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University President Geraldine M. Jones (left) goes over plans for the Rutledge Institute preschool with Tom and Karen Rutledge.

## Largest Gift to Cal U Focuses on Childhood Education

The largest gift in the history of California University of Pennsylvania is designed to make a lasting difference in the lives of children, Cal U students and the field of early childhood education.

Karen and Tom Rutledge, of Greenwich, Conn., joined University officials April 30 to announce plans for the Rutledge Institute for Early Childhood Education.

Founded with a gift of more than \$4 million, the Rutledge Institute will support an innovative preschool on Cal U's campus. The program will

operate in affiliation with The Village, an accredited early childhood education center in downtown California.

### Scholarship opportunities

The Rutledge Institute will fund annual scholarships for 20 local children, ages 3-5, to attend the institute's preschool program. It also will pay all tuition, fees and room costs for a select group of highly qualified students who enroll in California University's childhood education program.

While earning a bachelor's degree and Pennsylvania teaching certification

for grades PreK-4, these Rutledge Institute Scholars will:

- Gain experience working alongside The Village's qualified teachers and in California University's network of Professional Development Schools.
- Implement an innovative preschool curriculum focused on children's experiences in STREAM: science, technology, reading, engineering, art and math.
- Engage in a structured peer-mentoring and leadership development program.

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## Alumnus to Address Graduates

Alumnus Larry Maggi '79, Washington County Commissioner, will address graduate and undergraduate students at the University's 186th Commencement.

Master's degree candidates will receive their diplomas and be vested in their academic hoods at 7 p.m. May 11. Undergraduate Commencement begins at 10 a.m. May 12. Both ceremonies will be held in the Convocation Center arena.

In all, more than 1,200 students are expected to graduate, including those who choose not to attend Commencement. Graduates' families and friends are welcome to attend.

University President Geraldine M. Jones will confer the degrees and greet each graduate who walks across the stage.

Cal U's 186th Commencement recognizes students who completed their studies in January and May 2018.

### About the speaker

Larry Maggi '79 has devoted his career to public service. A lifelong resident of Washington County, Pa., Maggi is chairman of the county's Board of Commissioners, where he is serving his fourth term in office.

He has been a member of California University's Council of Trustees since 2009 and was chair of the council from 2013-2017.

Maggi served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1969-1971. He entered the Pennsylvania State Police Academy in 1973, beginning a 24-year career as a state police trooper and criminal investigator. He graduated from California State College in 1979, with a degree in education.

Maggi entered the political arena in 1997, when he was elected sheriff of Washington County. He held that office until his election as a county commissioner in 2003.

In addition to serving his Washington County constituents, Maggi is chairman of the board for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, which oversees spending of state and federal transportation funds for a 10-county region. He serves on the board for Blueprints (formerly Community Action Southwest), a nonprofit community action agency, and he chairs the Courts and the Corrections Committee of the

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Larry Maggi

## Strike-A-Spark Conference: A Steppingstone for Scholars

The fourth annual Strike-A-Spark Conference, presented by the Center for Undergraduate Research and the Faculty Professional Development Center, featured the research, scholarship, creative activity and application of Cal U's students and faculty through presentations, performances, posters and other displays.

Dr. Gregg Gould, the center's director, said 200 faculty and students — a conference record — presented their work at the event held April 25 in the Convocation Center.

For many students, having their work on public display was a new experience — one they hope to repeat at different venues before they graduate.

Biology majors Karrie Baker and Chloe Wheatley presented a poster exploring how lithium dosages cause hyperactive effects in tadpole embryos.

"This was our first time doing this type of presentation, which was different



Samantha Gloeckl (left) and Allison Greenleaf discuss their research on art history methodologies with Dr. Gregg Gould during the Strike-A-Spark Conference at Cal U's Convocation Center.

and expanded how we learn," said Baker, a junior.

The two are thinking about presenting at next year's Commonwealth

of Pennsylvania University Biologists (CPUB) annual meeting.

"It's something we are looking

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## Cast Members: 'It Gets Better'

One by one, six members of the cast and crew of *Heathers: The Musical* bravely faced the camera to share their personal experiences with shaming, isolation, suicide, homophobia, domestic violence, bullying and suicide.

Their message: You're not alone, high school is hard, things do get better.

More than 100 students from three area school districts — Albert Gallatin, Ringgold and South Allegheny — heard that message in person when they visited Cal U on April 13 for a special presentation of *Heathers*.

The play follows Veronica Sawyer, a 12th-grader, as she navigates her final days in high school. The show has upbeat musical numbers and comedic characters, but it also takes on some serious subjects.

Before the show, students heard from Abbey Sager, 18, founder and president of Diverse Gaming Coalition, who was bullied in high school, dropped out, and earned her GED. Sager used a reliable, teen-friendly comic-book format to illustrate the problem of bullying and to invite students to discuss potential solutions.

Following the production, the high school students watched the video, in which members of the *Heathers* cast and crew recounted their experiences in high school.

The visitors then had lunch with members of the cast, crew, and master's degree students from Cal U's counselor education program, who were available to answer questions and discuss issues raised by the play. Cal U faculty from counselor education, sociology and theater also answered questions.

"Bringing our students to see the play involved a lot of conversations with our administration and parents, but we felt it was a good experience for our students," said Toby Maykuth, a teacher in the Albert Gallatin School District who earned his master's degree in counselor education from Cal U.

"It was good to see the University putting forth this effort."

Students in Cal U's counselor education program, led by Jessica Jacobs and Amber Kirschner, prepared packets for high school students that included online



Abbey Sager, founder of the Diverse Gaming Coalition, talks to high school students about her comics series, which invites discussion as it illustrates the problem of bullying.

resources and other information regarding the issues addressed in "Heathers."

"The relationship between Veronica and J.D. is very one-dimensional," said Dr. Emily Sweitzer, who teaches in the sociology program, in describing the controlling behavior between two of the main characters in the play.

"Everything is either all right or all wrong (for J.D.). There is no in-between, no gray, no ability to see other feelings."

Members of the *Heathers* cast said the play impacted them, too.

"We grew a lot as people during the rehearsal

process," said Jeremy Mackey, who played J.D. "And we opened up about a lot of things in the video that we made."

"The message that we as a cast want to portray," said Chelsea Feudale in the video, "is that high school does end. The problems that you're facing are only temporary. I promise you, once you get into your little groups of people that understand you and accept you for who you are, everything gets so much better."

"It's like a breath of fresh air."



### Letis Talk

University President Geraldine M. Jones addresses a student's question during Campus Talk, which was held April 19 in the south conference wing of the Convocation Center. The talks are an opportunity for students to speak with the President directly, ask questions and share their opinions about campus matters.

County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, where he has been a member for 13 years.

Maggi also is active with a number of veterans organizations, including the Marine Corps League, the Mon Valley Leathernecks, the American Legion and the American Legion Riders.

He frequently participates in military ceremonies with various veterans groups.

A former Vulcan wrestler, Maggi has officiated high school wrestling matches for more than 40 years. He is a member of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) Hall of Fame, the Washington-Greene County chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, and the Pittsburgh

Chapter of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame.

In 2017, he was inducted into the Pittsburgh chapter of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame.

He is state coordinator for the annual Pennsylvania American Legion/Sate Police Youth Week camp for high school students interested in law enforcement or military careers. He also is a lay speaker,

inlurgist and Sunday school teacher at Clayville Methodist Church.

Maggi and his wife, Mary Jeanne, make their home in Buffalo Township, Pa. They delight in spending time with their four children and six grandchildren.

Both ceremonies can be viewed live online at [www.calu.edu/news](http://www.calu.edu/news).

For more information, visit [www.calu.edu/events/commencement](http://www.calu.edu/events/commencement).

## Campus BRIEFS

### Borough Trash Collection

The Borough of California has announced there will be additional trash pick-up days and electronic recycling in the borough for the end of the Spring 2018 semester.

Additional trash collection, especially for large items, will take place weekdays from May 14-18. Do not put out large stuffed items (couches, chairs) if it is raining or rain is predicted.

Electronic recycling will take place May 7-May 11. The recycling container will be placed in the California Area Public Library parking lot.

"This is part of our ongoing partnership with California Borough and it's up to our students to leave the community as nice as it was when they came at the start of the academic

year," said Larry Sebek, associate vice president for Student Affairs.

Call the borough at 724-938-8280 to arrange for pick-up of large items.

### ROTC Commissioning Set

ROTC Cadets Richard Myers and Sean Cushman will be commissioned as second lieutenants at 2 p.m. May 11 at the Kara Alumni House.

The commissioning ceremony is free and open to the campus community. The public is welcome to attend.

### Trustees Meet June 6

The University's Council of Trustees will hold its second quarterly meeting of 2018 at 7 p.m. June 6 in the Grand Hall of Old Main. The meeting is open to the public.

## Alumnus to Speak at Spring Commencement

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Children of employees, student volunteers and Blaz, the Cal U mascot, gather in Hamer Hall's gymnasium for Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day.

## 'Really Cool': Kids Enjoy Being Taken to Work

"**M**aking ice cream out of liquid nitrogen was really cool!" declared Carter Stairs, as he participated in an activity led by Dr. Kim Wozniak, from the Department of Chemistry and Physics.

Lots of things were really cool April 26, when more than 50 kids visited campus for Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day.

"They've been looking forward to this for weeks," said Adam Stairs, an application developer for University Technology Services, as he walked with sons Anderson and Carter.

"They hear about Cal U all the time but don't really understand until they come here and see firsthand."

Dr. Susan Morris-Rutledge, assistant professor in the Department of Secondary Education, enjoyed

spending some of her workday with her son, Jacob.

"He comes in with me a few times a year anyway, but we both really like the different activities," she said, pointing out the technology exploration by C.J. DeCholis and the yoga demonstration by Dr. Ann Bergamasco.

"The day is really nice." Jacob, who plays soccer, enjoyed the scavenger hunt with Monica Ruane Rogers and the Mandarino Library staff. But his biggest thrill was meeting the Vulcans men's soccer team in Hamer Hall for skills sessions and a group photo.

Senior Shatara Parsons, an All-American women's basketball player who graduates this spring with a degree in sport management, was one of 45 student volunteers.

"Ever since I was younger and

started baby-sitting my cousins and nieces, I have loved everything about children," Parsons said. "It's their day, and I'm just here to have fun and help them in any way."

Fifteen faculty and staff members helped with the activities. Dr. Azadeh Block, an assistant professor in the Department of Social Work, helped to coordinate faculty involvement. Dr. John Burnett and Tracy Breckenridge, of the Office of Social Equity, organized the overall event with support from the Office of the President.

"It's getting kids pumped about Cal U and they should see work as something to get excited about," said Block, whose sons Sam and Jonah were participating. "I believe this event helps them see what creative and fun things you can do in an academic environment like this."

## Strike-A-Spark a Steppingstone

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into. We'll use this experience moving forward," Baker added.

Undergraduate research is considered a high-impact practice with multiple benefits for students. In addition to taking a deep dive into a specific topic, students gain broad-based skills in research design, data collection and analysis, information literacy and communication.

Junior Joshua Blattenberger, a University Honors Program student majoring in English, presented at Strike-A-Spark after showcasing his scholarship in early April at the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), held at the University of Central Oklahoma.

His poster was titled "Monstrosity in Ignorance: How Inhuman Film Monsters Represent Humanity's Fear of the Unknown."

"I suppose I did it the opposite way, but both conferences were great experiences, and I really enjoyed speaking about the work," Blattenberger said.

"I am definitely more prepared and can't wait to do this again."

Garrett Smyth, a first-year theater major, presented a poster about humor research he conducted for

his Honors Composition II course.

"I was sort of baffled by this at the beginning, but I found the research made me understand and appreciate... humor research theories," Smyth said.

"Being in the Honors Program, I know I will be doing this type of public presenting again."

Senior Seneca Davis presented her research — "A Critical Analysis of Police Brutality Against African Americans Through a Social Work Perspective" — for the first time at last year's Strike-A-Spark event.

Two larger conference presentations followed, at the PASSHE Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Conference, and the State System Summit on Inclusive Excellence and International Education.

This year, Davis' work is set to be published in the *Keystone Journal of Undergraduate Research*, which is open to students from any of the 14 State System universities.

Davis, who will earn her bachelor's degree in social work this spring, credits her faculty mentor, Dr. Azadeh Block, with helping with the research, conference presentation and journal publication processes.

"Strike-A-Spark is a nice way to get

feedback," Davis said. "The publishing process is a huge learning curve. It was so important to have someone like Dr. Block to guide me through."

With, perhaps, master's and doctoral degrees in her future, Davis says building on her undergraduate research is a possibility.

Keynote speaker Dr. Stephanie Wallach, assistant vice provost for Undergraduate Education at Carnegie Mellon University, praised Cal U for holding a conference she called "intellectually inclusive."

Conferences like Strike-A-Spark do more than prepare students to engage in research-oriented professional careers; they also can be useful when seeking internships, applying to graduate school or entering the workforce, she said.

"Through research, you have not only successfully completed course credits in an unconventional way, you've also developed intellectual depth and can now talk authoritatively about the experience of using advanced learning beyond the classroom."

"That experience sets you apart from most other students," she told the presenters. "You are fashioning your own unique story line."

## Gift for Childhood Education

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• Attend a five-week summer workshop focused on innovation in teaching.

"We want to make a real difference in the lives of children, as well as Cal U students," says Karen Rutledge, "especially those who otherwise might not have these opportunities."

### About Karen and Tom Rutledge

The Rutledges are Washington County natives who spent time at "Cal State" in the 1970s, when they were raising their first child and Tom was earning a degree in economics. Today, Tom Rutledge is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Charter Communications Inc., the second-largest cable provider in the United States, with more than 95,000 employees and 26 million customers across 41 states.

This gift is the latest in a series of donations the couple has made to the University. They support scholarships for Cal U students who are studying economics or raising a family while earning a degree, as well as scholarships to help students from southwestern Pennsylvania pay living expenses when they take internships outside the area.

"We expect the Rutledge Institute to be a model of excellence for preschool education," Karen Rutledge says.

"It's so important to give children a strong start, so they can become lifelong learners. At Cal U, they will be taught by excellent teachers — and everywhere they look, they will see grownups who are going to school and learning, just like they are."

California University is poised to begin recruiting the first class of Rutledge Institute Scholars, and The Village is developing guidelines for awarding the preschool scholarships.

Space in Morgan Learning Resource Center is being renovated to house the on-campus preschool classrooms, which are scheduled to open in fall 2018.

"The Rutledge Institute is a major milestone in California's long history of excellence in teacher education," says University President Geraldine M. Jones.

"I am grateful to Karen and Tom for their generosity and their foresight. By investing in young learners and their teachers, the Rutledges are making a positive change in the lives of countless children, now and in the future."

To learn more about admissions requirements for the Rutledge Institute Scholars program, contact Dr. Diane Nettles, of Cal U's Department of Childhood Education, at [nettd@calu.edu](mailto:nettd@calu.edu) or phone 724-938-4135.

To inquire about enrolling a child in the Rutledge Institute preschool program, contact The Village's president, Cherie Sears, at [cherie.sears@thevillagecares.org](mailto:cherie.sears@thevillagecares.org) or 724-330-5525.

## 'Open Hearts' Celebrate Lavender Graduation

"Open minds and open hearts make Cal U a better place to learn and grow," said Sheleta Camarda-Webb, director of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity Education, at the fifth annual Lavender Graduation ceremony on April 17 at Kara Alumni House.

The event, presented by the Lambda Bridges LGBTQIA+ Program Office, recognized the achievements of 10 LGBTQIA students and allies who will graduate in 2018.

Lakjia Bynum, business administration; Jamie D'Angelo, liberal studies; Daniela Dell'Aquila, business administration; Ashley Ivkovich, elementary and special education; Jennifer King, communication disorders; Stephanie Mandella, business administration; Summer McIntyre, psychology; Caitlin Michaels, parks and recreation management; Amanda Teti, business administration; and Cassidy Zermose, bachelor's in secondary education.

"We're all equal, and judging isn't



Cassidy Zermose (left), Ashley Ivkovich, Lakjia Bynum, Stephanie Mandella, Sheleta Camarda-Webb, Daniela Dell'Aquila, Amanda Teti and Caitlin Michaels attended the Lavender Graduation Ceremony.

how your fix problems," Teti said.

"Having a program like Lavender Graduation makes everyone feel more comfortable."

Several students who identified themselves as allies mentioned supporting family members or friends who are

part of the LGBTQIA community. They came to Lambda Bridges with a goal of extending that support to the campus community and beyond.

"As a future educator, I want to support students, no matter what," said Ivkovich. "I want to be a leader

and someone people can look up to."

"I want to be a role model for Greek life and with other organizations on campus," said Michaels, a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha, the Parks and Recreation Society, the Panhellenic Council Executive Board and the women's rugby team. "I want to be true to myself and comfortable with who I am."

Helping students be supportive and comfortable with who they are is the goal of Lambda Bridges, said Camarda-Webb.

"We want to recognize and celebrate students and how they contribute to a positive, warm campus environment."

Camarda-Webb also thanked alumna Jan Zivic '64, a support of Lambda Bridges and Cal U's LGBTQIA community. Zivic supports Lavender Graduation and the Jan Zivic Outstanding LGBTQIA Leadership Award, which recognizes exceptional leadership and service.

## Four Professors Receive FPDC Merit Awards

Cal U's Faculty Professional Development Center has recognized four professors for excellence in service, grants, research and teaching.

Award recipients Dr. Sheri Boyle, Dr. Elizabeth Gruber, Dr. Justin Hackett and Dr. Michael Perrotti will be recognized May 11 at the FPDC's annual Merit Award Luncheon, and at Commencement.

The FPDC merit award recipients are chosen by faculty committees. The awards are meant to assist faculty in their efforts to provide high-quality education for Cal U students.

Boyle, an associate professor and chair of the Department of Social Work, will receive the Service and Service Learning Award.

Also the program coordinator of Cal U's Master of Social Work program, she is engaged in a wide array of activities in which she serves the University and the community.

Through her involvement with the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (HPPA), Cal U's MSW students rotate through three agencies that serve older adults and become better educated and prepared to be leaders who provide services to older adults. She also works with graduate and undergraduate social work students on domestic violence issues in Fayette County, Pa. She and Dr. Gruber recently were awarded a \$1.9 million Health Resources and Services Administration grant from the Department of Health and Human Services.

This interdisciplinary project with Counselor Education and Social Work departments will prepare Cal U

students to serve rural communities in southwestern Pennsylvania as school counselors, mental health counselors and social work practitioners.

Boyle has been an aide to Rep. Nancy Pelosi and a clinical social worker at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

For more than a year she is co-leading a collaborative group focused on building relationships and communication among the Cal U community by establishing a campus-wide dialogue program.

A professor and chair of the Department of Counselor Education, Gruber will receive the Grants and Contracts Award.

She believes her grant-writing informs her teaching and her teaching informs her grant-writing, which encourages her to do additional research she can bring into the classroom.

The HRSA grant she and Dr. Boyle were awarded includes \$300,000 annually, or \$1.2 million in all, to provide stipends for 30 Cal U graduate students as they complete the lengthy field placements required to earn a master's degree.

A 600-hour field placement, or internship, is required for students in Cal U's accredited counselor education program. The accredited social work program requires students to complete 600 hours in their advanced practicum. The project focuses on medically underserved areas in Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties.

Since 1999 Gruber has brought in nearly \$2.5 million in grants. Many of these incorporate a service component

with the campus and local community. The FPSE drug and alcohol prevention and VAWA Violence Against Women grants written by Gruber have made a significant impact in developing consortia of professionals and community members to address alcohol and drug abuse, as well as dating and domestic violence.

Hackett, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology, will receive the FPDC Research Award.

His main research interests lie in applied psychology and program evaluation, specifically the application of psychological science to better society. Since arriving at Cal U in fall 2013, he has published 13 peer-reviewed journal articles and given four invited talks and eight paper presentations at international and national conferences.

One of his talks, *Antecedents and Consequences of Global Identification*, was given at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Last month, Hackett and three Cal U advanced psychology students attended and presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Personality and Social Psychology in Atlanta, Ga. Along with his research team, Hackett has made 20 poster presentations, including research from Cal U students.

This spring he is teaching the newly developed Social Psychology Lab course, which is designed to increase students' understanding of the research process.

More specifically, the course combines a review of the foundations of psychological research with a focus on advanced procedural methods and

techniques for social psychological research. Not only are students in the course developing novel ideas, but they also are following through with data collection and analyses.

Perrotti, an assistant professor in the Department of Secondary Education and Administrative Leadership, will receive the FPDC Teaching and Learning Award.

He is the department's graduate coordinator, managing three Advanced Studies in Secondary Education, Master of Arts Teaching, and Master of Educational Studies programs.

Perrotti also serves as the department's webmaster and researcher. He has taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in secondary education at Cal U.

Perrotti serves on numerous committees, include the University Curriculum Committee; PASSHE grant reviewer, subcommittee chair; Council for CAEP Accreditation of Teacher Education Portfolio; and Professor Development School Collaborative Advisory Board.

He has been a regular Discovery Day participant since joining Cal U in 2013 and has served as an Open House student recruiting participant.

One student stated, "Dr. Perrotti pushes every student to become better, he shows that he cares for each student, and he is very involved in making sure each one of us succeeds in the classroom as well as our daily lives."

Another student commented that Dr. Perrotti "is an amazing professor. He makes class engaging, interactive with hands-on learning, and gives great advice."

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