Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar was joined by faculty, public officials, business leaders and former engineering alumni to celebrate the official launch of the new engineering program.

“The transition from Engineering Technology to a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering (BSE) is an historic achievement,” said Dr. Spectar. “The transformational initiative has been a centerpiece of campus long-range planning for decades.”

Dr. Spectar said that offering the highly sought-after engineering degree, and adding Chemical Engineering to the program, will enable Pitt-Johnstown to meet the emerging workforce needs of the community, give our students a competitive edge, raise the institutional profile and strengthen student recruitment.

Keynote speaker, Monty Hoffman ’83, credited his Pitt-Johnstown education and the construction skills taught by his dad for providing him the foundation needed to grow his company, PN Hoffman, into one of the leading design-build firms in the Washington D.C. area.

“The ‘new urbanism’ is altering the way we plan and build at ‘breakneck’ speed and the only constant is the ability to think critically with every new challenge,” he explained. “Urbanization commands an entrepreneurial spirit, as it is real estate’s form of ‘market disrupter’ reimagining and transforming whole communities within our lifetime.”

Hoffman, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil/Structural Engineering Technology at Pitt-Johnstown, is listed on Washington’s Smart CEO’s Future 50 list and Washington Business Journal Power 100.

Dr. Spectar was also joined by Sean Isgan ’82, founder of CME Engineering Inc. in Somerset, who shared his journey from Pitt-Johnstown as a civil engineering student to entrepreneur and owner of the engineering firm that assisted with the trapped Quecreek miners. Isgan, who used a technology that was designed to drill an air hole 240 feet into the ground to provide the miners with oxygen, reminded engineering students to think like entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs while offering practical advice such as honing their writing skills.

Pitt-Johnstown Engineering Division Chair, Jerry Samples, Senator John Wozniak, Representative Bryan Barbin, and Mark Pasquerilla, CEO of Crown Enterprises also participated in the program.

We are excited to report that a new major in Multimedia and Digital Culture has received final approval effective spring 2016 semester. The new major aims to provide students with the necessary skills to communicate in a digital culture, to understand how technology affects both communicator and audience, and to make the most effective and creative choices with the latest innovations in digital technology.

The interdisciplinary major will attract students who wish to pursue careers that require strong communication skills, and students will gain experience with latest digital tools, which will prepare them to compete for the newest jobs. The new major builds on our strengths in the traditional humanities fields, and adds the tools and technologies of the digital world. Its approval during the University’s “Year of the Humanities” has a special significance. We are very proud of the faculty in Humanities who led the charge to establish the new major and are grateful to all the faculty who contributed to this accomplishment.
Upcoming Events

December 12
Fall Final Exams Begin

Women's Basketball vs. St. Francis University

JSO Concert featuring Joshua Zona

December 13
Christmas Brasstacular

December 15
Women's Basketball vs. Univ. of Charleston
A Carpenters Christmas

Idea PITTch

December 17
Idea PITTch

December 18
Fall Term Ends

Mountain Cat Tournament

December 19
Winter Recess Begins

Mountain Cat Tournament

January 5
Spring Term Residence Halls Open

January 6
Spring Term 2016 Begins

Basketball Doubleheader vs. Shippensburg

January 9
Basketball Doubleheader vs. Shippensburg

January 13
Basketball Doubleheader vs. IUP

January 14
Senior Kick-off

The Investment Airing at 8:00 p.m. on WPSU

January 22
Wrestling vs. Gannon

January 27
Romeo & Juliet Russian Ballet

January 29
Wrestling vs. Wheeling Jesuit University

January 30
Basketball Doubleheader vs. Seton Hill University

Pitt-Johnstown Students Create New Businesses, Win Investments

Several Pitt-Johnstown students recently filed paperwork to create new businesses in Pennsylvania and convinced investors to ‘bite’ on their ideas in a shark tank-style competition held November 15 in State College.

Pitt-Johnstown engineering students Dustin Hallenbeck, Luke Shroyer, and Dan Janczewski, the brains behind Brake Safe, impressed judges with a pitch to provide motorcyclists with a portable safety light that illuminates with a change in speed. They were awarded $7,500 to help support their newly formed business.

Brake Safe competed against startup teams from Penn State and Bucknell for $30,000 in investment funds awarded through Inc U., an entrepreneurship education collaboration between Penn State, Pitt-Johnstown, and Bucknell funded by a grant from Pennsylvania’s Department of Community and Economic Development.

Hallenbeck, whose parents survived a motorcycle collision with a car, says his company’s portable brake light will enhance the safety of tens of thousands of motorcyclists across the country. The company also won $5000 investment in the qualifying competition held on Pitt-Johnstown’s campus on October 29.

Pitt-Johnstown students Troy Schall, Drew Colvin, and Mike Devan recently formed Healthponics, a company that aims to produce high-tech, home-based smart gardens for medicinal marijuana patients across the country. The smart garden will allow patients to monitor and control plant growth with a smart phone app that will provide the right amount of nutrients, water and light so that home growers can produce high quality medicinal marijuana at reasonable costs. Healthponics has won thousands of dollars in investor support at various competitions, including at PITTch Fest at Johnstown’s Showcase for Commerce.

Pitt-Johnstown's President Dr. Jem Spectar hailed these students for their contributions to the emerging regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. “These students in our Somerset Trust Entrepreneurship Program are walking in the footsteps of Johnstown’s makers and innovators and creating their own jobs for the 21st century,” said Spectar.

Pitt-Johnstown Launches Mountain Cat Mission Control (MC2), the Region's First Social Media Training Center

Social media has become a critical component of marketing and communications programs and a must-have skill requirement for many industries. Pitt-Johnstown Business and Enterprise students will be the first in the region to receive real world experience creating and maintaining a social media presence in the recently launched Mountain Cat Mission Control (MC2) Center.

The high-tech academic lab will be a training center where students will develop and execute social media campaigns for regional partners. The course, initiated and taught by Assistant Professor Skip Glenn, was designed as part of the Marketing program within the recently created Business and Enterprise Division.

“Through support from the Robert M. Hull Foundation, which funds advancement of dynamic education, Pitt-Johnstown is working to meet the needs of business and the community in generating talent for social media and content marketing positions,” said Business and Enterprise Division Interim Chairperson Raymond Wrabley. “Our objective is to provide academic and Real World resources through client projects and industry partners to create students ready to take the driver seat in the digital marketing space.”
U.S. Senator Bob Casey Jr. joined Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar to discuss his legislation that will help combat the rising number of sexual assaults on campuses across the country.

“It’s a scourge,” Casey said. “It’s a terrible insult to the country when we don’t attack this problem directly.”

Senator Casey said the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE), which took effect on July 1, 2015, requires higher education institutions to develop clear statements of policy regarding domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking is one component to address the problem. He said students, educators and law enforcement officials need to be more aware and actively engaged in solving the problem.

President Jem Spectar complimented Casey for his legislative efforts to address campus sexual violence.

U.S. Ambassador to India Speaks at Pitt-Johnstown

Recalling the times he spent at Pitt-Johnstown visiting his father, Professor Kamal Verma, U.S. Ambassador to India, Richard Verma said his family and the community supported him on his journey from Johnstown to India.

Speaking at the Whalley Memorial Chapel on the Pitt-Johnstown campus, Ambassador Verma recalled what it was like to be one of the first Indian families to live in Johnstown. “That was an uncertain time,” he said. “Just like all other immigrants to this area – from Eastern Europe, Russia, Western Europe; my father arrived in the U.S. from India with $24 he had borrowed. He came for the American dream and so many of you helped us along the way.”

President Spectar recognized the efforts of the area native with the Presidential Medal of Distinctive Excellence – the highest honor a college bestows.

“We are honored that our friend and exemplary member of our Board of Advisors is spending time at Pitt-Johnstown,” commented President Jem Spectar. “I am grateful that our students and the University’s surrounding communities have the opportunity to learn about US-India relations from one of our country’s most distinguished experts.”

Verma, confirmed as the United States Ambassador to India in December 2014, is the son of Savitri Verma, a special needs school teacher, counselor, and social worker, and Dr. Kamal Verma, who was a distinguished member of the Pitt-Johnstown faculty for more than four decades and editor of the South Asian Review.

Following his graduation from Westmont High School in 1986, Verma attended Lehigh University on an Air Force ROTC scholarship. He also holds degrees from American University’s Washington College of Law and Georgetown University Law Center.

Pitt-Johnstown Wins 2015 University Standard of Excellence Web Award

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown won the 2015 University Standard of Excellence award for Web Development from the Web Marketing Association’s (WMA) WebAward competition.

“Our University is very proud of our website,” said Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar. “With a relaunch in 2014, we knew we had a special product, but we now have received verification in the form of an award from a long-standing and highly regarded evaluator. Regardless of accolades, the intention of this website was and remains the serving of our internal, external, future, alumni, and community audiences. It is a worldwide gateway to our University.”

The web team, whose efforts resulted in the award, included: Web Manager Mike Morlacci; Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Executive Director of Real World Career Services Robert Knipple; and Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services and Director of Admissions Therese Grimes; Career Services Assistant Director Janna Kohler; former Coordinator of Marketing & Communication Natalie Bombatch; former Institutional Advancement Executive Director Jesse Pisors and retired grant writer Trish Beatty also served on the team.

“This web team used its diverse levels of knowledge and University expertise to collaborate, rewrite, and organize the site,” said Morlacci. “It was a detailed approach. We spent a lot of time perfecting the little things, while always maintaining a focus on the bigger picture of producing a great website.

Pitt-Johnstown Earns Military Friendly Designation for Seventh Consecutive Year

For the seventh consecutive year, the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown has been designated a Military Friendly School® by Victory Media, the premier media source for military personnel transitioning into civilian life.

The 2016 Military Friendly School® list honors the top 1,700 colleges, universities, and trade schools in the country that are doing the most to embrace military students, and to dedicate resources to ensure their success in the classroom and after graduation.

President Jem Spectar said: “To be recognized with this prestigious honor for the seventh year is a tremendous source of pride for the Pitt-Johnstown community. We are very grateful for the service of our military veterans and are strongly committed to their success as they transition from their military careers to the classroom, to good jobs in our community, and beyond.”
Great Americans Day Honors Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was the topic of the 19th annual Pitt-Johnstown Great Americans Day Citizenship Forum and Luncheon, held at the Living-Learning Center on the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown campus. More than 250 high school students, teachers, and community members attended the event featuring John Craig Hammond, PhD, an associate professor of history at Penn State University-New Kensington.

Hammond is an expert on the early American republic, and is the author of a number of books and articles on the topic. Hammond began his education at Pitt-Johnstown and later earned a bachelor's degree in physics at Temple University, a master's degree and a PhD in history at the University of Kentucky.

Dr. Hammond discussed Jefferson's philosophies of government, religious liberty and education. He specifically noted that Jefferson was a tireless advocate of education.

Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar lauded the tradition of the University's annual Great Americans Day event during his opening remarks, and encouraged students to find ways to give back to their communities and become involved in the political process.

“You are the next generation of great Americans,” he said. “Your service to your country can begin now.”

Funding for this event is provided by the Howard M. and Adelle C. Picking Great Americans Day Forum Fund.

Campus Hosts Revitalizing Our Community Event

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown was host to a community revitalization event focused on strengthening and advancing jobs, economic growth, and the community in general.

The Nov. 2, 2015 gathering at the Living-Learning Center on the Pitt-Johnstown Campus featured keynote speaker David McDonald, a developer-turned-consultant and author of Saving America’s Cities: A Tried and Proven Plan to Revive Stagnant and Decaying Cities.

“This book gives you a very straightforward and mechanical approach to actually begin the process of saving your cities,” he said. “It provides a true vision for growth in most of our stagnant and decaying cities – and even for our healthy ones.”

McDonald has observed firsthand the population and business exodus from hundreds of cities over a period of several decades. He noted what cities did to try and regain their lost “vibrance.” McDonald told the audience that included many of the region’s civic leaders, to invest in efforts that showcase assets and make room for more development by leveling structures that detract from a new Johnstown.

The event was sponsored by the Frank J. and Sylvia T. Pasquerilla Lecture Series Endowment Fund.

UPJ Faculty Members Contribute to Economic Climate Study Review

Two Pitt-Johnstown faculty members, associate professor John McGrath and assistant professor Skip Glenn, presented their findings at the annual Greater Johnstown/Cambria County Chamber of Commerce Economic Climate Study on Nov. 6, 2015.

McGrath said the report revealed “some good news for the economy, some not-so-good news,” reported The Tribune-Democrat on Nov. 7, 2015.

“Inside all of this stuff that’s going around inside us, we believe stuff can happen for us, and that’s a great starting point for the community,” Glenn said.
The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown rang in the holiday season with our neighbors in Moxham on December 1. The Park Avenue Playground was illuminated with more than 21,000 lights. The Pitt-Johnstown choir performed some holiday carols, and the Pitt-Johnstown student chapter of the United Way was on hand to distribute books to neighborhood children. This special holiday event is part of Pitt-Johnstown @ Your Service! Since the beginning of the Fall 2015 term, our students, faculty, and staff have invested more than 1,500 hours performing service projects in the Moxham neighborhood.

Projects have included restoration of the Village Street Playground, offering homework help at the Learning Lamp’s after-school program and Goodwill Career Center. These projects have been performed in partnership with the Moxham Renaissance and the Moxham Neighborhood Watch.

This collaboration arose out of the University’s strategic plan, which identified as a principal goal and focus that Pitt-Johnstown will make progress toward sustaining and enhancing programs that have a positive community impact.

Pitt-Johnstown Partners with Goodwill Career Center

Building on a commitment to support the community, Pitt-Johnstown has partnered with Goodwill Industries to help area job seekers be better prepared to find employment.

Pitt-Johnstown Justice Administration and Criminology majors have been volunteering at the newly opened Goodwill Career Center in Moxham as part of the Real World Action Program. Approximately ten students have been assisting with tutoring, online job searches, and filling out job applications at the Goodwill Career Center, hoping to make a positive community impact.

“The university and Goodwill share interests in encouraging people to reach their potential – an in efforts to improve the community, Ray Wrabley, interim chair of the Business & Enterprise Division, said. “This is a good example of marshalling resources to serve needs.”

Student Chapter United Way Established

A student chapter of the United Way has been established on campus.

The newly formed organization, which currently has 15 members, will focus its efforts on supporting the Moxham neighborhood through its “Change for Moxham” initiative.

Their first official project is sponsoring a food drive to benefit the Park Avenue United Methodist Church Food Pantry in the Moxham neighborhood.

Pitt-Johnstown, Penn Highlands Cement Partnership

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and Pennsylvania Highlands Community College have entered into an articulation agreement, which guarantees the transfer of a Penn Highlands Community College Associate of Arts degree into one of ten bachelor’s degree programs at Pitt-Johnstown. An innovative collaboration between two important educational leaders in the region will reshape the way in which many students think about higher education.

Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar said, “This agreement reflects our shared priorities of student success, access, and affordability. More Penn Highlands students will have the opportunity to easily transfer to Pitt-Johnstown and continue on the pathway to achieve their educational and career goals.” He continued, “We are delighted to partner with Penn Highlands to open more opportunities for students in the Laurel Highlands.”

With this collaboration, students will begin their studies by completing their associate’s degree at Penn Highlands Community College, and then transfer to Pitt-Johnstown to complete their bachelor’s degree in one of ten programs. The Pitt-Johnstown programs include Communication, Creative Writing, Professional Writing, English Literature, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Environmental Studies, and Psychology.

Agreement signed in Blackington Hall of Pitt-Johnstown

Moxham Light Up Night Held

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Veterans Recognized at the Heroes Memorial

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown held its fifth annual Veterans Day tribute November 11, 2015, on campus at The Heroes Memorial.

Faculty member and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Paul Newman served as the event’s master of ceremonies; Emmanuela Duku, a U.S. Army Reserves veteran, senior psychology major, and member of the Pitt-Johnstown MountainCat Veterans Program, led attendees in saying the Pledge of Allegiance; and faculty member and U.S. Navy veteran Dr. Kristen Majocha led in the singing of the National Anthem.

Pitt-Johnstown President Jem Spectar then spoke of the appreciation for all veterans, including students, faculty, and staff, saying: “Today we celebrate veterans of the United States of America, we are grateful for your service, and are honored to be in your presence.”

He was joined at the Heroes Memorial by students, faculty, and staff who served in the US Armed Forces. The tribute closed with the laying of a wreath by Dr. Spectar and Ms. Duku, followed by a moment of silence to honor the memory of the service men and women who were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Department Alumni Highlight Annual Geography Awareness Week

Pitt-Johnstown’s Geography Department hosted its 29th annual Geography Awareness Week, Nov. 16-20.

Alumni with accomplishments and expertise in the field of geography highlighted the 2015 lecture and presentation schedule, which included:

- Geography in Local Government, by Bradley Zearfoss ‘83, director of Somerset County Planning Commission
- Geographers in Federal Government, by Dorothy Stroz ‘84, former U.S. Census Bureau analyst;
- Geography and the Environment, by Brandi Robinson, an instructor and advisor in Penn State’s Energy and Sustainability Policy program
- Environmental and Regional Planning, by Lindsay Pyle ‘14, the regional planner for the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission.

Big Time at Big Top, 2015 Homecoming

This year’s Homecoming celebration, based on the theme “The Blue and Gold Big Top,” was held the weekend of September 25-26. The festivities kicked off Friday evening with a picnic on the campus mall, followed by a number of student-sponsored games and activities, and a live musical performance in front of Blackington Hall. The campus mall was filled with energy and excitement when the finalists for the 2015 Homecoming Queen candidates were introduced. Immediately following the introduction of the last queen finalists, attendees were treated to a spectacular fireworks display.

Saturday’s festivities kicked off with 5k fun walk and run followed by the annual Homecoming parade featuring student floats and banners, queen candidates, fire trucks, and the Forest Hills marching band. Kayla Stockdale was crowned Homecoming Queen in front of a packed crowd at University Square. The day also featured circus-themed games and activities, a live animal show, and an ice cream social. A first for this year’s Homecoming was the Pitt Players “Red Eye Project Performance,” held in the PPAC. As part of the event, students wrote, directed, built, and produced a show in 24 hours.

Record Placement Rate Reported

Based on preliminary results of the survey of the Class of 2015, Pitt-Johnstown placement rate is currently at 97% based on a 56% response rate.

Career Services held a Junior Salute Week in November, designed to help get juniors on track for their career preparation as they begin to prepare for their senior year. The office also participated in National Career Day with staffing and displays in the Student Union.

Industry tours were offered to several companies in our region during the month of October. The goal of the industry tours is to promote awareness among our students of the internships and career opportunities that exist in our area.
Movere L. Ponas had a great love for the nursing profession and guided many students through the Conemaugh Valley Memorial Hospital nursing program before retiring in 1976. A friend of Pitt-Johnstown has honored Ms. Ponas’ legacy with a generous endowment to the Johnstown Educational Foundation of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown to support the Movere L. Ponas Nursing Award. The award will be given to the top two students who have completed the RN to BSN program at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with QPA of 3.25 or better. Ms. Ponas passed in 1999 and her husband, John, passed away in October of 2015. Mr. and Mrs. Ponas were passionate friends and supporters of Pitt-Johnstown and will be sadly missed.

**STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)**

Education students Erin Derry, Laura DuVall, Kaitlyn Hoyer, Sean Jackson, and Beth Sabo, along with Dr. Donna Kowalczyk, Assistant Professor, presented “Water Wonders: Exploring STEM in Waterful Ways” to 5th and 6th grade students attending the STEM science event on November 14, 2015.

The event was held at Penn Highlands Community College and was attended by approximately 120 students from several local school districts.

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**Fall Into Research**

Posters and other visual aids helped showcase the innovative research by faculty, students and collaborators at Pitt-Johnstown's annual Fall Into Research symposium held in the Cambria Room of the Student Union on October 7, 2015.

The event, organized by Undergraduate Research Coordinator Dr. Karen Lee, provides a forum for faculty and undergraduate students to present their summer work during an informal evening of socializing and research and scholarship excellence.

Innovative Research Topics include:

- Pitt-Johnstown and Windber Research Institute student-research partnership, SPUR Biodiversity summer program, REU, URP and summer student –research internship recipients.

Research funding recipients, included the Alice Waters Thomas Endowment, College Research Council Grant, Faculty Resource Center Grant, President’s Mentorship Fund, and the Sabbatical Grant.

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**Admissions Updates**

Three-year comparison of Direct Applications of first-time, first-year freshmen. Direct applications are ahead 59% compared to this time last year, and ahead 40% compared to two years ago. Direct admits are ahead 70% compared to this time last year and 35% ahead of two years ago.

The Royall Applications are processed weekly.

The Royall Inc. application generation initiative launched the week of October 26, 2015. As of Friday, December 4, 2015 we have 594 applications from the Royall initiative for a total of 1933 direct applications.
The Office of Conference Services boasted a fruitful & exciting 2015 summer conference season, hosting over 36 events that collectively drew more than 8,100 guests to campus.

In addition to accommodating local and state-wide groups, such as the PA Amateur Wrestling Federation, Western PA United Methodist Youth Retreat, Pennsylvania Envirothon Competition and PA Association of Student Councils, Pitt-Johnstown's picturesque campus was home to three national events that drew 2,570 guests from across the U.S. and around the globe.

The Bible Students General Convention’s “National Convention,” and the North American Vegetarian Society’s “Annual Summer-fest” have long-standing relationships with the university that span back over 20 and 10 years, respectively. The Yogi Divine Society’s “Atmiya Youth Shibir,” which was our largest event of the summer, drew 1,600 guests to their second conference at Pitt-Johnstown.

“The quality contribution by each and every member of your teams across the beautiful campus, including the police & security staff, was clearly visible through their continued & proactive presence during the moment of need. We truly appreciate the continued display of professionalism.” - Mehul Thakkar, International Atmiya Youth Convention

Dr. Jem Spectar noted the unique cultural and educational opportunity that thousands of guests, with diverse backgrounds and ideologies, provide to the campus and community. “We are also helping to infuse visitor spending into our local economy, with 8,100 guests shopping at area retail locations, dining at restaurants, and filling up their vehicles at local gas stations,” he added.

**Faculty Accomplishments**

**Sharon Bertsch**
Awareness of Other Students Taking the Exam: Contributions to Neuroticism’s Effects on Test Anxiety. SHARON BERTSCH and ALYSSA MALONE, Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society. STEM Participation and 2D:4D. NATHAN D. OMASTA, Carlow University, SHARON BERTSCH, University of Pittsburgh (Sponsored by Sharon Bertsch).

**Thomas Malosh**

**Jill Henning**

**John Mullennix**

**John Mullennix and Kristen Majocha** held the “Pitt-Johnstown Being Human” Event on Oct. 10. The purpose of the event was to discuss and highlight how cross-training in the liberal arts and sciences is important for students’ education and career aspirations.

**Personnel**

**Appointments**
Walt Kalista - Interim Director of Facilities
Joyce Radovanic - Executive Director for Business and Campus Services

**Departures**
Pam Brush – Purchasing - Retirement
Ron Michlena – Physical Plant - Retirement
Natalie Bombatch – Marketing - Transition
Kirstie Pividori – IA - Transition
Andrew Walbeck – Physical Plant - Transition
Another Winning Season for the Pitt-Johnstown Lady Cats

Pitt-Johnstown (29-7) was the 2015 PSAC Eastern Division champions with a 19-3 mark in conference-play and hosted the conference tournament semifinals and finals. The Lady Cats reached the PSAC semifinals by sweeping Lock Haven University on November 17, then suffered a five-set loss to Clarion University in the semifinals.

Seventh-seeded West Chester University bounced back from an opening set loss to win the next three sets and upset second-seeded Pitt-Johnstown in the Quarterfinals of the 2015 NCAA Division II Atlantic Regional Tournament at the McDonough Center in Wheeling, W.Va. Kendall Mahony had 12 kills and four blocks for the Lady Cats, whose season came to an end with a 29-7 overall record.

The Lady Cats had four players on PSAC All-Conference Teams, and Pitt-Johnstown swept all four of the conference’s individual awards, including sophomore middle hitter Kendall Mahony being tabbed the PSAC East Athlete of the Year. Along with Mahony, the league’s coaches selected Haupt as the Eastern Division Coach of the Year for the second straight year, and sophomore defensive specialist Devan Orr as the Defensive Athlete of the Year for the second consecutive season. In addition, outside hitter Maura Brehl was named the PSAC East Freshman of the Year.

Athletics Updates

Pitt-Johnstown Names Niki Cognigni Head Softball Coach

Pitt-Johnstown has named former University of Pittsburgh standout infielder Niki Cognigni head softball coach.

Cognigni replaces Sabrina Lane, who helped get the program started two years ago and coached the team its inaugural season in 2015. Cognigni, who graduated from Pitt with a degree in Communication in 2012, started all 202 games at shortstop in her college career. She led the Panthers with 11 multi-hit games during her senior season.

In 2014, Cognigni was named head softball coach at Robbinsville High School in Robbinsville, NJ where she was named the Area Coach of the Year after both seasons. In those two seasons, Cognigni guided Robbinsville to a pair of Central Jersey Sectional Championships and two New Jersey State Runner-up finishes. She also guided the team to a Mercer County title in 2014.

In the summer of 2015, Cognigni led a group of collegiate all-stars from across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions to participate in an exhibition doubleheader against the USA Women’s Softball National Team.

Wrestling Honors 10 Outstanding Student Athletes

Head Coach Pat Pecora (40th season) and the Mountain Cats, ranked sixth in NCAA Division II and third in Super Region I, kicked-off the 2015-16 dual meet season against West Liberty (WV) University. Pitt-Johnstown opened the season at the Clarion Open on November 1. Pitt-Johnstown recognized last year’s All-Americans, National Qualifiers and All-Academic Team selections prior to the match on November 13. Those awarded were:

John Blankenship - 174 lbs - 2015 NCAA Div. II All-American(6th-Place), 2015 First-Team NWCA Academic Wrestling Team
Sam Hanau - 141 lbs - 2014 and 2015 NCAA Div. II National Qualifier, 2014 All-PSAC
Tyley Reinhart - 165 lbs - 2015 NCAA Div. II National Qualifier, 2014-15 PSAC Freshman of the Year
Cole Landowski - 149 lbs - 2014 NCAA Division II National Qualifier, 2015 Second-Team NWCA Academic Wrestling Team
Evan Link - 125 lbs - 2014 All-PSAC
Boe Bonzo - 157 lbs - 2015 Honorable Mention NWCA Academic Wrestling Team
Jimmy Harrison - 125 lbs - 2015 Honorable Mention NWCA Academic Wrestling Team

2014-15 PSAC Scholar-Athletes: John Blankenship, Boe Bonzo, Joe Davis, John Lobeck, D.J. Sims
Construction is underway for John P. Murtha Center for Public Service, as well as the major redesign and renovation of the Engineering and Science Building. The $23 million project consists of three parts: construction of a new building which will be called the John P. Murtha Center for Public Service. The second phase of the project entails major infrastructure, redesign and renovations to the Engineering and Science Building. A third component includes renovations to laboratories in Johnstown’s Krebs Hall.

“The Murtha Center will provide a much-needed multipurpose space on campus that is capable of hosting workshops; academic symposia; student assemblies; public debate; and discussion and inquiry into key local, regional, and national issues,” said Jem Spectar. “The center will support campus strategic goals to support civic participation and greater engagement in the local and regional communities.”