New Provost Named

The University has named Donna M. Randall, an administrator at the University of Memphis, as its new provost. Randall, whose appointment was approved May 5 by the University’s board of regents, will assume her new post on July 24.

Currently interim senior vice provost and a professor of management at the University of Memphis, Randall said she is impressed by the “quality of the faculty and the outstanding leadership” at the University of Hartford. She sees “a wealth of opportunities and choices ahead” and looks forward to “helping the University realize its potential in the coming years.”

University President Walter Harrison noted that Randall was clearly the first choice of the search committee. “I think it is fair to say that she took the campus by storm during her visit,” he said. “She will bring a high level of scholarship, commitment, and energy to the position.”

Prior to being named the interim senior vice provost, Randall was dean of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis. She has been an active scholar throughout her career, focusing in four areas: business ethics and malfeasance, women in toxic work environments, organizational commitment and work motivation, and international values and ethics. Her research has received recognition at the national Academy of Management Meetings. She has been actively involved in the Memphis community, serving on several boards and working on economic development initiatives.

Randall was selected as the UofH chief academic officer following a national search process that saw four finalists visit the campus in early April. Thirteen candidates had been interviewed by the members of the University’s search committee in mid-February, after the committee had reviewed résumés from more than 50 applicants.

She will succeed Elizabeth S. Ivey, who is retiring after five years as UofH provost and after more than four decades in higher education. Ivey’s numerous accomplishments include leading the development of the University’s Strategic Plan, spearheading an academic administrative reorganization of the University’s nine schools and colleges, and helping the University control costs by implementing a comprehensive program review process.

Randall earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Drake University and both a master’s degree and a Ph.D. in sociology from Washington State University. She also earned a master’s in business administration from Washington State University. She was a National Institute of Mental Health Fellow from 1981 to 1982 at WSU. During the summers of 1978 and 1979, Randall was a research assistant for the National Center on White-Collar Crime, Battelle Law and Justice Center, in Seattle.

Her husband, Paul Hagner, and her daughter, Kate, who will enter seventh grade in the fall, will join Randall in Hartford. Hagner is currently chair of the political science department at the University of Memphis and holds a National Learning Infrastructure Initiative Fellowship dealing with faculty engagement and support in new learning technologies.

Another Harrison on Campus

Larry Harrison has been named the eighth head coach in the history of the University’s men’s basketball program. Harrison, most recently assistant coach at DePaul University, has a reputation as one of the top recruiters in the nation. He was introduced at an April 20 press conference at the University’s Sports Center.

“We are very excited to be adding Larry to our staff,” said Pat Meiser-McKnett, director of athletics. “He has a history of winning at the highest level. I am very pleased with the qualities he will bring to our basketball program.”

Prior to his three-year tenure at DePaul under head coach Pat Kennedy, Harrison served for eight years as an assistant coach at the University of Cincinnati under head coach Bob Huggins. Harrison served his last four years at Cincinnati as the associate head coach and recruiting coordinator.

“I am very grateful to the University of Hartford for giving me the opportunity to begin my head coaching career,” Harrison said. “I am very impressed by the commitment being made by the administration to our basketball program. My goals are to be competitive in America East and to build a program capable of reaching the NCAA Tournament.”

Since 1989, Harrison’s teams have earned seven bids to the NCAAs and three NIT bids. During Harrison’s tenure, Cincinnati advanced to the Final Four once (1992) and the Elite Eight twice (1993, 1996).
On a bright and cloudless morning in May, small groups of educational and political leaders took turns donning hard hats and placing ceremonial gold shovels into a patch of soil on the southeast corner of campus. Fifteen months from now, the site where those shovels glistened in the spring sunshine will have been transformed into a brand-new building, filled with energetic children, with college students preparing for their life’s work, and with educators exhilarated by the opportunity to use innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

The event was the groundbreaking for the University of Hartford Magnet School, a ceremony marked by gratitude for those who laid the groundwork for the project over the course of more than seven years and by tangible excitement over the school’s potential impact on the future of education in Greater Hartford.

“I hope that the sunshine today is only a precursor for the sunshine that is going to fill so many children’s lives at this school,” said University President Walter Harrison. “This magnet school, and the teaching and learning that go on within it, will have a far-reaching effect on Greater Hartford and Connecticut.”

The magnet school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2001 on a site between East Hall (home of the Ward College of Technology) and the Watkinson School. Its students will come from Hartford and five surrounding communities—Avon, Farmington, Simsbury, West Hartford, and Wethersfield. The magnet school will serve 360 children in kindergarten through fifth grade and 36 three- and four-year-olds in an early childhood education center. The school also will offer a wide array of parental and community support services through a wellness/health center and a parenting support center.

The May 4 groundbreaking ceremony marked the beginning of construction on the $21.5-million, 76,000-square-foot facility. The ceremony was attended by dozens of people from the University, the State of Connecticut, the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), the City of Hartford, and the five other municipalities that are partners in the magnet school. The school is being funded by the state and will be managed by CREC.

In addition to bringing together students from diverse neighborhoods and cultures, the magnet school will implement an innovative approach to teach children. The school’s curriculum will be based on the “theory of multiple intelligences” developed by renowned Harvard University psychologist Howard E. Gardner. The theory recognizes that students learn in many ways other than the traditional, linear-logic approach taken in most classrooms. This diversified view of intelligence will encourage students to learn in the ways that best suit them as individuals, allowing them to display their true talents. Gardner received an honorary degree at this year’s commencement ceremony on May 14 (see page 20).

“This school was created out of a vision of a unique learning community that would reflect the rich and diverse cultures and communities of the greater...
Hartford region, and that would enhance student learning through an innovative curriculum designed to provide mastery of basic skills while also enhancing the full range of students’ diverse abilities and talents,” said David Caruso, dean of the University’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP).

The magnet school will also provide a “learning laboratory” on the UofH campus for students preparing for careers in education, music education, allied health fields, nursing, school psychology, counseling, educational leadership, and many other professions, Caruso said.

Among those who took part in the groundbreaking ceremony were two ENHP sophomores who will be seniors when the magnet school opens, and who may have an opportunity to do student teaching or internships in the new school.

“This school will provide all kinds of children from a variety of communities with the chance to explore their many intelligences and talents. [It] will also help me and other future educators to recognize the multiple intelligences in students,” said Nicole Dean, an early childhood education major.

The magnet school is just the latest project in the University’s ongoing efforts to serve as a valuable resource to its neighbors, President Harrison said.

“The University of Hartford Magnet School is a concrete representation of the University’s commitment to its communities,” Harrison said. “I hope over the years the school will come to represent the best of regional cooperation, and will become a leader in the education of our young people and in regional planning.”

Connecticut Education Commissioner Theodore S. Sergi described the magnet school as “a great symbol of cross-town cooperation, with the University at its center.” But he warned representatives of the six participating school districts that the school’s success depends on their ability to work together and to ensure that students from each of their communities participate.

“I challenge you to demonstrate to the young people of the region that communities in Greater Hartford can work together,” Sergi said. “No youngster in this state is educated on an island.”

Marcia Yulo, executive director of CREC, said that magnet schools are places of both opportunity and promise: “the opportunity to create schools from scratch and try out new ideas to enhance student learning,” and “the promise of high achievement for all students.”

“It’s a place to dream, it’s a place to try out new ideas, and it’s a place to bring everything together for the benefit of students,” Yulo said.
A Year Later: The Class of 2003

The Winter 1999 issue of The Observer featured nine students from the class of 2003, one from each of the University’s nine schools and colleges. To tell the ongoing story of their lives, The Observer will periodically visit with each of them during their four years at the UofH.

In this issue, two of the nine describe their first year as college students. John Garry of Waterbury, Conn., is an elementary education major in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions, and Erica Geller of Cherry Hill, N.J., is a vocal music education major at The Hartt School. For both students, it has been a good year, with a few glitches.

“The first semester went well,” John said. “I was not as focused the second semester, and during spring break I realized I had a lot of work to do, so I decided to get to it.” He also stopped running with the UofH cross-country team late in the semester to allow more time to study. “I needed to readjust my schedule, but I will run again next year.”

His focus on academics may also have been affected by the doubts about his major that crept into his thoughts at one point. “But I still want to work with kids,” said John. “Education is where I want to be—the question is, what part of it. This year, I worked with kindergarten kids, and they seemed so young. Next year, I will be working as a teacher’s aide in local schools, and I will move up a grade or two. I think I prefer working with older children.”

Because he is from Waterbury, John has had to deal with a question faced by many “local” students—whether to develop an on-campus life. He did that, going home only twice each semester and widening his circle of friends through work-study and basketball.

“I tried to keep busy so I didn’t think about how stressed out I was at times,” said John. “I’ve been getting up early to lift weights, go for a run, and play basketball.” Without a car, he goes off campus when he can, even walking to Bishop’s Corner to get his hair cut.

John will stay busy this summer. He joined the Red Caps, a volunteer student organization that assists with campus visitation and orientation programs. He worked during Orientation Week in May and will do so again during the one leading into the fall semester. This summer, for the third year in a row, he will work as a counselor at a Waterbury day camp run by one of his high school teachers. The camp is for children ages five through 12.

Like John, one of Erica’s semesters was more challenging than the other; in her case, the first semester. “I really had no idea what to expect at first; I was just hoping for the best,” she said. “I was a little homesick and I called my mother a lot, but it was just me being paranoid and silly. I also talked to my older sister, Meryl [a graduate student in physical therapy at Temple University]. We had heart-to-heart talks, and she made me feel like I was normal. She had gone through the same thing.

“I started to come out of my shell in the second semester, and now I feel like I belong here. It takes a while to establish friendships, but I overcame the social challenges and matured as a person. I knew a few people from my hometown here at first, but all my friends now are new.”

Erica’s social activities included joining Hillel, the Jewish student group; the Hartt Choir; and helping to form a singing group of music education majors. She also joined the Music Education Association, and went to its national conference in Washington, D.C., in the spring. When there’s time, she goes to campus parties.

“I have always managed my schedule well and kept my grades up, so I find myself with extra time,” said Erica. “The first semester, I made the President’s List and also began to work out at the Sports Center almost every day.”

She finds her music courses inspiring. “I have learned a lot, and the things I already knew have been strengthened. The courses are great, and every professor knows my name. My goal is still to teach music to young children.”

Summing up her first college year, Erica said, “[I] definitely had my ups and downs, but I feel good now. There were a lot more ups than downs. Everything has turned out just fine.”
Seeing the Scientific Light

The visual imagery of chemistry is now easily accessible to students at the University, thanks to a computer program created by Michael Rooke, assistant professor of chemistry, and his student Stewart Mader, a junior majoring in chemistry, in the College of Arts and Sciences. Called Web-based Spectroscopy Education, the site, <http://chemistry.hartford.edu/spectroscopy>, allows students to view spectroscopy, or the study of light and how it is used in science, as it is applied in the real world. "People take spectroscopy for granted," said Rooke. "It is used in many ways, such as during MRI examinations and when using microwave ovens."

Funding for the project came from the NASA Space Grant Consortium. Rooke's and Mader's grant proposal was related to the space mission. "Spectroscopy is fundamental to all sciences," said Rooke. "We noted how it is used in the Hubble Telescope and Global Surveyor programs."

"The site serves several purposes," said Mader. "It uses modern techniques to teach chemistry the way it will be taught in the future, going beyond the traditional chalk-and-textbook approach. Students can work on problems visually any time they have access to a computer, and you get instant feedback on an answer."

The site is divided into five sections: applications, exercises (practice chemistry problems for students), theory (definition and use of light in science), techniques (using five fundamental spectroscopic instruments), and education (how spectroscopy is used at UofH). There is also an instrument guide section containing step-by-step instructions for all instruments in the UofH chemistry labs. "We are still expanding the site, and it now shows some instruments not even owned by our department," said Rooke.

Rooke likes the site because it helps him organize his information and update it easily and quickly. The students like it, too. "Our upper-level students really liked the program, and the lower-level ones sought it out on their own," said Rooke. "Due to the interest sparked by this site, some students are considering choosing chemistry as a major here at the University."

Rooke says interest in the site has come from beyond the University as well. He and Mader presented the project at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Francisco in March, and "a number of schools asked for our address to get this program. We can share this information with other schools, and build on that," said Rooke.

Spectroscopy on View. Stewart Mader was one of 15 students to make a presentation at the annual Undergraduate Research Colloquium, sponsored by the University Honors Program. The students chosen for the program "are among our best and brightest," according to Honors Director Lynne Kelly. Here Mader displays the main Web site for his Spectroscopy Education project.

Amanda Boehmer, a fourth-year student at The Hartt School with a double major in clarinet performance and performing arts management and a minor in business, was elected vice president of the national board of the Music and Entertainment Industry Student Association (MEISA) at the organization's national convention in Chico, Calif., in late March. Amanda serves locally as the president of Hartt's MEISA chapter, as vice president of the Hartt Student Council, and is a member of Alpha Chi honor society.

MEISA is a united, global organization of students working to foster a higher level of education for music students as they enter the music and entertainment industries. The MEISA national board strives to assist its local chapters all over the country.

Boehmer, who will begin her final year at Hartt next September, earned an associate's degree in business administration at Massasoit Community College in her hometown of West Bridgewater, Mass. A focused musician with a head for business, she says she has "always craved music and a professional business atmosphere," making the entertainment industry a perfect match. "Ideally," she says, "I would like to work as a concert promoter or an artist manager." She has worked in the Hartt School's Community Division as manager of the Greater Hartford Youth Wind Ensemble; at Camp Encore Coda, a summer music camp, as an associate music coordinator; and as a liaison between The Hartt School and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. After she finishes her degree at Hartt, she would like to pursue a master's degree in music business with a concentration in entertainment law.
Artist and Teacher

Jeremiah Patterson, far right, was joined by his wife, Julie, and fellow Hartford Art School faculty member Fred Wessel, professor of printmaking, at his Master of Fine Arts exhibition, held at the Hartford Art School’s Taub Gallery in March. Patterson recently accepted a position as an assistant professor of foundations at the Art School. Though his principal love is painting, Jeremiah discovered he also loved to teach while helping his father, William Patterson, an alumnus of the Hartford Art School (’65) and professor of printmaking at the University of Massachusetts, and Wessel teach painting workshops in Italy in the summer of 1995. Wessel was a student of the elder Patterson at Syracuse University.

“Teaching filled something inside,” says Jeremiah. “I made the connection that being able to make art and to teach it makes a nice marriage.” While he considers himself a realist as a painter, Jeremiah envisions all of his paintings in the abstract. “When I create a piece, I draw it in my head, find models to fill the space created by the abstract ideas, and then paint them,” said Patterson. “It is a constant process of coming up with a need and then fulfilling it.”

A Room with Many Views

Internationally known sculptor Jene Highstein stands inside his Room with Ten Doors installation at the Joseloff Gallery. The room was a model for a large-scale sculpture that would be three to five times larger. Highstein said the work represents his continued involvement over two decades with a vocabulary of forms that share an affinity with the natural landscape as well as architecture. Highstein’s sculpture has been the subject of more than 100 one-person and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad.

Each scene as viewed through the doorways and the open roof of the Jene Highstein installation Room with Ten Doors is different and fluid. The exhibition at the Joseloff Gallery, which ran from April 12 to May 31, was composed of two separate yet related pieces—a wall 35 feet long by 10 feet high and a small passageway leading to the elliptically shaped, stucco-walled room measuring 7 feet tall by 24 feet long. Highstein said the two structures are linked by scale and the transformation of space.
A Pulitzer Prize–winning writer for The Baltimore Sun raised concerns about the effects of new technology on the future of print media in a visit to campus on April 18.

Alice Steinbach, who appeared under the aegis of the Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellows program, visited English Prof. John Roderick’s Magazine Journalism class and later that evening delivered a Humanities Center lecture.

In her lecture Steinbach expressed concern about the potentially harmful effects of the Internet on the delivery and shaping of news today. “The problem is that rumor becomes fact, and it never used to,” she said, because online reporters do not do careful fact gathering. She is also concerned about the emergence of 24-hour cable news shows, talk radio, and chat rooms, which are increasingly becoming the major sources of news for many people.

Baruch Sachs, a humanities seminar student, challenged those fears. “You’d have to be a real idiot to believe everything you see in a chat room,” he said. “You’re saying there are no idiots in this room?” Steinbach countered.

“I don’t agree with her,” Sachs said later. “I don’t think she fully understands what the Internet is about and the opportunities it could afford a lot of people.”

David Long, another humanities seminar student, did agree with many of Steinbach’s points. People need to be more aware, he said, and to think independently and to question what they hear; that will be the key to the future success of Internet and online news outlets.

Steinbach said it is difficult for her to consider the new breed of “presenters” as journalists. We need smart reporters who do not care only about breaking the news; they should care about getting the news. Breaking news is never the story, she said. “What you’re getting is not news; it is speculation.”

The picture Steinbach painted was not entirely bleak. She did hold out hope that new journalists will “step up to the plate” and challenge the way news reporting is done today.

Earlier in the day, addressing students in the Magazine Journalism class, she described the delicate balance that magazine writers need to attain between objectivity and interpretation.

She gave four tips that one should keep in mind when writing for magazines: tell a story, write in scenes, move the action along, and find your own voice.

With eyes lit up and a big smile, Steinbach talked about her Pulitzer Prize–winning feature, “A Boy of Unusual Vision,” about a blind boy and what he needed to overcome to be like any other child.

“Sometimes the best stuff you get in an interview is the stuff [the interviewees] don’t think relates at all to the interview,” she said. She cited James Agee and E. B. White as major influences on her writing, influences who may also be responsible for what she termed one of her faults: a tendency to stray in her writing by injecting little pieces of herself.

Steinbach had no background in journalism when she started to write. An art history major in college, she began writing a monthly newspaper for the Baltimore Museum of Art. Her work at The Baltimore Sun was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing in 1985. Later, she was appointed the 1998–1999 McGraw Professor of Writing at Princeton University. Her first book, Without Reservations: The Travels of an Independent Woman, has just been published by Random House.

Dana Ulman, a communication major, graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences in May with a bachelor of arts degree.
Birthright Israel

Seventeen University of Hartford students participated during the winter break in Birthright Israel. Created by noted philanthropists Charles R. Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt, Birthright Israel was established as a worldwide initiative to fund visits to Israel for Jewish youth. The UofH students were among 40 students from Connecticut out of a total of 4,000 United States participants.

The adventure took the students from Masada to Old Jaffa, the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv.

“Masada, the Dead Sea, and the Wailing Wall were the three places that had the most influence on me, in terms of both religion and aesthetics,” says Deborah Levine, a 22-year-old graduate student from Wethersfield, Conn. “On top of Masada, we had to sit there and just listened to the sounds… It was really peaceful and spiritual. A lot of us didn’t want to end that exercise.”

Moments like these rekindled the students interest in their Jewish heritage and spirituality. David Terdiman, director of Hillel at UofH, noted, “It’s the type of trip you dream of for your students. It was fantastic, phenomenal, exhausting. It was a life-changing, amazing 10 days.”

AIDS vigil, sponsored by the University’s Network for Peer Educators, received an award for best campus program in New England at the BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network Regional Conference on Feb. 27 at Worcester College in Massachusetts.

The vigil, held on World AIDS Day last Dec. 1, was a collaborative effort funded in part by the Mosaic Initiative, a special program of the Student Government Association. Groups receive a $500 grant if they collaborate with three or more student organizations on a campus event. In this case, the Network worked with Hillel, the foundation for Jewish campus life; the Women’s Center; and Spectrum, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender student organization.

With the proceeds from the Mosaic Initiative, the groups bought 432 condom “roses” to distribute in Gengras Student Union. Through AIDS Project Hartford, guest speaker Brian Libert talked about living with the AIDS virus and teaching others about it. University President Walter Harrison spoke about his own experience of losing a friend to AIDS.

The Network’s award is an extra-special triumph because its entry was chosen not just from AIDS programs but from New England programs with a wide range of topics. Said Rosalyn Dischiavo, the Network’s advisor, “It is an award for best program in anything. We won because we involved the most number of students. It was truly a campus event.”

The Network Peer Educators is a group of students from all over campus who focus on the wellness, expression, passion, and life of other students on campus. The group has sponsored other programs, such as Safe Sex Awareness Week, Sexual Assault Awareness Week, Take Back the Night, and the Mocktails Contest held during Alcohol Awareness Week. It has created and distributed “safe-break kits” for spring break as well as information on drunken driving and alcoholism.
Engineering Success

Saturday, April 8, proved to be most successful for two groups of College of Engineering students.

Trisha Marks, Adan Babb, and Ghaith Hammouri, three freshmen Tau Beta Pi (national engineering honor society) members, won a competition that day in Boston in which participants had to design a 100-watt, solar-powered radio transmitter. The competition, sponsored by General Electric, pitted UofH students against 16 other New England Tau Beta Pi chapters, including those from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston University, and Northeastern. “It felt so good to win,” Hammouri said, adding that it was gratifying to beat such schools. Marks, Babb, and Hammouri will share the $500 prize awarded to them by General Electric.

While the freshmen were in Boston, another team of UofH engineering students was vying for a prize on campus. Kevin Connolly and John Koinski, both juniors majoring in mechanical engineering; Tony Waslaski, a junior majoring in electrical engineering; and Amanda Yarlett, a senior majoring in mechanical engineering, were competing in the Regional Student Conference of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, held the same Saturday at the University of Hartford. The team designed and built an automated device that could grab a bottle, flip it over, fill it without spilling, cap it, and then aim it toward its target. The University’s team of four competed against 85 students from all over the Northeast, including teams from the University of Connecticut, Northeastern, University of New Hampshire, Boston University, and University of Vermont. As a result of winning this competition, the UofH engineers qualified to take part in the national competition that will be held next November in Orlando, Fla.

Back to Nature

University students, faculty, and administrators gathered with their counterparts from Hartford’s Annie Fisher Elementary School, Weaver High School, and Watkinson School to celebrate the opening of the Greater Hartford Urban Outdoor Classroom, a series of nature trails that will be an important environmental education resource for the schools. The construction and development of the trails was coordinated by the Eastern CT Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), with funding arranged by state Rep. Ken Green. The urban outdoor classroom project, which will have more than 50 learning stations to highlight various habitats along the north branch of the Park River, is aimed at bringing together students from public and private schools, from the elementary to the university level, to share this unique environment. Below: John Carson ’65, senior advisor, corporate and community relations at UofH, far left; state Rep. Ken Green (D-Hartford), second from left; Vivien Richardson, principal, Annie Fisher School, second from right; and Sandra Kee Borges, Hartford city manager, far right, were joined by Hartford Mayor Mike Peters, state Rep. Barnaby Horton (D-Hartford), students and friends at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the classroom on April 14.