Distinguished Alumni Biographies

Barbara Fredrickson
Kenan Distinguished Professor of Psychology, Univ. of North Carolina

A freshmen year in Musser could give most people a very negative worldview, but not Barbara Fredrickson. She is the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of North Carolina and has been a pioneering academic social psychologist and an international leader in the field of positive psychology, which focuses on the role of positive emotions and character traits and the manner in which these attributes influence individuals and communities, including Second Musser. Barbara has published extensively in leading psychology journals, received numerous research grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, and received the Templeton Positive Psychology Prize. She is noted for simultaneously conducting top empirical research while applying its findings as tools for use in everyday life, as described in her 2009 book, *Positivity*, which may or may not include dealing with the showers in Musser.

Jill Moses
Director, Division of Public Health, Chinle Service Unit, Indian Health Service

It’s a long way from second Goodhue to Chinle, AZ, especially when you take the scenic route through Nashville, TN and Baltimore, MD. But this is exactly what Jill Moses has done, and the people of the Navajo Nation have every reason to be grateful to her for her travels. After receiving her MD at Vanderbilt Medical School, she completed her residency in pediatrics at Johns Hopkins, earned an MPH at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, and then found her way to the Navajo Reservation in northwestern Arizona, where she established the Division of Public Health. Working within the cultural framework of the Diné (Navajo) culture, she established programs in nursing, nutrition, health promotion, disease prevention and school-based clinics, while continuing to see pediatric patients at the clinic in Chinle. Jill was also instrumental in expanding the Office of Native Medicine, a collaborative effort between traditional Navajo healing practitioners and western doctors. Her efforts have led to a measurable improvement in the health of the surrounding communities.
Jennifer Pietenpol  
B.F. Byrd Jr. Professor of Oncology, Vanderbilt University

An illustrious career in both volleyball and track was perhaps not the best indicator of Jennifer Pietenpol’s future, but possibly the two years spent living in dorms that begin with the letter ‘M’ gave her the desire to rid the world of pain and suffering. To that end, Jennifer is a cancer researcher who also completed her training at Vanderbilt and Johns Hopkins Universities. She is the B.F. Byrd Jr. Professor of Oncology at Vanderbilt, and has quickly become one of the preeminent cancer researchers in the U.S., focusing on defining molecular changes that are frequent in tumor cells. Jennifer was honored with Vanderbilt’s Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004. She has held several leadership positions at the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, becoming its Director in 2007. In 2008, President George W. Bush appointed her to the National Cancer Advisory Board of the National Institutes of Health’s National Cancer Institute. She was recently selected for a scientific panel to guide the Susan G. Komen for the Cure research program and was appointed one of 15 members of the board for the American Association of Cancer Research. Under her leadership, Jennifer has transformed the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center into a top-10 cancer research institution, although it still doesn’t have a varsity volleyball team.

T.J. Stiles  
Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer

As a legendary KRLX DJ, T.J. Stiles made history by filling the airwaves with top-flight 80s music. He is now a noted biographer whose historical scholarship has redefined our perceptions of iconic 19th-century Americans. Although he did NOT attend Vanderbilt University, his 2009 book *The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*, received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for biography, as well as the 2009 National Book Award for nonfiction and currently has a 4.3 out of 5 star rating at Amazon.com (which is much higher than Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight*). T.J.’s 2002 book *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War*, was named New York Times and American Library Association Notable Book, and a Best Book of the Year by the Library Journal, and the Chicago Sun-Times. It was also named one of the five best biographies of the year by the London Sunday Times. He has written for The New York Times Book Review, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, Salon.com and the Atlantic online. He is also a member of the executive council of the Authors Guild and previously held a fellowship at the New York Public Library’s Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers. In the spring of 2011, he was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship Award to further his latest project on the life of General George A. Custer. As Dr. Robert Bonner remembers, “T.J. was one of the best writers I ever saw in a freshman seminar, and he just gets better and better.”