Allison Mullen: preparing for a bright future

by Jessica Tyner

A native of Parkersburg, W.Va., sophomore Allison Mullen chose the University of Charleston for her undergraduate degree in biology because she says it’s the “best education West Virginia has to offer.” However, she was also already planning ahead for the next step when she was a freshman. “I wanted to be competitive when applying to graduate schools and in my future career,” Mullen reveals. Mullen is gearing up for an exciting opportunity in January 2014 — the university’s Physician’s Assistant Program. “I’m finishing up my last few prerequisites and getting some patient contact hours in as well as volunteer work.” It’s too soon to tell if she’ll be accepted, but she also has a Plan B in place. “If I’m not selected as a fast-track applicant, I’ll continue my biology degree here at UC and apply to the PA school here once again. I couldn’t do anything I’ve been able to achieve if it weren’t for the fabulous faculty here,” she adds. “Dr. Beth Pauley and Professor Janet Rorrer have been a huge support system for me, and I couldn’t be any more grateful.” The feeling is mutual, and Director of Student Leadership & Success Nicky Bell is sure of Mullen’s future success. “Organized, efficient, genuine, intellectual and competent” sum up Mullen’s character according to Bell. Although Mullen shines in everything she undertakes, it’s her role as a UC Peer Educator that has caught the attention of campus faculty. “Being a peer educator really puts the UC mission into a whole new perspective,” Mullen says. “Going from being a first year student and now mentoring first year students has really shown me how to live the mission of the university the way I believe it was intended. I absolutely love my job.” Bell can also speak for Mullen’s dedication as a peer educator, recalling a hectic time when interviews for new Peer Educator applicants were taking place. “I was stuck in the Charlotte airport and could not get back in time for the interviews. I asked the current group of PEs to give me feedback on the new applicants, and every single one of them included Allison in their list of definite hires!” As for Mullen, she considers her role as a peer educator to be wholly symbiotic. “I have the opportunity to share advice and knowledge about what being a freshman is all about. I love being able to answer their questions because I know that I learn just as much, if not more, than they do.” She knows all too well what being a newbie at UC is like, and calls her first year an interesting adventure. “The most common advice I like to tell new students is that above all else, you are responsible for your future and your
What a difference a year makes:
Preparing for UC’s future with Dr. Calandra Lockhart

by Jessica Tyner

Chair of the University of Charleston Education Department, Associate Professor and Certification Officer make up the trifecta of Dr. Calandra Lockhart’s titles at UC. Coming from such prestigious institutions as Valdosta State and Alverno College, Dr. Lockhart’s experience well prepared her for her inaugural year on campus.

“I have been able to apply my experience with regional institutions and adult learning,” she says. In the past year, the Education program blossomed into a Department with Dr. Lockhart at the helm, and she sees nothing but more growth moving into 2014, with a generous peppering of community-based learning.

“I have applied my passion for community involvement. While completing my doctorate at Auburn, I was an instructor of a class which required the students to complete fieldwork in an afterschool program at a local school.” She knows first-hand that learning doesn’t only take place in the classroom.

She’s also committed to engaging graduates and helping to transition them into active alumni. “Presently, students become active alumni by serving on our Educational Personnel Preparation Advisory Committee (EPPAC). The UC’s EPPAC membership includes current students, alumni, local teachers, community professionals and UC faculty and administrators. The advisory committee advises the department on matters concerning teaching standards, accreditation and all other personnel preparation matters.” At UC, the students really do become the “masters” after “Pomp and Circumstance” plays.

Alumni may also serve as assessors for our Admission to the Education Department event panels. During this event, assessors who are current teachers, retired teachers, UC faculty and community professionals interview current UC students concerning educational content, pedagogy and community involvement.” she adds, noting that this is a fantastic way to segue from peer to advocate.

Everyone has a different answer to the question, “Why UC?” and Dr. Lockhart’s perfectly embraces UC’s siren’s call. When she first came to campus, she says, “I felt that UC would provide me with the opportunity to continue my professional growth at an institution that shared my beliefs concerning outcomes-based education, educator preparation and the benefits of a private education.” One year later, she knows she’s made the right choice. “UC has a warm community climate. I believe that UC students feel valuable and cared for”—from day one well into the alumni years.

adding at least one master’s degree program; adding another undergraduate degree program; continuing to build and maintain partnerships with local schools and community agencies; and continuing to increase our technology options and capabilities through the use of hybrid and online courses,” says Dr. Lockhart. As if that weren’t enough, she also hopes to expand to the Martinsburg campus.

However, Dr. Lockhart’s vision doesn’t stop at graduation. She’s also committed to engaging graduates and helping to transition them into active alumni. “Presently, students become active alumni by serving on our Educational Personnel Preparation Advisory Committee (EPPAC). The UC’s EPPAC membership includes current students, alumni, local teachers, community professionals and UC faculty and administrators. The advisory committee advises the department on matters concerning teaching standards, accreditation and all other personnel preparation matters.” At UC, the students really do become the “masters” after “Pomp and Circumstance” plays. Alumni may also serve as assessors for our Admission to the Education Department event panels. During this event, assessors who are current teachers, retired teachers, UC faculty and community professionals interview current UC students concerning educational content, pedagogy and community involvement.” she adds, noting that this is a fantastic way to segue from peer to advocate.

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A note from Dr. Wright

Dear Alumni & Friends,

I am happy to report that the 2013-2014 academic year has gotten off to a busy, but exciting start. We are already halfway through the fall semester and the holidays will be here soon. I’m sure you remember Homecoming, mid-terms, and Fall Break – all of the same events our current students are experiencing.

In this newsletter, we introduce you to one of those students, Allison Mullen, who is on her way to becoming a Physician Assistant, as well as Dr. Calandra Lockhart, Chair of the Education Department. Our students and faculty are extraordinary, and I am proud to share their stories with you.

I’d also like to tell you about how our School is collaborating with the Office of Advancement this year. By now, I hope you have seen the “myUC” logo on information you received from the University. myUC is all about bringing together the UC family, past and present, and we are celebrating that through fundraising as well. Rather than emphasizing the Annual Fund this year, the Office of Advancement is focusing on building support for our Schools.

We want you, our alumni and donors, to see exactly where your support goes and the effect it has on the University. You have the opportunity to give directly to students, faculty, and projects in the School of Arts and Sciences. Not only are they students like Allison and faculty like Dr. Lockhart, they are students like you once were and faculty like those you had at the University of Charleston.

I hope you’ll take the time to read through this newsletter and get to know these members of the UC family. I also encourage you all to read through the letters from the Office of Advancement you are receiving and visit www.ucwv.edu/myUC to find out more about the University of Charleston.

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“Allison is very determined to be the best person I can be, because it will pay off one day,” she says. As a Welch Colleague, Pepisco scholar and Mary Lou Pepsico scholar and Mary Lou Mullen also works as a technician at Retina Consultants PLLC during university breaks and maintains a part-time job at American Eagle Outfitters. As a member of the PPHE (Pre-Professional Healthcare Society, formerly the PPHPP) and the American Chemical Society, Mullen balances her commitments to ensure she’s not spread too thin—and so she can fully enjoy her major. “Zoology has been without a doubt my favorite course,” she says, although she admits that the “list could go on and on” when it comes to favorite staff and professors, ticking off Xiaoping Sun, David Haas and Anna Hughes as a few who have made a big impact.

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