More than 90 students received their diplomas at the University’s Fall 2000 Commencement ceremony on Dec. 3 in Lincoln Theater. Speaking at the ceremony and receiving honorary degrees were Frances Daly Fergusson, president of Vassar College, and Mary Patterson McPherson, retired president of Bryn Mawr College. In addition, Helen and Harry Jack Gray were presented with Honorary Alumna/Alumnus Awards to recognize their philanthropy and their commitment to improving the lives of people living and working in Greater Hartford.

Fergusson was named one of America’s 200 Most Influential Women in 1998 by Vanity Fair magazine and has been the president of Vassar College since 1986. She is a member of the board of trustees of the Ford Foundation and chairs the board of trustees of the world-renowned Mayo Foundation (Mayo Clinic).

McPherson retired in June of 1997 as Bryn Mawr’s president after 36 years of studying, teaching, and leading. She is currently vice president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York City, having previously served as senior program officer.

The Grays have given more than $20 million to Hartford-area organizations, especially those representing the arts, health, medicine, and education. The University of Hartford has greatly benefited from the generosity of the Grays, who have given nearly $7 million to help fund buildings such as the Harry Jack Gray Center and the Helen Buckley Gray communications wing, as well as programs in the arts and humanities. Helen and Harry Gray are distinguished life regents of the University, and Harry Gray continues to provide leadership for the University by serving as honorary chair of the University’s 10-year, $175 million Campaign of Commitment.

“I always get mentioned first, but Helen deserves much credit for making Greater Hartford a better place to live, work, and study,” said Harry Gray in accepting his award.

He told the graduates that his commitment to giving back and helping to improve the quality of life in his community came from a pledge he made as a 25-year-old soldier fighting in Europe during World War II. “I ask you to stay in touch with this school and give it your support so that the University of Hartford can serve those who follow you.”
For faculty and staff assembled in Wilde Auditorium for University President Walter Harrison’s semiannual semester kickoff on Feb. 1, the address they heard was one of the most optimistic in some time.

Among the good-news items:
- the arrival of Provost Donna Randall, who, Harrison said, has brought “great enthusiasm, great charm, and breathtaking analytical skills to her position”
- Moody’s Investors Service’s upgrade of the University’s bond rating, a signal, the president said, “that Wall Street recognizes both our improved economic status and our bright prospects for the future”
- the conclusion of the third academic year in a row with a budget surplus
- the University’s endowment at an all-time high

The news that drew the most sustained applause from the overflow audience, however, was the announcement of a gift from the chairman of the board of regents, Arnold C. Greenberg, and his wife, Beverly, to the University’s Campaign of Commitment. Why such an enthusiastic response? The $1 million gift is for faculty development. Moreover, it will initially go to untenured, tenure-track faculty.

Although there are many priorities that require funding in the campaign, Greenberg believes that none ranks higher than providing for the faculty. “They are the lifeblood of our wonderful University,” he said, “and their scholarship and dedication to teaching will always determine how well we are judged as an institution.”

“We consider this an absolutely vital investment in the future of the University.”

During each of the first two years of the Greenberg Junior Faculty Research Grant Program, a minimum of two research grants of up to $7,500 each will be awarded. Proposals have already been submitted for the two grants to be awarded this year and are being reviewed by a five-person committee of tenured faculty, chaired by Diane Prusank, assistant provost for academic affairs and dean of graduate studies.

President Harrison, in announcing the gift, said that he hoped it would “signal clearly to our junior faculty that the University of Hartford is a place that not only values great teachers but also encourages the pursuit of the intellectual or artistic passion that first propelled them into academic life.”

For the Greenbergs, the most outstanding characteristic of University of Hartford faculty members is the time and attention that they give to their students. “Even during the difficult economic times of the 1990s,” Arnold Greenberg said, “when faculty compensation had fallen to the bottom 25 percent of institutions in the University’s peer groups, that dedication to students did not diminish. Now that the University’s economic picture is so much brighter, it is time to catch up,” he said, “not only with deferred maintenance but with the deferred needs of faculty members as well.”

Beverly Greenberg, a 12-year member of the Connecticut state board of education and former chairman of the West Hartford board of education, shares her husband’s belief that faculty don’t always get the recognition they deserve. “They are the ones in the trenches, and rewarding them for the
A University on the Move

Moody’s Investors Service has upgraded the University’s bond rating to the investment grade of Baa3 from Ba1, a move, according to University President Walter Harrison, that reflects “Wall Street’s view that we are a university on the move.”

Terming the University’s financial outlook “stable,” Moody’s cited four reasons for the upgrade: likelihood of continued, balanced financial operations, supported by conservative budget practices; improvement in student-market position and stabilization of tuition discounting; gradual growth in financial resources from current levels; and moderate reliance on debt in future capital plans.

“A new financial management team has revamped budgeting practices, instituting very conservative expense budgeting and strong controls, leading to three consecutive years of balanced operations,” noted the Moody’s report. “As a result of this commitment to fiscal discipline, as well as the comparatively robust market position [of the institution], the University now has a much greater capacity to make expense adjustments if it enters another period where revenues fall behind projections,” the report said.

Moody’s had lowered the University’s bond rating in January 1997. The University’s financial position had been negatively affected by the economic recession of the early 1990s and by demographic declines in the college-age population. In addition, the University’s endowment was not at the level of other, older institutions of higher education that were better able to weather the economic recession.

The University has begun a 10-year, $175 million Campaign of Commitment. Their commitment brings the total raised by the campaign to more than $54 million. Previous gifts to this campaign from the Greenbergs total $325,000; $275,000 for the continued endowment of the Center for Judaic Studies and $50,000 for the University’s Hillel organization.

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Procrastinating is a significant problem for students, as it can lead to missed deadlines and lower grades. Therefore, students need to prioritize their tasks and create a plan for completing them.
Internationally known artists Lowry Burgess and Robert Stackhouse displayed their latest works at the University’s Joseloff Gallery, from Nov. 9 through Dec. 12, as the 2000–01 recipients of the Richard Koopman Distinguished Chair in the Visual Arts at the Hartford Art School.

Burgess’s The Seed of the Infinite Absolute, a sculptural object formed by an elaborate series of processes and distillations over the past 25 years, was carried to the surface of the Antarctic Pole in February. The shell of the work contains an emulsion of the essences of trees, flowers, blood, and water. The sculpture was accompanied by a series of 26 drawings titled The Quiet Axis.

Stackhouse showed a 34-foot-long, limestone-and-aluminum sculpture titled Resurgent. This massive, double-ended, boat-like structure juxtaposes the organic with the industrial, the traditional with the modern, and is seen as a metaphor for the new millennium. The sculpture was displayed with several of Stackhouse’s works on paper.

The University’s Hartford Art School hosted its 13th Annual Alexander A. Goldfarb Student Reception and Awards Exhibition on Feb. 14. The winners of the Goldfarb Purchase Award were Jeanine Fijol, a senior in photography, for her color prints titled A River in Thirteen Frames, and Michele Redvanly, a senior in photography, for her color photograph titled Participle of Interlacement.

Honorable mentions went to senior in photography Jon-Ramsay Barnes for his paper-and-steel sculpture titled Home and to Arkadiusz Kuczynski, a freshman, for his mixed-media sculpture titled Old Man.

The awards are funded by the Alexander A. Goldfarb endowment trust, which sponsors the exhibition annually to recognize the talents of young artists.

Goldfarb Award Winners

Jeanine Fijol (center) with her parents, Sandy Fijol (left) and Ed Fijol, standing in front of A River in Thirteen Frames

UH senior photography major Michele Redvanly is pictured with her color photograph titled Participle of Interlacement. Redvanly won the Goldfarb Purchase Award at the 13th Annual Alexander A. Goldfarb Student Award Reception.

Arkadiusz Kuczynski (left) with his mixed-media sculpture, Old Man, and Tom Bradley ’77, ’96, associate dean of Hartford Art School
Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes saved at least 30,000 lives.

De Sousa Mendes held a diplomatic post as the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, France, in 1940 during the Holocaust. Against the policies and orders of his government, he issued more than 30,000 Portuguese visas that saved the lives of thousands of Jews and other refugees, including the exiled Belgian cabinet and the Hapsburg family, the royal family of Austria.

For his efforts, de Sousa Mendes was stripped of his post, blacklisted, and impoverished. He died in 1954 still in disgrace in his native Portugal.

De Sousa Mendes is just one of the 20 diplomats from countries around the world who rescued Jews during the Holocaust from 1938 through 1945.

“Visas for Life: The Righteous and Honorable Diplomats,” an exhibit that will be on display at the University of Hartford’s Joseloff Gallery from May 1 through June 13, features the dramatic and heroic stories and photographs of these diplomats, who saved thousands of lives during World War II.

Zina Davis, director of the University’s Joseloff Gallery, said few people are aware that diplomatic rescue was even a possibility during the Holocaust. Most diplomats who aided Jews did so illegally and in direct violation of the regulations and immigration policies of their countries. They risked their careers, and often their lives, to save others. In the years after the war, many diplomats and their families suffered retribution and economic hardship for their courageous actions.

To save those in danger, diplomats issued exit visas, transit visas, citizenship papers, and other forms of documentation that allowed Jews to escape the Nazis. Some diplomats personally smuggled refugees across international borders and frontiers. Many established safe houses and hid Jews in their embassies and personal residences.

“It’s very important to acknowledge this very real but unknown story of heroism during World War II,” said Davis. “Collectively, these people saved more than a quarter-million lives.” Furthermore, tens of thousands of people now alive are descendents of these refugees, who were able to flee through the efforts of the diplomats.

The families of the diplomats who were dishonored for their heroism have sought to have their respective governments restore the names and honor of their forefathers. After more than 60 years, some diplomats honored in the exhibit have yet to be recognized in their own countries. Portugal, however, repudiated its condemnation of de Sousa Mendes in 1995 and posthumously honored him with a hero’s medal.

De Sousa Mendes did not regret his actions. “If so many Jews can suffer because of one person [Hitler], then one Christian can suffer for Jews,” he said.

Exhibit Sponsors

“Visas for Life: The Righteous and Honorable Diplomats” is sponsored by the Wallenberg Society of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford and presented by the University of Hartford’s Joseloff Gallery. Funding for this program is made possible through the generosity of the following foundations and individual donors:

Beatrice Fox Auerbach Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, as advised by Elizabeth Schiro and Stephen Bayer

The Endowment Foundation of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, Inc.

Andrew J. and Joyce D. Mandell Family Foundation

The Samuel Roskin Trust at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

Janet and Michael Suisman

Refugees and staff of the Swiss legation in Budapest, 1945

Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes (right) in a 1940 photo
Baseball Is Our Game

Hailed as “baseball's greatest ambassador,” Tommy Lasorda told a packed house at the University's second annual Hot Stove Dinner that “baseball is our game” and that “high school and college baseball coaches are the unsung heroes of our communities.” The dinner in the Gengras Student Union cafeteria was held on Jan. 14.

“They have to take young men and make sure they are outstanding students, as well as great athletes, and make sure that they are prepared for life,” said Lasorda, who managed the Los Angeles Dodgers to eight National League West titles in his 20 years at their helm and led the U.S. baseball team to the gold medal at the 2000 Olympics in Australia.

“You don't see college basketball coaches having to collect money to send their team on a road trip. You don't see college football coaches having to go out before a game to put the lines down on the field,” said Lasorda, noting that he will travel anywhere around the country to help out college baseball programs but that he wouldn't set one foot outside his door for college basketball or football programs.

Lasorda had the crowd in stitches when he told stories about some of his players, such as Steve Sax and Pedro Guerrero.

In talking about his experiences at the Olympics, Lasorda said, “It was an honor and a privilege to take that team to the Olympics.”

As the November 2000 presidential election evolved into an unprecedented scenario of legal battles and chad-counting, political analyst Mark Shields brought his razor-sharp wit to the University of Hartford to try to make sense of it all.

Shields, a veteran Washington insider, syndicated columnist, and political commentator, who regularly appears on “The News Hour with Jim Lehrer” on PBS and “The Capital Gang” on CNN, came to the University for an hour-long talk and a fund-raising dinner, sponsored by the Museum of American Political Life. His visit to Hartford on Dec. 4 could not have been better timed, coming in the midst of the postelection chaos surrounding the outcome of the Florida vote.

During his talk in Wilde Auditorium, Shields delighted the audience with a continuous stream of anecdotes and one-liners that were both extremely funny and brimming with political insight.

“I've been in Washington so long, I can remember when the Oval Office was used to raise money and the Lincoln bedroom was used for sex,” he quipped.

Shields said that the 2000 election was unusual in that it reflected a desire for both continuity and change. Voters wanted to continue the nation’s economic prosperity, but they wanted a change in leadership, he said.

American voters have always been motivated by two factors—optimism and pragmatism—and historically, they have always chosen the party that best represents those qualities, regardless of ideology” he said. “What do Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton have in common? A relentless, incurable, indomitable optimism.”
Last October, about 20 current and former University of Hartford administrators came together in Virginia to celebrate the inauguration of their former colleague, Walter M. Bortz III, as president of Hampden-Sydney College.

On this memorable fall weekend, old friends reunited and proudly watched one of their own take office as a college president, said University of Hartford Secretary Charles P. Condon, who attended the inauguration.

But this was not the first time that someone with ties to the University of Hartford had gone on to lead a college or university. At least nine former administrators or alumni of the University of Hartford are currently serving as college or university presidents, and a number of others have served as presidents in the past.

“The intellectual atmosphere, the scholarship, and the opportunities that these people had at the University of Hartford helped to make them interesting people with a great deal to offer,” said former UH President Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, who has been president of The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., since 1988.

Bortz, the latest member of the University of Hartford family to become a college president, served UH from 1981 to 1989, first as executive director of admission and student financial assistance and later as vice president for institutional advancement. He went on to work as a vice president of The George Washington University, and last October, he was inaugurated as president of Hampden-Sydney, a four-year liberal arts college for men, with an enrollment of 975 students.

Like Bortz, many of the former University of Hartford administrators who went on to become college or university presidents worked at UH during the Trachtenberg administration. Bortz said that Trachtenberg’s dynamic, high-energy style helped prepare these administrators for their future leadership roles.

“They were all terrific, strong leaders whom President Trachtenberg pushed, cajoled, challenged, and tossed into every conceivable opportunity that one can imagine confronting in the higher education environment,” Bortz said. “Trachtenberg continues to this day to be one of the most prolific higher education administrator mentors in the field.”

In addition to Trachtenberg and Bortz, other presidents with University of Hartford ties include James S. Vinson, the outgoing president of the University of Evansville in Indiana. Vinson, the former dean of UH’s College of Arts and Sciences, has been president of the University of Evansville since 1987 and is planning to step down at the end of the current academic year.

Peggy Stock, former vice president for administration at UH, went on to serve as president of Colby-Sawyer College in New Hampshire and currently is president of Westminster College in Salt Lake City.

Walter B. Roettger, who served the University of Hartford as associate provost and as dean of the Ward College of Technology and the Barney School of Business, became president of Lyon College in Batesville, Ark., in 1998.

Also in 1998, Roy J. Nirschel was named president of Newbury College in Brookline, Mass. Nirschel had served as the University of Hartford's director of
Recognizing Achievement and Dedication

Five men and women who have distinguished themselves as outstanding members of the University of Hartford community were recognized in November at the 39th Annual Alumni Awards Ceremony. The annual event is sponsored by the Alumni Association.

The 2000 Distinguished Alumnus Award went to David Goldenberg ’73, ’76, ’76. Goldenberg has had a prolific career in higher education, having achieved success as an administrator, teacher, and scholar. He currently serves as chief executive officer of Pennsylvania State University at Mont Alto, one of 12 regional campuses that make up Penn State’s largest college.

“The University of Hartford had a marked effect on my life,” Goldenberg said in an interview after the awards ceremony. Goldenberg, a former student regent, remembers the University as the place where he discovered his love for his field. He said he enjoyed being back on campus and was delighted to see old friends like Floyd Fisher, associate professor of mathematics and Goldenberg’s first academic adviser at Hillyer College.

Goldenberg credits Fisher with instilling in him a love of mathematics and education. “The day brought on a whirlwind of great memories,” Goldenberg said. Even his former roommate, Alan Goldberg, flew in from Ohio to share the occasion with him.

The Distinguished Service Award was presented to Ethel Bacon ’44, ’55, the University’s archivist since 1965 and a former teacher and music librarian for The Hartt School. During more than half a century of service to The Hartt School and the University, Bacon wrote a history of Hartt, served as editor of the Hartt alumni newsletter, produced a Hartt School cookbook, and initiated a variety of other creative fund-raising projects.

Another long-time friend of the University, Cecilia Welna, was recognized with the Honorary Alumna Award. Welna, a professor emerita of mathematics, joined the University of Hartford faculty in 1957. Among her many roles at the University, she spent 14 years as chair of the Mathematics Department in the College of Arts and Sciences, and served as dean of the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP) for nine years. Welna continues to teach two mathematics courses every semester.

The Alumni Association presented a Special Recognition Award to Richard Keller, who has been a dedicated and outspoken advocate for people with disabilities in Greater Hartford, particularly at the University. Among other things, Keller assessed the accessibility of campus facilities, recommended improvements, and served as an ombudsman for disabled students.

Keller’s Special Recognition Award was presented by a student, and his acceptance remarks were read by his son. “Although I’m grateful for this award, my greatest gratitude is to this institution, a university that keeps its promise to provide students an accessible education.”

The Alumni Association also presented former Provost Elizabeth Ivey with “Recognition for Service to the University.” During her tenure as provost, from 1995 to 2000, Ivey played a critical role in steering the University through its fiscal challenges and into an era of financial recovery, stability, and growth. Ivey joined the University at a time when many academic institutions were facing serious budget deficits and declining enrollments, and she made many of the difficult decisions necessary to get the University back on track. Ivey said that she enjoyed her five years as provost, particularly the people with whom she worked.

Left to right: Richard Keller, Alumni Association President Jan Laraia, Elizabeth Ivey, David Goldenberg (in back), Ethel Bacon, Cecilia Welna

Presidents continued from page 9

Greenberg Professor of Judaic Studies, is now president of Gratz College in Melrose Park, Pa.

Several University of Hartford alumni have also risen to the rank of college or university president. Gwendolyn Jensen ’62 currently serves as president of Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pa. UH alumnus Elliott S. Milstein ’66 is the former acting president of The American University in Washington, D.C. Another alumnus, Marylouise Fennell ’72, ’73, is the former president of Carlow College in Pittsburgh.

Other former college and university presidents with ties to UH include Joseph F. Burke, who served as dean of the University of Hartford’s College of Basic Studies (now known as Hillyer College) in the late 1980s and went on to become president of La Salle University in Philadelphia. Carol J. Guardo, who served as University of Hartford provost from 1980 to 1985, subsequently became president of Rhode Island College in Providence.

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