Frances Perkins, class of 1902, was the nation’s first woman cabinet member. She served as President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945 and remains one of the most influential champions of economic and social protections for all Americans.

Before making history, Perkins was pursuing science within the broad scope of the liberal arts, and at an institution that believed in connecting women’s education with the world beyond its gates.

More than a century later—as Mount Holyoke celebrates its 175th anniversary—Rebecca Neubardt ’13 is doing that, too.
Inside the Studio:
Debra Martin Chase ’77

In February, a group of students sat down with Debra Martin Chase ’77, producer of The Princess Diaries, The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, Cheetah Girls, and Sparkle. Chase, who is the first African American woman to have a solo producing deal at a major studio, earned a law degree from Harvard shortly after graduating from Mount Holyoke. Her visit to campus was part of the “Inside the Studio” Media Series.

Not surprisingly, the conversation touched on Chase’s commitment to creating work that defies stereotypes, particularly around race and gender. Her hope, she told students, is to supply positive images and messages for all females.

“I’m a kid who grew up watching television and movies and was always not happy with the fact that I never saw me in anything and when I did see people of color in particular . . . it was in subservient roles,” she said. “I hope everything I do speaks to the girl in every woman.”

The thread in all of Chase’s work for film and television is that girls have the power within themselves to be anything they want.

“From Mia Thermopolis to the Lucia Girls, the message is ‘dream big,’ ” she said. “And that’s very much what Mount Holyoke is about. We know we’re smart and we’re special. Mount Holyoke reinforces that and tells us to use these gifts we’ve all been given, that if we work hard and we dream big, we can do whatever we want to do.”
Record-Breaking Wins

Cathleen Pruden ’16

Hometown: Raleigh, North Carolina

This season: 32 victories averaging at least two wins each meet, NEWMAC Swimmer of the Week x 3, NEWMAC Rookie of the Year (first time in Mount Holyoke swimming history)

Breaking records: 11 MHC records broken this season (1000-free, 500-free, 1650-free, 200-fly, 100-IM, 200-IM, 400-IM, 400-Medley Relay, 200-Free Relay, 400-Free Relay, 800-Free Relay)

Most memorable moment in college athletics: “Still to come! I’m only a first-year.”
The Education of an Activist

Child labor laws, a federal minimum wage, the 40-hour work week, unemployment insurance, the legal right to organize and join trade unions, Social Security—each is the legacy of Frances Perkins, class of 1902. From 1933 to 1945, Perkins served as President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Secretary of Labor. She was the nation’s first woman cabinet member and remains one of the most influential champions of economic and social protections for all Americans.

Before making history, Perkins was, in fact, a chemistry and physics major at Mount Holyoke. But she was pursuing science within the broad scope of the liberal arts, and at an institution that believed in connecting women’s education with the world beyond its gates.

“Fannie, as she was known then, studied with Anna May Soule, who taught political science and history in innovative ways,” explained Professor Daniel Czitrom in “The Switchboard of History: Frances Perkins and Social Justice,” a talk delivered at the College’s 175th anniversary celebration. “Soule brought Perkins and other students into the textile and paper mills of [the neighboring cities] Holyoke and Chicopee, to confront directly the realities and consequences of industrial labor.”

Soule also had founded a campus chapter of the National Consumers League (NCL), a group devoted to abolishing child labor and tenement sweatshops by educating the public and improving state laws. Perkins became active in the chapter and, during her senior year, met the NCL’s founder, Florence Kelley, during a campus visit. According to Czitrom, Perkins was so impressed by Kelley that she dedicated her life to working for social justice.

One hundred and eleven years later, Mount Holyoke continues to offer women a life-changing education.

Into the Community and Abroad

Since her sophomore year, Rebecca Neubardt ’13 has traveled weekly to the nearby city of Holyoke to work at the Holyoke Health Center. She’s there through Mount Holyoke’s Community-Based Learning (CBL) Program, which links students with opportunities to connect academic learning to social issues via experiential learning and campus-community partnerships.

As a CBL Fellow, Neubardt is paid for her work with Dr. Anne Nugent, a pediatrician who develops public health programming. She assists with Nugent’s La Linda Manita program, which focuses on early parenting education. Its workshops cover a range of topics, from nutrition and safety to developmental stages, as well as life skills, such as self-care and managing money.

“I’m a Spanish major and a chemistry minor. When I started at Mount Holyoke, my plan was to become a pediatrician who worked with Spanish-speaking communities. I couldn’t have had a better CBL opportunity for that goal,” said Neubardt. “I always feel like I get a lot more out La Linda Manita than the program gets from me—I’ve learned so much from my coworkers and the people participating in the workshops.”

While starting at the health center in the spring of her sophomore year, Neubardt took a class at UMass Amherst called Grassroots Community Organizing that proved influential. “It taught me about various injustices that marginalized communities grapple with daily as well as how to enter space as an outsider, among other strategies and philosophies of activists and organizers.”

That summer, Neubardt traveled to Lima, Peru, as the recipient of a Global Studies Summer Fellowship from MHC’s McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives. There, she honed her language skills while working with Socios En Salud (Partners in Health) on an educational curriculum for a cultural center in Carabayllo, a peripheral community of the capital city. Neubardt stayed in Lima that fall, studying at La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and assisting with Socios En Salud’s training program for community health promoters.

When Neubardt returned to Mount Holyoke for the spring of her junior year, she resumed her work as a CBL Fellow.
Fellow at the Holyoke Health Center and found herself increasingly drawn to the intersections between social justice and public health.

The summer before her senior year, Neubardt interned with Corporate Accountability International, a corporate watchdog nonprofit based in Boston. While assisting with a campaign challenging the tobacco industry she says she suddenly recognized how a commitment to public health and an interest in community organizing could merge as a career.

“It was that ‘ah-ha’ moment of ‘This is something I can do right now that effects change,’” said Neubardt. “Organizing fit me so much better than anything else. I want to be working with people and on issues that I really care about.”

Where the Path Leads
Throughout this academic year, she’s continued her involvement with Corporate Accountability International and has spearheaded a campaign to remove bottled water from campus. Likewise, she remains a CBL Fellow at the Holyoke Health Center, one with a new awareness of how environmental abuses disproportionately affect the poor. After graduation, she’ll be working on environmental campaigns for Green Corps.

“Before last summer, I hadn’t put public health in the context of global environmental issues and corporate abuses of natural resources. I’m really excited about what’s ahead. When I first started college, I never would have imagined myself doing environmental organizing.”

For Neubardt, that potential for discovery is what sets Mount Holyoke apart. “I learned here that I wasn’t limited to what I already knew I was good at. Instead, I was encouraged to figure out what it is I like to do. My liberal arts education connected me to all kinds of paths and provided me with the skills to succeed.”

To learn more about Frances Perkins and other Mount Holyoke Women of Influence, visit www.mtholyoke.edu/175.

Each year, ambitious Mount Holyoke students tackle real-world issues as Community-Based Learning (CBL) Fellows working with local nonprofits, schools, and municipal agencies. These highly sought-after positions provide paid academic-year internships in the arenas of community organizing, health, education, college access, youth development, environmental advocacy, and social and economic justice.

In addition, some students serve as CBL Mentors, which involves assisting faculty teaching CBL courses in a range of disciplines or mentoring students who are working in the community on ways to advance the partner agency’s aims and their own learning.

“CBL Fellows make a yearlong commitment to developing their critical analysis of social issues, and applying their academic learning to urgent social challenges,” said Alan Bloomgarden, coordinator of CBL. “These are demanding positions that require a commitment of time and passion as well as responsibility and maturity. But the rewards are many. CBL Fellows develop advocacy and career skills through collaborations with community leaders in South Hadley, Springfield, Holyoke, Amherst, Northampton, and beyond.”

CBL Fellows are supported by academic course work, including two 2-credit courses: Networking, Reflection, and Meaning (fall); and Integrating Learning, Service, and Social Action (spring). Bloomgarden, who teaches both courses, involves community leaders as coeducators whenever possible. He constructs the courses to develop students’ abilities to plan, implement, and evaluate capacity-building projects among nonprofit and educational organizations. Students also develop cultural competencies needed to enter and succeed in diverse communities, build teamwork and collaborative skills, and develop concepts of social action and citizenship that they can carry with them for life.

This year, CBL awarded fellowships to 40 students. Their responsibilities, which were determined together by the students and the staff of their community agency, include researching and developing surveys at the Holyoke Office of Planning and Development; and creating Run the World, Girls!, a program aimed at increasing the number of girls from low-income families who graduate high school and pursue a college education (supported by a grant from the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts).

Pictured: As part of their MHC Orientation, more than 70 students newly admitted this spring volunteered their labor for South Hadley’s annual food drive.
What do you think? That’s the question visitors to Brave New Perspectives: This World through the Lens of New Media Art are literally being asked about reproduction and genetics, the effect of global warming, and the impacts of news, global data, and social media. The exhibition at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum features a combination of new media works, posted questions, and the option to write in a blog accessible via an iPad mounted in the exhibition space.

Brave New Perspectives, which runs through April 21, is a collaboration between the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum and Streaming Museum (streamingmuseum.org), a hybrid museum that presents multimedia exhibitions in cyberspace and in public spaces worldwide. It is curated by Maureen Millmore ’13, the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum’s Andrew W. Mellon Academic Outreach Intern.
In late January, computer science students from throughout the Five Colleges gathered at Mount Holyoke for Global Gamejam, a 24-hour event that challenges participants worldwide to collaboratively design and build video games. The theme for this year’s event, which brought together jammers at 321 sites in 63 countries, was the “sound of a heartbeat.” It was the second time that MHC’s Computer Science Club has hosted Global Gamejam.

“The beautiful thing about this process is that you work as if you’re in the real world—planning, designing, programming, and incorporating sound and art,” said Sam Tulimat ’13.

Other Computer Science Club activities this year have included speed mentoring sessions with MHC alums working in the information-technology industry. These helped the majority of graduating computer science majors secure jobs with technology companies.

Mount Holyoke’s decision to freeze tuition for the second year in a row was cited in the Washington Post, U.S. News & World Report, and the Wall Street Journal.

MHC President Lynn Pasquerella is among the leaders in higher education pledged to fight global poverty through philanthropy, engagement, and increased awareness.

The Princeton Review once again named MHC among the 150 U.S. colleges that give consumers the best overall value for the tuition dollar.

As one of eight winners of the 2012 Young Playwrights Inc. National Competition, Catia Cunha ’14 presented her winning play in New York City in February.

The Huffington Post praises Elizabeth Carlson’s ’10 travel blog: with “25 countries under her belt,” she’s worth watching in 2013.

A new Ken Burns documentary and PBS series, The Dust Bowl, features 1901 alumna Caroline Boa Henderson (above) in the story of the worst manmade ecological disaster in U.S. history.

Students and alumnae now have access to SALT, a set of interactive online financial tools that helps them manage student loans and search for jobs and internships.

Barbara Smith ’69, groundbreaking publisher of women of color is included in Makers: Women Who Make America, a PBS documentary that tells the story of the women’s movement through firsthand accounts of the leaders, opponents, and trailblazers who created a new America in the last half-century.

Criminologist Richard Moran, professor of sociology, participated in a fiery debate on gun control on CNN.

Jenni “Fang” Lee ’15, who was featured in the documentary Somewhere Between, shared her life story with a sold-out crowd in a TEDx talk in San Francisco.

The Miller Worley Center for the Environment announced new internship opportunities through the Summer Leadership Fellowships fund that offers challenging internships arranged exclusively for MHC students at selected nonprofit organizations.

In February, the Mount Holyoke College squash team captured its seventh consecutive Seven Sisters Championship.