

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Graduate Kristie Teorsky Reflects on CGS .....	2	Program Spotlight: CGS Career Counseling Service .....	3
Education Nourishes Student's Soul .....	2	Letter from the CGS Alumni Society President .....	3
Student Spotlight: Yadhu Dhital .....	2	Alumni News and Achievements .....	4
Alumni Spotlight: Dawn Gunning .....	3	Word on the Street .....	4

# inside cgs

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH • COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES

SUMMER 2015

*Pictured above: Yadhu Dhital  
Read his story on page 2.*

## Sherry Miller Brown Retires after 45 Years of Service to Pitt



After 45 years of dedicated service to the University of Pittsburgh, **Sherry Miller Brown (BA '78)**, director of the McCarl Center for Nontraditional Student Success at the College of General Studies (CGS), retired at the end of May. While her office is now bare of the many awards, photos (including a photo of her in *Rolling Stone* magazine), and seasonal decorations that became her trademark, Brown has left quite a legacy on Pitt's campus.

Throughout her career, she taught and counseled thousands of nontraditional students who looked up to her as their role model, as Brown was a nontraditional student herself. Colleagues throughout the University continue to hold her in high esteem as a visionary in the field of nontraditional student education. All have come to know Brown as a person of integrity with a calming demeanor, always putting the success of students first in her mind. Education was the foundation for all that she did, completing her undergraduate and graduate degrees while working full time at the University.

Brown's first connection to the University was early in her childhood, when she participated in Jonas Salk's first polio trials as one of the group of children known as the "Polio Pioneers." Little did Brown know the instrumental role Pitt would eventually play in her life.

### Making Dreams Come True

Brown began her career at Pitt in 1970 working in the Graduate School of Business, now the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, and in 1976

transferred to CGS. Not long after she began at CGS, she recognized the need of support programming for adult learners. In 1980, she wrote a proposal for the construction of a student support center. While it passed through many deans' hands and garnered interest from senior administrators, Brown's proposal gathered dust for many years because of funding shortages.

However, Brown never gave up on her dream. Together with the generous support of CGS alumnus F. James McCarl III (BA '73) and his wife, Carol, Pitt established the McCarl Center for Nontraditional Student Success in 2002 in order to better address the unique needs of students who balance academic ambitions with family and work-related responsibilities. The McCarl Center continues to offer career counseling services; four instructional courses; including Mastering the University,

which Brown designed and wrote; extensive degree programming; and math tutoring.

"The opening of the McCarl Center felt like we had just built the Taj Mahal," remembers Brown. "I was so thrilled the dream I had held on to for so many years finally came to fruition, thanks to Jim McCarl."

### Student Government Programming

As an undergraduate in the early 1970s, Brown realized that while students at Pitt were paying an activities fee, there were very few programs on campus strictly dedicated to adult learners. She and a group of students took up the cause and, through their persistence, convinced the administration to separate the activities fees for nontraditional students. Those fees are now held by the CGS Student Government, which provides special events and programs throughout the year designed specifically for nontraditional students.

"I am proud to say that CGS Student Government is the only student government for nontraditional students in the entire country that has a separate account for student activities and programs," says Brown.

### Internationally Recognized

Brown has traveled extensively across the United States and Europe to speak about the outstanding programs offered through CGS and has written numerous papers and

spoken at conferences touting nontraditional education. She has been recognized nationally for her work in this area, particularly for her programming during National Nontraditional Student Week. In an effort to promote student work, Brown developed a photography exhibit showcasing the photographic work of students. Most recently, Brown worked with the Department of Athletics to put together Champions of Pitt, an exhibit featuring photos spanning Pitt's athletic history from the 1936 Olympics to the 2014 NFL draft.

### Student Ambassador Program

In 2012, Brown launched the Peer Mentoring Program, designed to provide opportunities for new students to engage with current students as well as provide guidance and support during the first year at Pitt. The goal for this program, now called the Student Ambassador Program, is to ease the transition into Pitt's culture and administrative procedures, welcome each new student to the CGS community, and help new students to access University resources.

What will Brown miss the most from her 45 years at the University of Pittsburgh? Without hesitation, she answers, "The students."

"Acquiring a college education is a dream come true for many of our students," says Brown. "So, while I am definitely proud of my accomplishments over the past 45 years at Pitt, there is nothing that is as rewarding and life fulfilling as when a student reaches out to me and tells me that I have really helped him or her to find his or her dream."

In recognition of Brown's many contributions to Pitt and to its students, CGS and the University established a named fund in her honor, that supports the student and alumni programming of the McCarl Center. Gifts to the Sherry Miller Brown Fund for Nontraditional Students may be made by visiting [giveto.pitt.edu/millerbrown](http://giveto.pitt.edu/millerbrown).



*A special award was presented to Sherry Miller Brown, retired director of the McCarl Center for Nontraditional Student Success, for her 45 years of dedication to the College of General Studies at the CGS Student Government's Excellence Awards ceremony in April.*

## Graduate Kristie Teorsky Reflects on CGS

Kristie Teorsky (BA '15) was the graduating class speaker at the CGS graduation ceremony in April 2015. While at Pitt, she was a member of the cross-country and track teams. This summer, she begins a 12-month graduate program in the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.



"From the moment I decided I was going to college, I wanted to attend the University of Pittsburgh. I thought that in my perfect life I would apply, get accepted, continue to maintain a 4.0 GPA, and graduate, and after that, my life would continue to be perfect.

"What people don't tell you when you are going through the college process is that it is not as glamorous as that, and nothing is perfect. You will trip and fall multiple times.

"My first fall came when I realized that I did not meet the requirements for admission as a freshman into the University of Pittsburgh. I had one option left that would enable me to easily commute and still have hopeful dreams of attending Pitt: Butler County Community College. Community college? What will people think of me? That was the last place I thought I would end up. Little did I know, this is where I would begin to grow up.

"My second fall came when I transferred to Pitt to begin my junior year. Although it was exhausting, the one thing that I will take away from the transfer process is that community college acted as a stepping-stone. It introduced me to college-level academics without the overwhelming university experience.

"After I declared my major in English writing in the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, I learned that not all classes from a community college would apply to specific degree programs. The specificity of the English writing major helped me to realize that I wanted to focus on more than just English writing. I wanted to be an English teacher, so what were my options? I started searching and landed on the CGS Web site. This is where I found uplifting words: pre-education option. Thank you, CGS.

"Through walk-in hours or fate, I connected with the person who would eventually become my new advisor, Jessica Roscoe. There is one word that could sum up the way meeting with Jessica always made me feel: hopeful. I'm not sure how many times I asked her to confirm that I would graduate on time. Her reply was always a reassuring yes, and she was absolutely correct. Thank you, CGS."

## Education Nourishes Student's Soul

College of General Studies graduate and Chancellor's Evening Scholarship recipient **Roberto Smiraglio** (BA '14) traveled many miles to complete his college degree. Born and raised in Italy, Smiraglio moved to the United States in 2005 when his future wife was accepted into a master's program at the University of Pittsburgh. He left family; friends; his home country; his native language; and, more importantly, his comfort zone to make the 4,000-mile leap into a new culture.

Smiraglio is now the general manager of Narcisi Winery, located north of Pittsburgh.

"I learned about CGS in 2008 and found that it was the perfect alternative for me. I was working 45-50 hours per week, so I needed something flexible and classes that I could schedule around my work commitment. My degree represented an advance in my career, because I was able to take classes like business management, marketing, and communications, which were extremely relevant to the work I was doing."

Unlike when he was a student studying at the University of Bologna, Smiraglio loved the overall feeling of being part of a smaller environment.

"At CGS, I felt like a person who could get help at any time. Being exposed to a variety of subjects after the initial difficulties really opened my mind

and made me realize the importance of continuing my education at this later stage in my life. It fed my soul."

Smiraglio received the Chancellor's Evening Scholarship, which covered his tuition until he graduated. "The scholarship made it possible to continue my education without worrying about the financial responsibility. Also, having the obligation to maintain a high GPA pushed me to excel in every class."

The Chancellor's Evening Scholarship is the most prestigious academic award that a CGS student can receive and is given to students who demonstrate outstanding academic performance, intellectual curiosity, and a passion for learning.



Roberto Smiraglio

To learn more about supporting CGS and its student scholarship fund, visit [cgs.pitt.edu/support](http://cgs.pitt.edu/support).

### STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Yadhu Dhital: Overcoming Challenges

**Yadhu Dhital** recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science in natural sciences (premed track) and a Certificate in Conceptual Foundation of Medicine from CGS. After taking a year off, he hopes to apply to Pitt's School of Medicine. While the future shines brightly for Dhital, he had to overcome many obstacles before receiving his undergraduate degree.

As a Bhutanese child growing up in a refugee camp near Nepal, he was surrounded by suffering and death from diseases like dysentery and anemia. He received some schooling at the camp, but resources were scarce and the education he did receive was subpar. Dhital instinctively knew education would be his ticket to a better life, so he worked hard during his time in Nepal.

In 2009, he and his family were finally able to leave the refugee camp with the help of the International Organization for Migration, and they settled in Western Pennsylvania. Dhital received his high school diploma in 2011 and was accepted to the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. During his sophomore year, he studied abroad, visiting 14 countries on four different continents.

In 2013, he transferred to the Pittsburgh campus and discovered the natural sciences premed track offered by CGS.

"Through this major, I had an opportunity to take diverse natural science classes from different departments while also having the freedom to take other nonscience classes," said Dhital.

As a Brackenridge Research Fellowship recipient, he also conducted extensive research on mental health and sleep among Bhutanese refugees who settled in Pittsburgh.

While the road may have been difficult, Dhital has accomplished much. Until he applies to medical school, Dhital will be working as a government fellow with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

"Through this fellowship program, I will be working on projects that aim to improve and develop culturally appropriate behavioral health services for the refugee and immigrant populations that have been resettled in Pittsburgh."



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Dawn Gunning (BA '90)

**Dawn Gunning** owns Gunning Inc., a mechanical contracting and sheet metal fabrication company, with her husband, Mike Gunning. In addition, they own two property management companies and a diamond brokerage business. Prior to starting Gunning Inc. in 2005, Dawn Gunning was president and owner of American Boiler and Chimney Co., an industrial contracting company founded in 1993 by her father, Jerry Kaelin.

#### Why did you choose to pursue a degree from CGS at the University of Pittsburgh?

"I chose to attend CGS because the school offered the degree program I wanted to study with the most flexibility of course scheduling. It was extremely important to me to earn a degree without incurring college debt, so I worked full time during the day at CGS and attended classes at night and on Saturdays."

#### Did you have a favorite class?

"The one class that had the most profound impact on me was a public speaking course I took in my sophomore year. At the time, I was interested in earning a degree in psychology and was looking for an elective to fill my



schedule. Although it was outside my comfort zone, I decided to take the public speaking class. I developed valuable skills and gained confidence in speaking in front of groups. After taking that class, I changed my major from psychology to communication."

#### How did your CGS degree prepare you for your career?

"After graduating from CGS, I pursued a career in the training and development field. Not only did my degree prepare me for that field, but it also had a positive impact in all aspects of my life. I now own and operate several companies and believe that having strong communication skills has enabled me to be successful in my career."

#### What is your advice to current CGS students?

"Work hard. You are responsible for your own success. Recognize and seize opportunities that come your way."

#### What do Pitt and the College of General Studies mean to you?

"Everything! I have very fond memories of working for and attending CGS. I made many lifelong friends and gained valuable skills and experiences that have served me well in business as well as in my personal life."



Brianna McMeekin

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### CGS Career Counseling Service: From Start to Finish

Through a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Career Development and Placement Assistance, the College of General Studies (CGS) provides students with a dedicated career consultant who is available to assist with all aspects of career planning, from choosing a major and defining a career path to finding an internship or a job.

**Brianna McMeekin**, a licensed professional counselor, encourages all CGS students to schedule an appointment with her as soon as possible. During individual strategy sessions, students can explore their goals, discover their strengths, and make decisions about their career and employment options or seek assistance in making a career transition.

For students who are not able to come to McMeekin's office in Wesley W. Posvar Hall, McMeekin offers distance career counseling via Skype. This service provides great face-to-face

interaction and support without requiring students to come to campus.

"The motto continually upheld by the career development and placement office is that we offer students career counseling services from start to finish," says McMeekin. "For students who are undecided about their major and career path, CGS offers the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment personality test as well as the Strong Interest Inventory. Through these tests, students are able to learn more about their interests and what motivates them as well as discover where they would feel most comfortable in the work environment."

McMeekin offers workshops on résumé and cover letter writing, networking, interviewing, and graduate school preparation. She also provides students with valuable information on internship and full-time employment opportunities.

To learn more about career counseling services, visit [cgs.pitt.edu/student-services/career-services](http://cgs.pitt.edu/student-services/career-services).

## Letter from the CGS Alumni Society President

### Dear CGS alumni,

Happy summer! This is the time of the year when we look forward to welcoming a new class into the CGS Alumni Society and Pitt Alumni Association.

As your representative to the Pitt Alumni Association, I am pleased to report that the members of the School and College/Regional Campus Committee continue to meet and explore ways in which the many alumni groups and councils at the University can collaborate to benefit all Pitt alumni. We have seen several examples of jointly held events, and the feedback has been very positive.

The committee recently held its second annual round table, collaborating with members and staff to discuss future initiatives. I am very excited about where the committee is heading, and I believe that the outcome will result in the best

use of alumni association resources and greater engagement for all Pitt alumni. In addition, the Pitt Alumni Association held its annual Alumni Awards Presentation and Gala on Friday, May 15, with CGS alumni well represented at the awards ceremony.

It is not too early to mark your calendars for Homecoming weekend 2015, scheduled for October 10-12 when the Pitt Panthers will host the University of Virginia Cavaliers. Make sure to check the alumni Web site [alumni.pitt.edu](http://alumni.pitt.edu) and your e-mail for more details!

I encourage all CGS alumni to frequently visit the alumni Web site as well as the LinkedIn-based Pitt Career Network (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Pitt-Career-Network-66406/about>), which provides many opportunities for career search and interaction.

It is my great hope that all alumni, new and old, remain connected to the University of Pittsburgh through the Pitt Alumni Association and the CGS Alumni Society. As always, I welcome your comments and can be reached at [bmountjoy@alumni.pitt.edu](mailto:bmountjoy@alumni.pitt.edu).

Thank you, and hail to Pitt!  
**Bruce D. Mountjoy (BA '91)**



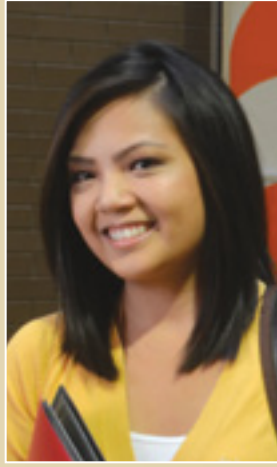
Bruce Mountjoy and retired McCarl Center Director Sherry Miller Brown



Word on the Street How has CGS helped you in your career development?

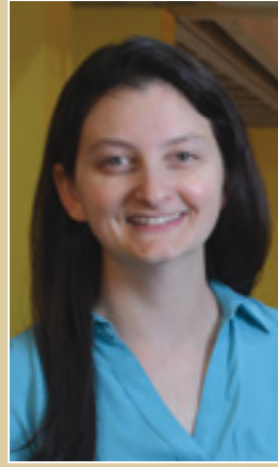
Phuong Lee McDowell
Accounting certificate student

"I recently secured a new position with PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PWC), which is a huge jump in my position. My previous work experience helped, but an accounting background is key. The CGS certificate got me noticed by PWC. This wouldn't have happened without the CGS accounting certificate."



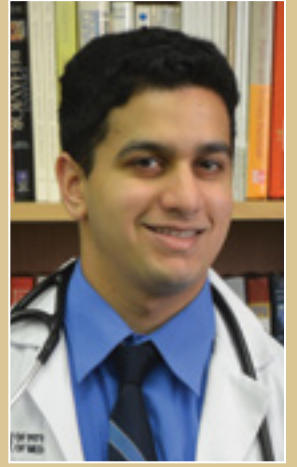
Allison Sanders
Postbaccalaureate premedical
nondegree student

"I am pursuing a complete career change with the help of CGS. I had a background in the arts, working in fundraising for 11 years. I am now seeking to study veterinary medicine and plan to begin in fall 2015."



Arpan Prabhu (BS '14)
Natural sciences (Premed option)
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine student

"I initially came to the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences as an undeclared student and then later selected economics. I began to integrate courses and found the natural sciences major through CGS. In addition, CGS study abroad scholarships made it possible for me to travel to Bolivia and conduct research on intercultural medicine and relationships."



The University of Pittsburgh is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution. Published in cooperation with the Department of Communications Services. DCS101110-0615

Contributing Writers
Pat McGrane
Bruce D. Mountjoy
Kristie Teorsky

Publisher
Christina Ruggiero
Center for Instructional Development
& Distance Education
Jim Judkis

Questions or concerns? E-mail us at cgs@pitt.edu.

inside cgs
SUMMER 2015
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH • COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES

CGS student and University of Pittsburgh staff member Teresa Lane recently was awarded the prestigious Newman Award for International Intergenerational Project Initiatives. The award supports programmatic development that enriches the lives of people in developing countries. Lane will be traveling to Bolivia in June to work with indigenous adults and children to write a trilingual children's book. Her humanitarian work extends to raising money to build a library outside Santa Cruz de la Sierra as well as other endeavors to support the community and the people of Bolivia.

AWARD RECIPIENT
TERESA LANE, NEWMAN

University of Pittsburgh homecoming weekend will be held October 10-12, 2015. Visit alumni.pitt.edu/homecoming to learn more and stay tuned for details about CGS home-coming events!

SAVE THE DATE:
HOMECOMING 2015

courses to adults 50 and better—recently received a second \$1 million endowment from the San Francisco, Calif., based Bernard Osher Foundation.

The University of Pittsburgh Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)—which is housed in CGS and offers a wide array of

OLLI AT PITT RECEIVES
MILLION-DOLLAR ENDOWMENT

opportunities for people to improve their lives. He was also a strong believer in education and the valuable benefits that an education could provide. It is in this spirit that his children established this fund in his name. They want to continue Novosel's good work and to provide opportunities for nontraditional students to pursue their passions and achieve their dreams. Gifts to the Anthony G. Novosel Memorial Student Support Fund may be made by visiting giveto.pitt.edu.

On hand to celebrate the announcement that the Bernard Osher Foundation awarded OLLI at Pitt a second \$1 million endowment are (from left to right) Christina Ruggiero, associate dean, College of General Studies; N. John Cooper, Bettye J. and Ralph E. Bailey Dean of Arts and Sciences; Jennifer Engel, director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute; and Kathy Humphrey, senior vice chancellor for engagement and chief of staff.



The College of General Studies is proud to announce the establishment of the Anthony G. Novosel Memorial Student Support Fund to aid in the academic success of nontraditional students. Novosel was the father of Tony Novosel, undergraduate advisor and senior lecturer in Pitt's Department of History.

NEWS IN BRIEF
NOVOSEL MEMORIAL
STUDENT FUND

Throughout his life, Anthony Novosel's philanthropic and personal endeavors created