The campus as we know it today was just beginning to emerge when Barry Sandrew ’70—founder of Legend3D, a leading Hollywood visual effects studio—arrived in the fall of 1966. He remembers the opening of the residential halls and Gengras Student Union in 1967.

“I was there when they broke ground for the dorms and when Gengras was first opened. In fact, I was one of the first students to sit in the cafeteria. I have so many great memories of those days such as having coffee in the cafeteria across from poet Allen Ginsberg with a few of my friends,” remembers Sandrew.

“It was in the psych department, under my advisor Julian Streitfeld, that I found my career direction. He introduced me to neuroscientist Bob Correll and famed neurosurgeon William Scoville. They gave me an internship in their Hartford Hospital laboratory and introduced me to the field of brain research, kicking off my journey,” he adds.

From that introduction, Sandrew went on to earn his PhD in neuroscience at Stony Brook University. In 1979, after a two-year National Institutes of Health fellowship at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, he joined Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School as staff neuroscientist. Then, his career suddenly veered.

“I was approached by Hollywood entrepreneurs who had learned of my work in medical imaging. They asked me to invent a process for colorizing black and white movies that was superior to what was then available for the entertainment industry. That was a tall order and I was committed to my career in neuroscience, but they made me an offer I simply couldn’t refuse and I eventually left Harvard and academia behind.”

What Sandrew invented was the first all-digital process for colorizing classic feature films. He then founded American Film Technologies and Ted Turner, along with most of the major studios in Hollywood and three television networks, became his client. He also invented the first paperless animation system for producing TV cartoons and a digital ink-and-paint and visual effects compositing system that was used on Steven Spielberg’s first digital animated film, We’re Back: A Dinosaur Story.

In 1993 Sandrew’s career took another detour when he co-founded, Lightspan, a company that became one of the largest educational software producers in the country, selling K–6 edutainment curriculum to entire school districts. That company went public and was later acquired by Plato Learning.

“Then in 2000 I went back to the entertainment industry, inventing a much more sophisticated colorization process and founding Legend Films (2001). There, we colorized 180 movies and produced visual effects for such films as Scorsese’s The Aviator and the HBO series Entourage.

“In the fall of 2006 it became clear to me that 3D was going to become a game changer in Hollywood and I was determined to be a major player in that industry. Consequently, I diverted all of my R&D to create a process for converting 2D footage to 3D. In 2009, after doing conversion and visual effects for Michael Jackson’s This Is It tour, I felt that the technology and my team were ready to enter the 3D fray.”

After Avatar was released in December 2009, Sandrew changed the name of his company to Legend3D and was immediately awarded the conversion of Alice in Wonderland for Disney, followed by the Shrek trilogy for Dreamworks and Transformers: Dark of the Moon for Paramount. Over the succeeding years, Barry’s team has worked on many of the most successful feature films released by the major Hollywood studios including the recently released Pottergeist and Zemeckis’s soon-to-be-released The Walk.

“Going from neuroscience to colorization, to educational software, back to colorization and visual effects and then to 3D feature filmmaking, one might say that I’ve taken a rather unconventional career path. Today I’m exploring opportunities in augmented reality, which I see becoming ubiquitous within the next four years and like with 3D, I’m determined to be a major player in its evolution.

“I’m always cognizant of the fact that this journey started at the University of Hartford, where I was fortunate enough to connect with mentors who recognized that my true potential was not necessarily reflected in my grades but rather in my vision for scientific and technological trends and my insight into innovative solutions to unique problems.”