Alumni Address Class of 2011

Nearly 1,200 Grads Receive Degrees May 6

Inspiration and advice from three distinguished alumni highlighted Cal U's 172nd Commencement.

President Angelo Armenti, Jr. conferred degrees on nearly 1,200 associate, bachelor's and master's degree candidates, including students whose diplomas were awarded in absentia.

"I invite you to return often and to keep in touch with us," President Armenti said.

"Be sure to let us know about your life after you leave here. Please know that California University of Pennsylvania is extremely proud of you and your accomplishments."

Daryl Zupan '77 addressed the master's degree candidates May 6 in Hamer Hall, and Raymond Milchovich '71 delivered remarks May 7 at the undergraduate event, which was held outdoors at Adamson Stadium for the second consecutive year.

Before the undergraduates received their diplomas, Provost Geraldine Jones introduced Charles S. Pryor '73, who was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

Senior Gift

Before students received their diplomas, graduating senior Taylor Williams, chair of the Senior Gift Drive Committee, presented President Armenti with a check for more than $6,700 contributed by seniors and their families.

In recognition of their generosity, President Armenti and First Lady Barbara Armenti contributed $1 for each family donation to the Senior Gift Drive.

To date, more than $14,000 has been raised for an initiative, President's Commission for the Status of Women, which was established in 1990.

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In recognition of their generosity, President Armenti and First Lady Barbara Armenti contributed $1 for each student donor and $2 for each family donation to the Senior Gift Drive.

To date, more than $14,000 has been raised for an endowed scholarship since this Cal U for Life initiative began with the first senior class donation at the spring 2010 Commencement.

Graduating seniors who donated to the 2011 gift drive wore red tassels affixed to their caps.

"Those of us who worked on the senior class gift drive embrace Cal U for Life, which is an important initiative," Williams said.

"Even though we were not exposed to Cal U for Life as the incoming freshman are now, we take seriously the lifelong relationship we want to have with our alma mater."

Commission Honors Outstanding Young Women

The President's Commission for the Status of Women presented awards to two outstanding students during a luncheon May 4 in Kara Alumni House.

Graduate student Katie Mercadante and undergraduate Amanda Smith were recognized at the spring 2011 Woman of the Year event.

The awards are given each semester by the commission, which was established in 1990.

President Angelo Armenti, Jr. and Provost Geraldine Jones were among those at the luncheon to congratulate the honorees.

This is the second Woman of the Year honor for Mercadante, who received the undergraduate award in fall 2009. She has earned three degrees in six years: a bachelor's degree in earth science with a concentration in meteorology; a bachelor's in secondary education: earth and space science; and a master's degree in mentally/physically handicapped education.

Mercadante has organized several residence hall programs geared toward women, such as a Think Pink program for breast cancer awareness and Walk a Mile in Her Shoes to help prevent domestic violence. She also writes curriculum for summer

Alumni Weekend, Gala Set June 3-4

California University will honor alumni, recognize faculty and raise funds for student scholarships during the 2011 Alumni Weekend and President's Gala, set for June 3-4.

President Angelo Armenti, Jr. and First Lady Barbara Armenti will host the annual President's Gala, “Puttin on the Ritz,” in the Grand Ballroom of the Omni William Penn Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh.

Proceeds from the fundraiser benefit student scholarships.

The Gala reception begins at 6 p.m. on June 4, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. A silent auction, casino games and dancing also are on the agenda.

During the festivities, President Armenti will honor Mrs. Gwendolyn G. Simmons, winner of the Lillian M. Basit Core Values Award.

Also being honored are faculty members Dr. Christine Patti, of the Department of Educational Administration and Leadership, who will receive the President's Faculty Award for Teaching; Dr. Robert...
construction firm with offices in 25 nations. His advice: Have a plan, be yourself, embrace and stand for failure, and form relationships.

“This is not rocket science, because I do not believe success in life is rocket science,” Milchovich said. “This isn’t complicated. It’s just really, really hard work.”

Milchovich traveled the world during his 40-year career, but he called southwestern Pennsylvania a unique region populated by honest, hard-working and caring people. “You have been raised, nurtured and educated by these people,” he told the graduates. “I don’t know if I could suggest you use that edge to your advantage and begin building the life you always imagined.”

Zupan, who grew up in Charleroi, Pa., is president and CEO for the AFCO and CAFO brands and Prime Rate Premium Finance Co. of BB&T Corp., one of the largest and oldest companies financing property and casualty insurance in North America.

He used the final three letters of Cal U’s website address in his talk, noting that E stands for education, D is for determination and U represents the unexpected. “Don’t forget that address,” said Zupan. “It has served you well up to this point, and it will continue to do so far into the future — particularly if you build on the education you received here, and add for good measure determination and confidence in meeting the unexpected.”

Pryor, the vice president of business development for L.R. Kimball, lauded President Armenti for transforming Cal U into the “flagship for the State System and the envy of the higher education community.”

F

Four Faculty Members Earn Merit Awards

Four Cal U faculty members with different areas of expertise are recipients of the 2011 Faculty Merit Awards. Given by the subcommittees of the Faculty Professional Development Committee (FPDC), the awards recognize Cal U professors who are engaged in exceptional research, committed to teaching, using grants and contracts, devoted to service or exploring cutting-edge technology.

The awards were presented at a luncheon on May 6. Winners are Dr. John Confer (earth sciences) for research; Dr. Cheryl Hettman (nursing) for service and service-learning; Dr. Margo Wilson (English) for technology; and Dr. Carol Bocetti (biological and environmental sciences) for teaching and learning.

Along with wooden plaques, each recipient received a $1,000 award and was recognized at Commencement. The monetary awards can be used for professional activity such as travel, supplies, equipment, books or periodicals, publications, or professional memberships.

“There are many good things going on within the University,” said President Angelo Armenti, Jr., “and I believe the FPDC is the jewel in the crown of California University’s excellence.”

He commended the award winners for their efforts and said they should be proud to be honored by their peers, something that takes hard work and dedication.

Dr. David Argent, of the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, received the Robert A. Vargo Lifetime Achievement Award.

Co-chairs of the FPDC for 2010-2011 were Drs. Ali Sezer and Craig Smith. The Faculty Center coordinator is Dr. Kurt Kearcher.

Community Service, Outstanding Efforts in Communication and Overall Efforts in Chapter Planning. More than 160 collegiate chapters participated in the competition.

SMA president Katy Ostronic and executive vice president Matthew Roos, both of whom graduated this month, gave presentations to the international membership about how to recruit and retain members effectively.

Roos, who was nominated for International Student Marketer of the Year, was the first Cal U student to serve as a student judge for the selection of the Hugh G. Wales International Collegiate Faculty Advisor of the Year Award. Last year, Dr. Shirley Lazorchak was the recipient of this award. Cody Foster has been elected president of the SMA for 2011-2012.

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Staff Recognition Dinner Set

Staff members should mark their calendars for the 30th annual Staff Recognition Dinner on June 10. The event will include dinner, entertainment, and door prizes provided by the Foundation for California University. The President, Trustees and vice presidents look forward to celebrating the work of staff members and recognizing their employment anniversaries.

Staff members should reserve their seats now for what promises to be a memorable evening.

Student Marketers

The Student Marketing Association at Cal U won three awards at the 33rd annual American Marketing Association International Collegiate Conference, held recently in New Orleans, La. The chapter won Outstanding Efforts in...
GIS Students Help Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Free students in Tom Mueller’s Environmental Applications of GIS class, the spring semester literally was a walk in the park. Along with their coursework, the students divided into six groups and worked on geographic information systems projects for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

After Mueller and his colleague Dr. John Conifer arranged the work with the Conservancy, senior restoration ecologist Erin Copeland visited the class, presented data and suggested a few project ideas.

The students then devised their own projects. They used equipment at Cal U’s GIS Laboratory, visited the parks and looked at spatial data to analyze their information. Then they created detailed posters and presented their results to members of the Parks Conservancy at Riverview Park.

“Their projects covered everything from the slopes of recreational trails to what soils were good for planting trees to demographic analysis of the populations around the parks to crime mapping,” Mueller said.

Grant Eaton, a junior GIS major, headed a group that used ArcInfo and ESRI software to relate crime data to weather. They analyzed crime patterns in certain areas, looking at times of the year when crime rates were higher or lower.

“Using the equipment for this project was really helpful and a good experience,” Eaton said. “After our presentations we also received excellent feedback from the people at the Parks Conservancy.”

Vicki Dulnikowski’s group conducted a demographic analysis of all four major parks in Pittsburgh — Frick, Highland, Riverview and Schenley.

“We focused on what should be brought to the parks and taken away,” she said. “Our emphasis was more on attracting youths to the parks, because they will return to the parks for the rest of their lives and later bring their families.”

Her group’s findings suggested that elementary school children could get involved by designing tiles and creating mosaics to enhance the parks’ appearance. The group also cited a need for basketball courts at Riverview Park.

Another project, led by student Fred Smith, analyzed the parks’ wooded areas and found that Schenley Park had a 160 percent gain in woodland.

“We thoroughly used the time and work the students put into the GIS analysis, map creation and presentations,” Copeland said. “There were many things our students did.”

Mueller consulted with Drs. Tom Wickham and Harrison Pinckney before and during the process. He said he was impressed with the diversity of the projects students devised.

“These projects really gave our students a real-world experience,” he said. “They had to deal with real data, real questions and real methodology on how to solve those problems, and then analyze the data they received. This was a complete project, and I am proud of them and pleased with their results.”

Cal U’s relationship with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is apparently just beginning. Copeland said the Conservancy looks forward to future collaboration with the University to conduct projects such as a spectral analysis of sections of Highland Park, plus mapping and data creation, editing and analysis.

“It is very exciting to us that every semester we have access to classes, interns or work-study projects that will help us with our GIS needs,” she said.

Alumni Weekend, Gala Set

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Whyte, of the Biological and Environmental Sciences Department, who will receive the President’s Faculty Award for Research; and Dr. Ralph Belsterling, of the Research; and Dr. Ralph Department, who will receive the Environmental Sciences Whyte, of the Biological and environmental Sciences

Young Women Honored

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camp programs at the Carnegie Science Center and volunteers at Old Economy Village in Ambridge, Pa. Mercadante, who graduated May 6, has accepted a position as assistant director of residence life at Gannon University in Erie, Pa. Smith graduated May 7 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a minor in women’s studies. She completed an internship with the Women’s Studies program at Cal U in spring 2010.

Smith’s outstanding contributions as an intern and then a work-study student were particularly evident while Dr. Marta McClintock-Comeaux was on maternity leave this semester. Smith was one of the keys to the success of the recent Audrey-Beth Fitch Women’s Studies Conference.

A member of Pi Gamma Mu honor society, Smith worked with other undergraduate students to start Social Justice Activism Now — So Just Act Now. She is a member of the women’s hockey team and was named its most valuable player during the final game of the season.

Also at the luncheon, Dr. Lisa McBride was announced as president of the President’s Commission for the Status of Women. She had been serving as interim president. Rhonda Gifford will be vice president of the organization. She served
Six ROTC Cadets Commissioned as Officers

Leadership principles took center stage when six ROTC cadets were commissioned as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army at a ceremony May 4 in Steele Hall Mainstage Theatre.

Cal U cadets Zachary Drysdale, Joseph Hummel, Konrad Kearcher, Nicholas Messina and David Schott Jr. received the gold bars signifying their new rank at the Department of Military Science’s Reserve Officer Training Corps commissioning ceremony.

They were joined by cadet James Cooper, who attends the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg.

Before taking the oath of office, the cadets heard words of advice from Dr. Michael Hummel, director of the Linda and Harry Serene Leadership Institute at Cal U and a retired Army officer with more than 23 years of military service.

“Leading and learning are lifelong obligations,” said Hummel, whose son was among those being commissioned.

“Hold people to a tough and high standard, and yourself to an even tougher and higher standard.”

The six new officers have different military assignments. Drysdale will serve in the Field Artillery, and the younger Hummel will receive a National Guard commission into the infantry. Kearcher, who received an educational delay, will attend law school in the fall. Messina will enter the Army Corps of Engineers. Schott, recognized as a Distinguished Military Graduate, will enter the Military Intelligence Corps. Cooper also will be assigned to military intelligence.

After completing his address, the elder Hummel pinned a gold bar to a cadet’s uniform. Following Army tradition, each newly minted second lieutenant exchanged for his first salute.

Dr. Charles Mance — also an MMVASHOF inductee — for Michael Duda — also a Distinguished Service Award recipient for success in academics and ultimately to parallel that with athletics. During his nearly 30 years as an athletic director, Zolak also helped with the successful merger of the Monongahela and Donora campuses into the unified Ringgold High School in 1979.

Zolak credits Cal U and the late President Emeritus Dr. Michael Duda — also an MMVASHOF inductee — for instilling in him the importance of academics. During his initial meeting with Duda, Zolak recalled, the college president challenged him to make the dean’s list.

“He was instrumental in me developing a desire to strive for success in academics and ultimately to parallel that with athletics,” Zolak said. “I was so proud when I was able to report to him that I had made the dean’s list.”

Zolak said that Dr. Duda and California made him look at academics and athletics as partners in excellence.

“This is a motto I took with me to the Ringgold and Bethel Park school districts,” he said. “I tried to use this motto to the best of my ability with the student-athletes.”

At Cal U, Zolak received the Alumni Association’s Michael Duda Award for Athletic Achievement in 2005.

This year’s Mon Valley Hall of Fame banquet will be held at 5:30 p.m. June 17 in the Willow Room, Rostraver Township. The other inductees are the late Willie Ross, Charles Ahlborn, John Hostetler, Charles “Yogi” Jones, Don Law and Michael Moorer.