Off to Work!

Graduation one day.
A full-time job the next.
Members from the Class of 2015 wasted little time to launch their careers.
President’s Line

At university commencement ceremonies around the country in the past few years, ebullience has been frequently dampened by concern. That is not to say families fail to cheer boisterously for their loved ones’ academic accomplishments, but sooner rather than later the conversation turns: Do you have a job yet? What will you do next? What about your future?

These important questions demand serious answers. Recent concern about graduates’ futures has been founded on bleak job reports. Media stories about talented, eager graduates having to patch together piecemeal, low-paid temp jobs have stoked fears, too. And not without some justification.

At UB, however, our grads are advised to approach their futures with intelligent strategy, not fear. From the moment they arrive on campus, students from across all academic disciplines are met with curricula that are relevant to the larger world. They learn from and work with professors who have experience and connections in an array of professional fields. Students participate in required internships, both here in the U.S. and internationally: work-study programs, study grants, research positions, and other opportunities geared to help students identify their interests, enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and get into “the real world.” By the time they graduate, they can bring practical value to the marketplace. The result: when our graduates leave UB, they have clear, promising plans for the future. This year, while the national media continues to report dim employment prospects for many college graduates, the members of UB’s Class of 2015 are going to work at places like Cisco and PricewaterhouseCoopers, as you will read in this issue.

At the same time, UB continues to grow and flourish as a center for research. Each spring, some of the most exciting projects on campus are offered to the public view on Faculty Research Day. This year, faculty and graduate and undergraduate students from eight schools displayed nearly 130 research projects. Soon afterward, Tarek Sobh, UB’s senior vice president for graduate studies and research and dean of our School of Engineering, was among a select group of deans invited to the White House for a summit spearheaded by the National Academy of Engineers (NAE). Increasingly, global issues like sustainability, cyber security, and health care are being solved through engineering and innovation, and officials want to know how institutions of higher education can help train experts who are capable of devising solutions. As Sobh points out, UB’s various research initiatives, its multidisciplinary approach to research that was on display at Faculty Research Day, and its continued focus on applying education to the larger world puts the University at the forefront of the NAE’s Grand Challenges of Engineering Campaign.

There are still challenges ahead: for newly minted graduates and for anyone concerned about issues like sustainable growth, natural resources conservation, the health of our economy, and more. But at UB, we have taken the steps to develop solutions and to train experts who will find the answers needed for a future filled with well-founded hope.

I know you will enjoy reading about our programs and achievements in this issue. I enjoy hearing from you at any time, and I especially welcome your ideas, suggestions, and comments.

Neil Albert Salonen
President
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There’s a lot going on at UB these days. The curriculum is ever expanding with new offerings, such as the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, which launches this fall. Students, faculty, and guests from the community are attending more on-campus events than ever, from athletics games to exhibitions, charity luncheons for Nepal, or one of dozens of informative lectures covering timely topics such as international trade or technology.

Alumni are returning to campus in greater numbers, too, making memories and rekindling friendships at events specially tailored for them, like this spring’s Schine Down! party you’ll read about on page 20 or Welcome Back Weekend. (The 2015 WBW will be held October 9-11, so save the date!)

UB’s energy seems especially palpable when it comes to research. As you’ll read in the following pages, Faculty Research Day was not only bigger than ever this year, it featured a breathtaking range of projects from eight schools and 29 departments. As I viewed this rich and diverse exhibition of talent, I was struck by how relevant the work at UB is to our collective future. Consider students like Taylor Goffstein, a medical lab science major whose research examines the most effective ways to detect infectious causes of life-threatening gastroenteritis. CPIA student Beltina Gjeloshi is developing a radio-based communications plan to deliver UNICEF Radio educational programming to landlocked Central African Republic, one of the ten poorest countries in the world. Meanwhile, Wafa Elmannai, a PhD candidate at the School of Engineering, is developing a portable, efficient, and cost-effective device that will help visually impaired individuals better navigate the world.

These and countless other R&D projects are not going unnoticed. This spring, Elmannai was named one of the most innovative women in Connecticut by the Connecticut Technology Council. A few weeks later, she was the only student in Connecticut to win a $20,000 grant from the AAUW (American Association of University Women).

What’s UB’s secret to cultivating an environment that encourages creative multidisciplinary research and innovation? Tarek Sobh, UB’s senior vice president for graduate studies and research and dean of the School of Engineering, has great insight, and he was recently invited to the White House by the National Academy of Engineers (NAE) to share his ideas. In particular, officials want to know how engineering schools can help to address the so-called Grand Challenges of Engineering, such as scientific research, sustainability, and cyber-security. (For more, see “Dr. Sobh Goes to Washington” on page 28.) Thanks to its track record, UB is well positioned to lead the way to solutions that impact all of us.

Clearly, life at UB may be busier than ever, but it’s busy with purpose. We’d love to hear what you think, so join those who’ve come to campus for any number of opportunities or contact us at knightlines@bridgeport.edu. We’d love to add your voice to UB’s fascinating and ever-evolving story.

Leslie Geary
Founding Editor, Knightlines
Helping Nepal

Dear Editor,

Please accept my heartfelt thank you to the University of Bridgeport for raising $7,717 to support our relief efforts in the wake of the devastating earthquakes in Nepal. I attended the fundraising lunch and was in total awe at the support the event received from the University of Bridgeport community. I was equally impressed by the group of Nepalese students who took the lead in sponsoring it.

The people of Nepal are displaying incredible resilience, and they are eager to rebuild. In addition to committing an initial $5 million to the response operation, the American Red Cross is working closely with the Nepal Red Cross and the global Red Cross network to help coordinate ongoing activities. We’re providing remote mapping and information management assistance. We’re also coordinating relief supplies from warehouses in Kuala Lumpur and Dubai. Additionally, nine American Red Cross disaster specialists are in Nepal—supporting emergency relief, cash transfer programing, information management, recovery planning, and IT/telecoms services—and one expert have been deployed to Geneva to support global Red Cross efforts online. We’re also developing preliminary plans with the Nepal Red Cross to do long term recovery—targeting villages to help rebuild. But even with the outpouring of support from the global community, the need in Nepal remains tremendous. There is no doubt that it will take a great deal of time and resources for Nepal to recover from this trying period, and it’s vitally important the global community extends a hand of friendship and assistance to those in need.

Without the support of donors like the University of Bridgeport we could not do our important work for the over 70,000 disasters we respond to. I thank the University of Bridgeport for helping us make a difference in the lives of others.

Lynne Phillips
Director, Resource Development
American Red Cross
Farmington, CT

Ed. Note: For more about the fundraiser at UB and to support the American Red Cross in Nepal, please see “Emergency Response” on page 24.

Checking in . . .

Dear Editor,

We have all stayed good friends since living together on Bodine’s 6th floor, and we get together every year for a holiday dinner. Here we are (from left): Mike Petrone ’78, Danny Shainis ’78, Andy Berliner ’77, Scott Sperduto ’78, John Reilly ’78, Mike Rifkin ’78 and Carl Piraneo ’78.

All have done well with a UB diploma.

Andy Berliner ’77
Monroe, CT
It was a day of smiles, proud memories, and much hope for the future at the University’s 105th Commencement.

Bravo

By Leslie Geary

Ruth Salas grinned broadly as she joined other soon-to-be graduates at UB’s 105th Commencement at the Webster Bank Arena. For the past four years, Salas had juggled the demands of a full-time job, school, and being a mother to two young sons.

Now, the moment she’d worked so hard for had arrived; Salas was lined up with 1,500 members from the Class of 2015 to receive her diploma.

“It was quite a journey,” said Salas, who earned a bachelor’s degree in business. “My goal is to get an MBA so I’ll be back, but today I’m halfway there. My husband and sons are here. That’s good, because I can be an example. I’m always telling my sons, ‘Go to college. Go right away. You have to finish.’”

Family members were equally proud. “This is his mother. I’m his dad!” called out a father when his son’s image flashed on one of the arena’s massive overhead Jumbotrons during Commencement exercises.

(continued on page 6)
Moments before, UB alumna, the Honorable Sheridan Moore ’75, received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters before delivering the Commencement Address. Members of the Class of 1965 crossed the stage at Webster Bank Arena to become Golden Knights on the 50th anniversary of their UB graduation, too.

Martina Santia ’15, an international student from Italy who earned a B.S. in Mass Communications and International Political Economy and Diplomacy was Class Speaker. Santia told her peers that the Class of 2015 should be proud of its rich cultural diversity.

“If there is one thing that distinguishes UB students from everyone else, it is our approachable and inherently curious nature. We are a
community that draws students from over 80 countries. And of course, with people come ideas. Brilliant ideas. Ideas that inspire and encourage. Ideas that change the world," she said. “Let us take this world and fill it with UB pride.”

Kerian Allen ’15 was ready to do just that. She earned her M.S. in Education and had long dreamed of becoming a special education teacher ever since her cousin was diagnosed with dyslexia many years ago.

“I want to be that person they can come to,” said Allen.

Jose Cabrera ’15 reflected on how much he’d changed. “When I first came to UB, I didn’t know what I wanted to do.” Then he enrolled in creative writing classes.

“Writing has given me a voice. It’s giving me something I will love doing for the rest of my life,” he said.

And then, it was over. Graduates streamed out of the arena, finding family members who were ready with cameras, hugs, bouquets of flowers, and balloons. One young man, spying his grandmother, embraced her in a bear-like hug, and as her eyes welled with tears of joy, he gently placed his mortarboard on the top of her head.
Graduation is half the battle. For many college students, the end goal is a career. With that in mind, UB students are frequently required to complete internships to obtain practical in-the-field experience as part of their degree work, and that, in turn, opens doors of opportunity. This year, several members of the Class of 2015 began working just after and even before they donned cap and gown. Here are some of their stories:

Crystal Parks
Major: Computer Science and Engineering
Hired by: Cisco Systems

Crystal Parks grew up taking things apart: the family laptop (“It was when we had AOL dial-up, so I took all the phone lines and tried to fix it”), speakers (“I stripped the wires and twisted them all together and put them into one stereo”); and various computers at her high school in Derby, Connecticut, where she shadowed the IT administrator when she had free time.


Parks no longer has to tinker with gadgets at home: she’s just started working as an IT engineer for Cisco Systems in San Jose, California.

The Silicon Valley-company offered Parks the job months before she graduated in May with a B.S. in Computer Science and Engineering. It all happened so quickly, Parks says. One moment she was chatting with a Cisco representative at a Society of Women Engineers symposium last fall, and the next thing she knew she was being invited to apply for a job. (Google and Caterpillar were equally impressed with Parks; both companies wanted to hire her as a software developer.)

Parks’s success is more than a story of personal achievement; it represents the hard work and support she got from her mother, a single parent who worked at Walmart to support her children. In fact, Parks said she fell in love with computers when her mother sent Parks and her siblings to a local summer camp so she could get to work. Camp activities included swimming, basketball leagues, arts and crafts—and, to Parks’s delight—a computer room where she took introductory-level programming classes. She remembers the joy she felt “finding out how things work, and finding out you’re good at something you enjoy doing and learning. I was always in the computer room!”

After camp ended, Parks continued to learn about coding and HTML by watching YouTube tutorials. She was so enthusiastic, in fact, that her guidance counselor
at Derby High School arranged for Parks to team up with the school’s IT administrator. If he was busy and someone’s monitor needed fixing, he sent Parks.

Still, Parks wasn’t convinced that computers were her future. “I loved engineering,” she said, “but I didn’t know what kind: computer science, mechanical, or electrical.”

So she came to UB, where she could explore her options. “Most of the schools in the area had only electrical engineering or computer science, but I was impressed by the variety of engineering majors at UB,” she says. “After I took Computer Science 101, I knew this is what I wanted to do.”

The University’s diversity impressed her, too. “I’ve met people from all over the world,” she said. “Many of my international friends didn’t go home until they graduated. They haven’t seen their families for four or more years. It’s a big sacrifice.”

Their example gave Parks the courage to accept the Cisco job, thousands of miles away from her mother who worked so hard to send Parks to college. “It’s exciting, but leaving my mom is kind of scary,” Parks admits. “She’s my motivation, and she’s over the moon for me. It’s a great offer.”

“It’s exciting, but leaving my mom is kind of scary. She’s my motivation, and she’s over the moon for me. It’s a great offer.”

—Crystal Parks

(continued on page 10)
In retrospect, it shouldn’t have surprised anyone that James Librandi would become a teacher. After all, he was only 11 when he began helping other students at Central Middle School in Greenwich, Connecticut. Trouble was, as much as he liked pitching in, he hated school. Really, really hated it.

“I cut classes,” Librandi admits. But instead of, say, sneaking off to smoke cigarettes or get into trouble the way kids do, Librandi would hightail it out of class and head down the hall to volunteer with the special education students at Central Middle. No, his teachers didn’t bother to send him back to his own class. They knew better.

“I was a very difficult student,” Librandi explains. “They figured that getting me to stay in school by letting me help with the kids was better than me refusing to go to school at all.”

Somehow, Librandi managed to graduate from high school. But college? No way. Instead, he lived at home and patched together jobs working at a children’s theater company, at a summer camp, and even at an after-school program. The irony of these gigs may not have been lost on Librandi, but it never dawned on him to pursue a teaching career so he could work with students full-time.

Then he got a call. One of his former teachers managed to graduate from high school. But college? No way. Instead, he lived at home and patched together jobs working at a children’s theater company, at a summer camp, and even at an after-school program. The irony of these gigs may not have been lost on Librandi, but it never dawned on him to pursue a teaching career so he could work with students full-time.

Then he got a call. One of his former teachers offered him a temporary position as a special education assistant at one of Greenwich’s elementary schools.

“She remembered me, and she knew I needed direction,” said Librandi, who accepted the offer. “I knew five minutes into it, this is what I wanted to do—what I had to do. I could float along forever, but it wasn’t much of an existence. I would never be able to teach the way I wanted to unless I became a student.

The problem was that I hated school.”

Any lingering hesitation Librandi felt about getting a teaching degree was quickly dispelled by Tina, a pretty girl who told him flatly: “We can’t be together unless you go to college.”

So he went. Librandi started by taking classes at a community college and eventually finished his bachelor’s degree in psychology through UB’s IDEAL program. He then enrolled at UB’s School of Education, where he earned his master’s degree in May.

Along the way, he said, he earned straight As and went from being someone who hated school to being an ideal student.

“The best part about the education program is that we were being taught by real teachers and administrators. There’s nothing like working on your first lesson plans and having help from teachers who’ve been doing it for a long time,” he says.

Shortly before graduation, Librandi got a job offer from the Greenwich School District to teach elementary school. A week later, he whisked Tina off to Disneyland for a long-awaited vacation. Turns out, she eventually agreed to a first date after Librandi began going to college. She’s watched him study and, since she’s also a teacher, encouraged him as he earned his two degrees at UB.

“It’s been one of the pieces that’s the strongest connection for us, a love of what we do, to be able to talk with each other and help each other,” said Librandi, who asked Tina to marry him while they were at Disney.

“I’m very, very happy,” he says. “I can start living the life I’ve wanted to live.”
Most of us can’t recall much about March 11, 2011, but Rie Sano remembers it vividly.

An earthquake, the largest ever to hit Japan, had triggered a tsunami with devastating 130-foot waves that caused the multi-reactor meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. This triple catastrophe—known as 3/11 in Japan—claimed almost 20,000 lives, destroyed whole towns, and caused billions of dollars’ worth of damage.

“I was with my mother and friend, driving in the car. It was the afternoon. Suddenly there was a very big earthquake. Everything stopped. Everything. Traffic lights stopped. There was no electricity,” she says. “I heard from my friends how severe the damage was in other areas. When I saw the damage, it was like a scene in a movie. Homes were floating on the sea.”

Today, says Sano, 24, “the damage was so severe that towns are still recovering. There is still much to be done.”

So Sano, who earned her master's in East Asian and Pacific Rim Studies this spring, has returned home to work for Japan’s Disaster Management Agency.

Her goal: to leverage her education, which includes training and an internship at the United Nations, to better coordinate 3/11-related outreach projects. In particular, Sano hopes to oversee public-awareness campaigns that more effectively connect residents to the help they need. “It’s not the same as before the tragedy,” she says. “People are still living in temporary housing. They are getting depressed because they are feeling ignored.”

Sano’s criticisms reflect mixed assessments of Japan’s handling of the devastation. Critics of the post-3/11 response maintain that the rebuilding of devastated communities and businesses has been hampered by political and administrative inefficiency on local and national levels.

Nonetheless, Sano is optimistic. She believes that her internship at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, a requirement to earning her master’s at UB, will serve her well in her new job.

At the UN, she points out, she was involved with “providing political support to fragile and vulnerable countries [and] helping nations develop by rallying financial and technical assistance.

“Japan has many resources, but we need cooperation between the government and the private sector. I think we need to change perspective,” she concludes.

“Japan has many resources, but we need cooperation between the government and the private sector. I think we need to change perspective.”

—Rie Sano
Kayla Rios
Major: Medical Lab Science
Hired by: Yale-New Haven Hospital

Five weeks before she crossed the stage at Webster Bank Arena to receive her diploma, Kayla Rios reached another milestone: she began her new job at Yale-New Haven Hospital’s hematology lab.

“I started my job search early, but I was excited to work. I wanted the satisfaction of knowing I made the right choice,” said Rios, who in the last month of school managed to complete her final classes at UB after her work at the hospital ended for the day.

A lot to handle, but Rios, 22, has long hoped to start her career. Until she came to UB, it wasn’t easy. She already had two bachelor’s degrees in forensic science and biology when she arrived at UB in 2013. The degrees were meant to help her get a job as a forensic scientist, and Rios had spent 2011 to 2012 crisscrossing the U.S.—from New York to California, Boston, Chicago, and Virginia—interviewing for job positions as a crime scene technician. Bright and personable, she frequently made the first round of interview cuts. Then back she’d go, dressed in her best suit, hopeful that after months and miles, she’d finally be the candidate they’d pick. But—

“—I found out it’s extremely hard to get into the field,” she says.

After an expansive, expensive, and ultimately fruitless quest, Rios reconsidered her options. She knew she’d “always wanted to work in a lab,” but if she couldn’t do that as a forensic scientist, she’d apply her skills elsewhere. The problem? She wasn’t sure where.

Rios began volunteering at a hospital to get experience and, she hoped, ideas about what she might do next. One day, someone mentioned UB’s bachelor’s degree program in Medical Lab Science. Maybe she’d want to take a look?

The program’s required rotations at local hospitals and lab work resonated with Rios, who describes herself as “hands-on.” Because she’d receive credit for some of the coursework she completed when she earned her previous bachelor’s degrees, she’d be able to graduate in just two years, not four. But most significantly, job prospects looked bright. According to government labor estimates, employment of clinical laboratory workers is expected to grow by 14 percent between 2006 and 2016.

“Nationwide, the profession needs 15,000 new medical lab technicians annually, and yet education programs are graduating only 5,000, so the need is there,” said Wayne Aguiar, director of the Medical Lab Science program at UB. “It’s a great time to enter the profession. Starting salaries are about $50,000 to $55,000. Second and evening shift people can draw $60,000 to $70,000. Some labs are offering signing bonuses, too.”

“We earn decent money, and the benefits are great,” confirmed Rios, adding that she gets health and dental insurance, plus retirement benefits.

Beyond paychecks, Rios talks about the deep satisfaction of working in a lab. Professors at UB’s program have all worked more than 20 years each in specialty fields, ranging from microbiology to chemistry, blood bank, and hematology. They also work at area hospitals and in clinical affiliates. As a result, Rios found her classes to be relevant and inspiring. “The professors were so passionate about what they do,” she said.

With their guidance, Rios honed her general desire to work in a lab to a more specific goal of working in a hematology lab. “The work is like solving a puzzle,” she explains. “A patient can come in saying they’re tired, but without me testing their blood and giving accurate results, they can’t get help. It’s a huge responsibility. Without my results, doctors can’t take the next step. That’s most gratifying, knowing I helped lives today.”
Nikolinka Marcheva  
Major: MBA in Accounting and Finance  
Hired by: Pricewaterhouse Coopers

Other people see numbers; Nikolinka Marcheva sees stories.

“They tell me, ‘This was a great period. See the growth.’ Then it may be steady or a down period. Maybe recovery,” said Marcheva ’15, who earned her MBA in Accounting this May. “They tell a story when someone bought a house or invested or sent a child to college. Numbers—math—it’s a language, you have to be able to speak it to know what the story is.”

In June, Marcheva brought her fluency in numbers to PricewaterhouseCoopers, where she was hired to join the firm’s partnership department.

“I’m an associate-level accountant in the corporate division,” said Marcheva, 22. “It’s exciting. I couldn’t wait to get my hands on a real job and start working in a real business environment. This is a new venture and a new beginning for me. I want to grow.”

Marcheva’s enthusiasm belies her initial feelings about her new profession. “I have a computer science background,” admitted Marcheva, who is from Bulgaria. “But I was a girl in a man’s world. It was extremely frustrating. I was told, ‘We have a receptionist position.’ It was my mother who pushed me into accounting.”

Desperate to launch a viable, interesting career, Marcheva said she “took the plunge” by leaving her family and moving to New York, where she might have more opportunity.

Once in the U.S., Marcheva enrolled in a local college to get an associate’s degree and perfect her English. She also built a network of equally ambitious friends, including recent UB MBA graduates.

“They had successful careers and they were able to find jobs. I wanted the same opportunities for myself,” Marcheva said. “They told me UB was a great experience. Professors helped them build their career paths. I needed someone to guide me, so I applied.”

As it turned out, her mother and friends were right. Accounting wasn’t dull after all. In fact, it fascinated Marcheva. “Back home in Bulgaria, accountants did payroll and cutting checks. But I discovered it’s so much more than paper pushing and numbers,” she said. “Over here, I got exposed to taxation, government organizations, private organizations, and audits. I come with a math background. Mathematics is one of my interests. Accounting is math but you also have to know business, regulations. There’s a lot more.”

At the same time, Marcheva was delighted that no one suggested she trade in her career to become a receptionist. Instead, Trez School of Business faculty and Dean Lloyd Gibson “helped me prepare for interviews and organize my résumé and interview documents. Dean Gibson helped me with finding opportunities,” she said.

Perhaps more importantly, the school got Marcheva to think more like a professional than a student.

“My marketing professor, Timothy Dorr, taught us that school wasn’t just about passing classes. He got us to think about how we can contribute and apply our abilities to a job,” she said. “I did not plan on studying accounting, and I did not plan on staying here in the U.S. I miss my family, of course, but they see that I have friends here and I have a future that I wouldn’t have back home.”

“It’s exciting. I couldn’t wait to get my hands on a real job and start working in a real-world business environment.”

—Nikolinka Marcheva
Begin with a question
If research begins with a question, a trail followed and chased for weeks, months, even years, then Beltina Gjeloshi’s began when she was a little girl in Albania, swept up in a national conflict she didn’t understand. Her family lived in poverty and political persecution so she and her mother fled to Italy. At seven she wondered, “Why did it have to be this way?” That question would become central to the research she presented at Faculty Research Day 2015. How could she affect change so other children didn’t have to live through what she did? In her International Conflict and Management course, College of Public and International Affairs Dean Thomas J. Ward asked students to find a nation in conflict and find a solution to “calm the waters” there.

Gjeloshi ’13, who is pursuing a master’s in Global Development and Peace, chose the Central African Republic (CAR) because it “had been in conflict and chaos since 1960,” and is one of the ten poorest countries in the world, torn apart by warring rebel factions, with children often unable to go to school. “I felt this on my skin and in my heart and it took me back to my childhood, only this was ten times worse,” she said. Her solution: a radio-based communications plan bringing BBC Media Action radio—used to empower and give voice to communities in other African countries—and UNICEF Radio educational programming to CAR.

Gjeloshi placed third in the graduate category but the real prize, she said, was sharing her research with so many people and learning about other students’ and faculty members’ research. “I never stopped talking,” she said. “The day was amazing.”

The day brimmed with that kind of synergy as faculty and students shared research across disciplines and departments creating a palpable buzz. “It’s a very academic day but it also had a festive feel,” said Kathleen Engelmann, associate professor of biology and member of the FRD committee. “The day has always been structured around research posters so there would be dialogue, to get people talking about ideas, and that’s what has happened. It shows just how valued research is at the University.”

One hundred and twenty-nine research posters were presented in the faculty, PhD, graduate, and undergraduate categories at Faculty Research Day. Eight schools and colleges and 29 departments participated. “This is our most diverse year yet,” said Christine Hempowicz, director of the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs.

Tarek M. Sobh, senior vice president for graduate studies and research and dean of the School of Engineering, said having that level of participation and engagement on a campus of 5,000 students was “stunning.” “This day cements the fact that we are truly an emerging research institution,” Sobh said. “The function of an eminent higher educational institution is to dispense knowledge but also to create knowledge, and this is what we are doing. It’s about sharing intellectual property. It’s about innovation.”

Attendees and participants packed Littlefield Recital Hall for keynote speaker Mark A. Boyer, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut, who urged the researchers to “follow the good idea,” to work across disciplines to solve real-world problems and to have fun while doing so. “It’s what keeps you smart, alive, and intellectually engaged in what you are working on,” he said.

More than 300 people turned out to view the posters and talk with researchers like faculty winner Stergios Bibis, a visiting assistant professor of biology, and undergraduates Luke DeRosa, Talissa Traverso, and Savari Divine from the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design, who won first place for research into “building green.” Faculty winner Ashish Aphale, a post-doctoral researcher and adjunct faculty member in engineering explained the complexities of “Graphene Based Nanocomposite Electrodes for Energy Storage in Supercapacitors,” while Bayan Hourani and Amanda Scott, undergraduates, shared their findings on “Cell Phone Addiction at UB? A Preliminary Survey.”

(continued on page 16)
Their research findings—that UB students, particularly females, reported being addicted to their cell phones, experiencing negative feelings of technostress and a need to constantly check their phones—drew many who said the findings mirrored their lives.

Cathleen Reich and Justine Quintiliano, dental hygiene majors who had stopped to hear about the research, said yes, their phones stressed them out, and, yes, it was very hard not to continually check them. “Even when I don’t want to,” Quintiliano said.

Avatars, second life, and virtual realities also intrigued attendees who gathered in a large circle three deep to listen to Michael Lohle, a senior lecturer at the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, discuss “Real Projects, Virtual Worlds: Coworkers, their Avatars, and the Trust Conundrum,” an idea that first came to him when he was in a hospital laid low by an illness he got while traveling for business. At the time he was portfolio manager and senior leader at a corporation with planes to catch, meetings to get to, and executives who needed him in Europe. But he had to recuperate first.

Lohle was long familiar with remote meeting access but wondered about using the concepts behind the popular “World of Warcraft” multiplayer online role playing game. His research explored whether it would be possible to apply the use of virtual worlds to corporate team collaborations on real projects. Ultimately, he found the concept isn’t viable—yet—too much monetary risk, but said it should be studied further. Lohle, who won a faculty award, marveled at the lively exchanges he had with students and faculty. “It was quite a day,” he said.

At the awards reception, University President Neil Albert Salonen praised the faculty and students for their innovative thinking. He quipped that when their ideas make them a lot of money they should “remember this day.”

Taylor Gofstein, a senior majoring in medical laboratory science, said the day would linger for a long time. She called FRD “one of my favorite days of the year because everybody gets to present and learn about research outside of their disciplines.” She received an honorable mention for “Evaluation of Nanosphere Verigene RT-PCR and Microarray Assay Versus Culture in the Detection of Enteric Pathogens” where she compared test methods for infectious causes of acute gastroenteritis. “With diarrhea as the leading cause of illness and death worldwide for children under the age of five, it is imperative to have a method which is both rapid and is able to detect every case,” she said.

Gofstein typically did her research in “the wee hours” while most in the city slept. “I’d dash over to Bridgeport Hospital to get my samples running before my clinical rotations, and would run back to the microbiology lab at lunchtime to check on their progress,” she said. “I also gave up my weekends to spend all day long running specimens.”

Her UB professors encouraged her to analyze problems from different perspectives, a skill she says helped her in her research and one she will use as she pursues her PhD in environmental chemistry at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks this fall.

She didn’t mind the lost hours of sleep or juggling her research with three jobs and her studies. “Would I do it again? Absolutely. I function at busy and live for the research and discovery.”
They were just numbers at first, columns of statistics until they weren’t anymore. Until they were people whose stories called to Taylor Hendrickson, stories that would become a two-year research project and a roadmap for what she wanted to do for the rest of her life.

Hendrickson was taking a psychology class with David Oberleitner, assistant professor of psychology, when he asked if she wanted to do research at the Yale School of Medicine with his wife, Lindsay Oberleitner, a research scientist and associate director of the Forensic Drug Diversion Clinic, which provides outpatient mental health care to substance-abusing men and women who have been in jail or who are on parole. The study would focus on links between trauma and depression, anxiety, a history of violence and substance use and become “The Role of Trauma in Baseline Functioning for Individuals Entering Substance Use Treatment from the Criminal Justice System,” the research Hendrickson presented at Faculty Research Day.

“I had no intention of falling in love with research in the way that I have,” Hendrickson said. “I found great joy recognizing the meaning behind statistics and the carry-over that the findings from data can have on the lives of real people.” She watched the clinicians in practice and saw how healing and recovery come when people transitioning out of the criminal justice system find “other people believe in them.”

Watching the Oberleitner’s work, she saw “firsthand how, if you love what you do, work can be incredibly fun and rewarding. They create an atmosphere of growth and learning and are constantly encouraging and pushing me to do the best I can.”

(continued on page 18)
On Faculty Research Day, Hendrickson shared her findings with Christopher Good, professor of clinical science, one of the judges. He found her research applicable to his work as a chiropractor. “Chiropractors treat many patients with physical and emotional traumas, and unfortunately some patients are substance abusers who end up involved in criminal activity,” he said. “This gave me insights into the depth of the problem and some understanding of its complexities and realities. She was impressive in her depth of knowledge and we shared our views on different aspects of the issues from our own clinical experiences. It truly was a shared learning experience.”

Added Hendrickson, “Having the opportunity to converse with Professor Good was a highlight of my day.”

A Better Prescription
For Xingguo Xiong, associate professor of computer and electrical engineering, innovation began with an observation. “Nowadays we already have smartphones and smart cars, why can’t we have a better, sophisticated yet streamlined smart drug delivery system?” He first mulled that over after spending time on a physician friend’s rounds at a hospital where he cared for elderly patients. Xiong listened as the patients talked about the many different medications they took daily and how complicated it was to keep track of them and make sure the dosage was correct. He went back to his lab and began working on a research project using MEMS (Microelectromechanical Systems) technology to develop an automatic smart drug delivery system.

He and his collaborator, Sk Hasan Hafizul Haque, a master’s degree student, developed a system consisting of miniaturized components—microvalves, a micropump, microchannels and microneedles. The micropump delivers the medicine to human body through a microneedle array which is always connected to human skin like a patch while a smart control circuit is preprogrammed to automatically deliver all of the patient’s prescriptions at the right time with the right dose. “We live in an aging world and I wanted to work on something that would make life easier for patients,” Xiong said. “Our next stage is to apply for some funding support so that we may make one device prototype and test its performance.”

Xiong was proud to receive a faculty award for his work with smart drug delivery systems. “I want to work on projects that are really useful, that can help society,” he said.

As he listened to the research work of fellow faculty members and students on FRD, he was struck by how many had the same goals as he did. “They want to do work that helps human beings in some way,” he said.

Team Marketing
When the nine-member team from the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design (SASD) design management course developed a design-marketing plan for the Half Full Brewery in Stamford, their recommendations included creating a customer loyalty social media app, developing a sustainability effort in beer brewing practices and enlisting the talents of a mixologist named “Bootleg Greg.”

Their challenge? To help an existing company to think “big picture” and develop new ideas to help grow the business. Getting nine people to work together can be a challenge, but it worked, said team member Priyama Barua, who shared team strategies on FRD. “We collaborated and used our individual strengths and backgrounds to put together solutions that were achievable and relevant to the target audience,” she said. They focused on their motto: people, planet, profit.

“What stood out the most to us was how much effort they put into every step of the process. From the initial presentations through the final recommendation, I felt as though we had professional consultants on site,” said Jordan Giles, Half Full’s director of branding and customer experience. Giles initially met with Alex W. White, associate professor and chair of the Master of Professional Studies in Design Management, and was soon eager to take part.

The team researched the company, the craft beer market and millennials, a key customer base, and found millennials like companies that are socially conscious, that engage customers with the latest technology and sell a quality product. The team also found that while men love craft beers, women are more partial to cocktails. They reached out to a well-known mixologist,
Greg “Bootleg Greg” Genias, a Trumbull bartender, “to inquire about a new movement within the bar and restaurant industry to create beer cocktails, which are exactly as the name implies.” Giles said.

The brewery acted on many of their recommendations—with Sunday brewery tours, an app in the works and new beer cocktails. Barua said the team gained skills they’ll use in their careers. “This project taught me a lot about how to promote products in innovative ways,” she said. “Having this experience of working with a real client and getting instantaneous feedback while still in school was priceless.”

A Better Brand of Compost
Swamp muck up to their boots and beyond. This was ecology class and, for Jasmine Reid, it was miles from her comfort zone. She plans to be a doctor and research Parkinson’s disease. Research to her involved test tubes and a laboratory, not mud.

“But it showed me that biology is not strictly based on medicine, and it broadened my horizons,” she said. “I realized how all fields of biology are so closely related and could help me become a lot more well-rounded in my field of study.”

James Durrell, her research partner in “How Differing Soil Microbial Communities and Dehydration Stress Affect Arabidopsis Thalia’s Morphological Development,” which the pair presented on FRD, aims to become a conservation biologist. So he was in his element. “When one of my classmates got stuck in the mud past her knees, I rushed over with my instructor to pull her out,” said Durrell. “Moments like these make me realize how much I truly love being outdoors, getting dirty, and learning about different ecosystems in such close proximity.”

For a research project for the course, they used a common garden weed as a model and tested different types of compost to see which retained moisture best and affected the development of the plant. They found that vermicompost, which uses worms to process compost, an accessible, natural and nutrient-rich compost, retained moisture best. Both said they found the research fascinating.

Durrell, who plans to one day launch a website cataloging all types of insects and plant life in the northeast, said he liked that FRD gave him the chance to talk about the environment with so many students and faculty members. “I’m hopeful people will be encouraged to further their understanding of how their own footprint affects all other living organisms and the environment we call home,” he said.
Beloved but out-of-date Schine Hall is demolished for a glittering new residence hall.

By Leslie Geary

Schine Hall, the towering residence hall that for more than two decades stood as a symbolic and physical point of thriving activity and vibrant cultural change at UB, began to be demolished on April 24, moments before students broke ground on a glittering new residence hall.

The historic events began when graduate student Jerry Olivier set a wrecking ball into motion and officially began demolishing Schine’s facade. Olivier, 23, had won the campus lottery to operate the wrecking ball, which had been painted purple for the event.

“Everyone’s going to remember the day they took the building down. I’m glad to be a part of that memory,” said Olivier. “I feel lucky.”

Moments later, ten UB students broke ground for the new residence hall.

They were cheered by roughly 200 students, UB trustees, faculty, and alumni who showed up for the event and for a special “Schine Down 2015” reunion.

“This is a symbolic moment of history and new construction at the University of Bridgeport,” said Vice President of Facilities George Estrada. “Schine Hall is a place of memories, but reopening and reconstruction of the building to meet expectations and needs of today’s students is unfeasible. The new residence hall will better serve UB’s ever-evolving campus.”

Student residence for the future

Sustainably designed by Antinozzi Associates of Bridgeport, the new four-story residence hall will house 220 students in suites and traditional bedrooms when it opens in the fall of 2016. The 60,000-square-foot building will also feature social amenity rooms and support services.

Construction by KBE Construction Company of Farmington, Connecticut, is slated to be completed by June 2016.

The new building is located across the street from Schine.
The towering ten-floor, brick-and-concrete residence hall was closed in 1992, but in its heyday, it was adorned with psychedelic murals by students who hosted lavish parties on its private rooftop, suites, game rooms, and various wings.

“I lived there during my freshman year in 1988, on the ninth floor,” said alumnum Scott Miller ’92. “It was a great place to live. You had so many different personalities and freedom. My fraternity brothers all lived in that dorm. Good friends I’m still friends with today lived in that dorm. Another one of my friends from Schine is married to his spouse, and they both lived in Schine. The parties were legendary.

“But all good things have to come to an end. It’s an old building. They need to modernize, and it’s good UB is moving in the right direction. Bigger and better things are coming.”

Schine Reunion
Nonetheless, nearly 50 alumni like Miller flocked to campus to recall life at the residence hall during a special reunion that featured grilled burgers, drinks, music, commemorative T-shirts, and much reminiscing.

Festivities belied Schine’s controversial beginnings. When plans for the 500-person residence hall were unveiled in 1969, students organized sit-in protests. Construction went on as planned, however, and Schine opened in 1971. It was named after Isaac E. Schine, one of the founders of the Junior College of Connecticut, UB’s precursor. Schine served on the board of trustees through 1947 and on the board of directors at Bridgeport Hospital.

The new residence hall has not yet been named, but there are naming opportunities for the building and its various facilities, said University Relations Vice President Mary-Jane Foster.

“UB’s buildings and their names—Schine, Trefz, Barnum, Littlefield, and more—reflect the proud heritage of those who built this campus and made an important and lasting impact on its future,” Foster said. “We’re excited to have the new residence hall continue in that tradition as we look toward a prosperous future.”
Goodbye, but Never Forgotten

A wrecking ball can’t destroy my best memories at Schine.

By Michael Schneider ’84

As the wrecking ball crashed into the façade of Schine Hall on April 26, sending concrete flying, the crowd cheered—all except for me that is.

The group of alumni had assembled for a special Schine Down 2015 reunion, and the buffet, the disc jockey, and open bar gave the event a festive atmosphere. Former residents of the ten-story residence hall swapped stories, snapped pictures, and toasted the edifice whose time had come to an end. Some were clad in decades’-old T-shirts that paid homage to the building and its namesake, Isaac E. Schine.

Their former home was being feted by some early inhabitants from the 1970s, following the dorm’s opening at the beginning of that decade; a group of students from the golden age of the 1980s; and even a few that resided there the following decade, before its closing in 1992.

The celebration seemed to reach a crescendo with the cheers accompanying the damage wrought by the wrecking ball’s assault. I had been vowing for months that the moment wouldn’t occur, as I planned to be chained to the front door to prevent it. As it was, I could only stand quietly and try to drown my sorrows with Sam Adams.

The friends I made in the four years after first walking into Schine in August 1980 are well aware of the place it holds in my heart, as I have never stopped raving about it. I moved into room 922 that day and was amazed that a lowly freshman from Jersey would have such a magnificent view of the horizon behind Long Island Sound.

My friends at other colleges were incredulous and envious that we actually had phones in our rooms. In those days, the only way to call most college students...
was to dial a hall payphone, hope that someone would answer it, and then pray that that someone would trudge down the hall to find the person being sought. But we had our very own phones! (My number: 203-576-2998.)

Within days of moving in, I met Joe Bokan from room 618. While the two of us stood in line one day soon after at Marina Dining Hall, he introduced me to a cute blonde from Barnum Hall named Lynn Eaton. A year after graduation, the three of us were lined up again, this time at the altar, with Joe serving as best man for the bride and groom.

Those inaugural days at Schine also served as an introduction to some challenging aspects of living within its grand walls: plumbing that didn’t always work; often-broken elevators that would necessitate a nine-floor climb; and most of all, middle-of-the-night fire alarms. There were times when a parade of somnolent students in robes and pajamas had to lumber down the stairs as many as three times in an evening, often when temperatures were the chilliest, because of those drills. Sometimes, we would just give up and go to State Street Diner for an early breakfast.

That is, unless we had had a late snack at Isaac’s Place, the section of the Schine basement that featured billiards, pinball, pizza, burritos, and other culinary treats. (It was at a party there that Lynn and I—f fittingly—announced our engagement and showed off the ring during January of our junior year.)

It was also in that basement that I would hold practices for the intramural floor hockey team I formed as a freshman: the Schine Wharf Rats, named after a Grateful Dead song. On cold winter nights, we’d open the windows and shoot at empty closets.

I recruited Schine’s hall director at the time, Don Waldo, to play on the team. Unfortunately, he and I were about the only ones with hockey experience, and the team’s winless record provided ample proof that the majority of the squad was made up of my drinking buddies. That first season was so painful that Don and I went almost 35 years without seeing each other, reuniting finally for the “Schine Down” event. I wore my Wharf Rats jersey for it; Don claims he still has his.

I came to UB as a journalism major with the singular goal of someday covering the National Hockey League. I eventually did that in Buffalo, covering the Sabres in their arena known as “The Aud” until that building met a similar fate. I always referred to it as “my second-favorite edifice on earth.”

I had a revelation at the “Schine Down” event that if I had known what would become of the beloved building in 2015, one of my children would be running around today with the middle name “Isaac.” So I found it impossible to join in the cheering as the wrecking ball began its dastardly work. As the event drew to a close, the disc jockey thanked all of us for coming. He then granted my request to play one final song often heard in the halls of dear old Schine while I was there: The Cars’ classic hit, Good Times Roll.
His home in Kathmandu is halfway around the world, but when Sunil Singh found out about the massive earthquake that destroyed his country, he immediately reached out to the 11 other UB students who are from Nepal.

The April 25 earthquake had flattened more than 500,000 homes, more than 7,500 people had died, more than 15,000 had been injured. Priceless artifacts were gone forever, and the toll continued to rise. Thankfully, by some unknown miracle, the students’ immediate families were spared. “Nonetheless,” said Singh, “we had to act.”

Within a day, the group had produced a video featuring dramatic drone footage of Nepal during and after the quake. The two-minute production ended with an invitation to a fundraising lunch, which the students organized with help from UB’s International Student Services Office.

“With your small help, we can make a big difference,” said student Satyam Shrestha, who directed the film.

Deeply moving and highly professional, the video hit a nerve. Students saw it and shared it on social media. Reporters saw it. The public saw it. On May 4, more than 300 good Samaritans brought their appetites and their wallets to help raise $7,717 to support American Red Cross relief efforts in Nepal. All of the food was donated by 21 restaurants from throughout Fairfield County.

“I’m overwhelmed! We thought maybe $3,000 but when we heard it was over $7,000, it was like, ‘My gosh!’” said Shrestha, who contacted his father in Nepal via Facebook to share the good news. “He was very proud. The value of this support is immeasurable!”

Mark Rozelle ’83, ’90, a UB alumnus and long-time Red Cross volunteer, spoke at the fundraiser and updated lunch-goers about the organization’s efforts in Nepal. The American Red Cross, he said, is supporting Nepal’s Red Cross by providing food, water, shelter, and reconnecting victims who were separated by the quake.

“Please remember that the need doesn’t go away when the headlines do,” Rozelle added. “These efforts are going to take years. Anything you can do, no matter how small, can make a huge difference in someone’s life.”

Clearly, many heard the call to action. Restaurants donated a feast of Indian, Turkish, Italian, Japanese, and other international food. Donations were also provided by the UB Chinese Student and Scholar Association; student Hosam Faqeha, who is president of the UB Saudi Student Club; Barbara Benedict, an admissions counselor at UB’s School of Continuing Education and Professional Studies; the UB Book Store, and the Office of Residential Life and Student Conduct.

Summed up Rozelle: “It shows the reach of the campus. It’s tremendous. It was like going to a United Nations lunch; it was fantastic!”
Long before humans zoomed into space, they sent animals: monkeys, dogs, chimpanzees. Those early flights not only helped to assure scientists and engineers that man could one day reach the moon, they also fueled the imaginations and enthusiasm of millions of awestruck children. Space! Wow!

Fast forward a few decades. Polls find that children today would rather be “famous” than become an astronaut. Elon Musk’s Tesla may be a more familiar brand to them than SpaceX. And kids, particularly girls, associate words like “geeky” or “crazy” with scientists.

There’s still hope, thanks to associate professor of technology Neal Lewis, who with a team from UB was awarded $6,000 from the Connecticut Space Grant College Consortium to develop a robotic puppet monkey that may go a long way in reigniting young people’s enthusiasm for space and science.

The Consortium also awarded UB professor Nelson Ngoh and graduate student Mohammad El-Abid approximately $12,400 for their work in Earth and Space Education (ESS). Ngoh, an associate professor of science education in the graduate School of Education, was awarded $7,433 to survey Connecticut K-12 science coordinators about the challenges and steps which can be taken to increase ESS instruction.

El-Abid, a senior majoring in computer science, received a $5,000 directed scholarship. El-Abid is a member of Dr. Lewis’s robot project team.

Lewis’s project is nicknamed “Ham,” for High Altitude Monkey. It’s also the name of Ham, the chimpanzee who was launched into space in January 1961, four months before Alan Shepard became the first American astronaut to travel in space.

Designed to fly in a high-altitude balloon 100,000 miles above the earth’s surface, Lewis’s simian will be operated by children who can watch him live in space on NASA-like monitors that will be located at the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Ham will eventually splash down in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Massachusetts, where he will be picked up and brought back to the Discovery Museum.

Ham can’t speak, but he can communicate by using signals—thumbs up, thumbs down, nodding his head—to help answer questions and “to engage young students as they learn about earth and space science,” said Lewis.

“You can’t point a camera out of a high-altitude balloon and maintain children’s interest for any length of time. You can’t send up a stuffed animal. The whole idea is for Ham to be interactive,” Lewis added. “We’re trying to get children interested in science and this really supports science education.”

Said Dr. Jani Marcari Pallis, UB’s space grant director: “We are once again grateful to the Connecticut Space Grant College Consortium’s continued sponsorship of UB student and faculty research in support of NASA’s mission.”
News Lines

Engineering Access

Honored by AAUW and the Connecticut Technology Council for back-to-back prestigious awards, Wafa Elmannai hopes to encourage girls to embrace education, too.

By Leslie Geary

Wafa Elmannai, a graduate student at the School of Engineering, was happy to talk about the string of prestigious prizes she’s won recently. She was also pleased to answer questions about the device she’s creating that will help visually impaired people travel more easily, but she was rushing to get her daughters to an appointment. The interview might have to wait.

“I don’t have much time,” she apologized over the phone as peals of laughter rang out in the background.

Time may be in short supply for Elmannai, a full-time student and mother of four daughters, but she wouldn’t have it any other way.

Elmannai came to UB from Libya so she could earn a PhD in Computer Science and Engineering and, she says, earn the kind of credibility that will help her to promote women’s rights back home.

“In the Middle East, for women, it’s mostly about caring for kids, cooking, and doing those sort of things. I have four daughters. I want to show them they can be successful, I want to be a role model,” she said, before adding, “You may laugh but I have had two life dreams: I want to work in the Ministry of Education [in Libya] to change the system to be more like the United States, and I want to start a school for girls.”

If anyone can shake things up, Elmannai can. In April, she was named one of the most innovative women in Connecticut by the Connecticut Technology Council, which picked her for one of its Women in Innovation awards based on her inventiveness, accomplishments in science and technology, independent research, and academic achievement.

Less than a month later, she was the only student in Connecticut to win a $20,000 International Fellowship from the AAUW. Other grant winners hailed from out-of-state universities like Duke, Harvard, Columbia, and Georgetown. “I’m proud,” she said, “to be among those from such prestigious schools and to represent UB.”

Those who know her say the awards reflect Elmannai’s dual dedication to achieving personal success as an engineer while helping other women aspire to professions of their own.

“Wafa exemplifies a role model of Women in Innovation,” says her adviser, Khaled M. Elleithy, associate vice president for Graduate Studies and Research and associate dean of the School of Engineering.

Elif Kongar, director of the PhD in Technology Management program, learned more about Elmannai at the ASEE (American Society for Engineering Education) conference held at UB in 2014, when Elmannai won the Decisyon, Inc. Big Data Analyst Award.

“I got to know more about Wafa’s dedication to the engineering discipline and was impressed,” said Kongar, who then co-nominated her for the Women in Innovation award with Elleithy.
At UB, Elmannai is president of the Honor Society of Upsilon Pi Epsilon and a member of the UB chapter of the Society of Women Engineers, Phi Kappa Phi, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), and Global and Health Help (GH2), which is dedicated to helping the poor.

Her research in computer science and engineering is motivated by her social consciousness, too. In fact, she began creating a navigating system for visually impaired individuals “after she noticed that many existing devices are limited in their capabilities or cost prohibitive,” said Elleithy.

So what about the device? Elmannai seems ebullient when she finally has a moment to talk about it.

Equipped with cameras, infrared sensors, and an ultrasonic GPS system, the still-unnamed device is unique because it’s designed to work during the day and night while giving far more accurate readings than existing products that rely on GPS systems. And unlike other models, hers will be small enough for people to wear comfortably, say, strapped to their leg or waist. She’s modified her designs so the device can give clear, audible directions to visually impaired users in “popular languages, such as English, Spanish, and Chinese.”

Most important: “I’m keeping costs low,” Elmannai insists. “Many blind people don’t have the ability to buy devices [currently on the market]. Their income is too low. It would be good to create something for people who really need our help.”

In short, it’s quintessentially Elmannai, who in between classes and taking care of her four daughters and conducting research and earning some terrific prizes and grants along the way, is opening all sorts of doors and access: for the blind, for girls who wish to go to school, and for other women who nurse professional dreams of their own.

The interview needs to wrap up, but there’s time for one final question: who was her role model?

“My mother,” Elmannai answers immediately. “She is my biggest supporter. She always tells me, ‘You have to finish your education.’”

Health students study the body to heal their patients. But as dozens of UB chiropractic and naturopathic students discovered this spring, their personal touch can go a long way in promoting their professions, too.

Two dozen College of Chiropractic (UBCC) students, along with faculty members, met with lawmakers in April when they attended the American Chiropractic Association’s national conference in Washington, D.C.

A few weeks later, 25 students, alumni, and faculty from the College of Naturopathic Medicine went to Capitol Hill, too, and lobbied on behalf of Doctors of Chiropractic (NDs). “We met with legislators and staff with two requests: for NDs to be included in Medicare and NDs to be eligible to be hired to work as part of the VA system,” said Dean Marcia Prenguber, ND.

Naturopathic students also attended sessions on timely issues, such as vaccinations, the role naturopathic medicine should have in health policy, and how NDs and integrative medicine are helping the VA to treat veterans.

“One of the missions we have in our educational programs for health care professionals is for our graduates to become active in their respective professions and for them to learn the skills to effectively promote positive change in the health care system to become the future leaders in their field,” said UB Health Sciences Division Vice-Provost Dr. David M. Brady. “Having students participate in national professional associations and attend legislative events at both the state and federal level is a wonderful way to accomplish this goal.” — L.G.
“Engineering,” insists Dr. Tarek Sobh, “is about helping people.”

As UB’s engineer-in-chief (he’s dean of the School of Engineering and vice president for research and graduate studies), Sobh is uniquely qualified to make that assessment. Among his other endeavors, Sobh draws together engineering colleagues, researchers, post-doc fellows, entrepreneurs, businesses, medical experts, and other interested parties so they can work together to develop multifaceted, STEM-related solutions to advance major issues like sustainable development, medicine, scientific research, and cyber-security.

That’s caught the attention of policy makers. In March, Sobh was among a select group of engineering deans invited to the White House by the National Academy of Engineers (NAE). How, deans were asked, can engineering be used to solve what the NAE has dubbed the Grand Challenges of Engineering?

Sobh had plenty to share. In fact, he noted, UB is “perfectly poised” and “already doing” the kinds of things needed to solve some of the world’s most vexing problems.

When he returned from Washington, Knightlines caught up with him to find out more.

You’ve said UB is “perfectly poised to meet the Grand Challenges.” How so?
In many cases, the Grand Challenges that have been identified are the very interdisciplinary problems that we excel in. At UB, for example, we have the Wireless Mobile and Communications Laboratory that’s dedicated to cyber-security. The University of Bridgeport has partners with Face Checks, the new venture at CTech IncUBator, our on-campus business incubator that specializes in biometric cyber-security applications.

Another example would be within area of energy and sustainability, which is one of the existing Grand Challenges. And within that area, we already have a Renewable Energy Research Lab that works with Fuel-Cell Energy company on many exciting environmental projects.

Within the area of scientific discovery would be the research centers that we have in the area of Robotics, Intelligence Sensing and Control (RISC) and biomedical engineering and nanotechnology, in which great advances are being discovered on a continuous basis.

What was the most inspiring or thought-provoking part of your White House visit?
There were three things that really stuck with me. The first was one of the questions I asked during one of the meetings along the lines of, “How could the White House help us meet the Grand Challenges project?” We were told, “If you tell us who to call and ask for what you need, we will do it for you.” That was one valuable outcome, being able to have an advocate and colleague in the White House to ask for help.
Secondly, what was very interesting to me was the establishment of the first engineering-based school of medicine. In my mind, that could be a project for us to contemplate, given the recent exponential growth of the engineering programs at UB.

Finally, I am fascinated by humanitarian engineering. It’s a new paradigm in engineering that’s started to emerge at a few schools across the country. Engineering is about helping people, in terms of pure water and building communities that are sustainable. If nothing else, we have the beginnings of a humanitarian engineering program in our School of Engineering.

The NAE wants schools to train their best engineering students to become Grand Challenge Scholars, and UB will start its own Grand Masters Program next fall. Tell us more about this. The program will contain the components identified by the NAE: interdisciplinary research and development, global engagement, and service. My preferred method would be establishing a portfolio-based Grand Master Scholars program so by the time they graduate, engineering students will demonstrate excellence in all of these five areas in order to become certified as Grand Master Scholars. For this reason, the priority will be focused on undergraduate students in the early stages of the engineering program—freshmen and sophomores—so they have time to do this.

Even as officials recognize that future solutions lie with engineers, we face a crisis in STEM education. Nationally, fewer than 40 percent of college students who want to major in a STEM field complete a STEM degree. How do we reverse this trend?

The problem is much worse than the 40 percent number. The U.S. is graduating 50,000 with a B.S. in engineering every year, but in countries like China and India, the numbers are 1.3 million and 1 million. Even if you account for population differences between our countries, we’re way behind.

The problem is that many students are not interested in STEM. The fact that our culture does not support or portray engineering as very cool or exciting doesn’t help, either. The Grand Challenges paradigm is a great step in making young students understand that engineering isn’t about sitting in a cubicle. It’s a profession that helps solve some of our biggest and most serious problems in society. It’s about helping communities solve problems with a purpose. If we can get young people to understand this, they will be much more excited about engineering.

Look around you. Is there anything around you that hasn’t been organized or implemented or devised by an engineer, whether it’s the drywall in the building, the road you’re driving on, the computer you use? That’s what they used to tell us as kids! When people understand how engineering can change your life, that’s the game-changer.

So, we have to turn engineers into today’s heroes?

Exactly! That’s what I’m saying. ■
News Lines

It’s a wrap!
SASD students end the year with prestigious awards.
By Leslie Geary

Judges from Campbell Soup, Volvo, and the Connecticut Art Directors Guild were among the industry experts who awarded Shintaro Akatsu School of Design (SASD) students prestigious awards over the spring semester.

At the New York International Auto Show, one of biggest auto shows in the world, industrial design major Runya Sun won the $4,000 Grand Prize for his invention known as the “Distance Sensor.” Sun designed it to prevent accidents that occur when car doors are opened without warning.

Two other UB industrial design students also won prizes at the Auto Show’s Traffic Safety Symposium. Xinyu Yuan’s “Slow-Down Protection System” took fourth place. It aims to better protect some 3 million Americans who suffer from whiplash by employing air bags that hold drivers’ and passengers’ necks in place upon impact. It also uses a rail containing a spring to allow seats to slide back approximately three inches during a crash, thus absorbing shock and reducing the chance of whiplash.

Zhang Da came in fifth place with his device called “Quick Grip,” a product that replaces snow chains.

Meanwhile, a team of four graphic design majors were among the top ten teams in the 48-Hour Repack Challenge, an adrenaline-fueled national competition that gives competitors just two days to create, build, film and pitch souped-up packaging products for well-known household products.

Team members Terrell Griffith, Joe Giampaoli, Mike Christiano, and Tijan Sallahike overhauled traditional packaging for Band-Aids. Their innovative design enables consumers to unwrap and put on an adhesive bandage with just one hand. It also helped them stand out among a field of more than 250 student competitors.

The Connecticut Art Directors Club (CADC) was also impressed by SASD students. It awarded Terrell Griffith and Hacksung Lee, both of whom are juniors majoring in graphic design, prizes at its annual Monica Wolff & Randall Smith Scholarship Competition.

“This is the second time in three years that SASD students have won half the prizes,” said professor Emily Larned, chair of the SASD graphic design program. “I’m very proud of our students, but also of the graphic design program here at UB SASD. This is evidence that SASD graphic design is competitive with schools throughout the state.”

It’s a wrap!
SASD students end the year with prestigious awards.
By Leslie Geary
Like a box of TNT, *The Vagina Monologues*, Eve Ensler’s award-winning play, blasts through the walls of silence surrounding sex, lesbianism, violence, poverty, and other hot-button topics that affect millions of women and girls worldwide.

Audiences may love or hate it. (It’s won an Obie Award, been the target of censorship, and even banned in Uganda as an “affront to public morality.”)

But for actors like alumna Askar Morisseau ’13, performing in the play was nothing less than transformative. “It made me find the courage in myself that I did not know I had,” says Morisseau. “It helped me see the world from a different perspective.”

Morriseau so loves the play, in fact, that she’s acted in it twice—in Massachusetts years ago, and most recently, this spring, when she learned that *The Vagina Monologues* would be performed at UB as a fundraiser for the Centers for Family Justice in Bridgeport.

Held at Littlefield Recital Hall from April 17-19, the three readings of the play sold out and raised over $1,500. The production also brought together UB’s global community of women who answered a casting call by Jill Bassett, associate director of residential life who organized the V-Day campaign on campus and directed the play.

For a little over a month, Bassett and a cast of 25 actors met for rehearsals. Some, like student J. Pink Fang, had never set foot on a stage, but signed on since the play “provided an opportunity for a challenge.”

Others felt compelled to be a part of the production. “*The Vagina Monologues* is an anthem, a poem . . . a sonnet to women,” said Mary-Jane Foster, vice president of University Relations. “How could I not?”
An Award to Smile About

Laurel Risom, a clinical associate professor at the Fones School of Dental Hygiene, enjoys esteemed company; she was voted among the “Top 20 Professors of Dental Hygiene” in the U.S. on the website MedicalTechnology-Schools.com.

Risom and other winners were selected for being innovators and leaders, “in everything from instructional methods to their scholarly research, and also leaders in the dental hygiene community.”

Risom said she was “surprised, humbled and honored” to be included in the Top 20 list of best professors.

“Education, public health and improving oral health is a passion of mine, and I enjoy sharing public-health outreach activities with my Fones students,” Risom added. “Dr. Fones had a strong vision of dental hygiene grounded in public health, which we continue to uphold today. I am proud to be a professor at the Fones School. This unexpected recognition of my efforts is a reflection of the dedicated faculty I work with daily!” — L.G.

Talking About Sports

Sports Information Director Chuck Sadowski has won the ECAC-SIDA’s 2015 University Division Irving T. Marsh Award. The award is presented annually to one who has exhibited excellence in the field of sports information. The award was first presented in 1966 and is named after Irving Marsh, the ECAC Service Bureau founder and director until his retirement in 1973.

“I’m humbled and honored to be selected by the ECAC-SIDA Board to receive one of the 2015 Irving T. Marsh Service Bureau Awards,” said Sadowski. “You look at the list of the previous recipients of this prestigious honor, and it is truly a who’s who of our profession. To be selected to join such a group is without question one of the highlights of my career.” — L.G.

Overcoming Pain

An estimated 100 million Americans suffer from chronic pain at a cost of over $500 billion annually, according to government figures. To help address this serious epidemic, Dr. James Lehman has been chosen with nine other experts to serve on the Samueli Institute’s new multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Breakthrough Collaborative.

“One of the goals of the collaborative is to increase access and quality of care for pain patients through patient-centered integrative pain management services. Jim brings a long history of clinical, educational and quality improvement experience to the collaboration,” said the American Chiropractic Association.

Lehman is director of Health Sciences Postgraduate Education at the University and an associate professor of clinical sciences at UB College of Chiropractic. — L.G.
Talking About Collaboration

Student entrepreneurs have been busy creating products of their own ever since UB launched its New Product Commercialization course. Funded by a three-year grant from Venture Well (formerly National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance), the class is a perfect mash-up of design, business, and engineering. Led by School of Engineering professor Neal Lewis, students from these three disciplines work together to invent products of their own.

The Product Commercialization course was offered for the third time this spring and is already a big success. Students include the likes of Reem Alattas, a computer science and engineering PhD candidate who’s obtained a U.S. patent for her souped-up bike helmet that’s equipped with high-visibility directional lights. — L.G.

Feeling Transcendental

Diane Krumrey, associate professor of English, has been selected to participate in the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) prestigious Summer Institute in Concord, Massachusetts, on the topic of “Transcendentalism and Reform in the Age of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller.”

Summer seminars and institutes for college and university teachers are offered by the NEH to provide faculty members and independent scholars with an opportunity to enrich and revitalize their understanding of significant humanities ideas, texts, and topics.

Krumrey will study with 12 senior scholars, including two Pulitzer Prize winners.

“Teaching American literature over the years, I’ve come to realize the primal influence of the Transcendentalists on American self-knowledge and spirituality. If anything, their legacy resonates even more in the 21st century,” said Krumrey. “At this seminar I’ll be able to work with the foremost scholars in Transcendental literature and history and do archival research in Concord and Amherst. This will tremendously enrich my teaching, of course, as well as my own research on Henry David Thoreau’s intellectual development.”

Krumrey teaches survey courses and advanced courses in American literature at UB, including Women in Literature and New Styles of Storytelling. Her areas of specialization include Early American Literature, Multicultural Literature, Contemporary Immigrant Literature, and Native American Literature. She is currently at work on a book entitled The Eloquent Savage in Early American Literature.

In 1997, she was Fulbright Professor of American Studies at Dortmund University in Dortmund, Germany. Krumrey received a B.A. cum laude in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a PhD in English from the University of Connecticut. — L.G.

In Memoriam

The University community remembers with great fondness its late colleague, Dr. Ernest “Ernie” Goldman. After a distinguished career in computer engineering at IBM, Goldman joined UB circa 1982 as the Bannow-Wahlstrom Professor of Computer Engineering and subsequently served as department head. He retired from UB in 1993. Goldman was married to the late Muriel Goldman and is survived by daughter Dr. Robyn Goldman of Fairfield and son Wayne Goldman ’86, of Ridgefield.
Alumni Lines

Would you like to share news of your own or nominate an alum to be interviewed for a “Focus On” interview? We’re interested in what you’re doing, and so are your classmates! Contact: Knightlines, Cortright Hall, 219 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604 or knightlines@bridgeport.edu. Be sure to include your full name, contact information, and class year.

1952
Henry “Bill” Kemp passed away peacefully on April 6, 2015. Born November 10, 1923, in Stamford, CT, he earned his master’s at UB, where he met his wife, the late Eleanor Huse.

During WWII, Mr. Kemp was a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt awarded him the Distinguished Flying Cross for “heroism [and] extraordinary achievement . . . in the face of enemy fire.” Mr. Kemp had flown 50 missions in the European Theater of Operations and was awarded the Air Medal with three bronze clusters; a European Campaign Medal with two bronze stars; one Silver Star; a WWII Victory Medal and a Presidential Unit Citation. He served in the 15th Air Force, 450th BG, 723rd Bombardment Squadron.

After the war, he taught advanced placement chemistry at Stamford High School, where he also served as head basketball coach from 1950-1965.

1965
Richard “Rick” Witschonke passed away on February 24. After graduating from UB with a degree in English, he worked for Perkin-Elmer, where he was involved in work with spy satellites. He later earned an MBA from Harvard Business School and spent most of his career at American Management Systems as vice president and manager of the North American Financial Institutions Practice. His interests included wine appreciation, jogging, and numismatics, the studying and collection of coins.

1975
The town of Westport, Connecticut’s Green Task Force awarded Rindy Higgins its WeGreen-Westport Award in May. The WeGreen-Westport Awards Program recognizes the contribution of Westporters—individuals, businesses and non-profits— whose work has made a substantial difference in bettering the community through a commitment to protecting and improving the environment.

1978
Joe Diorio recently accepted a position with Vanderbilt University’s Peabody School of Education as director of external affairs. Previously, he served as director of communication at the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg School for Communication. “I’m leaving Philadelphia just as the Phillies are becoming a perfectly awful baseball team,” writes Diorio, whose personal athletic plans include training for his first marathon. Former UB pals can find him at joseph.j.diorio@vanderbilt.edu.

1982
Alexander R. Ferrante writes to update us that he is a partner at Gold & Ferrante, P.C., a law firm in the Philadelphia area, as well as an adjunct law professor at a junior college.

2005
Erin Wilson has been awarded the prestigious Region 1 Teacher of the Year for Magnet Schools of America in April. Wilson has been teaching in Hartford, Connecticut, for over a decade and is currently the instructional coach for math and literacy at Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School. “I am a proud UB alumna!” writes Wilson, who earned her master’s in education at the University.

2006
Wayne Travers, Jr. recently earned the Silver Medal of Excellence in Communications from Sacred Heart University, where he holds a master’s in communications. He is an alumnus of the IDEAL program at UB and is currently a communications, marketing, and brand manager for the International Federation of Accountants in Manhattan, and a senior volunteer with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense office.

Veterans Project

TELL US YOUR STORY!

The University of Bridgeport Office of Alumni Relations needs your help to honor and preserve the legacies of our veteran alumni.

Please share memories and reflections from your own experience or from veterans you know, and how they might have inspired you to live the life you have since your own UB graduation.

Share your story by contacting alumni@bridgeport.edu or 203-576-4133. Thank you in advance for your participation!
UB Creative Writing Director D. Lehman’s debut work of short stories, *The Foundation of Summer* (Homebound Publications) is populated with murderers, fools, and competitive fanatics. And yet their private quests for something greater, despite odds they often can’t control, are recognizable in all of us. A chef competes in a high-stakes culinary competition, trackers chase each other through the autumn woods, men race in their speed boats off the coast of moneyed Westport, Connecticut. Despite their faults, or perhaps because of them, Lehman’s fully rendered characters are made by turns fearless and vulnerable, at times reprehensible, and more often than not, sympathetic.

In *46 Driver: A Marine Corps Helicopter Pilot’s Vietnam Memoir* (Bluewater Press), alumnus and retired pilot Arnold Reiner ’64 recalls his military service at the height of the Vietnam War. Reiner pulls no punches as he recounts white-knuckled feats of landing in zones laced with enemy fire, coping with in-flight mechanical failures, and learning that his simple mission would turn into a protracted quagmire. “At the start, there was neither optimism nor pessimism that the effort would succeed. We were simply marines executing a mission,” he writes. “As pilots we learned that untempered determination is a liability in flying in combat and that human error and mechanical failure are as dangerous as the enemy, often more so.”

History’s mysteries come to life in *Challenging Destiny, the Unknown Story of Anastasia* (iUniverse) by alumnus Mark Jay Gang ’69, ’72. When Bolshevik revolutionaries stormed the Romanov’s Russian palace, many wondered if the youngest daughter Anastasia escaped or perished with the rest of her family. In his first novel, Gang tells a fictional account of Anastasia’s secret life. Spirited and sweeping in scope, *Challenging Destiny* will keep readers spellbound with its tales of destruction, heartache, romance, power, and mystery.

— Leslie Geary
Side Lines

Hoping for the Majors

Record-breaking Purple Knights closer to Major League dreams.

By Mike Patrick

One’s a reliable batter who bounced back this year after a season nursing a broken wrist. The other has a southpaw pitch that’s both sure and powerful. Seniors John Ascenzia ’15 and Brian O’Keefe ’15 each set career records this season. And because they kept their eyes on the ball, the Major Leagues may have their eyes on them.

“It was big sitting out that whole year, watching,” said Ascenzia. “Made me just be more hungry for the game, you know?”

His hunger led to him finish with a .984 fielding percentage that made him the top defensive shortstop in the country. In May, he was named recipient of an American Baseball Coaches Association/Rawlings NCAA Division II Gold Glove.

That was despite a bad injury that even his coach thought might have been career-ending. It was the second game of the season last year when Ascenzia hit a grounder to third and slid into first base, jamming his hand under the bag and breaking his wrist.

Losing him for the season meant Head Baseball Coach Joe Tonelli was down not only a strong slugger, but a team player who influenced and inspired his teammates.

“Johnny’s the kind of kid who makes everybody around him better,” Tonelli said, adding Ascenzia “acts like a coach on the field,” setting up players and offering guidance.

“We try to groom people like that, and it just seemed natural for Johnny,” Tonelli said. “Every successful team has kids on the team that are like that. Fortunately for us, ours is Johnny.”

But Ascenzia’s gift, Tonelli said, is as a batter; he ought to know. A friend of the family, Tonelli said he has known Ascenzia since the batter was just five years old, and watched him grow to become an all-state baseball and hockey player for the West Haven High School Blue Devils before signing him to the Purple Knights.

“We’ve thought the world of him,” he said. “Just his whole presence. He’s a tough, hard-nosed kid from West Haven. He works very hard and does all the little things right. I knew no matter where I was, I was going to recruit him. It just so happened that I was here.”

And while Tonelli said he was concerned his star batter’s wrist injury might have been severe enough to keep him from the major leagues, Ascenzia said he’s completely healed and on at least one pro team’s radar.

“I went to a Red Sox workout last summer and did pretty well,” he said. “They said they’d keep an eye on me.”

A couple of pro teams are also looking at O’Keefe, and Tonelli has a good idea why.

“Any time you see a left-handed pitcher who throws hard,” Tonelli said, “you want to get him.”

And Tonelli said he knew he wanted O’Keefe as a Purple Knight when he saw him on the field for Milford’s Joseph A. Foran High School Lions.

“Brian, his work ethic is just incredible,” Tonelli said. “You never have to tell him to run. Brian just goes about business like a pro.”

In March, O’Keefe moved to the top of the Purple Knights’ all-time career strikeout list with 176. The previous record was 172.

“I really never thought about it. I didn’t know about it until the coach walked out in the middle of the game and told me,” O’Keefe said. “It’s my senior year. I just wanted to work hard, because you never know when it’s going to be your last pitch.”
It seems that last pitch may be a long way off.

“I got a few looks from major league teams. They’ve contacted me and sent me a couple letters,” he said.

“The Cubs showed some interest. I filled out a couple sheets for the Rockies and I worked out with the Braves this past August.”

Playing for a major league team has been O’Keefe’s dream since he played Whiffle Ball as a boy with his father, a former college athlete, he said.

“Oh, of course, no question about it; it’s always been a number one goal of mine ever since growing up,” he said. “I never want to stop playing and work that nine-to-five job.”

Tonelli said it’s not unheard of to have two players break records in a single season, but it’s not exactly common, either.

“Both kids have been outstanding players for us,” he said.
There are rings, and there are Rings.

Lower-case rings may look pretty. They may even glitter (a bit). But lower-case rings don’t have the same pizzazz as Rings that signify something important, like an engagement, a graduation, or a championship season.

Little wonder then, that the Wheeler Recreation Center thrummed with cheers on April 7, when the women’s gymnastics team received Rings for winning the 2014 USA Gymnastics Women’s Collegiate Team National Championships nearly a year before.

Students from Roosevelt Elementary School were invited to the ceremony, and they were treated to a demonstration of the gymnasts’ skills. Some youngsters learned a few moves themselves from the champions before the team lined up to receive shiny gold bands adorned with glittering stones.

It was the sixth consecutive victory for the Purple Knights, but that didn’t diminish the moment. After all, there are some rings you can never have enough of.

Much to celebrate as the gymnastics team gets championship rings.

By Leslie Geary
In only its fifth year at the varsity level, the women’s lacrosse program completed a history-making 2015 season, setting a program record for wins, as the team posted an impressive 12-4 overall record and went 4-4 in the East Coast Conference to end the campaign in a tie for fourth place in the ECC standings. This is the first time Bridgeport has recorded more than one conference win in a season, and the previous single season high for victories was five.

On the season, UB outscored the opposition by a 207-122 margin and opened the season with a seven-game winning streak helped in large part by the quality play of the six members of the UB Women’s Lacrosse Class of 2015.

Five of the six seniors started every game in 2015 for UB and accounted for 128 of 294 total points this season. Gabrielle Valela led the team with 50 goals and 63 points while fellow attacker Shealyn Scully tied for the team lead in 14 assists and added 22 goals. Emily Catalano contributed on both ends of the field as a midfielder, filling the stat sheet with 14 goals, eight assists, plus 21 ground balls. Alexia Costa and Paige Adamsky anchored the Purple Knights’ defense with 32 and 16 ground balls respectively.

Head Coach Kate Smullen was honored by her peers and was named the 2015 East Coast Conference Coach of the Year. Gabrielle Valela was named First Team All-ECC, and sophomore Lauren Mengel who netted 25 goals, 14 assists, and led the team with 40 ground balls, was selected to the All-ECC Second Team.

By Chuck Sadowski
Music, my lifelong field of study, is omnipresent throughout our society and culture. The sociologist Thomas Turino puts it especially well:

People in societies throughout the world use music to create and express their emotional inner lives, to span the chasm between themselves and the divine, to woo lovers, to celebrate weddings, to sustain friendships and communities, to inspire mass political movements, and to help their babies fall asleep. Music is the basis of a huge industry and can be an avenue to money and fame. It is also a constant of everyday life, wafting through the dentist’s office like sonic wallpaper . . . musical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole.

Despite its constant presence all around us, some devalue and marginalize the arts, particularly as part of the education of those whom Lisa Delpit memorably referred to as “other people’s children.” A thrust of my own work as a musician, teacher-educator, and scholar involves advocating for policies that allow all children to experience the kind of rich, balanced curriculum that the best public and private schools provide for their students, including ongoing, meaningful learning opportunities in the arts, athletics, world languages, history, and science—opportunities that have become all too scarce in the current political and policy climate.
Why is it important for humans to have opportunities to engage in music, or any other human pursuit without immediate survival value?

Well-intentioned justification can easily stay mired in vague and sentimental bromides, or promises of extrinsic benefits such as elevated standardized test scores. What meaningful and credible justifications can we provide? Recently, I’ve been reading a book by one of my own teachers, David Elliott, who, along with Marissa Silverman, has just released the second edition of his very influential 1995 Music Matters. The book synthesizes a wealth of recent work in philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, music, and education to provide a broad and compelling rationale for music participation in schools and the community. I’d like to share some particular reasons you may not have considered, in light of my own recent experiences, including:

- Conducting my community choir in one of the finest performances of Haydn’s Theresienmesse they or I have ever experienced.
- Singing alongside several of my UB students as they made their Carnegie Hall debut singing the Vivaldi Gloria. The thrill of singing on that stage never goes away, but the thrill of seeing them react to this experience for the first time is even greater.
- Playing the pipe organ for the (Spanish-language) funeral of a much-loved great-grandmother who died after a long and rich life.
- Watching from the audience as the excellent work of two longtime high school music teachers is celebrated at their last concert before retirement.
- Watching a large team of high school students present a funny, witty, and well-acted original musical with book, lyrics, direction and all aspects of the performance completely student-led and created.

Although some of these experiences involved masterpieces of music, and all were strong performances, in many ways the experience or the process was more important than the musical content or product. Music is one way to meet two deep human needs: flow experiences and the need for connection and community.

Aristotle believed that humans have an innate desire for knowledge and growth. The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes a condition called “flow.” Flow requires a personally meaningful challenge, and the means to achieve it. If the challenge is too far beyond our capacity, we become frustrated. If the experience is not challenging, we become bored. Such flow experiences are central to our well-being. As Elliott and Silverman note:

There is a fundamental circularity here. We engage in actions and pursuits that strengthen and order the self. We experience these pursuits as more satisfying, enjoyable and absorbing than everyday activities because they are more demanding and more congruent with the goals of the self. And because we enjoy these activities, we continue to pursue them.

Enjoyment does not result from satisfying basic biological and social needs. Enjoyment results from moving forward in psychological growth and complexity. Enjoyment only arises from unusual investments of our conscious powers.

Any human endeavor that you find personally meaningful and worthwhile that has the capacity to provide ever-increasing challenge and opportunities to deepen knowledge and skills can provide a flow experience.

Psychiatrist Edward Hallowell describes happiness resulting from five dimensions: connectedness, play, achievement, practice, and recognition. A powerful form of connectedness results from engaging in flow experiences with others. The connections we make at these times are extremely strong. As I played the funeral, watched the retirements, and watched the student-created production, I was bowled over by the positive sense of community so richly present in the room. This is one of the most powerful effects of music—one I’ve seen in my life again and again.

I hope that each of you have something in your life that can provide flow experiences and build connectivity with others. Be it an art form, a craft, an athletic endeavor, or something else, find something that allows you to create such sensations in the midst of your hectic everyday life.

Frank Martignetti teaches music and music education at UB and performs regularly as an organist and conductor. While he doesn’t experience play nearly enough, he is extremely lucky to regularly experience flow "on the job."
Celebrate your Purple Knight Pride!

Alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends of the University of Bridgeport are all invited to a weekend full of fun academic, social and athletic events! Be sure to register for the Early Bird Discount ($5 off) now through August!

We can’t wait to see you on campus!

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