



Mya Ostermiller | Criminal Justice Student Highlight

Kutztown University junior Mya Ostermiller thought her minor in public relations would provide her with a secondary career path with opportunities different from those associated with her criminal justice major. But she soon realized the two fields were not as disparate as she first thought. She discovered that she could use the communication and writing skills she learns from her PR classes to help enhance her performance in her major, making her feel better prepared for a criminal justice career. She further utilized this idea of transferrable skills to help her succeed in her athletics and her education.

“I feel like people sometimes don’t understand the full challenge [of being a student athlete],” she says. But her time running competitively has taught her “great time-management skills” and “great organizational skills.” Becoming more organized and focused because of her athletics helped Ostermiller to strive for success in her education.

Pursuing a rich experience at KU, she also sought out leadership positions in the

Criminal Justice Association and Alpha Phi Sigma. “Having been President of both the clubs has given me leadership experience that will help me in leadership roles in my career.”

Ostermiller plans to become an investigator for a county prosecutor’s office after she graduates, and maybe even earn a master’s degree. She knew she wanted to pursue a career in law

enforcement after attending the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office Youth Week Summer Program. “It’s a week-long program that’s set up similarly to a

police academy,” she says. “It gives you a little taste of how police academy training operates.” She then went on to intern at the very same office, only this time as a program coordinator.

Completing the internship was far from easy, though. During this past summer, Ostermiller had to balance her internship, a summer job, two summer classes, and waking up at 6 a.m. every day to train for cross-country. By using the crucial time-management and organizational skills she’d



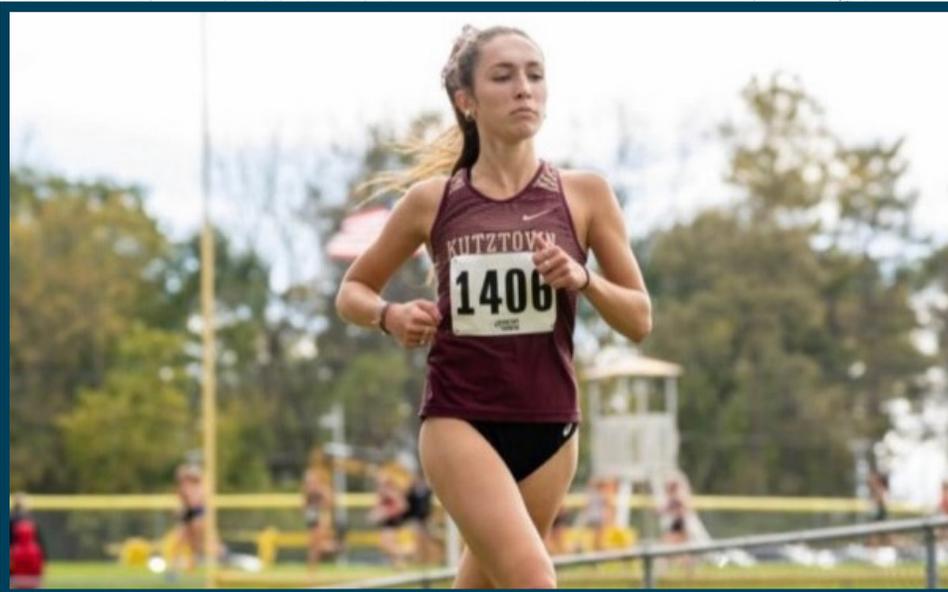
learned over the years, she emerged victorious at the end of the summer. She ended up passing both classes and even acing a law enforcement exam, called the Chief’s Exam, in her internship. “I was really excited and happy because all of my hard work paid off,” she says.

“Never give up. Always work hard for what you want because you can and will accomplish it.”

In addition to developing strategies for success, Ostermiller recognizes the importance of her parents’ care and support. “They always pushed me to never settle,” she says, “and they’re always at every cross-country race...they would wake up [at 6 a.m.] and ride their bikes alongside me so that I wasn’t alone.”

Ostermiller feels that she’s worked hard to be where she is and wants to maintain her current level of success in both her athletics and her education. Her determination has earned her the title of PSAC Scholar Athlete and a place on the Dean’s List every semester at KU.

For Ostermiller, the challenge of being successful in college is half the fun. It’s driven her to achieve greater accomplishments than she originally thought possible. She hopes other students find their passion and drive at KU because she believes it offers so many ways for them to push themselves to reach their potential. Regarding advice to prospective students, she would say, “Never give up. Always work hard for what you want because you can and will accomplish it.”



Mya Ostermiller remains focused and determined at one of her many cross-country races.



Dr. Robert Portada | Political Science Faculty Highlight

Dr. Robert Portada, a professor of political science at Kutztown University, dedicated himself early on to the study of international relations, particularly related to Cuba. His decision to study Cuba, he says, is based in his familial history. “In graduate school, I ended up doing all my field research in Cuba. Much of my family came to the U.S. as refugees, including my grandfather who had been deeply involved in politics during the revolutionary years of the 1950s. As soon as I was old enough to travel on my own, I made it my business to travel to Cuba and spend time there.”

Cuba wasn't the only place he wanted to research, however. Though many political scientists specialize in one area, Dr. Portada wanted to become a Global South scholar, one who studies regions formerly under European colonialism. Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and much of Asia are included in the “Global South.” It's because of this ambition to become a Global South scholar that he became

interested in writing about the effects of foreign military interventions on regime outcomes following the 2011 Arab Spring.

“I became fascinated by the Middle East, fascinated by this wave of revolutions that [was] going on,” he explains. As a result, he and Lynsey Billet, a former student of his Social Movements and Revolutions course, researched and published an article titled “The Finger on the Scale: International Interventions in the Middle East and North Africa Following the Arab Spring” for the *Journal of Global South Studies*.

“The key thing that we got out of our study from the Arab Spring,” Dr. Portada says, “was looking at the protests in a wider international context. The factors determining the outcomes of these conflicts were not simply confined to what was going on in those societies. The linkages they had with external actors played a very significant role.” This means that foreign powers can often influence domestic issues and protests in some countries.

“The world keeps offering opportunities of fascinating developments to study, so there's no shortage of projects.”

Finding that there's more to a given historical event than it appears is an idea that Dr. Portada is very familiar with, one that he tells students is important when studying international relations. In discussing how he helps them to understand why wars occur, he says, “These are long-standing patterns that emerge at times...there are basic dynamics that have been around for centuries that are going to be with us here in the 21st century.”

Dr. Portada believes that in order to find these patterns, one must look beyond current news reported by the media, which

often glosses over many current foreign events, not taking the history of the situation into account.

“With an understanding of history,” he says, “that's where you can start to anticipate and not be surprised [by international conflicts].” To help his students explore that idea in their studies, Dr. Portada tells them to look beyond the lens of the United States and to explore viewpoints from other countries. “Hopefully,” he says, “if students are engaged in other disciplines, having some of that international perspective can widen their view [and] their global understanding of political science.”

Diversity in the classroom has helped Dr. Portada to achieve a deeper global understanding. “I always look forward to the discussions that I end up having with students,” he says, “both from students who have grown up in Pennsylvania, but [also] other international students that come from different parts of the world that get to bring their upbringing into the classroom and how they might have been taught certain historical events.” Similar to how he was able to study Cuba using the unique perspective of his Cuban ancestry, Dr. Portada can now connect with others and their perspectives to enhance his research and teachings.

Currently, Dr. Portada is revisiting his Ph.D. research about the Catholic church in Cuba with a modern perspective. Along with his additional research into private security companies in South Sudan, he feels he has a lot of “irons in the fire.” He plans to continue his work as a Global South scholar. “The world keeps offering opportunities of fascinating developments to study, so there's no shortage of projects.”



DEAN'S CORNER

DR. DAVID BEOUGHIER

“per angusta ad augusta” is a Latin phrase roughly translated as “through difficulty to greatness.” As we approach finals and graduation, the phrase reminds me of the students, staff and faculty of our community. Four semesters into a continuing pandemic, I marvel at the challenges faced and overcome. Challenges of making time to balance competing demands, adapting to new and stressful conditions, trying to learn in modified conditions, and succeeding. Faculty continue to challenge students to find deeper understanding, to engage with those holding different perspectives, and to explore context. Students have accepted those challenges, pushed themselves, and achieved more than they may have thought possible. I am very proud of our students and their journeys to greatness. Best of luck with finals and I hope to see many of you at graduation!

