

## MY DIETRICH SCHOOL STORY

# Khadija-Awa Diop: Love What You Do and Share It

Khadija-Awa Diop, a senior studying film studies and African studies, lives by a motto she learned from Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*: "And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

What Diop wants is to make documentaries about people and cultures around the world. And she's already well on her way.

Throughout her time at the University of Pittsburgh, Diop has been working on a documentary about a Sudanese refugee and "lost boy" named Daniel who lives in Pittsburgh.

"I'm taking a look into the difficulties of refugee life in terms of adjusting to the society as well as the realities that many people overlook when discussing refugee life in politics and around the dinner table," she says. "People talk about refugees all the time now with the new election cycle and political climate. From both the left and the right side, we hear many different stances. In all of this, we forget that refugees are people, too. They're people who have survived some sort of traumatic event and fled their countries in order to save their lives. And even when they get here, they're fighting for their lives—finding jobs, making ends meet, raising children, experiencing culture shock, etc. The volatility of refugee life doesn't end when they are relocated to another, 'safer' country."

Alison Patterson, a lecturer in film studies and English composition in the English department, invited Diop to take on the project.

"[Patterson] had a connection to Daniel and knew that because of my background—my parents are Senegalese immigrants to the United States—and my interests in Africa, cultural studies, and social issues, I would be a person with the knowledge and sensitivity necessary to tell this story," Diop says.

Today, Patterson continues to serve as the faculty advisor for the project, while Diop manages all aspects of production. As filmmaker, director, and editor, she will have filmed and edited the entire project herself when it is completed. Diop received a Summer Undergraduate Research Award from the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity to work on the film.

"The first thing I ever wanted to be was an archaeologist, because I had watched *The Mummy*; then a doctor, because my aunt had started watching *Grey's Anatomy*; then a wizard, because Harry Potter is just too cool," she says. "By the time I reached middle school, I just realized I wanted to experience as much as I could and not limit myself to just one occupation. By becoming a filmmaker, you get a taste of everything you put into your films."

"No one becomes a film studies major if they don't love it," she adds.

Diop's time at Pitt has helped her to incorporate her love of film-making into the other things she loves: culture, global studies, and African studies. "I was able to take my love of film and connect it to those things and tailor my learning experience to my needs and wants," she says. "From my classes and research, I've also learned the importance of patience and flexibility. Not everything works exactly the way you want it to the first time nor does it necessarily come out immediately."

She continues, "The most rewarding experiences I've had at Pitt are experiences where I've been able to share what I've done with other people. It takes a lot of courage to follow your dreams. It's not easy. I appreciate that I've had many opportunities across different platforms ... to share and perhaps inspire someone else or guide them to also follow their dreams."

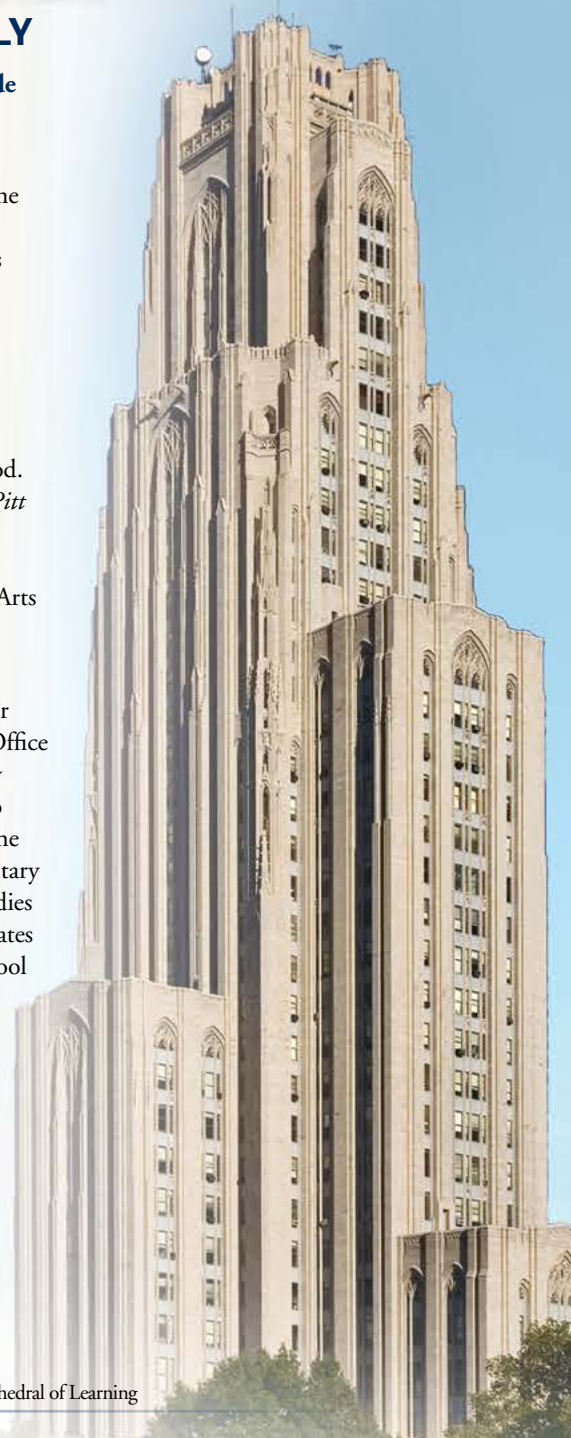
What is Diop's advice to Pitt students? "Follow your gut, take calculated risks, stay the course, and enjoy life while you're at it," she says. "There's a reason why you love the things that you do, and if you work hard, the universe conspires with you to make great things happen!"



## ENGAGING STUDENTS COMPLETELY

The Film Studies Program fully engages students both inside and outside the classroom.

- More than 85 percent of film studies majors complete an **internship**, and many do multiple internships during their time at Pitt. The program has a dedicated internship coordinator, hosts a film-specific internship panel each fall, and coordinates internship workshops and meet and greets with alumni. With so many films and television shows basing their production in Pittsburgh, film studies internships are versatile and practical. Visit [filmstudies.pitt.edu/internship-options](http://filmstudies.pitt.edu/internship-options) to learn more.
- Film studies students participate in **clubs and organizations** like UPTV (Pitt's own television station) and Pitt in Hollywood. Students also are involved in the production of the TV show *Pitt Tonight*. While only in its second season, *Pitt Tonight* received two College/University Awards nominations in 2016 from the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, the same organization behind the Emmy Awards.
- Film studies students have many opportunities to participate in **undergraduate research**. Many students receive funding for original film scholarship and short film production from the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity each year. Last year, more than 50 students participated in two research projects in honor of Pitt's Year of the Humanities in the University: Carl Kurlander led students in creating a documentary about the Year of the Humanities, and Dana Och directed *Bodies in Motion*, which brought together film students, undergraduates from the natural sciences, and graduate students from the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences to create artwork aimed at rethinking movement and differently abled bodies.
- The film studies major consists of 12 courses and the minor of six courses. Many students double major, often working also in the sciences, English writing, psychology, communication, theatre arts, and history. Once students complete the few core courses required for the major, they can **tailor the curriculum** to their individual interests.



The Cathedral of Learning

## MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

# Debunking the Myths of Undergraduate Research

Through the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity, students can begin conducting hands-on research as early as their freshman year. In the spring of 2016, more than 400 undergraduates performed research with expert faculty members from across all fields and disciplines.

Yet there are many misconceptions about undergraduate research, and students may not understand the breadth of research opportunities available at Pitt. Amanda Gamwo, a current sophomore studying natural sciences, is a previous First Experiences in Research (FE-R) participant who debunked those misconceptions in a June 2016 article published in *PittEd*, the School of Education's online magazine. I'd like to share her powerful observations. Gamwo writes:

Through this project, a number of my previous misconceptions about research were clarified.

### **Misconception #1: The FE-R program is for students needing to complete research requirements for graduate school.**

The First Experiences in Research program helps students attain valuable skills even if they aren't interested in graduate school. At first, I was interested in the program to list on my résumé for graduate school applications. However, I realized that the program had more to offer than checking off a box on my checklist. In the FE-R course, I learned useful research skills, such as how to write an elevator speech and abstract. The one-to-one meetings with my faculty mentor proved more rewarding. She was very collaborative and taught me how to use Excel to code data and how to find statistical significance in research. I had learned about statistical significance in a psychology course, but now I have seen this applied in actual research.

### **Misconception #2: Students should choose research projects in their major.**

While it may be convenient to choose a research project that directly relates to your major, students can learn from research in other areas. I am planning to complete the natural sciences pre-med degree program. However, I chose this project partly because I believe education opens doors to opportunities, so it is important that high school students attain the writing level needed to move onto college and other professions. I had a lot of help with writing and reading in primary and secondary school. However, not everyone is as fortunate as me. I also realized that writing is an interdisciplinary skill that should be mastered regardless of one's major.

### **Misconception #3: Research is focused a lot on "doing" rather than reading and writing.**

When I envisioned research, my imagination turned more to the hands-on activities I would do rather than the critical thinking, writing, and reading aspects of research. Data coding was a large part of the research but I also needed to read related studies. In addition, I needed to write an abstract for the project and a research poster.

### **Misconception #4: Most research projects are on science and health issues.**

Although it seems like a lot of the research we hear about focuses on science and health issues, I learned that many research projects aim to solve educational issues. In my research project, the educational issue was improving writing instruction for high school students.

As Gamwo's experience illustrates, research opportunities are available across all disciplines and majors and may involve a wide range of activities. No matter what a student is studying or where his or her interests lie, there's a research project that can benefit him or her. To learn more about FE-R and other research opportunities, visit [asundergrad.pitt.edu/our](http://asundergrad.pitt.edu/our).

### **Professor John A. Twyning**

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies



Associate Professor Amanda Godley (left) and student Amanda Gamwo collaborating on research

## FACULTY PROFILE

# A Conversation with Dana Och

Dana Och is a lecturer in the Department of English and Film Studies Program. She serves as the film studies undergraduate program assistant and the supervisor of the course Seminar in Composition: Film and Introduction to Film. She writes frequently on the topics of genre, Irish cinema, and horror, including publications on Neil Jordan, the postcolonial zombie comedy, *Twin Peaks*, and the neopostmodern horror film. She coedited the anthology *Transnational Horror Across Visual Media: Fragmented Bodies*.

### **What motivates you to teach?**

"I love to make connections with students and exchange ideas with them. I think that most people have more knowledge about media than they realize, so I aim to help them discover, embrace, and refine their knowledge, their insight, and their critiques."

### **What do you want your students to remember most about the classes they have taken with you?**

"My students learn a lot in class. I don't drill them about details or dates, but rather we work to understand a concept holistically. I teach them to critically think about everything around them. Former students frequently tell me that they miss being able to engage so deeply with a text after they graduate. They also most remember how much I invest in them as students and their success and how much I care about the topics that I teach."

### **What is it that excites you about film studies, and when did your interest in this area begin?**

"I came to film studies from literature; I started my graduate work thinking about modern revisions of Shakespeare's plays. I love film studies for the ways in which so many disciplines come together through media, whether literature, art, psychology, biology, history, neurology, or anthropology. This makes it especially fulfilling to teach undergraduates, as we see such a wide variety of student interests in any given class."

"My interest in film was always there; I remember my uncle acting out Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* after holiday dinners or my aunts jesting with a line from *Mommie Dearest* when I complained that life was unfair. My whole family processed events through references to the cinema. We bonded and formed a community by watching films on television together."

### **In addition to teaching, you work with students on research projects. Can you elaborate on that experience?**

"I began to work with undergraduates in research a few years ago when the film studies program decided to focus more on production opportunities for our students. We started to sponsor specific projects aimed at developing not only the skills of the students but a sense of collaboration between the students themselves with background support from faculty. Additionally, I work frequently with individual students on their independent research projects. The University is very interested in a range of independent research projects, so I encourage and mentor interested students from initial concept through application and final papers. I would encourage other faculty members to mentor their students in research as well through the various opportunities provided by the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity. Students learn how to pursue their own opportunities and interests through these experiences; given that the students often work independently, it is a major learning experience for their responsibility and time management skills, which are both so important to larger success."

### **What advice would you give to parents whose undergraduate student may be interested in film studies?**

"With their hard and soft skills, our students learn how to work independently and collaboratively; how to write clearly and effectively with evidence-based arguments; how to communicate in speech, writing, and sound; and how to be driven and responsible. They can do internships in a large variety of companies, and they can work on college productions on campus. This stress on experiential learning and real-world experience builds a film student's résumé with an eye to the future. Humanities majors—with their critical thinking and innovative problem-solving skills—are in high demand, as many newspaper articles are reporting. The current job market requires candidates who are adaptable and receptive to changing landscapes. Our major not only encourages this type of varied skill acquisition, but the relatively low number of required credits allows for a film major to be paired with another of the student's interests (if he or she so chooses) while still taking only four years to complete his or her degree."

## Film Studies Program Launches Pittsburgh-London Film Program



The Pittsburgh-London Film Program, new for fall 2016, is designed to give students a well-rounded and in-depth look at the art of filmmaking. The program links the history and analysis of film to practical production in a series of innovative courses that combine criticism and creation. Throughout the program, students study under the direction of members of the London and Hollywood film communities, including Distinguished University Professor of English Colin MacCabe, the executive director of the Pitt in London program.

In addition to work in the classroom, students also have access to the Derek Jarman Lab at Birkbeck, University of London, giving them access to software and equipment that is second to none in the United Kingdom. Students also attend in-person workshops with industry professionals in London.

The program is open to all majors at Pitt. Students take four film courses and two masters classes. All students develop a short film from start to finish during their study abroad experience. The program is intended to provide students with the skills they need to make a short film, regardless of major. For example, a neuroscience student can learn how to make a short film that highlights his or her research interests when applying for a grant or developing a Web site.

To learn more about the Pittsburgh-London Film Program, visit [abroad.pitt.edu/plfp](http://abroad.pitt.edu/plfp).

# Pitt Launches Center for African American Poetry and Poetics

Last spring, the University of Pittsburgh officially launched the Center for African American Poetry and Poetics (CAAPP), the first center of its kind in the nation. The mission of CAAPP is to highlight, promote, and share the poetry and poetic work of African American writers.

CAAPP emerged out of a brainstorming session with Pitt poetry professors Terrance Hayes, Dawn Lundy Martin, and Yona Harvey. This meeting was initiated by English department chair and professor Don Bialostosky, who wanted to discuss how the department might best celebrate the presence of these three acclaimed African American poets on its faculty. In short, CAAPP was brought into being by the dynamic energy of brainstorming and true collaboration, which now sit at the heart of CAAPP's philosophy and work.

CAAPP is a creative think tank for African American and African diasporic poetries and poetics. The center provides a space for innovative collaboration among writers, scholars, and other artists thinking through African American poetics as a field that investigates the contemporary moment as it is impacted by historical, artistic, and social repressions and their respondent social justice movements.

The center will host lectures, workshops, and other events. CAAPP supports individual writers, artists, scholars, and others from the Pittsburgh region and across the country, providing a space to collaborate, discuss, and create. The center also aims to create an archive of African American poetry and related resources.

Hayes and Martin serve as the center's codirectors. The center is housed on the fourth floor of Pitt's Cathedral of Learning. This location also will someday be the home of the Dream Space, an initiative of CAAPP now in its beginning stages that will provide a creative space for fellows and residents to work individually and collaboratively on their projects.



Pictured from left to right at the Celebrating Black Poetry & 20 Years of Cave Canem event in June are Janera Solomon, executive director of the Kelly Strayhorn Theater; Lauren Russell, CAAPP assistant director; poet Camille Rankine; Toi Derricotte, professor emeritus; and Terrance Hayes and Dawn Lundy Martin, CAAPP codirectors.

## Reflections on Research: Cassidy's Story

*Cassidy Davis (BA '16) participated in the London and New York City field studies programs offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity during her time at Pitt. As part of her research on gender stereotypes in American and British television sitcoms, Davis conducted an in-person interview with The New York Times' foremost television and film critic, interviewed industry leaders in London, and produced an 80-minute documentary on her work. Today, Davis lives in Los Angeles, Calif., where she is pursuing an acting career.*

"When I came to Pitt, I didn't think of myself as a researcher or consider that I would have any opportunity to do something research related. However, the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (OUR) has shown me that you don't need to be a biology major to do research at this university and that research doesn't have to mean looking at brain cells or finding a cure to cancer; research can mean something as simple as just getting to study a topic of your choice for an entire term, year, etc. This process has changed my perspective not only on research but also on what an academic experience can truly be, and it has impacted my time here as a student tremendously.

"Doing research at Pitt hasn't just changed my life academically; it also has changed how I view media, culture, and society, and it has influenced what I want to do with my future career. My research focused on analyzing gender stereotypes in British and American family-based sitcoms. I have learned a powerful life skill in that I now am able to analyze what I am experiencing instead of just blindly absorbing the media and culture around me.

"This research also has changed my future career because it has taught me that I definitely want to work in the media/entertainment industry in the future. I loved every moment that I was able to read and learn more about this industry as a whole, and I realized that I have a passion for it that I want to continue to pursue after college. This is something I never would have potentially realized if I had not been given the opportunity to explore something on my own, something that genuinely interested me, in order to see where it could take me.

"Even though my research is now complete, I think this is a topic I will always be interested in and, as a result, will always keep researching in some context. It has changed my worldview, it has changed who I am as a student and a person, and it has helped me to realize all the potential opportunities that exist in the world. Completing research through OUR has been a life-changing experience and a true highlight of my college career. The memories and friendships I made along the way are something I will cherish forever, and the professional connections and life skills are something that I will carry with me as I move forward in my future career."

See Davis' documentary at [asundergrad.pitt.edu/our/london-field-studies-videos](http://asundergrad.pitt.edu/our/london-field-studies-videos).

Kilian Liptrot (BA '16) and Davis in London



## TIPS FOR CHOOSING A MAJOR

By Maggie Stiffler,  
Dietrich School Peer Advisor

For some students, choosing a major is natural and simple; for others, it can be the hardest and most stressful process they have ever encountered. For me, it was the latter. How I came to the decision to study music composition while maintaining my goal of going to medical school is still a small mystery to me. As I go into my junior year here at the University of Pittsburgh, my academic life seems to be falling into place, and I'm excited to share my experiences with you.

The plan was always medical school for me—graduate high school, go to my dream college, attend med school, and then live out my life as a doctor. It all seemed fine and dandy until someone told me I needed to actually pick a major because premed is just a set of prerequisite courses. Biology and chemistry just didn't feel right for me, and I was under the impression that I needed to stick with what others were doing. I'm here to tell you that you can pursue anything that you wish! When I realized that music was my real passion and finally accepted it as a path for myself, everything became easier. I was excited to learn again.

Here are my tips for choosing a major:

1. Choose something that you're going to enjoy taking many courses in. That sounds obvious, but it's surprising how many students dislike their majors.
2. Don't focus only on the career you want after college. I want to be a doctor, yet I'm studying music. Majors don't define careers!
3. If you're at a complete loss, just take some courses. Explore different areas and try to find your passion. You'll never know whether or not you love astrophysics or religious studies until you try it!
4. No matter what, don't worry. Remember that many students are undecided or will change their majors along the way, and that's perfectly fine.

For parents, I have just one tip for helping your student to choose a major: Just support him or her. In some ways, choosing a major is choosing a life, and that should be completely up to him or her. Your student just needs to know that you are in his or her corner, rooting for him or her, no matter what.

**About the Peer Advising Program:** Peer advisors—returning Pitt students who guide and support newer students as they settle in at Pitt—are an integral part of the personalized advising experience offered in the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. Peer advisors share their own personal experiences to encourage students to make the most of their time at Pitt. They demonstrate how students can explore the curriculum in interesting and unique ways; answer questions and make referrals (from the scoop on a specific course to the inside story on a major to career exploration) so that new students can make informed and positive academic choices; and help students to understand and navigate academic policies, procedures, and systems.

You can read more about exploring options in choosing a major at [mystery.pitt.edu/time-yes-and](http://mystery.pitt.edu/time-yes-and) and [yourworld.pitt.edu](http://yourworld.pitt.edu).

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Advising Center .....	412-624-6444
Academic Resource Center .....	412-648-7920
Office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies .....	412-624-6480
Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity .....	412-624-6828
Office of Freshman Programs .....	412-624-6844
Office of Student Records .....	412-624-6776

[asundergrad.pitt.edu](http://asundergrad.pitt.edu)

Questions or concerns? E-mail us at [pittpride@as.pitt.edu](mailto:pittpride@as.pitt.edu).

# University of Pittsburgh

**Kenneth P. Dietrich School  
of Arts and Sciences**  
Office of Undergraduate Studies  
140 Thackeray Hall  
139 University Place  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
PERMIT NO. 511

## Denman, Lotz, and Sved Win Bellet Awards

(Reprinted with permission from the April 11, 2016, issue of the *Pitt Chronicle*)

The University of Pittsburgh's Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences has named three faculty members winners of the 2016 Tina and David Bellet Teaching Excellence Award.

Established in 1998 and endowed in 2008 by Dietrich School alumnus David Bellet (A&S '67) and his wife, Tina, the award recognizes outstanding and innovative undergraduate teaching in the Dietrich School.

Awardees, who each receive a one-time cash prize of \$6,000, are honored during a reception and dinner. The 2016 award recipients follow.

**Lorraine Denman** is the coordinator of the Italian Language Program in the Department of French and Italian Languages and Literatures. She earned her PhD from Pitt in applied linguistics and second language acquisition in 2013, and currently teaches Italian language, literature, and linguistics classes.

**Andrew Lotz** is a lecturer and academic advisor in the Department of Political Science. He is also assistant dean of social sciences for the Dietrich School's Office of Undergraduate Studies. Lotz earned his PhD from Pitt in 2009. He teaches courses in political theory, democratic theory, theories of justice, and pop culture and political theory.

**Alan Sved** is a professor and chair of Pitt's Department of Neuroscience. He earned his PhD from MIT in 1980. His research interests include central neural control of the autonomic nervous system and cardiovascular function, as well as the neurobiology of nicotine pharmacology.

Tina and David Bellet present awards (from top to bottom) to Lorraine Denman, Andrew Lotz, and Alan Sved.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### October

- 17** Fall break for students (no classes)
- 18** Students follow Monday class schedule
- 31** Spring term 2017 enrollment appointments begin

### November

- 11** Deadline to apply for April 2017 graduation; last day for spring term 2017 enrollment appointments
- 12** Spring term 2017 open enrollment period begins
- 23–27** Thanksgiving recess for students (no classes)
- 24–25** Thanksgiving recess for faculty and staff (University closed)

### December

- 9** Last day for undergraduate day classes
- 12–17** Final examination period for undergraduate day classes
- 17** Fall term ends; official date for degrees awarded in fall term
- 18** Residence halls close
- December 18–January 3, 2017** Winter recess for students (no classes)
- December 23–January 2, 2017** Winter recess for faculty and staff

For the online academic calendar, go to [provost.pitt.edu/information-on/calendar.html](http://provost.pitt.edu/information-on/calendar.html).

**DON'T FORGET** to complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**! **The FAFSA became available on October 1, 2016**, for the 2017-18 academic year. This is the most important form to complete in order to qualify for almost all types of financial aid. Visit [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov) to access the online application and many helpful tips.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
**THE PITT PRIDE**

Fall 2016

**Publisher**  
John A. Twyning

**Photography**  
John Conroy  
Haley Nelson  
University Center for  
Teaching and Learning  
University Staff

**Contributing Writers**  
Cassidy Davis  
Rebecca Farabaugh  
Maggie Stiffler  
Z Taylor

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, as fully explained in Policy 07-01-03, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. The University also prohibits and will not engage in retaliation against any person who makes a claim of discrimination or harassment or who provides information in such an investigation. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University's mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs and activities\*. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs, please contact: University of Pittsburgh; Office of Diversity and Inclusion; Katie Pope, Title IX Coordinator, and Cheryl Ruffin, 504 and ADA Coordinator; 500 Craig Hall; 200 South Craig Street; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-648-7860.

For complete details on the University's Nondiscrimination Policy, please refer to Policy 07-01-03. For information on how to file a complaint under this policy, please refer to Procedure 07-01-03.

\*Except where exempt by federal or state laws.

Published in cooperation with the Department of Communications Services. DCS108986-1016