning experiences into our students' lives. We've highlighted a few examples here, including the service learning aspects of the Peace Corps Prep Program and undergraduate research project opportunities such as the one described for our communication/journalism students. These experiences are particularly important in helping students build necessary background and practitioner skills within their majors, and in helping to develop and solidify their professional personas as they enter the workplace.

Another example is seen with the mentoring support provided by faculty through the work of the Frederick Douglass Scholars, who help emphasize the importance and value of a diverse campus and help guide students as they seek to become their best. Lastly, Dr. Ali Dagnes demonstrates well, notably through her newest book but also in her deep engagement with students and the public, how our faculty continue to work on the cutting edge of their disciplines and bring the best of themselves to our campus, students, and community.

James H. Mike, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

SU Foundation Volunteers

Shippensburg University Foundation

Shippensburg University
FOUNDATION
Nurturing Excellence

Volunteers are an integral part of the Shippensburg University Foundation. Whether an alumnus, parent, or friend, loyal and dedicated volunteers provide advice, support, guidance, and hands-on assistance with different projects. Whatever your experience or field of interest, there are opportunities for you to help.

Making a monetary gift is one way you can have an impact on the work that is done at the SU Foundation. Your gift benefits the students at Shippensburg University and helps to nurture excellence by advancing the university's mission of teaching, research, and community service.

You also can help with your gift of time. The CAS Advisory Board and Advisory Councils for Comm/Journ, Computer Science, Geo/Earth Science, and the Fashion Archives and Museum are critical to the ongoing success of each of their respective areas. These boards and councils are made up of volunteers who attend two meetings per year to advise the dean, the department chairs, and students on current trends and needed skills in the marketplace.

The SU Foundation relies heavily on volunteers to help with annual fund and special event mailings. Volunteers have fun and joke around with other alumni and friends while stuffing envelopes. During our spring Thankathon, volunteers call donors to thank them for their support of the SU Foundation. As classes approach their 35th, 40th, 45th, and 50th reunions, committee members assist the SU Foundation with fundraising efforts for their Class Reunion Gift project.

The SU Foundation treasures volunteers; they are a precious commodity. Through you, we help advance the university's mission. We provide essential support so Ship can open its doors to more students, broaden its academic programming, expand critical research, and engage the region in powerful new partnerships.

Providing a scholarship or an internship at your place of business also is a valuable way to support the students at Ship by giving them industry experiences that will foster their growth as individuals in their field.

If you would like to make a gift of your time, treasure, or talent, or want to learn more about how you can help, e-mail contactus@sufoundation.org or call (717) 477-1377.

There also are opportunities to volunteer with the Alumni Association to recruit students and answer questions from our confirmed students. Sending congratulatory notes to newly accepted students adds a personal touch from a non-admissions Ship Family member. Many alumni have held small, informal receptions in their homes to welcome confirmed students and parents by sharing the Ship experience.

By mentoring a current student, you help to build confidence, provide meaningful feedback from a professional in their field of study, prepare them for life after college, and build relationships that can last a lifetime. You can contact the Alumni Office at ship.edu/alumni.

sufoundation.org

Faculty Focus

HUMAN COMMUNICATION PROFESSOR PROMOTES MULTICULTURALISM

Diversity and inclusion are two things that have been Dr. Sharnine Herbert's personal mission at Shippensburg University. Herbert, the Frederick Douglass Institute coordinator and associate professor of human communications, strives to contribute to this mission both academically and professionally.

"Nowadays, you look around and there are so many diversity inclusion programs. But when the program first started out, there weren't many, especially not at the university," she said.

She became the coordinator of the Frederick Douglass Institute around nine years ago when the former provost and social equity director decided they wanted to be part of the institute collaborative and offer the program to Shippensburg University students.

Before its start, she was responsible for researching the institute and interviewing former fellows of the program throughout Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

"The Frederick Douglass Institute was specifically designed to bridge both the academic and student affairs experience." The program now has two 'wings'—undergraduate scholars and teaching fellows. According to Herbert, the undergraduate



wing is designed to move the conversations, like Frederick Douglass.

"In my classes that focus on diversity, inclusion, and culture, we have very informative discussions, then they stop there." That is why she enjoys being part of the institute, because it carries the conversations outside of the classroom. The undergraduate scholars also have a debate society component; the goal is to increase student engagement with contemporary issues of both

national and international concern. They typically compete in one or two debates a year with two to three teams each.

The fellowship side of the institute offers teaching opportunities to graduate students who are pursuing careers as university faculty and entering their final year of their degree/doctoral program.

"It's different than a lot of fellowships out there," Herbert said. "It gives fellows the opportunity to teach."

In addition to helping fellows with their career and degree programs, it helps the university by creating a more diverse, well-rounded faculty for students.

"Diverse voices make a university, and make all students thrive."

Professor Publishes Third Book

Dr. Alison Dagnes Covers the Polarization of American Politics

It all began when Dr. Alison Dagnes, political science professor, was asked to write a chapter of a book on cable news. While she had previously studied political media, when asked to contribute, she was unenthused, for she thought there was nothing new on the topic.

“But after I began my research on the topic I thought, wow, there is so much new here.”

That is what led her to write her third solo authored book, *Super Mad at Everything All the Time: The Political Media and Our National Anger*, which was published in March 2019.

The direction of the book began to take shape when she asked the department chair for a dry erase board after returning to working following a secondary surgery as a result of cancer.

“I think he would have given me anything I asked for at that time just so I would hobble out of his office and sit down,” Dagnes chuckled.

The book changed 100 times as she interviewed over thirty journalists,

producers, reporters, and those working in the political field to get a grasp on what is happening and what has changed.

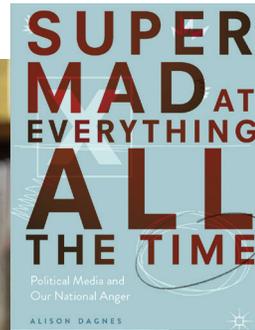
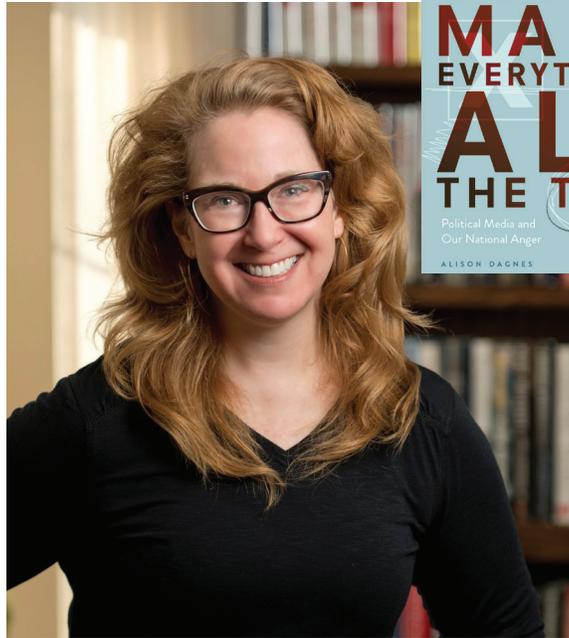
system where there are two different truths,” she explained. “And that is very harmful, dangerous, and petrifying to democracy all at the same time.”

While she enjoys writing, she loves teaching about American politics because she loves the government. “I love what it does. I love the way it survives. I love the way it can maneuver, and I love that it can change when it is compelled to.”

She also has a love for the students at Shippensburg University.

“When the light bulb does go on over the heads of students, there is nothing as satisfying,” Dagnes said, “and SU students do this beautifully.”

Although educating students on political science is harder now than it was before, her new book explores the polarization of American politics and offers suggestions on how to restore national dialogue while defending our right to disagree agreeably.



She mapped it out on her dry erase board, which covered the entire length of her office wall.

“We are operating right now in a

ADVISORY BOARD *Profile* ROBERT AMES '72-'76

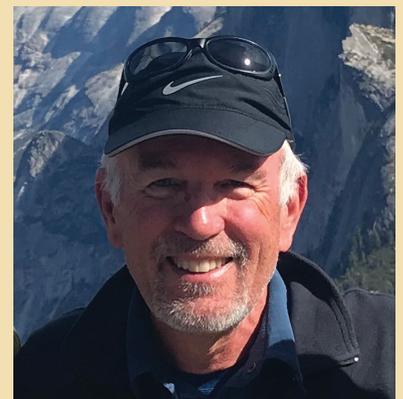
“The impact that one of my professors had on myself as a student is huge,” Robert Ames said. It is that very reason that Ames is a member of the advisory board. “I am happy to do anything I can to help other students here have the same opportunities I had.”

While Ames was a dedicated biology major at Shippensburg University, he had no idea what he was going to do after graduation. It was not until working with Dr. Gordon Laidlaw Kirkland, an associate professor and mammologist at the time, that Ames found a purpose behind his major.

“I would say my experience at Shippensburg and my experience working with Dr. Kirkland opened my eyes to

science outside the classroom,” Ames said.

Between his junior and senior year at Ship, Ames had the opportunity to work with Kirkland alongside another student and two graduate students in a West Virginia national forest for six weeks. He spent his summer



Applying Research Skills Outside the Classroom

Communication/Journalism Partners with South Mountain

In the spring 2019 semester, the accredited Communication/Journalism Department began fueling student research when partnering with South Mountain Partnership (SMP).

Launched in 2006, the SMP operates as a public-private partnership between DCNR and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Today, it has grown into an alliance of citizens, businesses, nonprofits, academic institutions, and local, state, and federal government agencies and officials collaborating to envision and secure a sustainable future for the South Mountain landscape.

In the department, three professors are working with students in their classes to provide SMP with campaigns revolving around the goals in their strategic communication plan, feature stories, and video coverage of their annual Power of the Partnership celebration breakfast.

Dr. Carrie Sipes, department chair and PR research and campaigns professor, has the eleven students in her class developing strategies, objectives, and tactics to meet the goals in SMP's strategic plan. While working in groups, Sipes said most of the student teams are focusing on raising awareness and developing programs that meet the needs of specific SMP key audiences including college students, Baby Boomers, and families with children.

"This kind of project is a high-impact practice," Sipes said. "It enables students to develop deliverables like social media content, other design pieces for promotional purposes, landing pages for the campaign, app suggestions, and blog posts."

Not only does the partnership give students specific accomplishments to discuss during interviews, but also provides SMP with a variety of professional content.

In the department's feature writing course, Professor Stephanie Witmer has students writing feature stories on business and tourism topics related to the partnership. Witmer explained that the stories can be used by SMP at its disposal either on its social media pages or its website.

"People don't necessarily view journalism as a research-heavy field when, in fact, that's what we spend most of our time doing" said Witmer, who believes each communication/journalism class has a strong research component.

"The research we do in this department is different than in a lab," Witmer explained. "It involves observational research, such as

trapping small mammals, determining the types of mammals and their population size in the area.

"He was very influential," said Ames, who valued his professor's dedication to teamwork and inclusiveness.

Ames stated that his professor always wanted to get students working together and had no reservations about getting young women into the science field at a time when some universities prohibited this practice.

Ames also said that because of the lessons he learned from Kirkland, he was motivated to have a career in the biology field after graduation, despite having a job lined up from a family connection.

reporting, as well as secondary research involving data and studies."

According to Sipes, research is the foundation of the journalism process.

Outside of the research component, students in the department's multimedia journalism course are providing video coverage from SMP's events, highlighting the excitement that the partnership's local cultural, agricultural, historic, and recreational organizations have.

**"WORKING ON RESEARCH
PROJECTS IN COLLEGE PREPARES
STUDENTS FOR THE INDUSTRY
AND HELPS DEVELOP A CURIOSITY
THAT ENCOURAGES**

lifelong learning."

The Communication/Journalism Department hopes to use this semester's partnership with SMP as a blueprint to get classes working with outside organizations.

Witmer said that while the research component of journalism expands across curriculums in the three concentrations (online and print media, electronic media, and public relations), giving students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a practical setting further prepares them for graduation.

In regards to the SMP, Sipes said "students get to practice problem solving, while developing a deeper understanding of the environment, landscape, and cultural assets of the region. They also develop additional teamwork skills and the ability to critically address a problem/issue, in which they can create solutions that are mindful of budget, timeframe, and staffing."

Overall, Witmer said that she is excited to have this opportunity with SMP and hopes to grow the collaboration in the coming semesters.

"Because of my experiences with Dr. Kirkland, I have a real fondness for the university, and my time here is something I treasure," Ames said. "It's absolutely clear that professors here care about their students, and I like to support that."

Despite his distance with the university after graduation, Ames was able to reconnect with Kirkland prior to his passing in 1999.

He later brought his outdoor knowledge to the Boy Scouts of America, after working in the scientific field for thirty-seven years.

SFRE Grant Funds Student Research

Behind the Development of the History of Science Course

Senior Amelia Rhoads found the perfect research opportunity at Shippensburg University that required her to use her knowledge from both her biology major and history minor.

Rhoads worked alongside Dr. Christine Senecal, a professor in the History/Philosophy Department at Shippensburg University, to develop a History of Science course with the funds she received from a SFRE grant, which supports student research.

After Senecal had chosen a general scope of history to cover in relationship to scientific achievements, she and Rhoads

bounced ideas off of each other about curriculum and readings for the class. To further their knowledge of science and its relationship with history, the two visited the Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia in Center City.

“The idea of the course itself interests me from various angles in that it provides perspective, which is something we all need,” Rhoads said. “When people think history, they think war, presidents, and people building ancient structures. They don’t normally think of science.”

To Senecal, the development of the course was all about the

research it required of her assistant.

“I applied for the SFRE grant because my student wanted to go into the field of medical history,” Senecal said. “Incorporating her into my process of thinking about the history of science enabled me to give her some research skills in constructing the course.”

Senecal conceived the idea of the history of science course not by looking at the details of famous scientist or inventions, but by considering the following: “How does one’s cultural/social/political background impact the way they understand how the physical world operates.”

Senecal reached out to Rhoads about being an undergraduate assistant in the development of the course simply because of the relationship they developed through a previous history class.

“I think that is something that Shippensburg has taught me; don’t just to reach out to professors and form connections, but talk to them as people,” Rhoads said. “Just having conversations can be the best way to get the ball rolling or learn something new. That’s what happened to me.”

Student Spotlight: AVEN BITTINGER

Pittsburgh native Aven Bittinger, a senior political science major with a history minor, is an active member of the Shippensburg University community.

Aven is a full-time resident assistant (RA) at McLean Hall. In this role, he discovered the need to relay the information and concerns of students living on campus to Shippensburg University’s student government.

“I ran for SGA president after my first year in SGA because I saw the potential we as a group had,” Bittinger said.

While SGA has a phenomenal connection to the Shippensburg University staff, according to Bittinger, its connection to the students it represents is lacking. This motivated him to redefine what SGA meant to the university by engaging students in a new way.

In addition, Bittinger is the newest member of Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education’s Board of Governors. Appointed by Governor Tom Wolf, Bittinger will help establish the broad educational, fiscal, and personnel policies of all the PASSHE schools, including Shippensburg University. He is one of three student representatives of the board.

With his academic contributions, in addition to his leadership roles both on and off campus, Bittinger is committed to helping his fellow students be the best they can be.

“Many of my peers focus more on the short-term happiness that college can present,” he said, “but I believe a well-rounded student understands that long-term happiness is achieved through hard work now with sacrifices being made for their betterment.”



And with this theory in mind, he is hopeful for the future as he awaits graduation in May 2020. Post-graduation he plans to go on to a political science related graduate program.

Spreading Frederick Douglass' Message

The Fredrick Douglass Institute Brings Diversity to SU's Teaching Staff

The Fredrick Douglass Institute at Shippensburg University consists of two components: undergraduate scholars and teaching fellows. As the university's Frederick Douglass coordinator Dr. Sharnine Herbert, associate professor of human communication studies, is responsible for recruiting the institutes' scholars and fellows. She said the Fredrick Douglass Institute's fellowship program is set apart from a lot of different fellowships because of its teaching component.

The yearlong fellowship brings diverse perspectives to the university either through the fellows' research or through their cultural experience or heritage.

"Although fellows lend their particular areas of experience to the SU campus through their teaching," Herbert said, "we want them to really become a part of the community."

Ashley Lewis, a current teaching fellow, choose Ship out of all Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education schools because of her desire to see a more diverse campus during her time at SU as an undergraduate majoring in human communication studies.

"Just having the opportunity to be the representation I wanted to see when I was here as a student, in addition to already being familiar with the campus, human communication department, and faculty is why SU was a priority to me," Lewis said.

Lewis graduated from Ship in 2009. She later ventured to Howard University in Washington, DC, to earn an MA in mass communication/media studies and her doctoral degree.

While she is a seasoned teacher— she taught human communication at Howard University for eight years—, she enjoys her teaching fellowship and her impact on the students in her classroom at Ship. "I think the Fredrick Douglass Institute is important because it helps to bring in the diversity I believe the university and the Shippensburg community so desperately need," Lewis said.

Despite challenging opinions on the matter, Lewis feels there are a lot of barriers that still exists when it comes to people of color.

"I THINK THE FREDRICK DOUGLASS INSTITUTE GIVES UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS THE *opportunity* TO connect WITH MENTORS WHO CAN SHOW THEM THE ROPES."



Dash Rhodes (left) and Ashley Lewis (right) are this year's two Fredrick Douglass Institute teaching fellows. Dr. Sharnine Herbert (center) serves as the coordinator for the institute.

She also feels that teaching fellows can share information on what to expect once you enter the work force.

Dasha Rhodes, a doctoral fellow of the Fredrick Douglass Institute at SU, feels the institute is important for representation. "I think it's important to bring a fresh lens of people who are of diverse populations to traditional institutions in order to challenge discussions that occur in classrooms and bring a new perspective that people might not have initially considered."

Rhodes, a Texas native, teaches micro/mezzo practice for two graduate students in the social work department at SU. Prior to her fellowship at the university, she obtained a bachelor's degree in social work from Stephen F. Austin State University in 2012, and later earned her master's in social work from the University of Houston.

Alongside her fellowship at SU, she is a PhD student at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. While teaching is something new to her, she has enjoyed her experience, seeing students challenge each other in the classroom.

Lewis and Rhodes are Shippensburg University's two current Fredrick Douglass Institute teaching fellows.





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Help us save



one of these!

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CAS *advisory board*

The College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Board is composed of alumni, friends of Shippensburg University, and faculty emeriti of the college. Its purpose is to share professional and personal perspective on matters relating to academic philosophy and practice, internships and cooperative learning opportunities, and professional development for faculty; to provide financial assistance; and to become involved in the curricular and extracurricular programs of the college. With thanks, we recognize the current members of the board:

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