



# Environmental Science and Sustainability Department Newsletter

*September 2020*

## Congrats Professor Pearce!



Staff Photo provided by Allegheny Website

For the students who had the chance to meet Kelly Pearce during her time as an assistant professor, her promotion to an official tenure track professor will come as no surprise. From her expertise within the fields of ecology and conservation, to her dedication to animals such as river otters and bats, Kelly Pearce has proved herself to be an exceptional lover of the outdoors and the sciences surrounding it, and therefore has succeeded in acquiring a permanent position in our Environmental Science and Sustainability department. I had the chance to speak with Professor Pearce about her experience as both a student and a teacher, and learned more about her background as a nature lover and her future career within Allegheny College.

Professor Pearce started as many environmental science specialists have, falling in love with the outdoors as a child and learning that such passions for wildlife could be made into a career in the early stages of her college education. Having grown up on a farm exploring with her sisters, Professor Pearce jokes that “some days my mom might be driving up and down our road looking for us, because we would be kind of hard to find.” With such a background of outdoor adventure, Professor Pearce moved on to graduate from three different universities, each time receiving a degree in environmental science related topics. Most recently she earned her PhD in marine, estuarine, and environmental science from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

As her education advanced, Pearce was able to narrow her focus from the wide world of environmental science into a focus of ecology and conservation,

eventually leading to her lifelong love of river otters. Professor Pearce has already taken advantage of the locations around Allegheny College to investigate these interesting animals including researching in the Erie National Wildlife Refuge with trail cameras to learn more about the areas the otters are using, along with their populations. I was very excited to ask about their presence in French Creek, though regrettably Pearce claims “I haven’t been able to detect them yet, but I haven’t looked that hard.” Along with her work with river otters, Pearce has been researching bats in Presque Isle National Park, a subject that has not been explored heavily in the past. Both of these projects are ongoing, and she plans to continue with student help this summer and farther into the future.

As an assistant professor, Pearce enjoyed teaching FS 201 and listening to students’ wide interpretations of the same article. Now, Professor Pearce hopes to integrate her own expertise into the research methods classes, and to provide guidance to students on their senior comps. Furthermore, Pearce is excited to further develop her upper level field ecology and conservation classes, hoping to offer a course which can allow students to experience the “whole process of science”. This coming winter, Professor Pearce will be teaching a virtual class on the coexistence of humans and carnivores.

Professor Pearce also takes advantage of the local area to pursue her many hobbies. She travels to Pittsburgh and Cleveland for live music, hikes in Allegheny National Forest, and takes her dogs on walks in the Robertson Athletic Complex. Since Kelly Pearce has already been a part of our ESS family it was only fitting to have her stay on board as a tenure track professor, and now with such longevity she can use the faculty’s resources and the enthusiasm of the students to further investigate her ongoing research.



# Welcome, Professor Byrnes!



Photo Provided by Delia Byrnes

Professor Delia Byrnes joins the Environmental Science and Sustainability Department at Allegheny College with training in the humanities and both her masters and doctoral degrees in English. She has focused much of her research on environmental humanities and is, therefore, interested

in the environment from a cultural and historical perspective. “I love environmental literature and movies and just thinking about what we can learn about ecology and the environment through those forms,” says Byrnes. She is thrilled to be a part of the Environmental Studies Department at Allegheny because she really “loves the idea of working with people who are doing such interdisciplinary work, but also with people who are really focused on working with the community and developing real world practical solutions for all kinds of environmental problems.” Byrnes plans to bring in perspectives about literary and cultural studies to not only educate students on humanities-based approaches to the environment, but also to further add to the interdisciplinary nature of the Environmental Science and Sustainability Department.

Prior to joining the Allegheny community, Byrnes has primarily focused her research on contemporary (21<sup>st</sup> century) environmental art and culture. “I am interested in cultures of energy, so places where energy, and especially, fossil fuels are extracted and how artists, activists, and writers represent or imagine alternatives to fossil fuels and how they represent injustice and imagine more just possibilities,” Byrnes added. She closely examines the ways in which people tell stories and create art about environmental issues. Byrnes plans to continue her study and discussion of environmental issues and justice in the Environmental Problem Analysis and Environmental Research Methods courses that she is teaching this semester at Allegheny. In Environmental Research Methods, her and Professor Swann-Quinn may work in collaboration with students to research, “what it would mean for the Environmental Science and Sustainability

Department to think about creating an Indigenous land acknowledgement as part of understanding environmental and land use relations with Indigenous populations from the area.” Within these courses, she hopes to help students explore and understand the intersections of social justice and the environment.

In the future, Byrnes plans to teach a course titled, “Black Environmentalisms Matter,” which will explore, primarily through cultural lenses, Black environmental traditions in the United States. She explained that she would also love to teach a general introduction to environmental humanities methods course and a course on fossil fuels in Pennsylvania. While teaching at Allegheny, Byrnes is looking forward to “the opportunity to work with students on their research projects and learn from students about projects they are doing.” She is also excited to be surrounded by Allegheny’s wonderful faculty, staff, and students. Outside of the classroom, Byrnes enjoys reading environmental sci-fi and fantasy, knitting, baking, bike riding, and going for walks. She mentioned that she is eager to get out and explore the Meadville area and experience the four seasons again.

## ESS Movie Club-

Our new faculty, Delia Byrnes and Jesse Swann-Quinn, founded a new club to discuss movies based in ESS. Every two weeks, members will vote on which movie to watch and club members are invited to share their thoughts and discuss the movie over Twitter using the hashtag: #ESSMovieClub.



Photo taken from Netflix

For their first meeting they voted to watch the movie Okja on Netflix. If you were not able to join their first meeting, you can still catch up on the discussion using the twitter hashtag and join in for their next movie!

# Welcome, Professor Swann-Quinn!



Photo Provided by Jesse Swann-Quinn

This year, not only do we welcome Professor Delia Byrnes, but also Professor Jesse Swann-Quinn! Professor Swann-Quinn is joining the Environmental Science and Sustainability department at Allegheny College with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Colgate University, an M.A. from the

University of Arizona, and a Ph.D. from Syracuse University. He is a political geographer with a focus on environmental issues and resource extraction. Professor Swann-Quinn is “excited and inspired by the perspective that work together” here at Allegheny, and specifically in the ESS department. Both his mom and his uncle graduated from Allegheny College, and while the ESS department did not exist back then, they both went into fields with an environmental focus. Because he grew up hearing about Allegheny, it felt like fate when he started his job search and found the department was hiring. He is enthusiastic about working alongside faculty in the Environmental Science and Sustainability department with knowledge in fields that he would not get to experience otherwise.

Before joining the ESS department at Allegheny, Professor Swann-Quinn spent 5 years creating wildlife documentaries. “It was so fun! I could talk for hours about [them] ... It was my dream job and I was so fortunate to have an internship out of undergrad that I just didn’t leave until they hired me,” Swann-Quinn stated. In these films he documented the research of ocean marine environments in Florida, the migratory patterns of birds along the Mississippi River, as well as other projects that led him to travel around the US. Even though creating these films was an amazing experience, he stated that he wanted to “create the knowledge, not just share the knowledge,” and knew that if he didn’t go back to school for research, he would have stayed in that field.

After going back to school, Professor Swann-Quinn worked and researched places such as the former Soviet Union, the country of Georgia, and has been to 13 different countries so far. He said that while he

wants to go back to a lot of these places to continue his work, he is most excited to go return to Nova Scotia where he spent his honeymoon.

It will come as no surprise that Professor Swann-Quinn enjoys traveling to new places. He is enthusiastic about exploring Meadville, “the communities that are here, and the environments that we live in.” He enjoys eating frozen custard at Hanks, hiking, and going on walks with his spouse, 9 month old daughter, and dogs. He and his family moved here from upstate New York so they are familiar with the weather we experience here in Meadville. Professor Swann-Quinn says that they love the snow and enjoy winter activities such as snowball fights and cross-country skiing.

As for teaching on campus, he is most excited about his Intro to ESS class (110) and the Research Methods course he is teaching with Professor Byrnes. He expressed that he is already inspired by the work his students have done and he is eager to see what they pursue in the future. In addition to these, he is keen on teaching more of the core courses, such as FS201, but also bringing in new classes to the curriculum. These include Extracting Environments, which will focus on resource extraction from a political, environmental, and historic perspective; Animal Geography, which will focus on all the ways animals shape and are involved in our daily lives and the geographies of the world around us; as well as Environmental Storytelling, which will focus on how we can convey information, how we perceive the world, and how that translates into how we care for, treat, and value the environments around us.

Through talking with Professor Jesse Swann-Quinn, he has a clear passion for teaching and for understanding the world around him. We are so excited to welcome him into the ESS family!

## Students for Environmental Action-

The SEA Club is back this semester! For now the meetings will be done virtually at their regular 7-8pm time slot on Thursdays. Email [sea@allegheny.edu](mailto:sea@allegheny.edu) to receive their email updates.





## Eric Pallant Receives the Julian Ross Teaching Award



Staff Photo provided by Allegheny Website

The ESS department would like to congratulate professor Eric Pallant, well... for being excellent! Eric was recently honored with the 2020 Julian Ross Award for Excellence in Teaching, which he has surely earned after 33 years of teaching at Allegheny. The Julian Ross Award, established by the Allegheny Alumni

Association, is presented annually to a faculty member who demonstrates excellence in teaching. It honors the memory of Julian Ross, a 1923 graduate of Allegheny who served as a professor of English at the college for 43 years and a dean of instruction from 1949 to 1966.

In and out of the classroom, professor Pallant truly embodies what it means to be an excellent teacher. He believes in the kind of participatory, reciprocal teacher-student relationship that makes Allegheny so unique. “The best teaching takes place in the discussion, with the questions where nobody has answers, with people who are willing to explore,” Pallant said in an interview. His favorite part of teaching is learning alongside his students, and for this reason, some of his favorite classes are those he teaches for the first time. His students value his friendly, casual demeanor and his constant presence as a mentor, in addition to his characteristic teaching style. “Professor Pallant is really good at stepping back and letting the learning process happen organically,” said one of his advisees, which speaks to his natural teaching ability.

Professor Pallant is perhaps best known for his timelessly fashionable footwear (he wore socks and sandals before they were cool) and his fascination with sourdough bread. He was gifted his first sourdough starter in 1988 – an 1893 vintage from the Cripple Creek Gold Rush – and what began as a hobby has turned into almost a side-career, culminating in a book on sourdough he is in the process of editing. “After a certain point,” he said with a grin, “I realized that I’ve been caring for this organism longer than I have my own children.” Pallant’s bread interests have

taken him all over the world, and allowed him to explore food and culture from an entirely unique angle.

Behind Eric’s laid-back, friendly personality is someone who has demonstrated a life-long commitment to sustainability. He has worked for the EPA, the Department of State and the Department of Energy. He has done land use planning and preservation work in Ecuador and Costa Rica. He serves to this day on countless environmental and academic advisory boards across North America and the world. His accolades are many – a Fulbright scholarship to teach at the Arava Institute in 2001, the Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence, now the Julian Ross Award, and many others. His work has been recognized around the world. Along with professor Choate and former professor Haywood, he received the Best Paper Award at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Symposium on Sustainable Development at Universities in Penang, Malaysia in recognition of the new Environmental Science and Sustainability major.

Professor Pallant joined this department in 1987 when it had only one full-time faculty member, and got to work building it from the ground up. The ESS department wouldn’t be the success it is today without him. To Eric Pallant, you are inspiring to all of us and truly deserving of this prestigious award. On behalf of the whole college, we look forward to your continued presence here, as a professor and foundational member of the ESS family!

### The Age of Nature- Online Screening and Talk Event

To launch the new Age of Nature Series on WQLN-PBS, they are holding an online screening event to watch the first episode, Wednesday October 7th. Go to [www.WQLN.org/Nature](http://www.WQLN.org/Nature) to register!



Photo taken from youtube trailer

## Elisia Wright Receives the 2020 Intel UNCF Scholarship

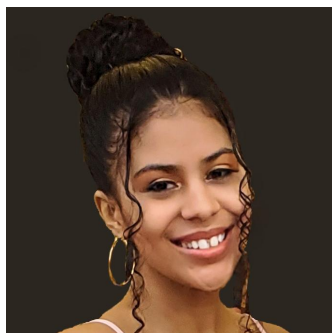


Photo Provided by Elisia Wright

Congratulations Elisia! Elisia Wright, a Senior this year at Allegheny, received the 2020 Intel UNCF Scholarship. This scholarship was established to support STEM students of color and help recognize the work they have accomplished as well as increasing their exposure to other job, research, and

networking opportunities. Along with being an Intel UNCF Scholar, Elisia is also the Social Chair of the Green Students of Color Society, and the Tamias-Grammateus of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority on Allegheny's campus.

Elisia expressed her excitement when they first notified her that she had been selected as an Intel Scholar! Even though most internships as well as other businesses were temporarily or fully closed this summer due to COVID-19, Intel was able to reach out to Elisia about taking her on board as a summer intern. She stated that her "...summer internship was an amazing experience, and it was extended to allow [her] to continue working remotely as a software engineer for Intel, throughout [her] senior year." Elisia stated that "being an Intel Scholar has enabled [her] to network with other Scholars, gain insight to new research opportunities, access to mentorship opportunities, as well as internship with Intel Corporation," and she is eager to continue her work with them.

Elisia still has amazing plans for the future, and one of those research goals is to design *An Intelligent Underwater Robot for Water Quality Testing*. She shared this goal with Intel on her scholarship application and explained that this research project would "[combine] both of [her] majors: Computer Science and Environmental Studies." Knowing that Elisia has the support of her mentors and peers from not only Allegheny, but also the other Scholars at Intel, will reinforce her passion and guide her through her professional career.

## Alumni Highlight: Lauren Wind



Photo Provided by the VT Department of Biological Systems Engineering

Lauren Wind, Allegheny College Class of 2015, recently won the 2020 Outstanding PhD award at Virginia Tech for her work in evaluating the spread of antibiotic resistance from "Farm to Fork." Lauren has a vast list of accomplishments, as well as a multitude of traits that not only contribute to her success, but also make her

a great role model for current ESS students.

Lauren Wind was an Environmental Science Major with minors in Chemistry and Spanish here at Allegheny. Lauren was originally set on becoming a doctor and was dead set on following the pre-med track. Over time she discovered an interest in environmental global change issues. In order to truly find and pursue her passion, she looked to faculty for guidance, specifically Professors Eric Pallant and Rich Bowden. She inevitably realized that not only could she pursue her passions in both environmental science and chemistry, but could do so jointly. After graduation she headed to Virginia Tech to achieve her Masters of Science in Biological Systems Engineering (BSE). There she studied the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria in agricultural soils that were applied with dairy cow manures and composts. The next step for Lauren was her PhD program where she more specifically took a look at those antibiotic resistant bacteria, but on a more long term basis from Farm to Fork.

Along the way Lauren has done some pretty amazing things in addition to stellar performances in her studies, research, and various degrees. Lauren is a member of Tau Beta Pi, Sigma Xi, and Gamma Sigma Delta national honor societies and has been an Interface of Global Change Fellow at Virginia Tech since 2017. Lauren is co-author on four journal articles and has been invited to present or speak at various conventions/webinars, including one hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



While her professional and academic achievements are outstanding, her social and community habits make her as well rounded as anyone. Lauren says “I chose to balance research and course load with service which included joining departmental and university committees and clubs, hosting football tailgates (#gohokies), and volunteering locally outside of VT affiliations. Hopefully some of the initiatives I've helped create here during my time will continue after I'm gone and the communities will be better for it. I think that's what it's all about.” She was also a graduate teaching assistant for four semesters, being praised by both faculty and students at VT.

After years of success, we can all hope to draw at least a few things from her journey that can aid us in our own. Firstly, Lauren tells us students to “apply to every opportunity that you are genuinely interested in. Skills can be taught, passion cannot be.” Secondly, “join a funded program with an assistantship, do not pay out of pocket. You have the skills necessary to be a funded graduate research assistant during graduate school no matter what field you pursue!”

Lauren understands that even after 9 ½ years of higher education, she’ll always have a lot more to learn. For now, Lauren says she’ll “start with joining a collaborative research lab that focuses on One Health (human, animal and environment interconnectedness) global change initiatives surrounding resistance, and am hopeful to lead my own research lab in the future with the same aims.” We look forward to seeing the great things she accomplishes with her research in the very near future.

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