Devdas Shetty, director of the Engineering Applications Center (EAC) in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, and a number of students are helping rehabilitation patients take a step in the right direction. Their creation, the ambulatory suspension system, helps patients learn to walk again after having strokes or experiencing other injuries.

The project has been in the works since 2000, when Avital Fast, M.D., approached Shetty and the University of Hartford about building such a device. Fast is chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, which is sponsoring the student project. Fast was determined to find a way to reduce the risk of falling for patients who were unstable on their feet. The problem, according to Fast, was that therapists were not always able to provide proper physical support for patients.

In the spring of 2000, graduate student John Zera went to work on the first prototype of the walker. He created a device that used tracks on the ceiling and a harness. When strapped into the harness, patients could move forward, backward, or at 90-degree angles. If a patient lost balance, the harness provided instant support.

“Patients learn how to fall in a controlled system that allows them to regain their balance,” explained research engineer Claudio Campana of the EAC, who is working with Senior Electrical/Electronics Specialist Julio Bravo in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering to put finishing touches on the system.

Several groups of students have worked on improvements to the apparatus since its first creation. In late 2000 the track system was replaced with one that allows patients to move in any direction. Throughout 2001 students worked on altering the system to allow the user to move up and down. In 2002 electric motors were added to provide even better support and mobility.

The result of this work is that patients can now move freely in a rectangular space, even going up and down stairs and over other terrain. When a patient loses balance, sensors detect the patient’s rate of fall and provide support through the harness.

The system also frees the rehabilitation therapist to observe the patient rather than concentrating on catching him or her. Moreover, the system can accommodate patients who weigh as much as 350 pounds. Supporting even a 160-pound patient can be challenging for therapists.

Shetty expects to have a prototype in the Montefiore Medical Center ready for patient testing by the end of the year. “It will be used by different kinds of patients, including older people and youngsters who have been injured,” he said.

“This kind of testing will help us identify the boundaries of what the system can do.” At the same time, Shetty is applying for a patent for the system. He hopes to have the paperwork submitted by the end of the year, since it can take a couple of years to receive a patent.

After initial testing at Montefiore, the ambulatory suspension system could become a valuable device for hospitals and rehabilitation centers across the country. Just another example of the type of work in which students are involved at the Engineering Application Center—projects that focus on real-world problems and arrive at groundbreaking results.
Golf is Garrett Iannella's passion. So golf it was, when James Fairfield-Sonn, associate professor of management in the Barney School of Business, asked Iannella and the 18 other Executive MBA students in his Managerial Skills class to deliver an extemporaneous presentation on something they simply loved. Little did Iannella know that his talk would lead him back to the golf course—with his entire class in tow.

“Garrett was the very last student to speak,” recalls Fairfield-Sonn. “At the end of his presentation, he mentioned that more deals are done on the golf course than anywhere else in the world. The students spontaneously picked up on that theme. Some people described how they’d done deals—or blown them—on the golf course. Others said they’d never even gone to a golf course. So, I told them that I would be willing to devote one class to developing skills around the game of golf—golf etiquette, etc.—that would make them more effective as they moved forward in their careers.”

An enthusiastic Fairfield-Sonn established the parameters: the outing had to be completed in the same four-hour block as a regularly scheduled class; it had to be based on the same course format of assessment and development (i.e., assess and develop golf skills); the first 45 minutes had to be devoted to the study of golf etiquette, because, as Fairfield-Sonn explains, “The golf course is a place where you can make good friends or make people very upset,” based on whether or not you know the unspoken rules of the game—like don’t walk in front of someone preparing to putt and steer clear of moving golf balls. And, oh yes, adds Fairfield-Sonn, the students themselves had to plan and execute the entire outing.

The students swung into action. Patty Morse, a vice president at Meric Community Health, contacted various golf courses and made all the arrangements. Jacqui Goren, a reimbursement requirements analyst for 3M Health Information Systems, created a spreadsheet to divide the class into groups of four or five golfers, each one a mix of experienced and novice players. Iannella, a pharmacy consultant in Rhode Island, prepped the group on appropriate dress. Dr. Ken Freedman, a medical director, alerted the media. Luckner Denord, a public health consultant with the East Hartford Health Department, provided each golfer with the all-important golf cap. Someone pulled together a catered barbecue lunch. And they were off to the Pistol Creek Golf Club in Berlin, Conn.

The students, all 19 of them, took home some illuminating golf dos and don’ts from Pistol Creek’s golf pro, Alex Kirk. Kirk was also in charge of the assessment and development honors: advising the golfers and golfer-wanna-bes on how they were doing and how they could improve. His advice—such as don’t shout in the ear of someone getting ready to putt and don’t take a cell phone call on the course, even if it is your broker—was meant to impress upon participants the importance of focusing on the people you are playing with and nothing else.

A point well taken by Iannella: “Our main reason for organizing this event was that, regardless of whether or not you are a real golfer, there are a lot of opportunities to do business on the golf course, whether you’re with a potential client or participating in a

Enjoying the golf outing were (left to right): Patty Morse, Garrett Iannella, Associate Prof. James Fairfield-Sonn, Dr. Ken Freedman, and Jacqui Goren.

Don’t Drive Your Golf Cart on the Putting Green
And Other Essential Tips for Winning Friends and Influencing People

by Judie Jacobson

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A point well taken by Iannella: “Our main reason for organizing this event was that, regardless of whether or not you are a real golfer, there are a lot of opportunities to do business on the golf course, whether you’re
charitable or community event. If you’re out there worrying about what to do and what not to do, you’ll miss the opportunity to communicate with the people you’re playing with.”

For Iannella and his classmates—or cohorts, as they are called in the Barney School’s Executive MBA program for Health Care Professionals—the day had the added benefit of helping them unite as a group. The students, who include doctors, nurses, health facility administrators, consultants, and a variety of other health care professionals, have been together for one year, and will spend one more year together before completing their degrees.

Jacqui Goren, a self-proclaimed nongolfer, says, “The day gave me a better idea of what happens on a golf course. It also made me realize how much you can learn about others by interacting with them outside of your normal venue, be that school, work, or any other setting.”

Now that it’s over, the innovative outing seems to be taking on urban legend proportions. After a story on the class appeared in The Hartford Courant, Fairfield-Sonn began receiving kudos from people all over the state. Not surprisingly, he plans to repeat the event with future classes. The key, he maintains, is letting students take the reins.

“This was a great event because the group took control of its own experience. Each group is a little different, and each one has to design the event based on its own needs.” After all, he adds with a smile, “We’re always interested in increasing active learning in the Barney School, and this is about as active as it gets.”

Faculty Emeriti: Retirement Has a New Meaning

Most Observer readers are familiar with the Alumni Association but may not know much about another organization that is also an important link with the University’s past. The Emeriti Association, with an increasing and increasingly enthusiastic membership of former faculty members, is starting to make itself known on campus.

“We serve as a venue of continuities,” says the Emeriti Association’s current chair, Peter K. Breit, “to keep alive our contacts with the University, to echo its history, and to offer our talents, services, and skills.”

Last fall the association launched a semiannual lecture series whose topics reflected the vitality of the University’s emeriti, giving entirely new meaning to what was once known as retirement.

“Our Macromolecular World: From Plastics to DNA” was the subject of the inaugural lecture, delivered by Malcolm Stevens, professor emeritus of chemistry. Stevens related how he became involved in polymer chemistry from a position in industry with the Chevron Research Company. He went on to teach the subject, eventually writing a textbook that is still in use today. Polymer Chemistry: An Introduction, published by Oxford University Press, is in its third edition.

Using samples he had brought along and language that could be comprehended by the nonscientists in the audience, Stevens explained what polymers are and how they are made.

Breit, who is professor emeritus of politics and government, presented the second lecture of 2002–03, describing an interactive computer game he has been developing on the events leading up to World War I. His talk was titled “The July Crisis, 1914: Using Counterfactual Thinking and Fuzzy Logic as an Improved Method of Teaching Politics and Government.” The game will enable students to make decisions relating to the six weeks of crisis following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, considered by many to be the triggering event for World War I. One of the purposes of Breit’s project is to challenge the idea that the Great War was inevitable and to examine instead how the outcome might have changed if different decisions had been made during those six weeks.

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Breit has been named a visiting professor this fall in the North American studies program of the University of Bonn, Germany. He is teaching American government and American foreign policy.

Sandra Katz, professor emerita of English, delivered the first lecture of this academic year on Sept. 18, discussing her new book, *Dearest of Geniuses: A Life of Theodate Pope Riddle*, published this spring by Tidemark Press, Ltd. (see review below).

Those wishing more information about the Emeriti Association may contact its coordinator, Gordon Clark Ramsey, secretary of the Faculty Senate.

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**Dearest of Geniuses: A Life of Theodate Pope Riddle**

*Sandra L. Katz*  
*Tidemark Press*  
*by Margaret Withey*

Sandra L. Katz, professor emerita of English and former chair of the Hillyer College English department, has written a definitive biography of Theodate Pope Riddle. Born in 1867, Riddle was one of the first women in the United States to distinguish herself in architecture, a traditionally all-male preserve. Best known for her design and operation of Avon Old Farms School in Avon, Conn., she was also the creative genius behind other innovative private schools and a number of private homes, including the Hill-Stead estate, the Pope home in Farmington, Conn. Among her best-known architectural commissions was the 1920 reconstruction of President Theodore Roosevelt’s birthplace in New York City.

Beyond a few basic facts, Riddle’s life and work have been obscured for most readers by a general impression of a severe, somewhat eccentric aristocrat of another era. Katz’s biography follows her subject’s life as it unfolds chronologically, without shifts in time, anticipation of the future, or reinterpretation of events already discussed. Through her extensive research and access to letters, diaries, transcripts, and other primary sources, Katz has been able to recreate Riddle’s extraordinary life.

She emerges in the biography as a girl, then woman, of extreme moods, intense commitments, and passionate loyalty and love. During her lifetime she experienced periods of enthusiasm and productivity that alternated with periods of her “sickness,” when she became fatigued, joyless, and depressed. Named Effie at birth, Riddle chose as a child to use her maternal grandmother’s name. She was a child of privilege, and her friends, like those of her parents before her, included members of the aristocracy of politics, industry, and the arts. In the pages of Katz’s biography, names of the rich and famous abound. Riddle’s industrialist father, Alfred Pope, did not hesitate to use his influence to provide his daughter with the training, the associates, and the opportunities that made possible her vocation as an architect.

Katz makes no value judgments about Riddle’s commitment to spiritualism, a widespread movement that became almost an alternate religion. Riddle gave large sums of money to psychical research, believing in the endurance of the human spirit but skeptical about the validity of mediums’ claims. She lived through two world
Jamaican Leader Proposes Bilateral Program

Receiving an honorary doctorate from the University on Oct. 1, Jamaican Prime Minister P. J. Patterson said he accepted the degree with “an overwhelming feeling of pride” in the name of Hartford-area Jamaicans and Caribbeans.

“We should have a vested interest in promoting bilateral programs,” Patterson said, proposing a partnership between the University and Jamaican institutions and inviting members of the University community to an inaugural conference in Jamaica during the winter.

“I accept your challenge to work with the institutions of Jamaica,” said University President Walter Harrison, and invited Patterson to address the All-University Curriculum class he teaches on the history of Hartford.

Patterson became the third prime minister of Jamaica to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University, following Edward Seaga in 1987 and Michael Manley in 1992.

Theodate fitted her life to John’s as a diplomat, notably when he was named ambassador to Argentina at the same time that she was laboring to design and build Avon Old Farms School. In turn, John sustained her through the constant problems of building, running, and maintaining control over the school and in contending with criticism from the community of Farmington. He was her “most trusted confidante and supporter.” In a note, he addressed her as “Dearest of Geniuses” and signed it “your devoted Old Faithful.”

By the 1920s, Riddle had established herself in her profession. The American Institute of Architects (AIA), having once declined her application for membership on the basis of gender, now elected her a fellow, and the magazine Architecture featured Avon Old Farms School. Katz writes, “Avon Old Farms School was to Theo what Taliesin was to Frank Lloyd Wright. Both she and Wright felt a mysterious, indefinable bond to their buildings, perhaps because of Theo’s belief in spiritualism and because of Wright’s quasi-mystical Celtic faith.”

Throughout her life, which spanned the last third of the 19th century and nearly half of the 20th, Riddle strained against social and economic restrictions that were destined to change in the aftermath of World War II. She died in 1946, when the country was poised for sweeping socioeconomic changes that would alter the face of the society she had known and whose prejudices she had tested.

Katz is also the author of Elinor Frost: A Poet’s Wife and has published articles on Robert Frost and other American writers. Dearest of Geniuses is published by Tidemark of Windsor, Conn., www.tidemarkpress.com.