



PennState
Abington

PHILANTHROPY

IMPACT REPORT

MAY 2025



PennState
Abington



FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Every day, the work being done at Penn State Abington is made possible through the dedicated support of our entire community: from our faculty fueling the academic excellence of our students, our staff supporting student success at every stage of their journey, to our alumni and volunteers dedicating their time, talents, and treasure to enrich the student experience.

I am pleased to share with you our latest Impact Report which details exciting developments made possible through philanthropy.

This publication offers a glimpse into how recent gifts and engagement are having a profound impact at Penn State Abington, such as new scholarships making the pursuit of a degree more accessible, innovative new programs that strengthen civil discourse, and undergraduate research programs that encourage emerging researchers to pursue their interests across disciplines.

Through their philanthropy and volunteer leadership, alumni and donors are ensuring that our students can embrace every opportunity offered to them through a Penn State education.

I hope you enjoy these stories and find something here that inspires you to connect with Penn State Abington.

Thank you for being a part of our community, our mission, and our future successes.

With gratitude,

Gary Liguori, Ph.D., FACSM

Albert and Suzanne Lord Endowed Chancellor

Penn State Abington

TRUE TEACHER-COACH

CHANGED LIVES THROUGH SPORT

NEW SCHOLARSHIP HONORS BOB BARTON'S LEGACY

When Erin Foley reflects on her days as a Penn State Abington student-athlete, core memories revolve around **Bob Barton**. Measuring the now-retired coach and athletic director's impact on thousands of students is tough, but Erin sums it up neatly: "Bob changed lives through sport. He was a true teacher-coach."

Erin returned to Abington four years ago to serve as the director of Athletics, Recreation and Intramurals, and she proudly carries on the legacy Bob established over a nearly 40-year career.

"When I was a student-athlete, I saw people like Bob who embodied a true caring spirit. He recognized the value of athletics," she said.

Erin's enduring respect for Bob and his legacy is shared by many other former Abington student-athletes, one of whom recently made a gift to establish the Bob Barton Scholarship at Penn State Abington, which supports outstanding full-time Abington undergraduates.

"Bob is a symbol of Abington athletics, and the friendships, education, and opportunities that athletics afforded me. I wanted to thank him by funding this scholarship," the donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, said.

Naming an endowed scholarship in Bob's honor is a powerful way to honor his enduring legacy at Penn State Abington. The newly created scholarship will help deserving students persist toward completing

Erin Foley talks about old times with Bob Barton, her former coach and past athletic director. Foley has followed in Barton's footsteps and now serves as Abington's director of Athletics, Recreation and Intramurals.

A new scholarship from an anonymous donor was recently endowed in Coach Barton's honor.





their degrees and have a lasting effect on the lives of Abington students for years to come.

“Bob made me think about life in a different way. He taught us about hard work, determination, and resilience, which are skills that we would need to be successful in our classes and in our professional and personal lives,” Erin remarked.

Even before Abington joined the NCAA Division III, Bob was instrumental in providing and expanding opportunities for student-athletes.

“When I was an Abington student, kids that came from the area didn’t always have a lot of places to play, and

Bob, the coaches, and everyone in athletics gave us opportunities to play at a competitive level,” she continued.

Erin graduated from Penn State in 2000, and – like Bob – served in a variety of roles in collegiate sports administration. She now – like Bob – leads Abington student-athletes to pursue excellence in the classroom and on the fields, courts, and tracks.

“When I became an athletic trainer after college, I did it because I wanted to give back and work with students. Bob Barton’s Abington is the place where it all started for me,” she said. ♦



PENN STATE ABINGTON

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROFILE

UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

(2023-24)

3,088



ALL STUDENT
AID RECIPIENTS

2,565



STUDENTS
WITH AID

78 %

UNMET NEEDS

AID RECIPIENTS
WITH UNMET NEED*

1,642



**Unmet need is the difference between the total cost of a student's education for one year and the amount of the expected family contribution combined with all sources of student aid funding received (including student and parent loans).*

AVERAGE
UNMET NEED
\$12,829

PHILANTHROPY BY THE NUMBERS

\$31.8M RAISED IN 2017-2024 (FISCAL YEARS)

186% INCREASE OVER PRIOR 8 YEARS

\$33.4M CAMPUS ENDOWMENT (AS OF 3/1/25)

\$18.2M SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

STUDENT BODY SNAPSHOT

% FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS ... **44%**

PA RESIDENTS **71%**

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS **6%**

STUDENT-ATHLETES **8%**

PENN STATE ABINGTON'S DEVELOPMENT & ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICE

To learn more about how you can create your own scholarship or program fund to support Abington students, contact the Development and Alumni Relations office or scan the QR code.



KAREN WEISS JONES

Director of Development
and Alumni Relations

✉ kmw398@psu.edu

☎ 215.881.7399



🌐 Visit www.abington.psu.edu/support to learn more.

DONOR-FUNDED ENDOWED & ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS

NUMBER OF ABINGTON STUDENTS
WITH SCHOLARSHIPS

546

AVERAGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

\$2,148

PERCENT OF ABINGTON STUDENTS
WITH SCHOLARSHIPS

17%

NUMBER OF DONOR-FUNDED
ENDOWED AND ANNUAL
SCHOLARSHIPS

82

TOTAL ABINGTON SCHOLARSHIP
DOLLARS AWARDED*

\$1,173,346

**Funds from Abington's annual and endowed
scholarships awarded to Abington students.*

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF STUDENTS
WITH 3.0+ GPA WHO QUALIFY FOR,
BUT DID NOT RECEIVE, DONOR-
FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS

450



SOLUTIONS LIVE HERE

AMPLIFYING THE IMPACT OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

BIG IDEAS & REAL RESEARCH START WITH ACURA PROJECTS

Ambitious entrepreneurial endeavors, innovations in engineering and technology, and award-winning research into a viable therapeutic alternative to aggressive tumors – no, these aren't National Institute of Health-funded research proposals, they're just a few of the topics Penn State Abington students are exploring as part of the Abington College Undergraduate Research Activities (ACURA) program.

A yearlong collaboration between faculty and students, ACURA empowers students across disciplines to explore their interests through scientific experimentation, inquiry-based research, or creative works.

These projects run the gamut, bringing together a diverse cohort of students from the humanities and

social sciences to STEM-related disciplines. Regardless of their course of study, ACURA students gain a core set of skills, ones that will help them excel in whichever field they pursue.

"It's more than just research skills, it's professionalism," said Yi Yang, associate professor of engineering and computer science and ACURA coordinator.

"Students learn to act as a co-worker. They're collaborating directly with faculty and their peers," he adds. "They have to research, plan, and prepare, all of which are vital skills when it comes to applying knowledge in real world settings."

Fourth-year students Priya Mathiy and Sakshi Sandhir,

University Undergraduate Research Ambassadors and the 2023-24 ACURA winners for the Division of Science and Engineering, couldn't agree more.

"Our classes do a good job at teaching us a little about a lot, but there's an important skill set you miss if you don't have a chance to put it into practice – things like sourcing information, looking through databases, making adjustments in real time," Sandhir said. "All of that experience is incredibly valuable."



● *Fourth-year students Sakshi Sandhir (left) and Priya Mathiy are University Undergraduate Research Ambassadors and the 2023-24 ACURA winners for the Division of Science and Engineering.*



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– Yi Yang, associate professor of engineering and computer science and ACURA coordinator

"I've always been interested in medicine, but after doing my research project I'm specifically interested in translational research," she adds. "Because of ACURA, I know that I want to participate in programs that allow me to translate my research into real patient outcomes. ACURA has helped me define my journey," she continued.

For Mathiy, whose previous research was rooted in the humanities, ACURA was just as much about confirming what she didn't want to do as much as opening her eyes to what she did want to do.

"If you don't go through different doors, you won't know which ones to close," Mathiy says. "I realized the humanities wasn't for me. Through ACURA, I was led down a path to biology, towards our current project," she said.

That project, exploring the therapeutic impact of 4-thiazolidinones in the hopes of establishing a viable therapeutic alternative to more aggressive cancer treatments, has implications that extend far beyond Abington's campus.

This far-reaching impact is what caught the attention of Jim Creighton, a 1981 graduate, whose personal

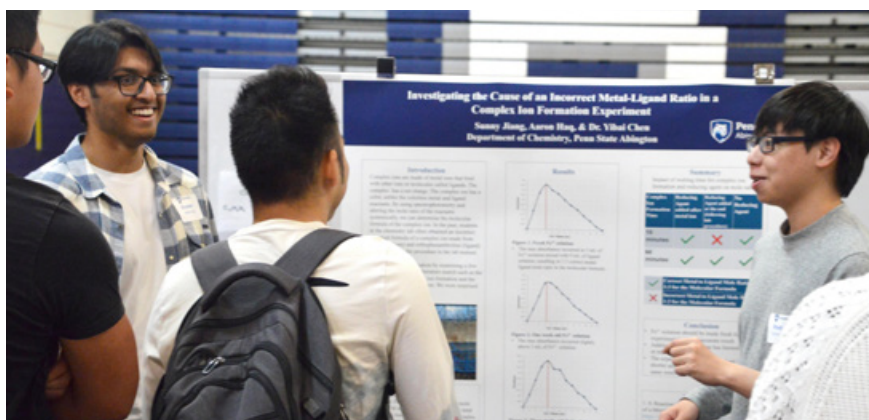
ties to cancer research brought the program to his attention. After learning more about ACURA's scope, scale, and reach, supporting the program was a no-brainer, Creighton said.

"Many people might not realize how expansive research is. It can support a range of student interests," he said. "ACURA supports business students, engineers, social scientists. These students are unbelievably smart, and the work they're doing on campus is going to translate into the real world."

"Just think, if we had more students taking part in programs like ACURA, we could send even more students into their post-graduate endeavors with the most valuable, marketable skills," Creighton added.

As both Sandhir and Mathiy prepare for their next chapters – medical school – both students cannot overstate the impact of the program's influence on their own careers.

"My ultimate goal is to make the medical field more accessible to those around me," Sandhir said. "ACURA has made it abundantly clear that translating ideas into solutions is only possible with great research." ♦



Abington students discuss their projects at the ACURA spring poster competition. This team approach helps students better prepare for the workplace or additional higher education opportunities.

AGREE TO DISAGREE NAVIGATING CIVIL DISCOURSE

BIG IDEAS & BOLD OPINIONS ...WITHOUT JUDGMENT

In a Sutherland Building classroom, students come together twice a week to discuss some of the most controversial and polarizing topics of our times, from Russia's invasion of Ukraine to issues in the Middle East to the 2024 presidential election.

As members of **Penn State Abington's Brandeis Global Engagement and Leadership Fellowship Program**, these students can count on lively discussion, thought-provoking debates, and, surely, a few disagreements.

But there's one more outcome that might be the most surprising, according to one student.

"No matter how passionate our discussions became, there were no contentious feelings," said Kate Amato, a fourth-year student who was a member of last year's inaugural class of Brandeis Fellows. "In fact, every week, we always left class together."

"I found it so helpful to have a place on campus, in an academic setting, where you could express your opinions and ideas without feeling judged," she said. "That's rare."

The program, established through the generosity of Penn State alumni Barry and Renee Brandeis, was created for this very reason. The initiative, now in its second year, is dedicated to fostering civil discourse among undergraduates. The discussion-based curriculum is rooted in the First Amendment's guiding principles with opportunities for students to explore law, policy, leadership, and democratic values through hands-on learning, case studies, and dialogues spanning diverse perspectives.

"We serve a diverse student body with all kinds of perspectives," said Salar Ghahramani, associate professor of business law and international law and policy and academic director for the program.





● ○ *Penn State alumni Renee and Barry Brandeis (center) founded Penn State Abington's Brandeis Global Engagement and Leadership Fellowship Program, which is now in its second year.*

“Our goal is to create an environment where students feel at home, in a setting where they know their thoughts will be valued in a judgment-free zone,” he added.

Despite Ghahramani’s own professional expertise in First Amendment issues, the discussion is entirely student-led. In fact, he modeled the class after Benjamin Franklin’s Junto, a meeting which encouraged discussion and questions of morals, politics, and natural philosophy, and to exchange knowledge of business affairs.

“I believe in the power of conversation and the value of listening and critical thinking skills,” Ghahramani said. “With students from all backgrounds and majors, they can see how someone with a data science background might interpret a particular issue versus someone with a history background, for example.”

“And it’s ok to disagree – as long as we do it civilly,” he said.

“Like many others, we saw a divisiveness in this country, one that meant many students were afraid to express their opinions,” recalled Barry Brandeis. “We wanted to create a safe space where people could offer their opinions and discuss controversial experiences—because that’s how you learn.”

In addition to classroom discussions, the program includes opportunities for students to travel and

participate in networking opportunities and panel discussions. Last year, students visited the World Affairs Council, the Brookings Institution, and Columbia Law School, a vital and necessary component of the program, said Renee Brandeis.

“A program like this isn’t just the discussion – it’s the experience,” she said. “It’s not just debating, it’s getting out in the world and learning from other people and other cultures.”

As the program, for which the Brandeises’ support through endowed and current use funds, continues to grow, they hope others will consider following their lead in sustaining and expanding the program’s impact.

“A program like this has a direct impact on students, but it also has greater implications across campus, and beyond,” said Barry.

“These students – this next generation – they’re the future of our country,” he said. ◆





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PHILANTHROPY

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