COOL SCIENCE:
DNA, Prosthetics, Fruit Flies, and more

NEW PROSTHETIC DESIGN

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE RESEARCH

AGING AND LONGEVITY DISCOVERIES
With four friends Bobbi McNeil started taking evening classes in 1989 at the University of Hartford’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP). She was working full time at Mount Sinai Hospital in Hartford, Conn., as an interventional technologist. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science, cum laude, majoring in healthcare management, in 1994. McNeil has been employed at Hartford Hospital since 1998, the last five years as director of radiology.

From the start, McNeil has been a staunch supporter of the University of Hartford, beginning with her involvement with the Alumni Association after graduation.

“My advisor, Peggy Ciarcia, recommended me to Nicholas Zaharis, director of alumni relations, to be on the Alumni Board. I developed a real friendship with Barbara Klemmer, the alumni director after Nicholas Zaharis. She encouraged me to be on many committees, and I found myself going from vice president to president of the Alumni Board [from 2001 to 2004].

“Becoming president meant that I had a seat on the Board of Regents. After my term as president of the Alumni Board ended in 2004, I thought that was the end of my time on the Board of Regents. But then President Walter Harrison asked Barbara Klemmer to nominate me because he wanted me on the board. It was such an honor.”

McNeil is now serving her second term as a regent. She also serves on the ENHP Advisory Board and will soon join the board of the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund, in addition to participating in many campus activities.

“The more involved I became, the more I wanted to be involved and be able to give back,” McNeil says. “All that I do for the University is paying forward because I have been fortunate to have parents and a job that allowed me to get to this sweet spot in my life.

“I am retiring on July 1 and feel as though I still have plenty to do and to give.”

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Dear Readers,

This issue of the Observer is packed with articles that will give you plenty to talk about around the proverbial water cooler. You’ll find stories about faculty research linked to DNA in various ways. Chemistry students and their professor are doing work connected to hydrogen-fueled cars. Other faculty and students are traveling globally to underdeveloped countries.

Alumni are also on the cutting edge. Go to the inside back cover to read about Mohan Kocherla M’13, who is a partner in a company that uses a patient’s DNA to help physicians prescribe medication.

Our students are excelling in the classroom and on the playing fields. Eight University Honors program undergraduates traveled to the University of Kentucky at Lexington to present at a very selective research conference. Three students received important academic awards at Commencement.

Megan Barry ’14, another honors student, is breaking records as a cross-country runner. Sean Newcomb ’15, a left-handed pitcher for the Hawks, and two teammates were drafted into Major League Baseball. And there’s a lot more sports news, including the hiring of new Director of Athletics Anton Goff.

We’re bursting with pride about all these accomplishments and hope alumni, parents, and friends will too. Spread the word. It’s OK to brag. Come back to campus and celebrate our successes with us during Hawktober Weekend, Oct. 17–19, or anytime during the year.

We look forward to seeing and hearing from you!

Trish Charles
Editor-in-Chief
pcharles@hartford.edu

Read the Observer online at hartford.edu/observer.

On the cover: Students and faculty across the University are involved in important research projects, many of which involve DNA (see the Coal Science section). In the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, a master’s student designs an innovative prosthetic finger, while biomedical engineering undergraduates develop an affordable prosthetic foot.

On the back cover: Hartt alumna Christine Dwyer ’07, right, who plays Elphaba on Broadway in the long-running hit Wicked, sang “For Good” with costar Jenni Barber, left, at the televised Tony Awards on June 8.

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The Importance of a Small University

On a Thursday in April a group of approximately 150 students, faculty, staff, and family members gathered in the Regents Commons of the Shaw Center at Hillyer College to celebrate the life of Frank Dello Iacono, who passed away this past February. Frank had been a math faculty member in Hillyer for the past 20 years and a part-time statistics faculty member in the Department of Economics, Finance, and Insurance in the Barney School of Business for 10 years before that, during which time he also was employed by United Technologies Corporation (UTC).

Frank was a very visible figure on campus—a small, dapper man who usually dressed in a sport coat, a pair of casual slacks, and white running shoes. I knew him to be an involved and popular teacher in Hillyer, so I was not surprised by the large turnout of students and colleagues who came to honor him. But what I heard that day not only honored him but also revealed to me, in the most concrete and moving way, why a University of Hartford education is so valuable.

Dean David Goldenberg, who was resplendent in white running shoes for the occasion, had organized a great lineup of speakers—colleagues, students, and family members who all remembered Frank in their own ways. During my turn I remembered Frank’s beating me to Harry Gray with requests for funds. Frank had made a connection with Harry during his time at UTC, and the two men shared a deep interest in improving students’ math skills through information technology. When Frank knew he needed a new lab or new software, he told me and then went to Harry despite my continually asking him not to.

Sure enough, when I went to my next scheduled meeting with Harry and began to discuss our needs in math, Harry would stop me: “Frank has already been here,” he would smile. And sure enough, when Harry made his next series of gifts to the University, there would be a gift to math education in Hillyer.

Frank’s last request (this time I did get a chance to help frame the approach) was to establish a pilot program for what has now grown into our successful Summer Bridge program for entering University students.

Every speaker had similar stories. Frank’s colleagues told lovely and moving stories of his daily small acts of thoughtfulness. His granddaughters, Katie and Gabby, told loving stories of Frank taking them for walks and for ice cream. Like their grandfather’s faculty colleagues, they focused on the everyday acts of kindness that defined him so clearly.

But, to me at least, the most moving comments came from his students. Three of them—Jessica Musto A’16; Melissa Rubackin A’13, ’15; and Sherice Forde A’14—told of their relationships with Frank, and two others—Samrana Bertrand A’14 and Chelsea Natal A’14—presented a video tribute to him. Each in her own way, these five students talked about Frank’s ability to help them overcome their past challenges with math and his way of supporting and challenging them to succeed. Each of them had a strong personal connection to Frank.

The most memorable moment for me came during Melissa’s comments. She was describing how Frank (touchingly, she called him Dello) gave her bananas to get through the day, when she broke down into tears. We all waited patiently. At just the right moment, Sherice got up, walked over to her, and put her arm around her, remaining there until Melissa composed herself and finished her comments.

The moment was so emotionally perfect: one student silently supporting another while the other student poured out her soul. I have never seen anything like it.

Later, when Frank Dello Iacono, Frank’s son, concluded the remembrance, he commented: “I went to a large university. I never knew my professors personally. Now I know why it is so important to attend a small university.”

I couldn’t have said it better.

Walter Harrison
President
Nine seniors in the University Honors program achieved an amazing accomplishment when they applied to present their thesis work at the highly selective National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR) this year. Despite the NCUR’s usual acceptance rate of about 40 percent of proposals, all eight proposals (one was a joint proposal) submitted from University of Hartford students were accepted. And so in early April, eight of the nine student presenters traveled (one was unable to make the trip) to the University of Kentucky at Lexington to join other outstanding undergraduates from around the country in a two-day scholarly conference. Joining them at the conference was Associate Professor Donald Jones, director of the University Honors program. Having Honors program students apply to present at the conference is a new initiative by Provost Sharon L. Vasquez and David H. Goldenberg, interim dean of undergraduate studies.

After returning from the conference, the students recounted their experiences during the University’s annual Undergraduate Research and Creativity Colloquium. They said that in addition to the thrill of presenting their work at a prestigious national conference, they enjoyed having the opportunity to hear other students’ presentations and to engage in scholarly discussions with students from all over the United States.

“We all had something to learn from each other,” says Stephanie Lessing ’14, a Barney School of Business graduate.

As part of the Honors program, each student worked closely with a faculty mentor and with Jones, who together taught them how to write conference proposals and helped several of the students to refine their presentations. The experience of working with mentors on their theses during their senior year, then condensing their work into stimulating, professional-quality presentations, will benefit the students for the rest of their lives, they said.

“Getting a 50- to 60-page thesis down to 15 minutes was a challenge,” says Nicole Kalmus ’14, a French and international studies major.

But the challenge was well worth it.

“It was really amazing to be able to share what I’ve been so passionate about for a year and a half, and to have people come up to me and ask me questions about it,” said Kalmus, who presented the concept of a central, transparent development aid database system for earthquake relief in Haiti.

Don Fantozzi ’14, who presented on social change and technology, agreed. “To have that kind of feedback and hear other viewpoints really makes you look at things from different perspectives.”
About 80 percent of amputees who need a prosthetic leg live in developing countries, including 25.5 million in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, according to the World Health Organization. Even if someone is lucky enough to receive a prosthesis after years of waiting, physical therapists are seldom available to teach patients how to use their new limbs.

Enter the University of Hartford. For the past three years, physical therapy (PT) graduate students in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences have been developing concise, clear, educational posters and brochures for patients from different cultural backgrounds, many of whom are illiterate.

This was not merely a class project. Students and faculty have designed vinyl posters, take-home brochures, and a clinician’s manual that will be used worldwide to teach patients how to exercise, climb stairs, use crutches, and generally move safely with their new prosthetic leg. The material also informs people how to care for their amputated limbs and when to go to a health clinic.

Diana Veneri, associate professor of physical therapy, began the project with a group of doctoral PT students. The group hired a model with an above-the-knee amputation and fitted him with a LIMBS prosthetic limb, the same one used in developing countries. Then they documented the entire rehabilitation process, taking thousands of photos of the model taking care of his skin, exercising while sitting and standing, and performing various activities. The photographs were used for the clinician’s manual.

Based on a review of the literature, a second group of PT students realized that photographs of an American white man were not representative of the people they were seeking to help. They knew the photos had to be converted to an image of some sort and that only minimal words could be used.

In a truly cross-disciplinary project, they brought the University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School (HAS) students into the project to help with the final design work. Visual communication design students Megan Johnson ’14 and Jerlyn Cespedes ’14 turned the photos into illustrations for the posters and brochures. The work was done under the direction of Natacha Poggio, assistant professor of visual communication design in HAS.

“We came up with a prototype and gave [the students] the content, and they made it look professional,” Veneri says.

The illustrations on the posters and brochures can be customized to match the skin color and facial features of a particular country. In addition, the posters and brochures will be translated into Spanish, Hindi, Chinese, Arabic, and Swahili.

One of the biggest challenges in the project was figuring out how to communicate the health information to people who may be illiterate.

For example, to convey the idea of stabbing pain, the students initially drew several knives sticking into the amputated leg. But when Johnson and Cespedes tested the effectiveness of the poster on classmates, they realized they were way off. The classmates thought the poster warned that if you were stabbed by a knife, you should go to a health clinic. Then they tried using arrows and, eventually, sharp black wedges to describe stabbing pain—with better success.

The third and current group of PT students working on this project has been testing its work with local students and amputees to evaluate the effectiveness of the posters and brochures. They also had the opportunity to test them in Peru, Uganda, and Kenya during spring break this year when students and professors brought them to prosthetic clinics in those countries.

In the next step of the process, LIMBS will test the posters and brochures in a Spanish-speaking community setting in Mexico.
It’s a challenging assignment. Design a prosthetic foot that has the flexibility and spring of a high-tech prosthetic but at a fraction of the price.

Biomedical engineering students in Assistant Professor Mary Arico’s Senior Design class in the University of Hartford’s College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, have been asked to do just that: develop a highly functioning prosthesis that costs no more than $20.

For three years, the students in her class have been making prototypes to come up with an energy-storing prosthetic foot that is comparable in its main specifications to the carbon fiber prosthetics you may have seen on athletes and veterans in the United States. The difference is that the carbon fiber foot costs thousands of dollars.

The goal is for the students’ low-cost prosthesis to be available in Africa, Peru, and other developing countries to impoverished amputees who must currently rely on stiff, wooden prosthetic feet that have no give and make a natural gait impossible.

The project is funded by LIMBS International, a Texas-based nonprofit that offers low-cost, high-quality prosthetics to amputees worldwide.

A team of five UHart biomedical engineering students works collaboratively with teams of students in Mexico and at the University of Texas–El Paso to develop the best inexpensive, lightweight, energy-storing foot.

“It’s a challenge but it’s a challenge that we enjoy,” says Satmeer Bains ’14, of Wolcott, Conn. “Personally, I like the mission of the company in general. These amputees don’t have the resources, so it’s nice that we can contribute this way.”

Last year, Arico’s students came up with initial prototypes made of burlap and epoxy. The prototypes were “springy” but failed under loading, which refers to applied weight. Another prototype that was made thicker to support the loading was too stiff and heavy.

“You want something that’s about the weight of a foot. If it is too heavy, it will change [the wearer’s] gait,” Arico explains.

This year’s prototype is made of a plastic called Delrin and a thin sheet of flexible metal. LIMBS already manufactures a prosthetic knee made from Delrin, so it has this material on hand. Another goal of the project is to develop a sustainable foot that can be made from inexpensive materials already available at local LIMBS clinics around the world.

For the seniors in Arico’s class, the challenge gives them a chance to work on a real-world problem and experience collaborating and testing their designs.

“This is totally student driven. I guide them so they can make all the design, manufacturing, and testing decisions for each foot design,” says Arico.

“I’m pumped!” says Lydia Weitzler ’14, of Middleton, Mass. “I’m interested in prosthetic design. To be able to do this is great.”

What happens next? The prototypes will undergo various kinds of testing at UHart and LIMBS, with the hope that one of the students’ prototypes will make it to field testing with patients at one of the LIMBS clinics.

“This is a multiyear process, with a lot of redesign built in,” says Arico. “But field testing with LIMBS is the ultimate goal.”
In the span of just three months, Nicole Coumes ’16 and Cindy Lau ’16, students in the University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School (HAS), traveled through parts of Africa, played a big role in a major Nigerian tradition, and attended a summit hosted by the Clintons (Bill and Hillary)—all thanks to a collaboration with Amanda Carlson, associate professor of art history. And they’re just getting started.

Coumes, a visual communication design major, and Lau, an illustration major, joined Carlson on a research trip to Nigeria this past winter. Carlson, who received a grant from the University of Hartford’s Women’s Education and Leadership Fund (WELFund), brought the students to help her study the ways African women use art and symbols to decorate their bodies. Carlson has been traveling to the Cross River region of Nigeria since her college days, but she says Coumes and Lau greatly enriched her research.

“They taught me a lot about what is happening with youths,” explains Carlson. “It expanded my perspective to learn through their experiences. There’s so much fieldwork that one person really can’t do it, and to have them there was invaluable.”

Coumes and Lau spent most of their time in Nigeria working on the Calabar Carnival, a monthlong festival in southeastern Nigeria. Lau designed sketches for one of the event’s makeup artists. Coumes worked on costumes for the massive parade that is a carnival highlight. Millions of people saw their designs, either in person or on television. To top it all off, they were asked to be part of a float and rode through the crowded streets of Calabar for 10 hours.

The rush of Calabar Carnival was a sharp contrast to life in the Nigerian village where Carlson and the students went next. Carlson previously conducted some of her research in the village before shifting it to the country’s urban areas, so she wanted the students to see how different life can be within one country.

“The village was a really humbling experience,” says Coumes. “They aren’t as modernized and the people aren’t as used to seeing foreigners. One of the highlights was going to a Sunday school and [seeing how] the kids’ eyes lit up. They were excited to see us.”

“This trip forever changed the way I see things, from everyday conversation to more global issues,” says Lau. “Traveling to Africa has taught me more about life than I could ever imagine.”

The trio next traveled to Ghana to join University students who were taking a short-term study abroad class, Art and
Environment: The Sustainable Studio in Ghana, that Carlson cotaught with Carol Padberg, HAS associate professor of painting. Local Ghanaian artisans taught them weaving, dyeing, and assembly techniques, including the West African batik method of designing dyed fabric with melted wax. They collaborated on projects and experimented with traditional techniques in new contexts, including the philosophy of sustainability.

Their heightened interest in sustainability after returning from Africa led Coumes and Lau to apply to attend the Clinton Global Initiative University annual meeting at Arizona State University. Thanks to another financial contribution from WELFund, they spent spring break with more than 1,000 student leaders from around the world talking about solutions to some of their generation’s biggest concerns. They returned to campus with the goals of making more local food available to University students and finding new ways to repurpose food waste.

“Our proposal was inspired by some of the work we talked about over the winter [in Africa],” explains Coumes. “We’re trying to bring a little bit of Ghana back here. It’s a continuing project, and I’m sure we’ll be working on it at least until we graduate.”

Carlson is not surprised by the impact the trips had on the students.

“We do gain inspiration and energy from these experiences,” she said. “[They] took away a sense of community and a sense of what it can mean to be an artist who is socially engaged.”

Editor’s note: Amanda Carlson recently published the book Africa in Florida: Five Hundred Years of African Presence in the Sunshine State (University Press of Florida, February 2014), which was coedited with Robin Poynor, professor of art history at the University of Florida. You may read about this publication on her blog, “Africa in Florida: From Book to Blog” at africaflorida.blogspot.com. She is currently working on a second book based upon her research on a graphic writing system in Nigeria.

Top: Dancers perform at the 2013 Calabar Carnival in Cross River State, Nigeria. Photo: Jess Durkin.
Above: (l–r) Nicole Coumes ’16, Associate Professor Amanda Carlson, and Cindy Lau ’16 wear traditional attire at a wedding in Calabar, Nigeria, in December 2013.
For a third year, the University of Hartford celebrated two Commencement ceremonies in one weekend. On Saturday, May 17, more than 425 graduate students received master’s and doctoral degrees at the Graduate Commencement, cheered on by family members and friends at the ceremony held under a large white tent. On Sunday, the tent was filled with attendees and graduates at the Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony. Guests filled the tent and spilled out into the rows of chairs outside as nearly 1,100 students received their bachelor’s degrees.

At the Graduate Commencement, President Walter Harrison gave the Commencement speech, telling graduates, "Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American poet, said to Walt Whitman, another great American poet, after he’d read his first book, Leaves of Grass, ‘I greet you at the beginning of a great career.’ And I feel today that I am greeting you at a great beginning.”

Also during the festive Graduate Commencement, the University presented honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees to Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, and to world-renowned chef Jacques Pépin. Joe Torre, Major League Baseball’s (MLB) executive vice president for baseball operations, gave the Commencement address at the undergraduate ceremony on Sunday, May 18. Torre played for the Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves, St. Louis Cardinals, and New York Mets in his 18-year career as a player and also managed five MLB clubs, including 12 years with the New York Yankees. Torre will be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., on July 27, 2014.

In his speech Torre focused more on overcoming adversity than celebrating success. “Even though you go out there in your field of play and you do everything right and you give it every bit of energy and every bit of passion that you have, it may not work out. It may be a disappointment, but that’s when you check the character level and you bounce back.”

President Walter Harrison described Torre, who also received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, as “an outstanding and courageous individual” for his work as a baseball player, manager, and executive, and for his work against domestic abuse through the Joe Torre Safe At Home Foundation.

Other honorary degree recipients were Ellen Marram, former president and chief executive officer of the Tropicana Beverage Group, and Rabbi Stanley Kessler, the founding rabbi of Beth El Temple in West Hartford, Conn.

For more about Commencement 2014, including photos, videos, and text of Commencement speeches, go to hartford.edu/commencement.
Photos, Selfies, & Tweets

Joe Torre
Jacques Pépin
Golden Hawks
Ellen Marram
Rabbi Stanley Kessler
Marian Wright Edelman
Alexander Domini ’14
Three outstanding members of the Class of 2014 were recognized for their academic excellence during Undergraduate Commencement on May 18.

**BELLE K. RIBICOFF PRIZE**

Nicole Kalmus ’14 received the Belle K. Ribicoff Prize. A double major in international studies and modern language (French), Kalmus was one of eight University Honors students who presented at the highly selective National Conference of Undergraduate Research in Lexington, Ky., in April. Her presentation explored how foreign aid was distributed in Haiti after the devastating earthquake in 2010.

“Niki’s enthusiasm is infectious,” says Jane Horvath, associate professor of economics and director of the economics and political economy programs for the College of Arts and Sciences. “So is her determination to make a difference in the world. I am convinced that Niki will find a way to make development her life’s work.”

From the dance and Ultimate Frisbee teams to the Red Caps, Gospel Choir, and several other groups, it’s hard to find an organization in which Kalmus was not involved. Her ability to balance these extracurricular activities with the rigor of the University Honors program made her an ideal recipient of this impressive award.

**JOHN G. MARTIN SCHOLARSHIP**

Catherine Brennan ’14 will take her passion for mathematics across the pond to study at Oxford University in the fall as this year’s recipient of the prestigious John G. Martin Scholarship. She graduated with a 3.95 grade point average and majored in mathematics with a minor in actuarial science. She was also a private and group tutor for the University’s Student Success Center and in the math and physics tutoring lab.

Planning to stay in school indefinitely, as a student and then a professor, Brennan’s scholarly instincts are undeniable. She continues to seek the answers to the questions introduced by her Calculus II professor. It was in that course that Brennan recalls being handed a mathematical problem that focused on differential equations, Newton’s Law of Cooling, and how they could help determine the time of a murder.

“In the 15 minutes it took to solve the problem, the decision to pursue a degree in mathematics was made with 100 percent certainty,” Brennan says. “Most would not consider homicide to be of particular mathematical interest, but the problem prompted the realization that the applications of mathematics extended to the further reaches of contemporary life.”

**JOHN G. LEE MEDAL**

Kyle Hebert ’14, a double major in economics and mathematics with a minor in actuarial science, received the John G. Lee Medal.

With an almost perfect 3.98 GPA, he received the Junior Regents’ Honor Award in the College of Arts and Sciences, given to the student with the highest GPA in his or her respective college, last spring.

“In my 30 years as faculty at two universities, I have rarely, if ever, come across a student as bright as Kyle,” said Farhad Rassekh, professor of economics and associate dean of the Barney School of Business. “Most would not consider homicide to be of particular mathematical interest, but the problem prompted the realization that the applications of mathematics extended to the further reaches of contemporary life.”

Hebert gained valuable work experience in internships at two industry-leading insurance companies, Cigna and MassMutual Financial Group, and has already successfully passed two actuarial exams.

Outside the classroom, Hebert was active in the University of Hartford community. He was a member of the University Honors program and vice president of the Alpha Chi Honor Society. He cofounded the University’s Actuarial Club and served as its president. He will pursue a master’s degree in applied statistics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison this fall.
Also honored at Commencement this year were a top executive at Cigna, a prolific composer for television and film, and the director of NBC’s Meet the Press.

2014 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Mark Boxer ’83, who is global chief information officer for Cigna, received the University’s Distinguished Alumni Award during the Undergraduate Commencement ceremony.

At Cigna, Boxer is responsible for driving the company’s worldwide technology strategy and ensuring that its infrastructure and applications are innovative, flexible, and aligned with both the business strategy and the needs of customers, partners, and employees.

Prior to joining Cigna, Boxer was group president for government healthcare at Xerox Corporation. He also served as deputy global chief information officer for Xerox. Before that, he served in various leadership roles at WellPoint, Healthsource, and Hewlett Packard.

Boxer earned a bachelor’s in engineering and a bachelor’s in physics from the University of Hartford in 1983. He earned an MBA in finance from the University of Connecticut and a master’s in information systems from Drexel University. He also holds a doctorate in global public health from the Arizona School of Health Sciences.

A trustee of The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Boxer also serves on a number of boards. He has been recognized as one of Computerworld’s Premier 100 IT Leaders and by Insurance & Technology magazine as an Elite Eight technologist. Boxer, who champions the employment of the disabled, has received both the Tony Coelho Award, named after the coauthor of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Justice for All Award, given by the American Association of People with Disabilities.

2014 HARTT ALUMNI AWARD

Composer Ed Alton ’81, has had an impressive career in the Los Angeles TV, film, and recording industries for nearly 30 years. To date, he has composed scores for more than 530 episodes of 31 different prime-time network TV series and performed as bassist on more than 70 feature-film soundtracks. He has received numerous honors, including five ASCAP Top TV Composer Awards, an Emmy nomination, and several Gold and Platinum Record awards.

Some of Alton’s more prominent TV compositions include the scores for the 1980s hit series Head of the Class, the Top 10-rated series Suddenly Susan, and The Single Guy, two of which ran during the peak of NBC’s successful Thursday-night “Must See TV” reign. Recent well-known series have included My Boys on TBS and Whitney on NBC. Alton plays many of the instruments used on his own soundtracks.

In 1998, Alton’s song, performed by Bernadette Peters on the CBS series The Closer, was recognized with an Emmy nomination for outstanding music and lyrics. In 1997, Daily Variety recognized Alton as one of TV’s top theme composers when it listed him as number 5 among Nielsen’s Top TV Themesters of the 1990s.

Alton also played bass on the soundtracks of such popular films as Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, The Breakfast Club, and Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure.

2014 HILLYER DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

Rob Melick A’96,’98, director of NBC’s award-winning Sunday morning news show, Meet the Press, was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus of Hillyer College during Hillyer’s diploma presentation ceremony at Commencement this year.

Melick also earned a bachelor’s degree in communication at the College of Arts and Sciences. While at the University, he immersed himself in the Student Television Network, STN-2, and had internships at Hartford’s NBC affiliate and at the Fox Network in New York City.

Melick began as the director of news broadcasts in Rochester, N.Y.; Hartford, Conn.; and Philadelphia, Pa., as he built a reputation for talent, dedication, and a tireless work ethic. This and a network of mentors earned him a spot as director of the weekly political television show Fox News Sunday, based in Washington, D.C. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Melick produced shows on the road in 26 states and has directed everything from Oval Office interviews to broadcasts from Afghanistan.

Melick caught the attention of NBC and, in 2010, became the director of Meet the Press, the longest-running show on network television.
Anyone who watches *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* or similar television shows knows the significance of DNA material to many plot lines. Your DNA is different from everyone else’s and can be used either to convict you or, in the case of The Innocence Project, to exonerate you, of a crime.

For the layman, DNA testing has become an over-the-counter reality. Kits are available in Walmart and other retailers and online to help you discover your ancestry or whether your dog is a true purebred, or to determine the paternity of a child.

In 2003, 50 years after James Watson and Francis Crick described DNA’s double helix structure and won a Nobel Prize, international researchers completed the mapping and sequencing of the human genome, also called The Genome Project. (All these genes together are our “genome.”) The resulting detailed data have many applications in scientific research and medicine for the prevention, treatment, and cure of diseases.

To learn more about the “personalized medicine” made possible by DNA sequencing, see the inside back cover of this issue. Mohan Kocherla M’13 is a partner in Genomas, Inc., a company that uses a patient’s DNA to determine the most effective medications and dosages for that specific individual.

In this section, Aime Levesque and Stewart Frankel, associate professors of biology in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, are conducting research that uses genetic mutations of particular proteins to study breast cancer and lifespan, respectively. Michael Wininger, assistant professor of rehabilitation sciences, part of the University’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, has used DNA sequencing software in a novel way to examine the “evolution” of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex” speech through several drafts.
In February 2013, newspapers, TV networks, and online news outlets were full of stories about actress Angelina Jolie, who had undergone a double mastectomy. Genetic tests had revealed that she had more than an 80 percent chance of developing breast cancer. The culprit in this case is an inherited mutation of the gene BRCA1.

Ironically, a normal BRCA1 gene functions as a human tumor suppressor, or “caretaker gene,” and is found in all humans. The protein helps repair damaged DNA and destroy cells if the DNA cannot be repaired. It is just one of a multitude of tumor suppressors, DNA damage sensors, and other genetic safeguards that are part of the two pathways that help secure the integrity of our hereditary material.

But gene mutations in those important components can change all that. Associate Professor Aime Levesque teaches genetics in the Department of Biology in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences. She also conducts research on breast cancer, focusing on a different tumor suppressor protein called p53. It turns out that more than 50 percent of human tumors have defective p53 proteins, making it a logical place to begin. Levesque became interested in p53 while a postdoctorate research associate at the Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth Medical School.

You may remember from high school biology that a cell’s DNA holds the information directing the normal cell processes. When there is damage to the DNA, those processes are affected. DNA mutations can cause cancer spontaneously, or it can occur as a result of exposure to carcinogens such as UV light, various chemicals, or cigarette smoke. But it takes multiple mutations for cancer to develop.

“To guard against cancer and other problems, our cells employ cell-cycle checkpoints, which prevent cells with damaged DNA from replicating themselves and allow time for cells to repair the damage,” says Levesque.

“If a cell successfully repairs its DNA, it then proceeds with cell division. If the DNA damage is irreparable, the cell activates cell-death pathways.” In the majority of cases, the cell is prevented from dividing with damaged DNA, thus eliminating the possibility that any defects in DNA will become permanent mutations that may lead to cancer.

But obviously cancer has found ways to breach the walls of this protective system. In fact, many inherited cancer predispositions are due to mutations in key genes that are normally involved in protecting cells from cell growth and division in the face of DNA damage. For example, defects in the normal cell-division regulatory system that get passed through the cell-cycle checkpoints can lead to one of the hallmarks of cancer: uncontrolled cell division that leads to tumor growth.

The p53 tumor suppressor protein that Levesque and her students study plays a major role in cell-cycle arrest for repair and cell-death responses to DNA damage.

“The protein p53 is part of the checkpoint. When it is defective, the checkpoint doesn’t work or is at least a less efficient checkpoint, which makes the cells more susceptible to further mutations. They will divide with damaged DNA, develop more mutations, and become cancerous,” explains Levesque.

“BRCA1 is similar but its job is different. It repairs damaged DNA. When it is defective, cells are more likely to get mutations because they can’t repair the damage.”

Every semester, several students who take Levesque’s genetics course express an interest in learning more. Sometimes these students end up being trained to help Levesque with her present research on p53. She says she welcomes the chance to get to know these students and mentor them in the lab. Her former research students have gone on to enter PhD programs, medical school, and dental school, as well as taken jobs in academic, industrial, and government research laboratories.

Two current students, Sophia Wacker ’16 and Wen Chen ’16, are at work on two research projects in Levesque’s lab—one on breast cancer and one on neuroblastoma, a type of cancer that occurs primarily in infants and small children.

“I am very grateful to Dr. Levesque for giving me the opportunity to work on her research. Working in her lab has allowed me to experience something new as well as tackle challenging problems. And the possibility of working on a new development in the field of breast cancer is exciting!” says Chen.
Lord of the Flies
CALORIC RESTRICTION AND LIFESPAN

Fruit flies. Not something you want to find swirling about in your kitchen. But Stewart Frankel, associate professor of biology in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, has a very different perspective. Since 1998, fruit flies have provided the data for his research on slowing aging and extending longevity.

As recently as 30 years ago, the consensus on aging was that it was simply wear and tear on the body. One note of dissent was the observation that restricting calories slowed aging and extended longevity in rodents. More recent work on calorie restriction in a variety of animals, as well as genetic studies, refutes the wear-and-tear theory of aging. Researchers have discovered that at least a dozen genes can slow aging when mutated.

Frankel is studying three genes, rpd3, sir2, and 4E-BP*—which are known to play a role in changes in lifespan with caloric restriction—to find out how the proteins made by these genes work and to pinpoint what changes in the body lead to longer life.

Genes provide information for making proteins, which are the machines that make cells work. The DNA in cells produces messenger RNAs that in turn direct the formation of proteins. “When we mutate flies so that they have less RPD3 protein, they live longer. When we mutate flies so that they have more SIR2 protein, they also live longer. When we mutate flies so that they have less 4E-BP protein, there are complicated effects upon lifespan that we are trying to understand,” says Frankel.

Of the three proteins Frankel studies, RPD3 and SIR2 are master regulators of gene transcription, the process of making RNA from DNA. Mutations affecting these proteins extend longevity; therefore, both proteins are making the necessary changes in the body to support longevity. The 4E-BP gene regulates translation, which is the process of making proteins from messenger RNA.

To explain master regulators of gene transcription, Frankel uses the example of the fuse box in a house. To turn one light on or off, you use the light switch in the room. To turn all lights in part of the house on or off, you could use a fuse in the fuse box. Master gene regulators are like fuses; they pull the switch on suites of genes in a cell. Frankel says many of the activities affected by these proteins are related to metabolism, the process of extracting energy from food and using it to power things happening in the cell.

Although many researchers use mice, tiny nematode worms, or even zebrafish for aging studies, Frankel prefers fruit flies for several reasons.

“Their size makes it possible and economical to feed and raise thousands in a relatively small lab,” explains Frankel. “A short lifespan, with an average length of 30–40 days, allows one to watch the effects of a change through several generations quickly. Also, 75 percent of human genes linked to genetic diseases have counterparts in the fly.”

Frankel does what is called a survival study, using hundreds of newly born flies—half in a control group with either normal genes or a normal diet, and half in an experimental group with either one mutated gene or a calorie-restricted diet reduced by 30–50 percent.

“Then we count how many flies in each group die each day to see how the lifespan has been affected.” Frankel adds with a smile, “My students, collaborators, and I spend a lot of time counting flies.”

The average life span can almost double in Frankel’s experiments, and the maximum lifespan increases as well. Not only is the lifespan longer in animals with reduced caloric intake, but the aging process is also slowed down. This conclusion is based on studies that measure the activity level of animals, their stress resistance, sugar metabolism, fat metabolism, and other physiological factors.

Which means an old mouse or monkey can have a young body. Some people want to apply calorie restrictions to humans, which Frankel says is dangerous. “We don’t know all the side effects that could result. It’s possible that immunity would be compromised, and we do know that fertility is affected by calorie restriction.”

Frankel’s research could help lead to treatments for diseases affecting the elderly, such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and Alzheimer’s. Interestingly, he says the reverse of caloric restriction is also true. Experimental animals fed calorically richer diets have shorter lifespans and age faster.

Donuts, anyone? ■

*In this article, gene names are lowercased and italicized; protein names are capitalized and not italicized. The gene/protein 4E-BP/4E-BP is an exception.
It began as a chat over coffee between two friends—one, a faculty member at the University of Hartford; the other, a graduate student at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College who was searching for a master’s thesis topic. The graduate student jokingly suggested that he would write a thesis about writing a thesis. This led to discussions of how he could conduct the process of writing in an objective and quantifiable way.

The conversation soon hit a dead end. But the topic would come back to Michael Wininger, assistant professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Wininger teaches integrative biology and neuroscience and directs the Rehabilitation Computationics Laboratory in the department, which is part of the University of Hartford’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions.

It wasn’t long after that conversation that an idea struck him: What if he could apply techniques common to molecular biology—specifically software used in DNA sequencing—to track the “evolution” of prose text through a number of drafts?

While the analysis of textlike gene data has been commonplace for years, the application of these tools to prose texts was unheard of before Wininger’s work.

“It is a new approach to the analysis of written works that uses sequence homology analysis (SHA)—a technique well known to researchers in molecular biology and computer science—to measure the revisions made to a document over a series of drafts,” says Wininger.

For the experiment, Wininger compared four drafts of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s farewell speech, often referred to as the “military-industrial complex” speech. Eisenhower gave the speech in January 1962 just before he departed the White House.

Wininger accessed digital copies of the drafts from the online repository at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene titled “Ike and the Draft: What Molecular Biology Can Tell Us about Eisenhower’s Farewell Address.”

“The talk came about as a result of a conversation between Mike and me regarding the multiple drafts of the farewell address,” says Timothy Rives, deputy director at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum. “Genetic sequencing is not something most historians, communications scholars, or political scientists would use in their analysis of Eisenhower’s speeches or rhetoric. Dr. Wininger’s research opens new interpretive models for scholars of presidential communication.”

By comparing two or more strands of DNA, SHA is used routinely to ascertain familial relationships such as paternity, to assess disease risk factors, and for forensic identification.

Instead of comparing two strands of DNA, Wininger identified pairs of sentences in the speech drafts that conveyed the same content, even if substantially altered in other drafts. The goal was to identify every sentence in the dated drafts as either a completely new addition to the speech or a repetition of a sentence found in a previous draft. He accomplished this by writing an algorithm that allowed him to apply SHA to the study and comparison of drafts of a speech.

Although Wininger cannot be absolutely certain of the sequence of the drafts, he can draw some hypotheses.

“I find compelling evidence that the undated draft precedes Draft 2, dated December 21. There were more shared sentences between the undated draft and the December 21 draft . . . . Draft 2 appears to copy and paste most of the sentences of the undated draft before initiating a series of new topics, and there [were] a very small number of deletions versus a very high number of insertions, which suggests a ‘building’ process. Circumstantially, it would appear that the undated draft was an early-stage draft upon which the December 21 draft was built.”

Wininger says he is now contemplating using the algorithm to compare drafts of other famous speeches, and he hopes researchers will embrace his work. He has written an article on his Eisenhower research that is currently in press at the Journal of Writing Research.
In 1966, General Motors introduced the first fuel-cell vehicle, the Chevrolet Electrovan. Because the rear section of the van was completely taken up with hydrogen tanks and the large fuel cells of the time used to create electrical power, the Electrovan was doomed, according to a 2013 article in Fortune magazine.

In the decades since, automakers have spent billions in research and development money trying to come up with a solution.

Kyle Wald ’14, who majored in chemistry, looks forward to the day he is walking down the street and sees a hydrogen fuel cell–powered car drive by. “I’ll be able to point to that vehicle, look at my buddies, and say, ‘I had a hand in making that happen.’ That will be an amazing feeling,” he says.

Wald was part of the team of students that worked with Andrew Craft, professor of chemistry in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, testing various metals and alloys to find the safest and most durable materials for storing the hydrogen for use in a fuel cell. Researchers have been trying to find a material that can contain the hydrogen without becoming brittle, a significant safety issue for hydrogen storage systems based on metals and alloys, notes Craft. Another key issue in the research is finding a material that will store enough hydrogen to allow significant distances to be covered between fill-ups.

The push for the development of hydrogen-fueled cars is growing stronger. Joel Rinebold, director of energy initiatives for the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology in East Hartford, Conn., and a member of the Connecticut Hydrogen-Fuel Cell Coalition, notes that eight states, including Connecticut, have signed an agreement to dramatically increase the number of zero-emission vehicles (either electric or hydrogen fuel) on their roadways. Connecticut’s target is 40,000 such vehicles by 2018 and 1.2 million vehicles by 2025, according to Rinebold. The only emission from cars powered by hydrogen fuel cells is water vapor; however, the hydrogen itself can have a significant carbon footprint.

Automakers like Toyota and Hyundai are gearing up to bring hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles to America’s roadways as early as 2015. One key to creating consumer demand for these vehicles will be building a refueling infrastructure that will give drivers confidence that they can find a place to refill their tanks after they reach their 300-mile limit.

Another factor is the cost of the fuel, Rinebold says, noting that for a hydrogen fuel-cell car to be a more cost-effective option than a conventional gasoline-powered vehicle that gets 25 miles to the gallon, the price of hydrogen fuel needs to be less than $10 per kilogram. The U.S. Department of Energy’s target is to provide hydrogen fuel at a cost of $3 to $4 per kilogram, he says.

Though Craft’s research doesn’t address the cost of hydrogen, it certainly opens up the possibility of enhancing the safety of hydrogen-fueled vehicles. An attractive feature of storing hydrogen in a metal or alloy is that the highly flammable gas becomes nonflammable, which means that the risk of a fire occurring during a crash is virtually nonexistent. But the issue of embrittlement of metals needs to be addressed before hydrogen storage in metals becomes viable. As of now, the research is focused on an alloy that is a mix of palladium and silver. “We’re looking for] the right combination in this alloy to reduce embrittlement,” says Craft.

His latest paper on the research, which is about to be published in the Journal of Energy Engineering, has eight undergraduate student coauthors. “At the University of Hartford, I haven’t published a research paper that hasn’t had a student coauthor,” he adds.

“It’s really wonderful to see how they’ve matured,” says Craft of his students. “I want them to reach a level where they can work independently, and they’ve done that quite nicely.” He adds that the research skills these students have learned are readily transferable to any field. “If our students are doing work that’s of publishable quality, and it clearly has been, that sends a clear sign to any potential employer or graduate school about the quality of their work.”

“We’ll be part of the legacy of how these cars came to be in people’s driveways,” says Joe Kubik ’14. “The research we’ve been doing—others will take it and build on it, but we definitely played a part.”
New CETA Scholarship Honors Russell Ahlquist ’54

Students enrolled in the University of Hartford’s College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA) will soon benefit from a $100,000 gift made by Beverly Harris and her husband, Don, who established the Russell W. Ahlquist ’54 Memorial Endowed Scholarship in honor of Beverly Harris’s father.

The Harrises’ gift is an investment that will fund scholarships in perpetuity for students enrolled in CETA.

“This generous gift from the Harris family will allow us to bring highly qualified students to CETA who would otherwise not be able to attend,” says CETA Dean Lou Manzione. “It makes us competitive with other engineering programs to bring the best and the brightest to our college.”

“My father’s education was very important to him,” says Beverly Harris. “He would be very pleased to know that he would be helping future engineers at the University.”

Russell Ahlquist was the first of nine children in his family to go to college. A veteran of World War II discharged with military honors, he began his career with the Emhart Corporation (formerly based in Farmington, Conn.) in 1948. He received an associate’s degree in mechanical engineering in 1951 and a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering in 1954, both with high honors. He went on to earn a master’s in business administration at the University of Connecticut in 1959 and retired from Emhart as group president, specialty products, in 1977. He also served on the University of Hartford’s Board of Regents from 1970 to 1972.

Ahlquist had a strong passion and appreciation for higher education. His influence will live on through this legacy gift made by his loved ones.

Currently there is a critical need for endowed scholarships like the one established by the Harrises. Both federal and state financial aid programs have been substantially reduced in recent years, creating an even greater call for endowed scholarships at a time when student need is at a historic high. Endowed scholarships make an important difference for students not just financially but timewise as well. Scholarships can reduce the amount of time that students have to budget for part-time jobs, giving them more time to focus on their studies and making it easier to schedule the classes needed to graduate on time.

At CETA, the Russell W. Ahlquist ’54 Memorial Endowed Scholarship will enhance the school’s mission to nurture students who will solve problems and help people worldwide live better, healthier lives. “It is a fitting legacy for Mrs. Harris’s father, who took his education from CETA and really soared with it,” says Manzione. “It enables us to prepare the next generation of alumni who can go forward to make the same kind of difference that he made.”

Other Gifts and Grants

Below is a select list of private foundation and corporate grants received by the University of Hartford in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014, along with each gift’s project or purpose.

Newman’s Own Foundation
$125,000 » Civil Rights Act, 50 Years Later Program

The Prudential Foundation
$75,000 » Small Business Technical Assistance Program

The Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
$55,000 » 2014–2015 Chamber Music Series

Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Hartford
$30,000 » In Our Own Words

Newman’s Own Foundation
$20,000 » Sustainable Business in Western Kenya

SBM Charitable Foundation
$17,488 » Pre-Collegiate Workshops

The Augustine Foundation
$10,000 » 50th Anniversary of Hartt Guitar Department

Kaman Corporation
$10,000 » Scholarship

Newman’s Own Foundation
$10,000 » Soccer Excellence Fund

Pratt and Whitney
$10,000 » Engineers Without Borders

An engineering student watches fog flow over a simulated airplane wing inside an air tunnel in the Thermo-Fluids Lab in United Technologies Hall on campus.
Success Stories

Megan Barry ’14
Being a record-setting distance runner training for an Olympic development race is challenging enough. But imagine doing that while completing an honors thesis and studying possible treatments for Alzheimer’s disease.

That was the life of Megan Barry ’14 while she was a student-athlete with dreams of a future as a runner and a veterinarian.

Barry, a biology major, used her honors thesis to look for a correlation between the ratio of protein to fat in a mouse’s food and the rodent’s cognitive functioning. Her hypothesis was that high-fat diets produce the best results. Barry hopes the findings can be applied to humans and that a diet with higher fat and moderate protein could slow the effects of Alzheimer’s. She worked with Associate Professor Jacob Harney, director of the neuroscience program in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, and Associate Professor Donald Jones, coordinator of the University’s Honors program.

“Megan exemplifies the best qualities of a college student,” says Harney. “She has taken true ownership of her own education. The sky is the limit for her.”

When she wasn’t in the lab, chances are Barry was training. In fact, she plans to spend two years after graduation focused on running. At the prestigious Mt. San Antonio College Relays in California on April 17, she competed in the Olympic Development 10,000-meter race. While the word Olympic inspires thoughts of competing in the Games, Barry’s coach, Stephen Walsh, points out that this is just one of many steps that would lead to the Olympics. Barry placed 20th in the Silver Elite section, shattering her previous school record and personal best with a time of 35:32.98.

Barry was certainly successful on the collegiate level. She set 11 University records over the course of her career and currently holds six of those records. She was the first female in school history to earn All-Conference and All–New England honors in cross-country. In May, Barry won the 10,000-meter race at the New England Championship and finished second in the 10,000-meter race in the America East Championship. Also in May, Barry was nominated as one of nine senior female student-athletes from campuses within the America East for the 2014 America East Woman of the Year award. The winner of that award will be forwarded to the NCAA Woman of the Year selection committee.

Joe Dziok ’14
London, summer 2012. Sochi, winter 2014. Rio, summer 2016. Joe Dziok ’14, who majored in music production and technology at the University of Hartford’s Hartt School, became a regular on the NBC network coverage support team for the Olympics while a student.

After returning from two months in Russia, Dziok, who also plays jazz piano and credits his music with helping him get his network job, has this to say about his time in Sochi:

“London was an internship, but this time around, NBC hired me for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi as a ‘video utility’ in the Venue Engineering Field Shop. My job consisted of building hundreds of cameras for the different Olympic venues anywhere an event took place. I then had to help integrate various video systems and install them at the venues. Once the games started, my duty was to be on standby to bring replacement equipment and/or fix equipment on the spot if there were any issues.

“My experience was much different from the other NBC interns, [who mostly] come for the week before the games begin, and their jobs consist mainly of getting coffee for talent and taking notes for producers and other things of that nature. My internship in London and my paid position in Sochi have been much more hands-on and technically related. I feel like I made a good impression on my bosses [at NBC], and I hope I made the University proud!

“I think that the University of Hartford has prepared me well to handle this AMAZING job opportunity. The hands-on experience I learned in the classroom, both with the recording and audio equipment and in my electrical engineering classes in CETA [College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture], has given me the skills to do what I spent two months working on in Russia. The critical-thinking skills from my AUC [All-University Curriculum] courses and my other various courses have helped me to handle very stressful situations when a solution was needed very quickly. I think, overall, I would never have been able to land this job if it wasn’t for my education at the University of Hartford.

“I was asked to come back again for the Summer Olympics in Rio in 2016! So I’m excited that I did well enough to be asked to come back.”
Because we are constantly using them, it’s easy to take for granted just how complex our hands and fingers are. Graduate students in the University of Hartford’s prosthetics and orthotics program understand these complicated mechanics. Now, one of them is using her knowledge to develop what she hopes will be the most realistic prosthetic finger on the market.

While observing patients’ use of prosthetic hands, Casey Beasley M’15 noticed there was much room for improvement. She decided to design a new prosthetic finger as her University Honors project. Under the guidance of Assistant Professor Michael Wininger in the University of Hartford’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, Beasley spent last summer and fall developing 12 working prototypes.

The prototype, known as a biomimetic finger because it mimics the function and structure of a natural finger, includes a “fat pad simulant.” Beasley says this pad “takes on a key characteristic of the natural human grasp: a sort of soft-tissue compliance that aids our fingers in securely grasping many objects.”

Another new feature involves the phalangeal segments, or bones, of the finger. Beasley’s creation uses continuously adjustable phalangeal segments so that there is a more customized fit for the patient while still making it possible to mass-manufacture the fingers.

This spring, three of Beasley’s classmates joined the project. Derek Becker M’15, Joseph Cassella M’15, and Stephen Sousa M’16 each brings his own perspective and expertise, and all are focused on expanding the finger design to a complete hand prototype.

Beasley received a Connecticut Space Grant Consortium Student Project Grant award of $932 as well as $9,307 from the University of Hartford’s Women’s Education and Leadership Fund. Both will help with the next step, which is to send the best prototype out for machining and then develop the electronics to make it work.

Beasley has been asked to give a talk on her research at the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association National Assembly in Las Vegas, Nev., in September. The conference is the largest gathering of prosthetics and orthotics professionals in the world.

Goldfarb Awards

Two Hartford Art School (HAS) students won top honors at this year’s Alexander A. Goldfarb Student Exhibition, and a third HAS student won a special Juror’s Prize. The awards were announced at the closing reception for the exhibition on March 27 in the University of Hartford’s Joseloff Gallery.

Rachel Rubenbauer ’14, a ceramics major, and Erin Shaw ’14, a photography major, won this year’s Purchase Prizes. Rubenbauer won for her sculpture, My Estranged Sister, and Shaw won for her photo diptych, The Things Left Behind. Every year, two student artists receive Purchase Prizes of $1,000 each, made possible through the Alexander A. Goldfarb Endowment Trust. The winning artwork becomes part of the Goldfarb Memorial Collection, to be owned by the Hartford Art School and proudly displayed throughout the University.

A third HAS student, senior photography major Tiffany Lee, won a Juror’s Prize for her photograph, Ivy. The $100 Juror’s Prize is a special honorable mention. The annual juried student art exhibition and prizes were established by Alexander A. Goldfarb, who was dedicated to the arts and to furthering the careers of young artists. The exhibition is open to all undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Hartford. This year’s invited guest jurors were David Klein and Richard Reid of KleinReid, a dynamic New York City studio creating handmade ceramics, lighting, prints, and other works.
THE DIFFERENCE
A MENTOR CAN MAKE

UHart students excel in annual poetry competition

The 2014 student poet is Laura Ahking ’15, right, with Assistant Professor Ben Grossberg.

Opposite page, top to bottom: Amanda Schoen ’13 won for 2013; Tim Pettus ’11 was selected in 2011; John Dudek ’10 won a spot on the tour in 2010; and Matthew Gilbert ’09 was the first UHart student to be chosen in 2009.
The University of Hartford is gaining a reputation as a perennial powerhouse in an annual competition among some of the most talented college students in Connecticut. This competition does not take place on a playing field, and it does not involve popular competitive pursuits like robotics or chess. This competition is all about verse.

For five of the last six years, a University student has been selected for the prestigious Connecticut Poetry Circuit Student Poets Tour. This annual tour, which the Connecticut Poetry Circuit has been sponsoring since 1970, sends five undergraduate student poets across the state to read their work at Connecticut colleges and universities. They also read their work in the summer at the renowned Sunken Garden Poetry Festival at the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, Conn.

Competition for the five spots on the Student Poets Tour is intense. All two- and four-year colleges and universities in Connecticut are invited to nominate one undergraduate each year to be considered for the Student Poets Tour. No University of Hartford student had been selected for the tour until 2008–09—the year that Assistant Professor Benjamin Grossberg joined the University’s College of Arts and Sciences faculty.

Grossberg, who recently published his third book of poetry, is the first poet to serve on the English department faculty in many years. He has made it a goal to try to get a University of Hartford student on the poetry tour every year—and he has an almost perfect record of success.

“It seemed like an incredible opportunity. It is a great way to build up students’ ability to think of themselves as writers in the world,” Grossberg says.

Every fall, Grossberg invites all undergraduates at the University to submit five pages of poetry. After reviewing the submissions, he selects one student to be nominated for the tour. Grossberg then works closely with the student to help revise and edit the work before submitting it to the Connecticut Poetry Circuit for consideration. For the five University of Hartford students who have been selected for the Student Poets Tour, the experience has been profound.

“The tour was the highlight of my undergrad career. It let me experience the performance side of poetry,” says John Dudek ’10, who won a spot on the Student Poets Tour in 2010. Dudek is working toward an MFA in poetry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he recently won the Robert J. and Katharin Carr Graduate Poetry Prize.

Tim Pettus ’11, who was on the Student Poets Tour in 2011, says, “It was flat-out the coolest thing I did during college. I was meeting great poets, visiting Connecticut’s best and brightest institutions, and sharing my voice with a much larger audience than I had imagined reaching at that early stage.”

The students on the tour often develop a close bond, Grossberg says, allowing them to become part of a community of writers in a profession that can be very solitary.

“The most important thing for a writer is being part of a community, because it isn’t a profession with an instruction manual that tells you how to be successful if you follow certain steps. You figure out what to do by experiencing other writers,” says Matthew Gilbert ’09, who became the first University of Hartford student to win a spot on the tour when he was selected in 2009. Gilbert went on to earn an MFA in poetry from Columbia University.

All of the students who have represented the University of Hartford on the Student Poets Tour say that Grossberg’s teaching and mentoring played a key role in their success. Grossberg expanded their ideas about what a poem can be, they say, teaching them poetic technique while encouraging them to experiment and branch out in new directions.

“It was his encouragement that led me to submit my poems to the Connecticut Poetry Circuit in the first place,” says Amanda Schoen ’13, who was selected for the 2013 poets tour. “He always had time during office hours to discuss revisions, and I believe his suggestions made my pieces significantly stronger.”

The newest University of Hartford student on the tour is Laura Ahking ’15, a former art student who is finding her voice as a poet. Being on the tour this year has helped significantly with that process.

“It was a great learning experience.”
**A Record-Breaking Year for Baseball**

It is fitting that legendary baseball manager Joe Torre delivered the Commencement address to undergraduates in May. Torre, owner of four World Series rings, knows how to win. He had set foot on a campus whose baseball team was savoring winning like never before.

While many of the headlines focused around one of the hottest professional prospects ever to don Hawk scarlet and white (see adjacent story on Sean Newcomb), there were plenty of milestones to go around.

With its three-game sweep of UMBC in early May, the UHart baseball team secured its first berth in the America East Tournament since 1996. The Hawks’ pitching staff was impressive throughout the 2014 season and, at the end of the regular season, owned the 30th-best team ERA in the nation (2.97). In addition, Hawk hurlers held opponents to 1.23 walks and hits per innings pitched, placing the squad 31st among 296 Division I programs nationally.

But it wasn’t just the pitching. Senior catcher James Alfonso had a 14-game hit streak snapped by Central Connecticut on May 13, which was a team high this season. During the run, Alfonso was 22 of 56 at the plate, hitting .393 with seven doubles, a triple, and three home runs.

A total of 11 individual postseason honors were awarded to UHart players by America East, headlined by Newcomb’s being named to the All-Conference First Team and being voted unanimously America East Pitcher of the Year. Named to the All-Conference Second Team were Brian Hunter, Alfonso, Ryan Lukach, senior relief pitcher Alex Gouin, and freshman third baseman David MacKinnon. MacKinnon was also an All-Rookie Team honoree, while Alfonso and Hunter were named to the All-Academic Team along with junior Brady Sheetz. In the MLB draft, Alfonso and Hunter were selected by the Seattle Mariners and the Cincinnati Reds, respectively.

**Hartford Hawks Welcome New AD**

Anton Goff, who has extensive experience in the field of athletics administration, most recently as athletic director at Bowie State University in Maryland, has been named the new director of athletics at the University of Hartford.

Goff was introduced at a press conference on May 2 in the Sports Center, where he displayed his energy and enthusiasm for the University of Hartford, unveiling what is sure to be his new slogan: “Hawk Nation Domination.”

“When I look at this place, I see limitless potential,” said Goff, who will assume his new position in July. He outlined six areas of focus as the University’s athletic director—academic success, athletic success, accountability, compliance, community involvement, and character.

“I was attracted to Hartford athletics by its academic and athletic accomplishments. This university has created opportunities for students to be successful both in the classroom and on the field, and I want to build on that,” Goff said.

Goff will succeed Pat Meiser, current director of athletics, who is retiring after 21 years at the University. Both Goff and University of Hartford President Walter Harrison paid tribute to Meiser and the program she has built over the past two decades.

“Over the past 21 years, Pat Meiser has built a superb foundation for our athletics department. Now I look forward to working with Anton, and I’m very excited to see how he will lead us to new levels of success and excellence,” Harrison said.

Goff has been athletic director at Bowie State since 2010. Under his leadership Bowie State athletic programs increased student-athletes’ academic success rate (Bowie’s student-athlete graduation rate is now higher than that of its overall student population); enhanced their existing facilities; exceeded fundraising targets; and captured Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association championship titles in men’s basketball (2013) and women’s bowling (2013).

Prior to his Bowie State appointment, Goff served as the associate athletic director and the sport supervisor for six varsity sports at the University of Maryland–College Park. Before that, he was associate director of support services for Michigan State University’s football team.

Goff earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in the administration of justice from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond in 1991 and 1993, respectively. He is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, as well as multiple honor societies.

Goff and his wife, Wendy, have two daughters, Alexa, 9, and Gianna, 5.

**Meiser to Retire**

A career in college athletics that spanned four decades as a student-athlete, coach, and administrator will end at the end of July when Patricia Meiser, the University’s director of athletics and special assistant to the president, retires.

Meiser arrived at the University of Hartford in 1993 as only the 13th female athletics director at the NCAA Division I level and the third AD at the University of Hartford in the Division I era. The hallmark of her tenure at UHart has been to foster a culture of collegiate athletics based on excellence, integrity, and a balanced student-athlete experience. Her leadership has been marked by a commitment to NCAA rules compliance, fiscal conservatism, increased visibility through corporate partnership, community engagement, and athletic success.

“Pat Meiser is an icon in her field, recognized here at the University, within our conference, within our state, and across the country for what she has done for student-athletes, coaches, and athletics professionals,” said UHart President Walter Harrison. “She has been widely and publicly recognized as a pioneer of Title IX and opportunities for women, but fundamentally, she has always been about opportunities for everyone. She has left her impact here at the University and everywhere she has been.”
Heads and California
Radar guns were popping on many a spring afternoon on campus—and they weren’t aimed at cars testing the speed limit. They were focused instead on the University of Hartford’s Fiondella Field, and most specifically on junior pitcher Sean Newcomb, the Hawks’ latest entry into the world of professional sports.

On June 5, Newcomb was selected in the first round of the Major League Baseball (MLB) draft, the 15th pick overall, by the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. He is the first UHart player ever selected in the opening round. Four-time Major League All-Star Jeff Bagwell, a Hawk from 1987 to 1989, was selected in the fourth round by the Boston Red Sox in the 1989 MLB draft.

Newcomb’s game has blossomed at UHart. The 6-foot-5 left-hander’s fastball has rocketed to 96 miles per hour, complemented by an increasing arsenal of off-speed pitches. About 25 scouts were on hand each time Newcomb took the mound.

In 13 starts during the regular season, Newcomb was 7-2 with a 1.36 earned-run average—13th best in the nation and first, by more than a run, in America East. He allowed opponents only 5.11 hits per nine innings, fourth best in America. His 92 strikeouts, better than one per inning pitched, ranked 27th nationally.

As a freshman, Newcomb hurled a no-hitter in a seven-inning game, the first by a Hawk in almost three decades. This past April, he became the eighth student-athlete in University of Hartford history to appear in Sports Illustrated’s weekly “Faces in the Crowd” feature. Newcomb was recognized in the magazine’s April 14 edition for holding the longest streak in 2014 without allowing an earned run, going 40 innings to start the season before yielding his first earned run to Maine.

Newcomb also recorded his 200th career strikeout against Albany in April, becoming the only player in Hawks’ baseball history to strike out 200 batters.

A Baseball America Preseason All-American, Newcomb was a unanimous selection at season’s end as America East Pitcher of the Year. He was also selected to the America East All-Conference First Team.

Alyssa Englert ’14
(women’s basketball)
Englert was named First Team AllState Women’s Basketball Coaches Association Good Works Team. She was recognized for her countless hours of community service on campus and throughout our community. Englert was key in planning and executing the 2012 Walk for Weaver that raised more than $45,000 for her former Hawk teammate Amanda Weaver to help in Weaver’s battle with cancer. Englert also has volunteered with Tabor House, a shelter for homeless men living with HIV/AIDS; Boys & Girls Clubs; and the YMCA, as well as participating in the Hartford Breast Cancer Walk. She also mentors a child at the University of Hartford Magnet School. Englert accepted her award during the Final Four in Nashville, Tenn., a busy, four-day trip she calls “the experience of a lifetime.”

Damion Lowe ’15
(men’s soccer)
Named Second Team All-Northeast Region and First Team All-America East while leading the defense to a 0.91 goals-against average, a new school record dating back to the program’s first year in Division I in 1984. Hartford posted the most wins since 1996 last season, earning its second America East Championship title game appearance in three years. “Damion goes to one of the best organizations in the MLS and gets to play in a great soccer environment,” Hawks head coach Tom Poitras says. “Damion has his best soccer still ahead of him. He will be a tremendous representative of our soccer program and the University of Hartford.”

Evan Russell ’16
After posting one of the most impressive single seasons in program history, Evan Russell ’16 of the University of Hartford’s Men’s Golf team continues to receive accolades. At the end of the 2014 spring season, he was named to the Division I PING Northeast All-Region Team for the second-straight year.

Russell competed in the 2014 NCAA Men’s Golf Championship regional in Raleigh, N.C., May 15–17. One of only five individuals selected to compete, Russell finished tied for 29th place among the 75 golfers in the field. He is the first UHart men’s golfer to play in the NCAA regionals since 2007, when the Hawks won the America East Championship and qualified as a team.

Russell, who hails from Essex, Vt., posted a 70.39 strokes-per-round average through 31 rounds this season. That number stands as the best single-season average in program history. Russell was tabbed the 2014 America Sky Men’s Golf Conference Player of the Year and was named to the America Sky All-Conference First Team.

Stephanie Santos ’15
(women’s soccer)
Represented Portugal as a member of the national team as it competed in the 21st Algarve Cup, an invitational women’s soccer tournament held annually in Portugal. Santos was one of only two college players invited to play on the team. In her first season with the Hawks in 2013 after transferring from Southern Connecticut State University, Santos earned America East co-Midfielder of the Year accolades. She was named to the New England Women’s Intercollegiate Soccer Association All-New England First Team and earned America East All-Conference First Team honors. She led the Hawks and the America East with seven assists during the regular season, while adding a goal and an assist in the conference tournament.
Dear Fellow Alumni,

It has been my honor to represent you as president of the University of Hartford Alumni Association these past three years and to have the wonderful experience of working with the committed group of our peers who serve on the Alumni Board. These individuals have given tremendous amounts of their time and talent to provide opportunities for all alumni to connect with the University.

Since I took over as president in 2011, we have seen many changes at the University and within the Alumni Association. As I reflect on the experience, I am filled with pride and yet humbled by our collective accomplishments.

We have evolved to a point where there is a much deeper connection between the Alumni Board, the Alumni Association, the Alumni Relations office, and the rest of the University of Hartford. Under the leadership of President Walter Harrison and through the efforts of devoted volunteers and staff, we have entered a new era in which the University, the Office of Institutional Advancement, and the Alumni Board are all moving in the same direction. We have seen our current membership grow. Looking forward, we have connected to future alumni as they begin their relationship with the University at freshman Orientation.

As my term comes to an end, let’s stop for a moment to take note of our specific achievements of the past three years. Together we have:

- increased the number of University of Hartford regional and networking events for alumni across the country and around the world;
- supported improved career-readiness goals for current students through Express to Success and other networking programs;
- expanded our Hawktober Weekend programming;
- enhanced our online presence through our website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and the Alumni Hub app;
- introduced a monthly alumni e-newsletter, The Link;
- developed an online alumni events calendar;
- established a strategic framework for the Alumni Board, including revised bylaws, position descriptions, and committee structure;
- engaged in a strategic planning effort, resulting in better alignment with the similar efforts of the Office of Institutional Advancement and the University as a whole; and
- supported efforts to increase annual alumni giving to the Anchor Fund.

The Alumni Association will most certainly continue to evolve after I step down, and I look forward to cheering on the next generation of UHart volunteers. I encourage all alumni to find their own way to connect with our great University. Volunteer service feels good, and it really does make a difference in the lives of fellow alumni, students, and faculty. Thank you for allowing me that opportunity.

With best wishes as we move steadily forward,

Da’Rel Eastling ’99, M’11
President
University of Hartford Alumni Association
1952
FREDRICK F. WARD SR. (A’50 BARNEY, BARNEY, M’63 BARNEY) of Wethersfield, Conn., is making steady progress in his recovery from a stroke. What helps is his pride in his three sons, all of whom have passed the Connecticut Bar Exam and are very successful in their field.

1963
DON ECCLESTON (HAS) of Uncasville, Conn., taught art for many years at the high school level. He taught painting and drawing on the Queen Elizabeth 2 luxury liner in 1975, when both Jasper Johns and Salvador Dali were on board. Eccleston is still painting at 84 and was featured last year in The Day (New London, Conn., Jan. 10, 2013).

1968
HERBERT A. MILLER JR. (BARNEY) of Austin, Texas, is a lecturer in the Department of Marketing at the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. The Herbert A. Miller Jr. Endowed Dean’s Scholarship in Business was established by the university’s board of regents to honor Miller in a lasting way and provide scholarships for future students.

1969
ROSE ARMENTANO (A&S) of Vero Beach, Fla., has published her first novel, Phantom Dancer (Xlibris, 2013), available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other websites. The book is a romantic mystery set in the world of classical ballet. Find additional information at the author’s website, roseamentano.com.

1971
SUSAN AVEL MENKES (HAS) of Bellmore, N.Y., was one of 50 teachers profiled in American Teacher: Heroes in the Classroom (Welcome Books, 2013). The book brings together 50 voices heard in American classrooms today in a collaborative effort to inspire other teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers in public education.

1973
JONATHAN BRUCE (HAS, M’74 HAS) of Hartford, Conn., was honored by The Craftery Gallery, Inc., in recognition of his contributions to the Greater Hartford community and the role he plays in the advancement of the arts and arts education in Greater Hartford and beyond.

1975
MAGDALENE “MEME” HANLEY (A&S) of Bristol, Conn., has joined the Orange County Land Trust, based in Sugar Loaf, N.Y., as director of development.

You Wear It Well
The 1970s never looked so good as when this bunch of UHart alumni and friends rendezvoused in Vermont in August 2012. Having a great time are, from left to right, Sharon Greensherr Sprintz, Maureen Hall, Mike Bauch ’75 (A&S), Berni Kunzelmann ’74 (Barney), David Heyman A’73, ’75 (Hilliery, Barney), Deb Hanfling, Penny Rosen ’75 (ENHP), Susan Krumholz, Vida Fox ’75 (ENHP), and Michael Bolton ’74 (A&S).

GARY LAROCQUE (ENHP) of Ocean Isle Beach, N.C., is senior advisor for player development of the St. Louis Cardinals, which was named by Baseball America magazine as its Organization of the Year.

1976
JASON MEYER (HARTT) of South Windsor, Conn., and PAUL BISACCIA ’78 (HARTT) of Hartford, Conn., have released a new CD of music for violin and piano, titled Franck, Gershwin, Meyer, Chopin. The CD includes Meyer’s own compositions and is dedicated to Hartt violin professor Renato Bonacini and Hartt piano professor Raymond Hanson. Meyer and Bisaccia have been performing together since they met as teenagers at Hartt.

1978
PAUL BISACCIA (HARTT). See JASON MEYER ’76.

BARRY MOORE (A&S) of Las Vegas, Nev., a freelance photographer since 2000, has recently moved his business, Moore Photos by Barry, to Las Vegas.

GEORGIA “GERRI” ROBERTS (M, BARNEY) of Glastonbury, Conn., is the first woman president of The Hundred Club of Connecticut, a philanthropic organization providing financial assistance to the families of police officers, firefighters, and correction officers who die in the line of duty. Roberts was also reelected last November to the Wethersfield Town Council.

1979
JEFFREY BROWN (HAS) of Colorado Springs, Colo., is retiring in June after 40 years as a high school art and photography teacher. Brown has a piece in the permanent collection of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. The work, Nostalgia Baggage (pictured), is mixed media with monoprint and found objects.

Barney Hall of Fame 2014
Jeff Goffman ’80, second from left, and Jerry Orefice ’66, second from right, were inducted into the Barney Alumni Hall of Fame in January. Scholarships were given in the name of each inductee to Monica Harrison M’14, center left, and Brady Sheetz ’15, center right. Also pictured are President Walter Harrison, far left, and Barney Dean Marty Roth, far right.

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Jeanne Morningstar Kent (HAS, M’82 HAS) of Winsted, Conn., had her gourd pieces selected by the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) for a special exhibit, "Celebrating Six Years of NEFA’s Native Arts Program," at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Ledyard, Conn. Morningstar was also awarded a 2012 NEFA grant for research on her book "The Visual Language of Wabanaki Art," due for release in 2014.

1981

Eugene Cantera (HARTT) was artist in residence in May at the Wilderness International School in Adelaide, Australia. He worked with students, teachers, and ensembles, as well as performed as a guest artist at the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel.
Filmmaker Dylan Bell ’07 at Tribeca Film Festival

Remora, a nine-minute narrative short film, written, produced, and directed by Dylan Marko Bell ’07, had its world premiere at the 14th annual Tribeca Film Festival (TFF) in New York City in April.

Two weeks after graduating from the University of Hartford with a degree in cinema, Bell headed to Los Angeles, Calif., intent on breaking into filmmaking. His first opportunities came as a freelancer directing music videos and editing video content for several different production houses. He later went on to found his own production company, M. Constant Pictures, in 2009.

“I decided I had specialty skills like editing and directing, and I needed to find a day job that would value those skills,” says Bell. “I applied to what seemed like thousands of jobs and finally got one as a freelance assistant commercial editor at Omelet LA, an ad agency.”

And what about Remora? “Remora was a science-fiction drama I had written a while ago but never finished,” says Bell. “By August 2013 the filming was done, and in November we went into postproduction/special effects. We submitted it to several film festivals, including Tribeca.”

Bell says this was the first time he had submitted anything to TFF, and he never expected to be accepted. The festival selected only 58 short films this year, including Remora, out of 3,074 submissions.

Lauren Cook, associate professor of cinema in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, was impressed with Bell’s abilities even as a student. “I’m in no way surprised that he’s done so well in L.A. He is a natural leader and is an incredibly driven person. I’m sure he will go on to do even greater things.”

“At the University of Hartford, I learned countless lessons,” says Bell. “Perhaps the most important one was that learning is lifelong. I am learning every day and happy that the beginning of my career explorations was at UHart. I have found a career that is endlessly challenging and exhilarating. I am very excited for the future.”

ROBERT A. LANDINO (ENGR) of Chester, Conn., was featured on the cover of the March 2014 issue of Business New Haven magazine as its Business Person of the Year. Business New Haven’s annual civic and business awards offer recognition to seven of the region’s most outstanding business people and organizations.

CHARLES PAGANO (ENGR, M’07 A&S) of Waterbury, Conn., was awarded the David Sarnoff Medal by the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers. The major industry award was given for Pagano’s pioneer technology and innovation efforts with ESPN.

MARK DION (HAS, Hon’02) of New York, N.Y., was Memphis College of Art’s 2014 Downing Pryor Visiting Lecturer. With numerous awards for his work in the public realm, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between objective scientific methods and subjective influences.

LEONARD M. ROMANIETTO JR. (BARNEY) of Middlebury, Conn., has been promoted to managing partner of Lenkowski Lonergan & Co., LLP, a certified public accounting and consulting firm.

KIM IZZARELLI (M, BARNEY) of Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., has received her master’s in educational leadership from Pace University’s School of Education.

SCOTT HUMMEL (CETA) of Easton, Pa., has been named the William A. Jeffers Director of the Engineering Division of Lafayette College.

JOLIE ROCKE BROWN (HARTT) of Wethersfield, Conn., has released a new CD, Rock of Ages: Hymns for the Soul.

BRUCE L. OLIVER (M, BARNEY) of Las Vegas, Nev., was recognized with a 2013 Travel Weekly Magellan Award for travel agents in the media and print category. Oliver’s company, Cruise with Bruce Enterprises helps clients turn ordinary vacation plans into extraordinary experiences.

DAVE S. CHRISTENSEN (ENGR) of Harwinton, Conn., has been promoted to partner at Cantor Colburn LLP, a law firm focusing on patents, trademarks, and other intellectual-property concerns.
Frank Dello Iacono, a longtime math and statistics instructor, first at Barney School of Business, then at Hillyer College, died Feb. 20, 2014. He played an integral role in the founding and subsequent success of the University’s Summer Bridge program, which brings incoming first-year students to campus for a one-week head start on the transition to college.

Paul Moschella, an associate professor emeritus of management in the Barney School of Business, died on Feb. 28, 2013. He was 89. With a doctorate in business, Moschella approached education with a lifelong passion and dedication. He remained a faculty member at the University for more than 30 years, teaching business strategy until his retirement in 2002.

Thomas N. Smith, associate professor emeritus of English, died on Nov. 21, 2013. Specializing in medieval and Renaissance literature, Smith was a member of the English department in the College of Arts and Sciences for more than four decades. He created a humanities course for engineering students that was eventually adapted as an All-University Curriculum course.

Former Hartt School Dean Malcolm Morrison Dies

Malcolm Morrison, former dean of the University of Hartford’s The Hartt School and University Professor of Theatre, lost his long battle with cancer on Nov. 8, 2013. He was 73.

British-born Morrison joined the University community in 1996 to begin a program in theatre; two years later he was appointed dean of The Hartt School. During his 10 years as dean, from 1998 to 2008, he oversaw the development of both Theatre and Dance Divisions of Hartt, moving the school for the first time in its history into a true, multifaceted performing arts conservatory, thus expanding its national and international stature in the world of performing arts.

While he was dean, Morrison also oversaw the design and construction of the University of Hartford’s $21 million studio, office, and performance space, the Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center. With Morrison’s vision and respect for existing urban potential and community renewal, the state-of-the-art facility was redesigned from a former car distributorship.

University President Walter Harrison spoke of Morrison’s vision and his love of Hartt and its students: “Malcolm turned that vision into reality. He cared lovingly for the school, and poured his energy into nurturing talent and providing opportunity. He attended student and faculty performances of all sorts almost every evening. I marveled at his energy and real enjoyment of so many genres of art.”

Hartt Dean Aaron Flagg, in his announcement of Morrison’s passing to the Hartt community (UNotes, Nov. 8, 2013), wrote, “The Hartt family has just lost a great leader, mentor, faculty member, and friend. . . . As a community of performing artists, we will . . . remember and appreciate the honor of having known and learned from him.”

Morrison was honored for his contributions during Commencement ceremonies in May 2013, when he was awarded the University of Hartford’s Medal for Distinguished Service. Other recent honors included Fellow of the Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance in London, England, and recognition in Paris, France, for his work in international theatre. In his distinguished career Morrison also directed and taught in Australia, Russia, China, Austria, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Malta, Jamaica, and Singapore.

1992

THERESA CASEY (M, BARNEY) of Columbia, Conn., captured first place nationally for Best Feature Writing in the prestigious Society for Marketing Professional Services’ 2013 Marketing Communications Awards. This is her seventh award from regional and national communications competitions for both feature writing and special-event planning. Casey is the founding principal of On Target Marketing & Communications, LLC.

1993

PETER BOYER (M, HARTT; D’95, HARTT) of Altadena, Calif., has released the second recording of his music in the American Classics Series on the Naxos label. The work features Boyer’s Symphony No. 1 and four other pieces performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under his direction. Boyer conducted the world-renowned orchestra at London’s historic Abbey Road Studios.

MICHAEL MENAPACE (HARTT) of North Granby, Conn., has been promoted to counsel at Wiggin and Dana LLP, a full-service law firm representing clients throughout the country and abroad.

PATRICIA WITKIN (A&S; M, ENHP) of Simsbury, Conn., has been named a 2014 officer of the National Inter-scholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

1994

SETH I. RUBINSON (BARNEY) of Houston, Texas, has been named a partner in the law firm of Zabel Freeman. Rubinson represents clients in the gas-pipeline and other energy sectors.
Leonard B. Chaponis Dipl’54, ’56 (HAS)  
New Britain, Conn. 10.21.13
Rudolph J. Emerick Cert’56 (Hillyer)  
East Hartford, Conn. 9.22.13
Jean P. Berard M’56 (ENHP)  
West Hartford, Conn. 1.6.14
Nicholas Malnick ’56 (Engr.)  
Groton, Conn. 10.1.13
Goodrow A. Gilbert Jr. Cert’58 (Ward)  
Manchester, Conn. 10.12.13
Philip D. Austin Cert’59 (Ward)  
Windsor, Conn. 10.6.13
Fred A. Demeo Cert’60 (Ward)  
Enfield, Conn. 9.28.13
Leopold M. Neckerman III ’62, M’65  
(A&S, ENHP), Columbia, Conn. 10.26.13
Muriel N. Weber M’64 (ENHP)  
Torrington, Conn. 10.20.13
Tobey Garber Bannister A’65 (HCW)  
West Hartford, Conn. 12.30.13
Harold D. Blanchard A’61, ’66 (Engr.)  
Milford, Conn. 1.25.14
Paul P. Domini M’66 (ENHP)  
West Suffield, Conn. 2.4.14
Ronald V. Glassman M’66 (ENHP)  
Bluffton, S.C. 2.9.14

Kenan Trebincevic ’03, M’05 (ENHP), with coauthor Susan Shapiro, has published The Bosnia List: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return (Penguin, 2014). The book is Trebincevic’s poignant story of surviving the Bosnian war and returning to his homeland to confront the past. His writing has appeared in The New York Times Magazine, the International Herald Tribune, and the Wall Street Journal. Trebincevic works as a physical therapist in Greenwich Village, N.Y.

Iain Quinn (HARTT) of Tallahassee, Fla., has completed a reconstruction of American composer Samuel Barber’s childhood cantata, Christmas Eve. The first performance of the work was as part of the 104th annual carol services at Harvard University, with a subsequent performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Devine in New York City.

Joe Erardi (ENHP) of Watertown, Conn., is the new superintendent of Newtown, Conn., public schools.

Amanda Weaver ’11 (ENHP), former University of Hartford Women’s Basketball team member, and her family extend their sincerest appreciation to the UHart community for their love and support in the former Hawk’s battle with cancer. A Walk for Weaver fundraiser held on campus in September 2012 raised more than $45,000 for Weaver, who continues her recovery.

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2004
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Amanda Lovelee (HAS) of Minneapolis, Minn., and her design team are the 2014 winners by popular vote of a public art competition sponsored by the Minneapolis Convention Center. The team’s installation, Balancing Ground, is a welcoming, reflective, interactive space that is continually transforming, with complex shadow patterns and colors from an overhead canopy of prisms. Lovelee is the artist in residence for the city of St. Paul.

Shawn Murphy (A&S) of Madison, N.J., has joined the healthcare marketing agency Vogel Farina as art supervisor.

1999
Roy Clay Dumas (HARTT) of Montgomery, Ala., has been admitted as a shareholder in the law firm of Hill, Hill, Carter, Franco, Cole & Black, P.C. Dumas’s practice focuses on commercial litigation, first-party insurance defense, aviation, and gaming law.

With Heartfelt Thanks

Amanda Weaver ’11 (ENHP), former University of Hartford Women’s Basketball team member, and her family extend their sincerest appreciation to the UHart community for their love and support in the former Hawk’s battle with cancer. A Walk for Weaver fundraiser held on campus in September 2012 raised more than $45,000 for Weaver, who continues her recovery.

JOSEPH R. GORNEAUT JR. (HAS) of Cromwell, Conn., had a self-titled exhibit of his paintings at The Tobacco Shop in Cromwell, Conn., had a self-titled exhibit of his paintings at The Tobacco Shop in Cromwell, Conn. Pictured here is Exhilarate (mixed media, 12’ x 10’, 2013).

2000
Javier Colon (HARTT) of West Hartford, Conn., is paying forward his musical success by donating his time to work with young people in educational programs like Achieve Hartford and with aspiring singers at New Haven’s Area Cooperative Educational Services. After 15 years in the music business, Colon became an “overnight” sensation when he won the inaugural season of NBC’s The Voice in 2011.

2001
Kathryn Planow (ENHP) of Thomaston, Conn., was named associate executive director of Alpha Epsilon Phi Sorority in Danbury, Conn.
Maren Suessman (ENHP) of Manchester, Conn., is the Connecticut recipient of the 2012 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Suessman is a math specialist for New Canaan Public Schools.

2002
Tiffany Briere (A&S) of San Diego, Calif., has received a 2013 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer’s Award. The award is given annually to six women writers who demonstrate excellence and promise in the early stages of their careers.
Joshua Kail (A&S) of New Hartford, N.Y., has opened his own public relations firm, Glass Lantern PR (glasslanternpr.com).
Matt Margolis (WARD) of Silver Creek, N.Y., has written his second nonfiction book with coauthor Mark Noonan. The book, 150 Reasons Why Barack Obama Is the Worst President in History, is available at Amazon.com.

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Photo: Elidin Trebincevic

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Teaching More Than Jazz

Steven Ortiz M’09 (Hartt) (front row, second from left) brought his Windsor High School students’ Jazz Quartet to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Conn., in December to play for holiday travelers. The group was surprised by the appearance of U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) (third from right), who thanked Ortiz’s students for their kindness in dedicating their performance and handing out green ribbons to the crowd in honor of the one-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy.

Desirée Robinson (A&S) of East Elmhurst, N.Y., moderated a panel at the Health Disparities Conference 2014, held in March at Columbia University’s Teachers College. Under the conference theme “Urban and Global Health: Culturally Appropriate Research and Practice,” Robinson’s 90-minute panel explored the game-changing potential of hip-hop artists as public-health advocates.

Jason Anick (Hartt) of Medford, Mass., had a CD release show to introduce his new disc, Tipping Point, at The Side Door jazz club in Old Lyme, Conn. A jazz violinist and mandolinist, Anick performed alongside Hartt piano instructor Matt DeChamplain ‘10 (Hartt).

Burak Konuk (M, Ceta; M, Barney) of Indianapolis, Ind., has passed the Professional Engineer Exam. With his wife, Elif, by his side, Konuk was granted his license by the State of Indiana Licensing Board at a special ceremony. He has been a transportation engineer at URS Corporation since 2009.

Jesse Rosenaum (Barney) of Stamford, Conn., was promoted to Connecticut account manager for Varonis Systems, a global software company based in New York City.

Matt DeChamplain ‘10 (Hartt). See Jason Anick ’08.

Rocco Mesiti (D, Enhp) of East Longmeadow, Mass., has been honored by the Italian Cultural Center with the Servium Award, given to individuals of Italian descent who have dedicated their lives to bettering the Italian-American communities of western Massachusetts through community service and other exemplary works.

Joshua Thompson (Hartt, Gpd’12 Hartt) of Gloversville, N.Y., was appointed to the faculties of Castleton State College in Castleton, Vt., and SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury, N.Y., where he teaches horn studios and chamber ensembles. Thompson is the founder of Gloversville Community Music, a private-lesson studio and community-outreach program in the arts. He is also a founding member of the chamber music ensemble Music Among Friends.

Christianana “Ana” Lang (A&S) of Whittier, Calif., has joined the Peace Corps as a volunteer in Thailand for 27 months. Friends can share her experiences on her blog at anajourneyinthailand.wordpress.com.

John-Ryan “Jr” Quick (Barney) of Bristol, Conn., has joined a newly established firm, Ridgeline Financial Partners, LLC, in Avon, Conn.

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COURTNEY FEBBRORIELLO (Barney) of East Granby, Conn., has written a book titled Wife of the Chef (Clarkson Potter, 2004). Her husband is Chris Prosperi, chef and co-owner of Metro Bis restaurant in Simsbury, Conn.

NANCY MEYER (Univ Studies) of Hartford, Conn., has been named the new publisher of the Hartford Courant.

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We would love to share your news with the University of Hartford alumni community through Observer magazine. Please send news about your accomplishments, travel, milestones, announcements, and photos to

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Information about a University of Hartford Alumni Reception at The Hartford Club, planned for September 17, 2014, will be emailed to Hartford-area alumni later this summer. Update your e-info at alumni@hartford.edu.
ALUMNI EVENTS

For upcoming Alumni Association events go to anchoronline.org.

**Presidential Reception at Major League Baseball in New York City**
Alumni, President Walter Harrison, coaches, regents, and staff gathered on Nov. 5, 2013, at the Major League Baseball offices in New York City to reconnect and learn about the latest happenings at the University.

*Top left (l–r):* Arnold West, President Walter Harrison, Kathleen Behrens ’85, University Board of Regents chair Lucille Nickerson, Joe Coughlin ’80, Thomas Trillo ’79, Dominic Fulco ’81.

*Top right:* President Harrison (left) addresses the crowd.

*Bottom row (l–r):* Sarabjeet Singh ’13 and Ariana Tarpinian ’11; Alumni Association President Da’Rel Eastling ’99, M’11, with UHart regent Arnold West; Bonnie Barrett ’81 and Victoria Voketaitis ’93.

**APAP Alumni Reception in New York City**
Hartt School Dean Aaron Flagg (far left) joined a congenial group of UHart and Hartt alumni in New York City on Jan. 13, while he was in town for an Association of Performing Arts Presenters event.

**Boston GOLD Reception**
A large group gathered for our Boston GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) reception on Dec. 5.

**Presidential Reception in London**
(L–r) Charles Condon chats with Kevin Sliwoski ’12 and Katie Whitcombe at a University of Hartford reception in London in November.

**Presidential Reception in Paris**
President Walter Harrison (far left) and Dianne Harrison (far right) enjoy a reception in Paris in November with alumni (l–r) Jean-Philippe Baert ’88, Nicoleta Andre ’95, and Emma Maillard ’94.

**Tip-a-Hawk Dinner**
Hartford Hawks and their loyal supporters came out in force at this year’s Tip-a-Hawk Dinner, held in November in Farmington, Conn.

*Top left:* (l–r) Rob Crovo; Bill Sullivan, assistant women’s basketball coach; John Gallagher, head men’s basketball coach; and Bill Ghio.

*Top right:* That winning women’s basketball team spirit is just as strong off the court. *Bottom left:* Guests at center table stand to cheer for team member La’Trice Hall ’17, who was seated at their table: (l–r) Coleman and Judy Levy; Dave and Amy Raisner; John Watt (partially hidden); John Gallagher, head men’s basketball coach; and University President Walter Harrison. *Bottom right:* Amy Raisner (left) chats with Cedric Quackenbush ’11, director of operations for women’s basketball.
A HAWK’S TALE

AT THE FOREFRONT of PERSONALIZED MEDICINE

Mohan Kocherla M’13
Barney School of Business

Mohan Kocherla M’13 is a remarkable young man who believes in the power of education. His story begins in India, where he received a bachelor’s degree in microbiology and chemistry in 2000 and a professional diploma in network-centered computing in 2001. That same year, Kocherla came to the United States and earned a master's in 2002 in management information systems at Ferris State University in Michigan. In 2004 he received a second master’s in genomics and bioinformatics at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. His MBA from the University of Hartford’s Barney School of Business was awarded in December 2013.

Despite his five degrees, Kocherla is not living the life of a perpetual student. Instead, he has been preparing himself, even before he knew it, to move up the ranks from research scientist to operations director and partner at Genomas, Inc., which is based on the Hartford Hospital campus.

“Genomas, Inc., is a biomedical company started in 2004 by Dr. Gualberto Ruaño. He was also my professor at The George Washington University,” says Kocherla. “He spotted my talent and asked me to relocate to Hartford in August 2004. I was employee 001. Since then, I have been helping him build the company. Now, 10 years later, I have gone from being an employee to a partner in the company.”

Genomas is a player in the new field of personalized medicine. According to the company website, the “one-size-fits-all” approach to prescribing medications is giving way to an advanced method of drug selection based on the capacity of the individual to process (metabolize) the prescription. That capacity can be determined through analysis of the patient’s DNA.

“For about 50 percent of the population, the suggested drug dose is appropriate. However, about 25 percent of us are below-average metabolizers and may face risks when a drug builds up and causes potentially serious or even life-threatening complications. And about 25 percent of people have an above-average ability to metabolize drugs. This capacity could lead to lack of efficacy, as the medication is broken down before it has its effect” (genomas.net).

Kocherla’s contributions to Genomas, according to company founder Ruaño, have touched every aspect of the business, from laboratory design and management to helping the company obtain Small Business Innovation Research grants totaling $7.2 million and beyond.

“Mr. Kocherla has excelled in many and varied capacities at Genomas: research and clinical scientist, laboratory manager, and presently director of operations. . . . [He] was instrumental in creating the Laboratory of Personalized Health, . . . a clinical laboratory serving doctors and patients in the New England region. Since its inception in 2004, test results on over 5,000 patients with mental ailments have directed psychiatrists in providing the right medication in the appropriate dosage amount, thereby preventing lethal adverse drug reactions.”

Asked why he decided to go for an MBA, Kocherla responds, “Before receiving my MBA, my expertise was in biology and computer science. As my entrepreneurial bent increased, I was falling short in understanding my customers and investors.”

About his experience at Barney, Kocherla says he initially chose the program for its flexibility for working professionals and its personal touch. He also says Barney’s supportive faculty have helped him accomplish his goal of developing effective business strategies to guide his company in the ever-growing market of DNA-guided medicine.

Kocherla won first place in the Barney business plan competition with “Genomics and Health Care vis-à-vis Insurance and Cash-Based Business Models,” then presented it at the Connecticut Collegiate Business Plan Competition. At the state level he received the Inaugural Intrapreneurship Award. Associate Professor Irina Naoumova explains that intrapreneurship refers to an entrepreneurship mindset for in-company projects, a concept that is very popular now in the corporate world. She calls Kocherla a team leader, his project’s “heart and soul,” and observes that “his presentation skills added to the judges’ positive opinion on his business idea.”

Although the company has just six employees now, Kocherla sees great growth in its future, thanks to a redefined business plan that he developed at Barney. “For 2014, we project multimillion-dollar revenue. I feel that the Barney curriculum has provided me with booster rockets to rise to the executive level. Though graduation marks a new journey, I will not easily say goodbye to Barney.”
Alumna Christine Dwyer ’07, who stars in the Broadway hit Wicked, wowed the audience with a performance of “For Good” with costar Jenni Barber during the televised Tony Awards on June 8. While at Hartt, Dwyer studied with voice teacher Kristin Huffman as well as Alan Rust and Diana Moller-Marino in the theatre department and performed in several school productions. For more about Dwyer, go to hartford.edu/dwyer_tonys.