NEW DEAN ON CAMPUS

In August 2015, Provost Sharon Vasquez announced the appointment of Caryn Christensen as interim dean of undergraduate learning. This newly created position is in response to the University’s Strategic Plan 2014–19, particularly Goal 1 of the plan, which pertains to challenging and supporting students in a rich environment that prepares them for career success and promotes personal development.

Christensen’s responsibilities include oversight of the All-University Curriculum (AUC) and First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs), review and revision of the AUC to incorporate high-impact practices and essential learning outcomes, design of a support structure to sustain strategic plan initiatives, and the linking of undergraduate academic entities like the Honors Program and the Writing Center to our key strategic initiatives.

Christensen, associate professor of psychology, has served since 2010 as director of AUC and FIGs. In this capacity she was responsible for working with faculty, staff, and administrators of all seven colleges to provide more than 200 interdisciplinary general education courses each year as well as identifying and training faculty who teach integrated course clusters to first-semester students. During Christensen’s time as AUC director, the program introduced many new courses and took the lead in providing online and hybrid experiences for undergraduate students.

To read more about the University’s five-year strategic plan, visit hartford.edu/strategic-plan.

THE CLASS OF 2019 ARRIVES

The campus is active and lively this fall, thanks in large part to the 1,538 first-year and transfer students who moved in on the last weekend in August. The new Hawks comprise the largest class of incoming students since 2009. This is an increase of 195 over last year’s new enrollees, according to Guy C. Colarulli, senior associate provost and dean of enrollment management at the University. The increased numbers prompted refurbishing over the summer of first-year residence halls that were not in use by entering students in recent years.

Top right: The Class of 2019 forms the ritual “Big H” on Gengras lawn after Convocation.

Below: Members of the Class of 2019 wear their class T-shirts with the message "IMPOSSIBLE is not an OPTION"
Along with the new year, January will usher in a change in leadership for the Presidents’ College (PC), the adult-learning community arm of the University of Hartford.

Completing his phased retirement at the end of the 2015 calendar year, Humphrey Tonkin, president emeritus of the University and University Professor of the Humanities, will step down as director of the popular Presidents’ College. Joseph Voelker, professor of English and former dean of the University’s College of Arts and Sciences, will succeed him in the directorship.

“I took over [the Presidents’ College] in the summer of 2006 at something of a time of crisis,” Tonkin recalls. “I jumped in to recruit a group of volunteers to assist in the organization of our activities, forging a link with the University Libraries—without this connection we could not possibly have survived—and [to recruit] the best and brightest as our instructors.”

The Presidents’ College has been a distinctive part of the University’s community outreach for 25 years. Its program of noncredit short courses, travel, and other intellectual pursuits boasts a current enrollment of more than 2,000 “fellows,” as PC members are called. For those adults who value the life of the mind, succulent offerings like this fall semester’s “Japanese Art and Culture,” “Issues in 21st-Century Policing and Community Policing,” “The Afghan-Persian Musical Tradition,” and “A Roundup of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2014 Term” are but a sampling of the topics that keep participants coming back for more.

In conjunction with the current Japanese art and culture course, the Presidents’ College is offering a trip to Kyoto and regional art and cultural sites at the end of May 2016.

Summarizing his tenure as PC director, Tonkin says, “I think we have helped put the University of Hartford on the map in the larger community by providing high-quality programming to an ever-wider group of people. Many have become loyal supporters of the University, not just through the Presidents’ College but in other ways as well.”

Tonkin is pleased with his successor. “I am lucky to have Joseph Voelker as my successor,” he says. “He knows the University and its faculty really well and has an eye for talent.”

Voelker finds the prospect of his new assignment exciting. “The role of impresario for all these wonderful courses and lectures allows me to interact with this array of dynamic people: scientists, musicians, engineers, dancers, painters, professors, and on and on. And at the same time, I work with these wonderful and enthusiastic volunteers,” he says.

When asked how he intends to steer the direction of the Presidents’ College, Voelker is very clear: “The Presidents’ College has reached its present configuration over 25 years of Humphrey Tonkin’s adventurous experiments. This semester we have 700-plus filled seats in our courses, so radical expansion is not in the cards. My priority is to maintain the intellectual quality and excitement of our courses and events.”

And with that, here’s to the next 25 years of the Presidents’ College.

For a full list of Presidents’ College offerings as well as travel and registration information, see hartford.edu/presidentscollege.
CAREER SERVICES MOVE
University Career Services has moved from the third to the second floor of Gengras Student Union to improve both visibility and access. The new, larger space, which is branded similarly to Bates House, the Campus Store, and University Commons, has seen a marked increase in visits. “Prepare students for career success and personal development” is language included in Goal 1 of the University’s Strategic Plan 2014-19, and each school and college is integrating career readiness within its undergraduate academic core.

CAMPUS HOT SPOT FOR A LATTE AND HOMEWORK
Over the summer, Starbucks at the Dorothy Goodwin Café in Mortensen Library received a total makeover, transforming it into a full-service, popular spot for students, faculty, and staff to gather for a sandwich or a drink from the full Starbucks beverage menu. Since opening in August, the café has become a favorite place for a study break between classes.
A GRADUATE IN ONE YEAR

When Nicholas Wollmann ’15 came to campus in fall 2014, he introduced himself to his classmates as a “freshman-senior”—a description that prompted curiosity and a few raised eyebrows. In terms of housing and student life, he was a first-year student, but academically, he was a senior, having already earned more than 90 credits toward college graduation.

Nick majored in computer science and minored in math in the University’s College of Arts and Sciences and graduated with a Bachelor of Science summa cum laude this past May. Because he had attended the University High School of Science and Engineering (UHSSE) magnet school on the University’s campus, he had been able to take three or four college-level classes per semester since his sophomore year in high school.

Founded in 2004, UHSSE is a partnership between the University and Hartford Public Schools. Its curriculum is based on the “Early College” model, in which students can take classes and earn credit for college courses while still in high school. To qualify, students have to be recommended by the high school, and University professors have to agree to take the students into their classes. Nick earned about 70 credits from the courses he took at UHart, another 25 credits at UConn, and additional credits from advanced-placement exams—all before leaving high school. That left just a few credits needed in order to graduate from college.

“I was surprised to be able to get it all done in one year, but I’m really glad with the way it worked out,” says the 19-year-old from Burlington, Conn.

Nick now works full time on software development at Cigna, just down the street from the University. The job is the result of a career-development internship he landed—also while in high school. He plans to take at least a one-year break from academics before taking classes part time toward a master’s degree.

How does a teenager stay motivated to do high-school, college, and internship work all at the same time? “The key was how much I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the challenge that came with the courses I took,” Nick says.

He started teaching himself computer science when he was in the eighth grade, and he was hungry to learn more. He says his teachers at UHSSE and the University really encouraged and supported his passion. In his final semester at UHart, he did an independent study with Carolyn Pe Rosiene, professor of computer science, and helped her design course materials and strategies for assignments in a course.

“At such a young age, Nick showed so much potential, grasping concepts very quickly. As a freshman-senior, he assisted in my class by developing the graphical interface and backbone to complete some Flappy Bird-like code to challenge a freshman programming class,” says Rosiene. “Nick has been an exceptional and extraordinary student.”

Asked if he thought he might regret not spending more time living “the college life,” Nick says, “That might be something I think about 15 or 20 years from now, but I am really fine with where I am right now.” After all, in 20 years he will only be 39.

Nick Wollmann ’15 spoke to local reporters after his graduation from the University High School of Science and Engineering in June 2014. Nick took enough courses at the University of Hartford while a high school student to allow him to graduate with a Bachelor of Science magna cum laude from the University of Hartford in May 2015.