

Welcome to the Penn State Learning newsletter for March, the month of Spring (and Spring Break!), Daylight Savings, Easter, Purim, St. Patrick's Day, Benito Juarez's birthday, and many, many tutor and receptionist birthdays. In this issue, you can learn tips to improve your study habits and increase learning. You can also learn how much longer Duane Graysay will be working here and why he does not want to be a dragon. Happy March!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **March 18 (Friday), 11 a.m.-1 p.m.: Bake Sale at the Corner Room!** The social coordinators of Penn State Learning have planned a bake sale to raise funds for the **Mid-State Literacy Council**, a local non-profit group formed to offer basic literacy, English as a Second Language, and family literacy services to adults in Centre and Clearfield counties. Writing tutors have held yearly fundraisers for the group, but this year we want to include all of Penn State Learning. If we raise enough money, we will be able to enter two teams in the **Annual Spelling Bee on April 6**. Please contact one of your coordinators or Cindy Clem (crc189) if you would like to help bake or sell.

2. **March 28 (Monday), 5-6 p.m.: Bystander Intervention Training!** Penn State Learning will offer a **Stand for State** (Bystander Intervention Training) workshop for all employees. Please watch your email for an invite so you can RSVP for this important event. Full disclosure: we cannot pay you for this training. It is optional. But we really want you to come. You will learn important and easy techniques (even for shy people!) for diffusing tense situations and perhaps preventing crime. This training will look good on your resume and may even be something you can discuss at a job interview.

3. Now is the time your supervisors start to think about staffing needs for the fall. Please let your supervisor know if you won't be returning to work in the fall or anticipate limited availability.

FEATURE STORY: Studying Smarter

Neill Johnson, Brendaly Drayton, and Cindy Clem recently attended the "Study Smarter, Not Harder" presentation by cognitive psychology Professor Josh Wede and chemistry Professor Jackie Bortiatynski. We are working on training several tutors to offer study skills tutoring (**please email Cindy, crc189, if you're interested in tutoring study skills!**), but we'd also like to share with you some of what we learned should you wish to sharpen your own study habits.

Studying techniques that DO NOT work:

- re-reading your notes
- re-writing your notes
- using flashcards to memorize key terms
- re-reading your textbook

Studying techniques that DO work:

- **generating deep questions** - asking "why" and "how" about each lecture you attend or each chapter you read will help transfer concepts to long-term memory, *even if you don't know the answers*.
- **teaching to someone else** - we learn by teaching, so pretend to be a teacher and explain the material to your friend, your parent, or your pillow.
- **creating concept maps** - write down everything you know about a topic and then start drawing lines, arrows, circles, etc. to show how it all connects. You don't even have to finish your map; the very act of *trying* to make a map increases learning.
- **removing distractions** when studying - turn off phones, close social media sites, turn off music, find a quiet place. Research shows that we *cannot* multitask even if we think we can. If you must listen to music, listen to music without words.
- **debriefing after class** by asking questions about what you just learned, attempting to teach the material, etc. Daily practice will mean that when the exam comes, you won't have to spend hours cramming the night before.

A helpful video series about studying smarter: <http://www.samford.edu/departments/academic-success-center/how-to-study>

MARCH BIRTHDAYS (so many!)

Krysta Ermine, Writing Tutor, March 3
Year: Senior



Major: Management
Time at PSL: 2 semesters
Post-grad goal: Upon graduation I have accepted a full time position with Textron in the Human Resources Leadership Development Program.
What's a special skill or talent you have? I can hula hoop for a really long time. In high school, my sister and I battled each other and we both went for 1 hour and a half but had to stop because school ended.
If you could meet a celebrity for a cup of coffee, who would it be? Definitely Ellen Degeneres. She's just so wonderful and hilarious so I think she'd be a good choice.



Ni Yang, Chinese Tutor, March 4

Year: Senior
Major: Veterinary & Bio-Medical Sciences
Time at PSL: Since October 2013
Post-grad goal: Find a job related to animal vaccine and general pharmaceutical
What makes you laugh the most? Hearing people laughing.
What was the last movie you went to? Kungfu Panda 3. I really liked it; all the Chinese cultural elements in the movie show the endeavor of the crew.
How many pillows do you sleep with? 2.5



Shannon McCulloch, Spanish Tutor, March 8

Year: Sophomore
Major: International Politics & Spanish, with a minor in Global Security
Time at PSL: 2 semesters
Post-grad goal: It's still early in the game, but I know for sure I would like to work for the government. Stay tuned for specifics.
What is one of your favorite books? 1984 is hands-down my favorite book.
If you had to describe yourself as an animal, which one would you be? I asked a friend "if I were to be described as an animal, what would I be?" She responded "a peacock."

What's your favorite zoo animal? Monkeys and moose are my favorite animals, even though moose aren't in the zoo...



Jess Murphy, Writing Tutor, March 10

Year: Junior
Major: Childhood & Early Adolescent Education, PreK-4
Time at PSL: five semesters
Post-grad goal: My goal after graduation is to teach abroad for a few years. Ultimately, I want to go back to school and become certified in Secondary English Education and teach at the high school level.
If you could eat only one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? Easy...I would eat pizza for the rest of my life.

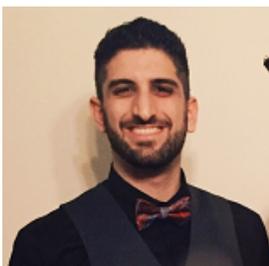
What's the most unusual thing you've ever eaten? I am currently studying abroad and taking an Italian food class. We had to try lampredotto, the 4th stomach of a cow, and it did not have a desirable texture or flavor.

What's the most daring thing you've ever done? I just recently went paragliding in Interlaken, Switzerland. I loved it!



Jacob McLaughlin, GSG Leader, March 11

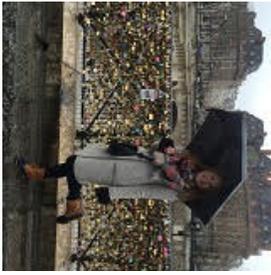
Year: Sophomore
Major: Physics & Mathematics
Time at PSL: since Fall 2015
Post-grad goal: go to graduate school to study physics
What would you sing at karaoke night? Always, by Erasure
If you could eat only one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? Calzones, with pierogies on the side



Justin Sorice, Italian Tutor, March 14

Year: Senior
Major: Security & Risk Analysis, with a minor in Italian
Time at PSL: This is my second semester at Penn State Learning but my first semester actually tutoring.
Post-grad plans: I will be doing technology consulting with Ernst & Young in New York City.
What celebrity would you like to meet at Starbucks for a cup of coffee? Justin Timberlake
What is a special talent or skill you have? I love to sing and am a member of Blue in the FACE, an a cappella group here at Penn State.
What did you want to be when you were small? I wanted to be the starting catcher for the New York Yankees. I still have hope. Slow and steady wins the race.

Kasey Feather, Writing Tutor, March 21



Year: Junior
 Major: Digital & Print Journalism
 Time at PSL: I've been at Penn State Learning (counting my 250 semester) for 3 semesters, not counting this one.
 Post-grad plans: Not really sure yet, maybe teach English in France and then law school. Or maybe teach English in France and then work for a media group or publishing house.
What was the last movie you went to? What did you think? I saw two movies in one week last week: *Deadpool*, which I absolutely loved! I was laughing out loud the entire time. And *Hail, Caesar!* which I also thought was hilarious and really well done. And the cast was so great for both movies!
What would you sing at karaoke night? "I Wanna Dance With Somebody" because it's a crowd pleaser and I like to believe I can sing like Whitney Houston. And everyone loves to dance to this song (so they won't be focusing on

my poor singing).

If you could share a meal with any 4 individuals, living or dead, who would they be? Lena Dunham, John Green, Jennifer Lawrence and Emma Stone



Asher Dubin, Receptionist, March 25

Year: Senior
 Major: Theater Performance, with Dance minor
 Time at PSL: Four years
 Post-grad goal: Move to New York (and hopefully be a working actor) OR work on a cruise/tour
If you could live anywhere, where would it be? It would definitely be in either Paris or London!
What's the worst birthday gift you ever received? Being pulled over by a cop for speeding...or getting sick
If you could join any music group, past or present, which one would you choose? I would join Destiny's Child (and replace Michelle)



Claire Silva, Writing Tutor, March 28

Year: Senior
 Major: English
 Time at PSL: one year
 Post-grad goal: Graduate school, teach English at the college level
What is one of your favorite books? I'm going with the very cliché answer of Harry Potter. I recently realized that I had never read the entire series as a college student and that I only have until May to do so. I blitzed through the first six over winter break and now I'm reading the seventh book. It's so cool to see how differently I react to the series at 21 versus how I reacted at 13 or 14.

How many pillows do you sleep with? I sleep with 6 pillows, and I'm made fun of for it pretty often.



Drew Van Wagner, Receptionist, March 31

Year: Sophomore
 Major: Finance
 Time at PSL: since January 2015
 Post-grad goal: Move to New York City and work in the financial district!
What celebrity would you like to meet for a cup of coffee? Mark Cuban
If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? Steak

- Matthew Easton, Math Tutor, March 8
- Alan Ludwikowski, Writing Tutor, March 8
- Jacob Wisser, Math Tutor, March 8
- Ilana Shtivelman, Spanish & French Tutor, March 12
- Tianxin Li, Math Tutor, March 13
- Emma Fivek, French Tutor, March 24
- Bernadette Carson, Receptionist, March 26
- Christina Soliday, Math Tutor, March 27
- Melissa Martin, Writing Tutor, March 29
- Glyn Wei, Math Tutor, March 31

FUN FACTS

Below you will find a quiz based on the Birthday section above. You should be able to answer the first three questions easily if you read the birthday section carefully, generated 'why' and 'how' questions about it, and pretended to teach it to one of your 6 pillows.

1. Which of these words or phrases is NOT mentioned in the birthday section above?

- a. cow stomach
- b. pierogies
- c. hula hoops
- d. super-cereal
- e. Mark Cuban
- f. New York Yankees

2. Please view the picture below and decide whether the following statement is true or false: The Editor of this Newsletter is a photo-shop genius.



3. Which movies were recommended in the birthday section above?

- a. Deadpool
- b. Hail, Caesar
- c. Kung Fu Panda 3
- d. A & B
- e. all of the above

4. According to www.sleepcomfortably.org, pillow placement in all but one of the following areas can improve your sleep. Which of the following pillow placements will NOT improve your sleep?

- a. under the head
- b. between the knees
- c. between the feet
- d. all over the bed
- e. under the bed

5. Which of the following is NOT an Erasure song?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Later
- d. Stop!

6. According to [Alaska's Kenai Moose Research Center, A World Leader in Moose Science](#), "The only way to really find out what a moose is eating is to_____."

- a. watch a moose eat
- b. feed it yourself
- c. track it in the wild
- d. watch what comes out of it

Answers: 1-d; 2-FALSE; 3-e; 4-e; 5-c; 6-a

PSL PROFILE



Duane Graysay, 205B Boucke

If you don't know already, Duane Graysay is the Co-curricular Programs Coordinator for Math Learning Communities. You will often find him in 220 Boucke, working on his laptop, chatting with tutors, and answering math questions. Duane also coordinates our online tutoring program and helps supervise and train Guided Study Group leaders for math. He's been at Penn State Learning since the spring of 2014. According to his bio, Duane earned his BS in Secondary Education from Penn State in 1995 and his M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Mary Washington in 2006. Before coming here, Duane taught high school math with Stafford County Public Schools and The Commonwealth Governor's School in northern Virginia. Duane is about to finish a PhD in Mathematics Education at Penn State and recently accepted a bonafide faculty position as an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education at Syracuse University.

Since Duane will be leaving us in August, be sure to appreciate him while he's still here. You can start by reading his answers to the following questions and asking him follow-up questions when you see him.

Did you always like math? Why? Why is math so great?

I didn't always like math, but I always did well in math throughout elementary, middle, and high school. So, when I decided to become a teacher, I chose to teach mathematics. I taught high school mathematics for ten years in Stafford County, Virginia. Teaching mathematics

helped me to understand it more and to recognize the depth and beauty of the subject. I think mathematics is fascinating, in part, because it is always an intellectual challenge no matter how much you have learned about it.

What do you think is the most challenging part of being a math tutor?

I think the primary role of any mathematics tutor is to help others become independently proficient in the mathematics that they are learning. This means that it is important for a tutor or teacher of mathematics to focus on finding out what the other person thinks, knows, and understands about the mathematics and on then asking questions, giving suggestions, or sometimes demonstrating in ways that help the other person to become more able to do the mathematics independently. The temptation for a tutor to demonstrate his or her own knowledge is very strong, in part because it is much easier to "show what you know" than it is to use your knowledge to anticipate the mistakes or misconceptions that someone else might have. I think that the mathematics tutors at Penn State Learning work hard to ensure that their efforts are focused on helping their peers to become better at mathematics and not just on helping them get answers to their homework assignments.

What would you do if you didn't have to worry about money for the rest of your life?

I am very lucky that I currently don't have to worry about money much as it is. If I didn't have to worry about it at all, I would keep teaching and doing research, both of which I find interesting and rewarding.

What was your favorite book when you were a kid? What is your favorite book now?

It's hard to pick a favorite, but one of my favorite books, both when I was in high school and now, is "A Tale of Two Cities". It's true that the plot is filled with contrived coincidences and a bit of melodrama, but Sidney Carton's trajectory and his motivations always move me. Knowing the story and how it ends actually makes reading it a second or third time even more enjoyable than the first.

Would you rather have a dragon or be a dragon? Why?

I think I would skip being a dragon. There has to be serious heartburn involved.

Tell us something about yourself that you don't want anyone to know.

I don't want anyone to know that I am an expert at the art of deflection.
