



# the Collage

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Kutztown University

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## Dr. Derek Mace | Psychology Faculty Highlight

For Dr. Derek Mace, professor of Psychology at Kutztown University, spatial cognition has always been an interesting field of study. “How people and animals navigate through an environment and remember places, that’s always interested me,” says Dr. Mace. He explains how spatial cognition influences daily life and more high stakes situations like flying an airplane, all the while linking environmental psychology to spatial cognition. “Every day you move through the environment and remember where things are,” he says. “It’s all spatial cognition.”

Currently, Dr. Mace is helping an honors student with research on environmental psychology. “Spatial cognition and environmental psychology go together really well,” he explains, as both look at how the built and natural worlds influence behavior. In the built world, spatial recognition is achieved through awareness of surrounding architecture, while in the natural world, organic elements in the environment help with navigation—and ultimately, the question is, how are these cues in both worlds used in comparison to one another.

He believes this idea is best realized when taking students to study abroad. Dr. Mace believes going to another country can be

transformative for students, allowing them to understand more through experiencing new cultures and settings. “Study abroad is probably one of the most important things to me at KU,” Dr. Mace explains. “I love [psychology] and I love helping students get into graduate school, but I really have a heart for study abroad.”

For about ten years, Dr. Mace, along with Dr. Gregory Hanson, took students to Germany. He taught environmental psychology and had the students speak with urban planners about how to help make the streets more navigable for walking. He explains how the textures within the city can help give people these clues—a rough, cobblestone street is different to a smooth highway and can help to contextualize where to walk, as many different countries and cultures emphasize walking over cars as a mode of transportation. “I have had a lot of fun taking students abroad and expanding their minds by getting somewhere else where they

are a little bit out of their comfort zone... they can reassess and rethink what they feel like they already know,” Dr. Mace notes.

Currently, Dr. Mace runs the study abroad program in London, a trip he has also been leading for about 10 years. He wants to emphasize that the trip is open to all majors and there are many classes offered from different departments and professors. He is also heading the study abroad trip to Japan, open to all majors, Summer of 2024.

Study abroad, or just being open to different opportunities, is something Dr. Mace advises all students to do, as these experiences can be something compelling to set them apart in the future. “Study abroad is a little piece of making yourself different and interesting,” says Dr. Mace. “Doing something that draws attention and demonstrates your capacity to navigate new areas and worlds—I think that goes a long way.”



“Study abroad is probably one of the most important things to me at KU.” KU students in London, 2023.



## CLAS Welcomes Dean Dr. Laurie McMillan

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is excited to welcome Dr. Laurie McMillan as Dean. Dr. McMillan joined KU as the CLAS Associate Dean in fall 2020, previously holding positions as Assistant Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at Millersville University, and chair of the Department of English and Modern Language Studies at Pace University. She served as Interim Dean for the CLAS since 2022 before being selected as Dean.



## Ebben Berenstein | Public Relations Student Highlight

After starting out in marketing at Harrisburg Area Community College, Kutztown University senior Ebben Berenstein found her passion in Public Relations. She discovered the PR program at KU to be more people focused: “I like to call myself a people person,” she explains. “I just felt I connected with that more.”

Ebben found The Agency at KU highly impactful, as it provides her with real PR experience. “The Agency Experience” is a two-semester capstone course where senior PR majors can collaborate on projects for local clients. These projects give students professional PR experiences, allow them to network with other PR professionals and develop their portfolio pieces for graduation. Previous classes have helped to install the mural on the Bagel Bar Café and to

develop the oral history project with the Kutztown Community Veterans Heritage Project. Ebben worked with The Agency and classmates to support the Kutztown Community Partnership in its effort to revitalize a local historical theater through research and helping to document the process.

Along with her work in The Agency, Ebben’s work study with

the Community Outreach Center on campus has also been influential: “That’s another place where I gain more experience and practice my networking and interpersonal skills.” Her work focuses on social media and event coordinating, including developing and organizing a fundraiser for the Center. Ebben feels this draws on her PR skills and she has found a niche in event coordinating within the field. Ebben also had an internship Fall 2022 with the Minsi Trail Council of Boy Scouts, attending events and working with a grant they received. Not having worked in the non-profit world before, Ebben found some insight into grant writing and presentations she will take with her into her PR career.

She also enjoys volunteering and giving back to the community, another reason for her involvement with the Community Outreach Center

and Minsi Trails Council. She hopes other students will get involved in community service on and off campus: “I think it’s important to give back and help others as a member of the community,” Ebben explains. “It’s a good opportunity to do something fun, something extra, and build your resume.”

**“I like to call myself a people person.”**

After graduation, Ebben hopes to find an entry level PR/marketing job in her hometown near Harrisburg. Her goal is to eventually work for a PR agency in a bigger city to gain more client focused experience—she also hopes to become a publicist further into her career. She advises other students not to be afraid to reach out to people to build connections and open new opportunities. “It’s all about relationship building,” she says. Being outgoing is important to building these relationships, which can take you far in your career.



## Bonus Content



### Tour The Agency Lab

Watch Ebben give a tour of The Agency lab, where students collaborate and work with local clients

To watch, click on the video!

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