University News

• This year, Penn State welcomed approx. 17,000 new students: 8,565 at University Park (up 2.2% from 2013); 8,488 at Commonwealth Campuses (up 4.6% from 2013). This includes 2,185 students starting in the summer, an all-time high for a summer start.
• At World Campus, undergraduate student headcount is up 16% for 2014; graduate students are up 8%.
• The applications window for the 2014-15 year opened on Sept. 1; as of Sept. 14, we have received 3,344 baccalaureate applications.
• *U.S. News & World Report* released its 2015 “Best Colleges” rankings on Sept. 9, with Penn State ranked No. 14 among national public universities, and No. 48 overall among both public and private institutions. Penn State ranked No. 2 among "Best Colleges for Veterans."
• Penn State received its second consecutive national Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education.

Academics and Research

• A new course placement system was introduced for first-year undergraduates and transfer students starting this summer/fall. The ALEKS-McGraw Hill online test allows for adaptive math placement and offers the opportunity for students to access learning modules to strengthen their math skills prior to enrollment. One third of the students in the calculus sequence used the online modules, and 90% of those placed into a course higher than the original placement level, significantly advancing their progress on degree requirements.
• Penn State is a member of the new $678 million Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST) that is now in development. The LSST will provide an unprecedented view of the universe, and will allow investigation of important questions ranging from charting unknown objects in our solar system, to the large-scale structure of the universe, to the mysterious nature of dark energy and dark matter.
• Penn State offered the popular MOOC, “Creativity, Innovation and Change,” in Chinese this summer. Nearly 60,000 registrants representing 189 countries enrolled in this collaborative course.
• World Campus, which has a greater percentage of students with hearing or vision impairments than any other Penn State campus, is nationally recognized as a leader in making online education accessible to students with disabilities.
• PennTAP provided 273 cases of technical assistance to clients across the Commonwealth in 2013, resulting in more than $7.7 million in economic impact and 72 jobs created/retained.
• Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center has received nearly $2 million from the PA Department of Health to facilitate programs focused on healthy eating and exercise in 15 Pennsylvania school districts.
• Mohammad Reza Abidian, professor of biomedical engineering, has received a $1.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health's Institute for Neurological Disorders to help find a solution to the major clinical problem of neural regeneration in central and peripheral nervous systems.

Honors and Awards

• Norris Lacy, the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor Emeritus of French and Medieval Studies, has received the North American Branch of the International Arthurian Society’s Award for Lifetime Service to Arthurian Studies. The award is unique in the history of the society.
• Geoscientists Lee Kump and Chris Marone have been elected as Fellows of the American Geophysical Union.
• Long-Qing Chen, distinguished professor of materials science and engineering, and engineering science and mechanics, has received the Materials Research Society's 2014 Materials Theory Award, which recognizes advances to understanding the structure and behavior of materials.
• Karen Thole, head of the Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, has been named the Society of Women Engineers’ 2014 Distinguished Engineering Educator.
• Mark Maroncelli, professor of chemistry, has won the American Chemical Society’s Joel Henry Hildebrand Award in the Theoretical and Experimental Chemistry of Liquids in recognition of his distinguished contributions.
• Miriam Freedman, assistant professor of chemistry, has been honored with a Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award from the National Science Foundation. This is the most prestigious award given by the NSF in support of junior faculty members who exemplify the role of teacher-scholar.

Athletics

• Approx. 20,000 Penn Staters turned out to support the Nittany Lion Football team in the Croke Park Classic in Ireland; with more than 10,000 packing the streets for the Pep Rally.
• Students are ready for HOCKEY! The 1,000 allotment of student section “Roar Zone” tickets for the men’s ice hockey games sold out in three minutes.
• Penn State Dominates! Last weekend, both men’s and women’s cross country teams claimed titles at the 2014 Harry Grove Spiked Shoe Invitational; the football team won the Big Ten opener against Rutgers; the field hockey team dominated Lafayette; both men’s and women’s soccer teams were victorious; and the women’s volleyball team defeated four different opponents to win the Villanova Classic.

Development

• The Arboretum at Penn State dedicated its new Childhood’s Gate Children’s Garden on Sept. 7. Penn State alumni and philanthropists Edward R. and Helen S. Hintz and Charles “Skip” Smith provided the lead gifts to build and endow the Garden. In total, gifts from all donors to support the Garden exceeded $6 million.