Our University has been characterized since its founding by close relationships between students and faculty and staff, and among students. These relationships are what the majority of alumni treasure most about their experiences here. This isn’t just my opinion. It is the most dominant result of market research conducted by Simpson Scarborough, a nationally known leader in this field that the University has retained to help us plan for the future. The important things to realize for this discussion are (a) this system has developed around people coming together in one geographic space to learn, and (b) it is relatively expensive to operate.

I know these are very general descriptions, threats, and goals, but many of us have been busy over the summer adapting them to the specific situations the University of Hartford faces. We’ll continue this activity—engaging as many faculty, staff, alumni, and students as we can—throughout the fall and winter, hoping to develop a comprehensive plan by the spring.

What will that plan consist of? It is far too soon to tell yet. But I will tell you what I, for one, think are the essential questions we should be asking ourselves:

1. How do we take the values, both moral and educational, that have traditionally characterized the University of Hartford and use them to help form a University that is more flexible and nimble in responding to a world defined by the increasing pace of change? In other words, how do we ensure our sustainability?

2. What is important now is for us to use the next five weeks to tell yet. But I will tell you what I, for one, think are the essential questions we should be asking ourselves:

1. Our University, as well as many others, was built on a federation model: that is, a university is essentially a federation of schools and colleges whose principle focus is their own educational model and culture. That’s essentially a part of our founding story here, but it is also true at almost every university I know. Whatever the value of such a structure, it does not allow for the nimble and the resources to adapt to the rapid and massive change that characterizes our age.

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Fulbright Shines Spotlight on Three Alumni

Two artists who graduated from the University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School recently returned to the United States after completing their Fulbright research abroad. While they were in different countries working on very different projects, Stass Shpanin 12 and Chotsani Dean ‘98 both used art to connect the present with the past.

Stass Shpanin, who was born in Russia, spent most of the past 12 months in Moscow, where he did research on the history of pre–World War I Russia.

After a brief visit home earlier this fall, Shpanin returned to Moscow in late October to do something truly unusual—live in a glass house outside the Moscow Museum of Art for a month and complete a painting a day based on images from television and newspapers.

“This is a public project. I want everyone to see it,” says Shpanin. “Webcams will be set up so people can follow me. It’s a social experiment on how we see our contemporary history. I want to show that we, as a society, are responsible for the history we are making.”

The only political statement I am making is that the U.S. and Russia have a lot in common and I hope they can have a friendship,” Shpanin explains. “We live in a global world, where everything is interconnected. Culture is something that can start that mutual friendship. You don’t need to speak the same language to understand art.”

Shpanin’s Fulbright research followed that theme. He created artwork based on the history of pre–World War I Russia. One of his first pieces was a coat of arms, connecting images of human and animal parts into one symbol.

“There is a heart, a tongue, and skeleton all in the form of a coat of arms,” Shpanin describes. “What I want to show is that Darwinism applies to animals and people. The strongest one survives. That is also in order to convey that arms. They are symbols of someone’s power.”

Shpanin’s ultimate goal is to get viewers to think about art and history in their own way and not to focus on what they may have learned from books.

“I’ve been trying to use symmetry and symbols from history in compositions,” says Shpanin. “In many cases, it is absurd, but it depends on the viewer to determine what they see. There are a lot of parts, but I want to let the viewer make the final decisions about what it is.”

Chotsani Dean, who now is at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, created ceramic tiles that make a connection between two continents. She was similarly moved by her time on a tea plantation in northern India.

While she spent part of her time in India on the tea plantation, Dean’s primary research focused on cotton. She was looking for a connection between Africa, the home of her ancestors, and India, which was the main exporter of cotton before the Atlantic slave trade.

“I was just interested in that dynamic because that’s how my ancestry impacted a different culture,” Dean says. “I learned that West Africa was trading with India. And Indian textiles had the striped patterns loved by Africans and that you see in my work. It was just interesting to go to India to piece together a different kind of narrative to my ancestry and the impact my ancestor’s hands had on the global economy of cotton.”

Continues to inspire Dean’s work. She makes ceramic quilts based on the fabric quilts created on plantations. It’s that connection between the past and the present that led her to Varanasi.

“It is one of the oldest, most sacred cities in the country,” she explains. “That’s part of what drew me to it. You have these holy men with iPads. They have the accumulation of now, while they’re embodying the elements of the past. The past, present, and future were happening all at the same time.”

On the Swiss/English Express

Alumuses awarded both Fulbright in Switzerland and University’s John G. Martin Scholarship to Oxford University

When Miles Aron ’13 learned that his Fulbright Scholarship application had been accepted, he was faced with an unusual dilemma. Aron had just received the John G. Martin Scholarship at Commencement last May. He was set to spend the next two years in England, studying at Heriot College at Oxford University. After some serious thought, he postponed the Martin scholarship for a year and is now at the University of Zurich in Switzerland for the next year.

Aron, a graduate of the Acoustical Engineering and Music program in the University of Hartford’s College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA), is working to improve the treatment of brain diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer’s, and Parkinson’s. He is looking into ways doctors can use ultrasound to penetrate the blood-brain barrier in order to deliver drugs more effectively to the brain. Aron is starting his research in Switzerland and will continue it at Oxford, where he hopes to earn his PhD.

“When I first learned ultrasound was an option for treating brain diseases, that seemed like something worth spending a life on,” Aron says. He became even more convinced of that decision on his flight to Switzerland.

“I was sitting next to a woman who was very proud of her son, who was a brain cancer researcher,” Aron says. “Last year, he died of brain cancer. He was in his early 30s. Seeing the pain she was in from the loss of her son was moving, and even though we had never met, his story is one of many that inspire me to work on brain cancer and diseases.”

Miles Aron ’13 (far left) surveys Bern, Switzerland, during his Fulbright studies in Zurich.

So far, Aron is treasuring his Fulbright experience. He lives in a flat with a view of the Alps, has traveled to Germany for Oktoberfest, and has experienced paragliding.

He also values his research team. Aron says he feels lucky to have the opportunity and hopes his work pleases everyone who gave him a chance, including Robert Celmer, professor of mechanical engineering in CETA, his advisor during Aron’s years at the University.

“He’s an amazing guy,” Aron says of Celmer. “I was excited to be his student. He works very hard, and he expects a lot from his students.”

DISTINCTIVE ALUMNI

Personal viewpoint is also a theme that runs through the research of ceramicist Chotsani Dean ’98, who spent nine months as a Fulbright scholar in Varanasi, India, in 2012–13. Among her many projects was a series of clay workshops for young students at the Kirti Gallery in Varanasi, which mounts exhibits in its gallery and also offers artist residencies. During their first visit, Dean showed her students miniature paintings that are part of India’s tradition.

“We were teaching them about seeing with their eye but also seeing art through themselves,” she says. “We wanted them to ask themselves, ‘What do you really see when you look at the colors?’”

The workshops also introduced Dean to the plight of some young girls in Varanasi. One of her students was kidnapped by her father and sold into marriage. The girl eventually ran away but became ill and died of hepatitis C. Dean, who learned of the child’s death after she returned to the United States, says the experience had a profound effect on her.

She was similarly moved by her time on a tea plantation in northern India. Like cotton before the U.S. Civil War, tea in India is grown on plantations and tended by workers who do not receive any of the crop’s revenue. Dean visited the main tea plantation and spoke with young girls living there. She says they were amazed that an American had taken the time to meet them.

While Miles Aron ’13 (far right) surveys Bern, Switzerland, during his Fulbright studies in Zurich.
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Dean’s primary research focused on cotton. She was looking for a connection between Africa, the home of her ancestors, and India, which was the main exporter of cotton before the Atlantic slave trade.

“I was just interested in that dynamic because that’s how my ancestry impacted a different culture,” Dean says. “I learned that West Africa was trading with India. And Indian textiles had the striped patterns loved by Africans and that you see in my work. It was just interesting to go to India to piece together a different kind of narrative to my ancestry and the impact my ancestor’s hands had on the global economy of cotton.”

Continues to inspire Dean’s work. She makes ceramic quilts based on the fabric quilts created on plantations. It’s that connection between the past and the present that led her to Varanasi.

“It is one of the oldest, most sacred cities in the country,” she explains. “That part of what drew me to it. You have these holy men with iPads. They have the accoutrements of now, while they’re embodying the elements of the past. The past, present, and future were happening all at the same time.”

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Six Alumni Garner EMMYS in SPORTS BROADCASTING

In 1984 the University of Hartford was pulling out all the stops to raise its profile as a new NCAA Division I school. At the GHO, Greater Hartford’s most celebrated golf tournament, for example, an aerial banner plugged about the school’s move from Division II to Division I. An elaborate advertising campaign on television and radio and in newspapers talked about the beginning of “Hartford’s newest sports tradition.” And a Hawks hotline boosted season ticket sales from 22 to 600 just two months before the first Division I basketball game, according to news reports at the time.

As the start of the season neared, the only thing excited Hawks needed to cheer on the fledgling Division I team was a fight song. Bring in a Hartford School student with a passion for band repertoire.

“In my freshman year I saw a polling for a fight song contest,” says Michael Gaylord ’87. “I always loved band repertoire—marches, concert. I played many instruments—the sax, flute, clarinet, oboe, and bassoon. I had played so much band music that I figured it would be easy to come up with a fight song.”

Gaylord’s “Hartford on to Victory” beat out entries by graduate students to win the $200 prize.

“I arranged the song for the new pep band,” Gaylord says. “We were Division I, we had to have a pep band. Back then, games were played at the [Hartford] Civic Center. In my junior year, a jazz band was organized to play during games, and I made an arrangement for them as well.”

After graduating, Gaylord took his ground-breaking habits to the Manhattan School of Music to earn a master’s in commercial composition.

“In graduate school I took a job with a digital media company [Fusion Media],” he explains. “Having been a musician all of my life lent itself well to what was happening in the digital world. I developed interactive video for museums and shopping malls. Thinking about all the layers and possibilities of a video capitalized on my musical composition skills. There was something symbiotic about what I did in digital media and what I did as an arranger. I think the career I ended up in was the digital media path, when digital media was fairly new,” he says. “Having been a musician all of my life lent itself well to what was happening in the digital world.

In 1997 Gaylord joined MTV Networks, as vice president of digital media for TV Land and Nick at Nite, he “was responsible for every screen but the television.” He and his team won an Emmy for the 2005 TV Land Awards synchronized broadband experience.

Gaylord now lives in Madrid, Spain, and works for Silicone Valley companies like Google and Twitter. He continues to be involved in orchestrating and arranging. His current project is a score for a short film, “The Pan Complex,” which was shot in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Do You Remember the Lyrics? Michael Gaylord ’87 recalls that the original lyrics he wrote for the fight song commemorating the University of Hartford’s entry into the NCAA Division I were tweaked slightly. But he says he will always remember “Hartford on to Victory.”

Check your memory:

**Hartford on to Victory**

The red and the white are set for victory,

The Hawks are the best that can be.

Oh, Hartford has spirit that is next to none,

The red and the white are set for victory.

Go, Hartford. CHARGE to victory!

Go out and win the fight,

For sure we are NUMBER 1!

Our message is really very clear;

We’ll win every battle with a shout and cheer,

Oh, Hartford has spirit that is next to none,

The Hawks are the best that can be.

Our message is really very clear;

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Do you remember the lyrics?
The University of Hartford community had a half-dozen reasons to celebrate as the 34th annual Sports Emmy Awards were handed out this past spring in New York City’s Lincoln Center. Six U Hartford alumni captured prestigious Sports Emmy Awards.

Ashley Allen ’10, Ron Bishow ’10, Brad Cheney ’00, Arnold Fucci ’03, Brandon Moye ’10, and Matt Parlapiano ’09 were honored for their work with the MLB Network’s MLB Tonight broadcast, which was named the outstanding daytime Emmy Awards. Cheney, director of engineering for the network, served as an operations producer on the show, while the other five contributed as associate producers. The Sports Emmy Awards are presented by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in recognition of excellence in American sports television programming, including sports-related series, live coverage of sporting events, and best sports announcers. In contrast to the more well-known primetime and daytime Emmy Awards, which hold a separate “creative arts” ceremony for behind-the-scenes personnel, Sports Emmy Awards are given in all categories during a single ceremony.

Parlapiano credits the University’s Student Television Network for introducing him to “the real TV news world” and says the video editing system he uses now in his day-to-day work is the same one he used while taking an advanced TV news class that focused on local sports.

“My experience at the University of Hartford fully prepared me for the real world,” Parlapiano says, “and is the reason why I was able to do what I wanted to do right out of college—and even when I was still in school.”

Several of the more recent alumni developed their skills through Hawk Sports Television, a student-run sports broadcasting club that Allen cofounded. Lynne Kelly, director of the School of Communication, was a big supporter of the organization up and running. “Ashley Allen has a true passion for sports broadcasting,” Kelly recalls. “She took advantage of every opportunity available to participate in shooting sporting events. Where there were no opportunities, she created them for herself by her own resourcefulness.”

Kelly observed other students, including Moye, shadowing Allen and learning from her, adapting the same enthusiasm and work ethic.

“My favorite thing about the University was the diversity of the student body, and the ability and access to pursue my interests,” Moye explains. “Winning an Emmy has been an amazing accomplishment. To have one at such an early age makes me only want to achieve more later in life.”

“I couldn’t be prouder of these alumni for their accomplishments,” Kelly says. We provided them with opportunities to develop their skills in media and beyond, but they took advantage of those opportunities and had the drive and passion to excel. Receiving Emmy Awards for their work at MLB is recognition of their skill level and their ability to work collaboratively as part of a team, an intangible that we try hard to instill in our students.

Ashley Allen (left foreground) and Brandon Moye (right inset) proudly showing off their Sports Emmy Awards.

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Hartford on to Victory

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We’ll win every battle with a shout and cheer, Our message is really very clear, On red and white, Go out and win the fight, Go, Hartford! CHARGE in victory!

To hear Gaylord’s music for the fight song, go to hartford.edu/observer/fightsong.
The University of Hartford and what is now the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA) have a long history of partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Even before the 1969 moon landing and the dramatic Apollo 13 mission, Hartford students and alumni were making significant contributions to major projects in the nation’s space program. Today, that partnership continues and includes students working directly with the space agency on a long list of engineering projects. The University is the lead institution for NASA’s Connecticut Space Grant Consortium, and Thomas Filburn, professor of mechanical engineering in CETA, is the consortium’s director. The Space Grant Consortium provides students with research grants, fellowships, scholarships, and internships.

Over the years, University of Hartford students have conducted a number of important research projects for NASA, opportunities that are unusual at the undergraduate level. Filburn says, “Several engineering students are currently working on a water reclamation project for the International Space Station that is aimed at increasing the amount of clean water that can be recovered from urine,”

“...and he loved to bake,” said Welna in a 1982 newsletter. The following year, he received the 1970 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Hartford.

One alumna in particular, Michelle Jarzyniecki ’06 and Jesse Berube ’06 designed a small “snorkel” for further exploration of the moon and Mars. The University alumni, family, and students play important roles in the University’s daily operations.

Astronaut alumus Jack Swigert M’67 aboard Apollo 13

Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, Columbia. Many Americans remember the names of the projects and the excitement surrounding every launch into space as the nation became fascinated with the NASA space program, beginning in the 1960s. Children were actually allowed to watch television in school on those special days, and adults crowded around TV screens wherever they could find them.

It is no surprise to learn that a young man who eventually became an astronaut on one of NASA’s early lunar missions was taking MBA courses in the University of Hartford’s Barney School of Business in the mid-1960s. John L. “Jack” Swigert Jr. came to Hartford, Conn., in 1957, after receiving his bachelor’s in mechanical engineering from the University of Colorado. Swigert became an engineering test pilot at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Group in East Hartford and North American Aviation Inc., now part of Boeing. He earned a master’s in aerospace science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Hartford in 1965 and his Barney MBA in 1967.

Three years later he would be strapless in all of the Apollo 13 command module and heading for the moon.

After two failed attempts to join the astronaut program, Swigert was selected in 1966. NASA required astronauts to have a bachelor’s degree, and most had graduate degrees as well, which is probably what brought Swigert to the University of Hartford.

“While here, he took an undergraduate course in statistics from an assistant professor in math, Cecilia Welna. Later, he took calculus and she tutored him for one semester. Once when she arrived to begin a tutoring session, he presented her with a cake he had baked. ‘He was very personable and good natured . . . and he loved to bake,’ said Welna in a 1982 Observer story after Swigert’s death from cancer that year.

Welna, who died in 2012, had a long career at the University, eventually becoming the long-time chair of the math department, dean of both the College of Arts and Sciences and what became known as the College of Education, Learning and Health Professions, as well as a professor emerita and University regent.

A member of the back-up crew for Apollo 13, Swigert was bumped up three days before launch to replace Thomas K. “Ken” Mattingly, who had been exposed to German measles and was grounded by NASA doctors.

Apollo 13 would go down in history as the “successful failure.” Launched on April 11, 1970, from Kennedy Space Center, Fla., it suffered a devastating explosion just under 56 hours into the mission. An oxygen tank exploded on board and the spacecraft drifted out of control, with the moon just a few miles away in space. It was then that Swigert altered the now famous statement, “Houston, we’ve had a problem here.” (The statement was changed to “Houston, we have a problem” in the movie Apollo 13 in which Swigert was played by Kevin Bacon.)

Swigert was on an austerity drive, so we have to fly ourselves around.” Swigert returned to Hartford to receive the 1970 Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University and a two-day hero’s welcome from the city.

As did the nation as a whole.

The friendship that grew between the professor of mathematics and the young man who would become an astronaut in the Apollo program as well as a successful political candidate, continued after Swigert left the area. Welna received Christmas cards from him and contributed to his two political campaigns. He was elected to the U.S. Congress as a Republican in the House of Representatives from Colorado’s 6th district. Stricken with cancer during the campaign, he died in a Georgetown University hospital in December 1982 at age 51, a week before he was to have assumed office.

Editor’s note: In July 2013, President Walter Harrison received an email from Peter F. Hunter ’79, a former director of Alumni Relations, notifying him of the recent death of Thomas F. Brennan ’51, who was very involved in alumni activities. After graduation, Brennan was personnel director at the Fuller Brush Company and then vice president and regional director at Northwood Unilink. In his email, Hunter mentioned that it had been Brennan who nominated Jack Swigert to receive the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1970, just a few weeks after Apollo 13 splashed down safely in the Pacific Ocean. The award was presented to him by Brennan.
Many alumni of CETA, beginning in the late 1950s, have helped design important components for NASA. Robert E. Breeding Jr. ’59 and Edgar H. Brinson ’59 were the last ordnance at Hamilton Standard in Windsor Locks, Conn. (today known as UTC Aerospace Systems), for the design and development of the portable life-support system, called the “backpack,” and the spacesuits used during lunar landings. Without that support, the support system, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin would not have been able to make their historic moon walk. Brinson had this to say about his experiences: “I went to work at Hamilton Standard six months after graduation. In 1966 they sent me down to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to open a field office. We trained the astronauts to use the spacesuits and the backpack. We even built a lunar landscape for them to practice on. For Apollo 13, I flew to Houston after the launch and helped with the emergency rigging of equipment to reduce the back-up if carbon dioxide in the LM (lunar module). The backpack had a canister of lithium hydroxide, but canisters in the command module (CM) were incompatible with those in the LM. We had to improvise a way to connect the backpack to the CM canisters to the LM’s cylindrical canister-cocks.” After Apollo, Brinson went on to work on the space shuttle, finally retiring in 2000.

Contributions to the Apollo program and future space travel also came from another alumnus, Gunther Sabionski ’65, who earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics here. In his 27-year career with NASA, Sabionski helped develop Apollo guidance programs and managed Apollo command module flight software and flight control during lunar landings. He also headed the software design section for space shuttle systems and served as manager of the digital imagery laboratories, helping to initiate concepts for further exploration of the moon and Mars.

The most prominent of those alumni connections is University of Hartford alumnus Jack Swigert M’67, one of three astronauts aboard the ill-fated Apollo 13 moon mission in 1970.