

# Possibility in Action at the Dietrich School and CGS

2023-24



## The Next Generation of Difference Makers

More than ever, undergraduate and graduate students at the Dietrich School and College of General Studies want to be change agents. They are moved and motivated to make the world a better, more equitable place. And they want an education that prepares them for success across the breadth of their careers, not just for the duration of a single job.

Our students come to us with high expectations that inspire us to be future-oriented and constantly innovating. That means developing new majors, minors, certificates, and courses that address the challenges of today and anticipate the big questions of tomorrow.

This year, we created new undergraduate academic opportunities in our Departments of Economics, Geology and Environmental Science, and Linguistics. We also launched the inaugural Hot Metal Bridge (HMB) Summer institute to onboard predoctoral fellows from groups traditionally underrepresented in their

academic disciplines, including first-generation graduate students and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Among the wide variety of new courses that debuted over the past year are, "Oral History/Oral Tradition in Archeology," "Stage Combat," and "Technology in Asia."

Our students drive excellence beyond the classroom as well, and this year, we partnered with the University Center for International Studies (UCIS) to create a new shared position, Director of Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences' Global Experiences. The new director is charged with increasing our undergraduate

students' participation in international academic and experiential learning opportunities.

Graduate students were invited to increase their AI literacy through the Dietrich Graduate AI Innovation and Networking Series (GAINS), that included workshops, speakers, a bi-weekly newsletter, and a public website for shared resources.

Our students are truly outstanding. But don't take our word for it:

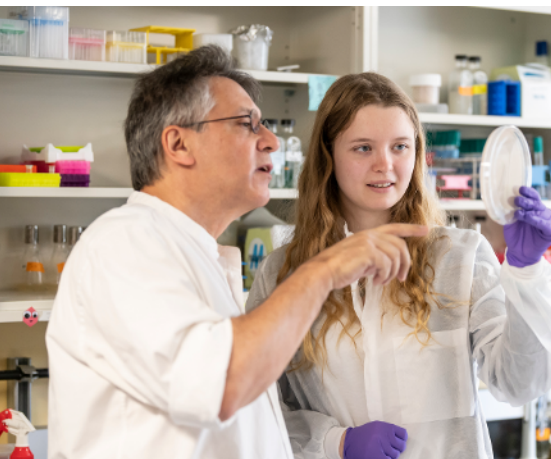
Sixteen Dietrich and CGS undergraduate students earned prestigious awards including a Goldwater Scholarship, Pickering Fellowship, Lionel Pearson Fellowship, Critical Language Scholarship, Voyager Scholarship, and 11 Gilman Scholarships.

Dietrich School graduate students have demonstrated exceptional dedication and scholarly expertise, earning esteemed fellowships such as the Fulbright, Provost's Dissertation Year Fellowship for Historically Underrepresented Doctoral



Karen Gilmer, Teaching Associate Professor, Department of Theatre Arts.

Students, HHMI Gilliam, NSF GRP, Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship, and Whittington Predoctoral Fellowship. These accolades reflect their outstanding academic achievements, innovative research contributions, and commitment to advancing knowledge within their fields.



Graham Hatfull, Eberly Professor of Biotechnology, HHMI Professor, Department of Biological Sciences.

## EVERYONE BELONGS

We're committed to providing an environment where all of our students, faculty, and staff are treated with kindness, empathy, and respect. We welcome diverse perspectives and experiences with the understanding that more voices at the table means more ideas, more possibilities, and more opportunities. And we also know that cultivating this kind of community--where everyone belongs--must be a choice. Something that we prioritize every day. This year, we revamped and relaunched our faculty and staff diversity committees and continued to expand our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training opportunities. In December 2023, we graduated our first co-cohort of faculty and staff from our DEI 2.0 program in which participants worked with two partner organizations to support underrepresented communities.



# SURPASSING LIMITS

Dietrich School faculty across all of our disciplines engage in ground-breaking research that pushes the boundaries of the known and the knowable. From the ethics of AI to the evolution of galaxies, our faculty members are pursuing questions and answers that will improve lives, expand knowledge, and provide real-world research opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students.

Research expenditures in Dietrich have increased by 36% over the last 10 years. These funds are critical, enabling faculty to conduct research in their areas of expertise, purchase specialized equipment, and hire research assistants—including undergraduate and graduate students.

In FY2024 alone, the Dietrich School has received more than 140 externally-funded awards. Twenty-one awards exceeded \$1 million, including a \$4.2 million award to Associate Professor Kirill Kyselyov from our Department of Biological Sciences, one of many faculty pursuing research into Alzheimer's Disease.

But not all research happens in the natural sciences. Associate Professor Olga Kuchinskaya from the Department of Communications received a grant to study the role of technology in sociopolitical movements, and Assistant Professor Dela Kuma from the Department of Anthropology was awarded funding from the National Geographic Society and the American Council on Learned Societies for her work exploring regional and global trade networks in Western Africa over the last 200 years.



Dela Kuma, assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology.



## Adam K. Leibovich, PhD

BETTYE J. AND RALPH E. BAILEY DEAN  
KENNETH P. DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES

When I began my Deanship on July 1, 2023, my goals for the Dietrich School and the College of General Studies (CGS) were clear. Support our faculty's research and teaching and encourage scholarly innovation and creativity. Offer our staff the ability to continually grow and develop as professionals. Be a touchstone for alumni—a home they can always return to, be proud of, and remain involved in. And provide our students the opportunities, mentoring, and resources to reach their full potential.

The past 14 months have been gratifying and humbling. During a listening tour of our 30 academic departments last fall, I learned about out-of-the-box efforts to prepare our students for success beyond the classroom. At our Spring All Staff Meeting I met new hires excited to bring their skills and experience to our team. While delivering the welcome at our graduate commencement ceremony, I had a front row seat to the dynamic group of thinkers and do-ers who will respond to their generation's most complex challenges. Every day I discover new sources of inspiration and motivation—in the pages that follow, I'd like to share some of them with you.

We put together this report to offer you a glimpse of what I'm fortunate enough to witness every day: possibilities in action across every department, program, and initiative. Keep reading to meet some of the people who make the Dietrich School and CGS extraordinary. And stay in touch with all our news by [visiting our website](#) and following us on [social media](#).

## ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



### Brett Murphy (A&S '13)

Brett was part of a team of ProPublica journalists who won the 2024 Pulitzer Prize in the public service category of journalism for their investigative series on how billionaire donors courted the favor of Supreme Court justices.



### Brandon Som (A&S '02G)

Brandon earned the 2024 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for "Tripas," a collection of poems about his multicultural, multigenerational childhood home.



### Lily M. Ng, PhD (A&S '85G)

Professor Emeritus of Cleveland State University and past Chair of the Chemistry Department. Dietrich School Distinguished Professional Achievement Award.



### Mark Pastin (A&S '70)

Founder and President of the Council of Ethical Organizations. Author, professor, and ethicist. Dietrich School Distinguished Alumni Award.

## PROVIDING HOLISTIC SUPPORT

We are a community of learners. We encourage each others' successes, we celebrate each others' achievements, and we care about each others' well being. We want to be a destination workplace for our faculty and staff and a safe, collaborative scholarly home for our students.

Over the past several months, we've made some exciting changes aimed at providing more holistic and comprehensive support to all members of the Dietrich School and CGS community, including:

- ▶ Introduced an embedded therapist dedicated to supporting graduate students in the Dietrich School, who will provide counseling services as well as mental health and wellness programming.
- ▶ Piloted a staff ally program to support new staff joining the Dietrich School and CGS.
- ▶ Provided funds for staff and faculty to promote community building and foster belonging.
- ▶ Launched monthly Dean's Office Hours, open to all Dietrich School and CGS faculty, staff, and students.

In 2024-25 we intend to build on this progress with the rollout of a new Ombuds Office that will serve faculty, staff, and graduate students, and an increased focus on developing more online courses and academic programs to make a Pitt degree more accessible for part-time and nontraditional students.

## INVESTING IN INNOVATORS

The best answers to complex issues rarely come in tidy packages. More often than not, the big challenges we face at our school, the University, and in life require responses that cross boundaries of every kind.

The Dietrich Innovation Initiative (DI<sup>2</sup>), rolled out in Spring 2024, seeks to address our toughest questions by

welcoming and supporting the most creative, paradigm-shifting, big-picture ideas. Faculty and staff at the Dietrich School and CGS are invited to submit proposals that offer unique and exciting opportunities in the areas of curricular development, outreach, research, and student services. Awards will be announced in

late Fall 2024 and we're excited to announce our first co-hort of innovators.

Learn more about this effort by visiting our website.