When Karen Tejada was chosen as the University of Hartford’s first Jackie McLean Fellow, she couldn’t wait to seize the opportunity.

“I think it is important to see how many ways you can challenge yourself,” Tejada says about her academic goals. She has been working toward her doctorate in sociology at the University of Albany and is now finishing her dissertation on political activism among Salvadoran immigrants in Washington, D.C. The Jackie McLean Fellowship is making it possible for her to complete her research.

When she is not conducting that research, Tejada is in the classroom. She taught a course in social problems for Hillyer College last fall. During the spring semester she is teaching a class about race and ethnic relations for the College of Arts and Sciences. Tejada says she enjoys teaching at the University because “the campus is big enough to have a diverse group of students, yet small enough to know the students’ names.”

This fellowship is named for the late Jackie McLean, a world-renowned alto saxophonist who was a faculty member at the University of Hartford for 36 years. McLean established the African American music department and later the Jazz Studies program, now called the Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz, at The Hartt School.

Tejada sees the fellowship as a way to carry on McLean’s legacy. She says she hopes it becomes “a tradition of helping people and bringing out the best in them.”
President Walter Harrison arrived at the University of Hartford in July 1998, making this past fall the start of his 11th year at its helm. During the first 10 years of his presidency, Harrison oversaw a true campus renaissance, involving new construction; increases in alumni giving, academic quality, and fundraising; and soaring school spirit. In addition, student applications climbed 150 percent from 1998 levels, and enrollment and degrees awarded rose significantly.

Increased fundraising, coupled with sound financial management, has created a strong foundation for building a successful future for the University. Since 1998, fundraising results have increased 100 percent. We successfully completed the Campaign of Commitment in 2008, raising $175,852,600 with gifts from 34,156 alumni, faculty, staff, parents, and friends. Campaign funds have fueled construction projects and growth in a variety of areas.

A self-professed fan of new construction on campus, Harrison has worn a hard hat at numerous groundbreaking ceremonies since 1998: the University of Hartford Magnet School; the University High School of Science and Engineering; the Integrated Science, Engineering, and Technology complex; the Renée Samuels Center at the Hartford Art School; the Hawk Hall first-year residence; and the new Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center, as well as new baseball and softball diamonds and a refurbished soccer/lacrosse field.

In spring 2009, he will add the Shaw Center at Hillyer College to the list.

But our rebirth hasn’t been just about bricks and mortar. Since 1998 the University has added several new degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels and three endowed professorships. In 2000 the University began offering what is now called the multimedia Web design and development bachelor’s, its first interdisciplinary University degree. Physical therapy grew from a bachelor’s program to a postbaccalaureate doctoral program in 2004, and since that time, its applicant pool and enrollment have more than doubled. In fall 2005 the first students in a new master’s in architecture program were enrolled. The master’s in deaf education and aural habilitation welcomed its first cohort in summer 2007. That fall, the math secondary education degree began offering classes to future high school math teachers. Plans are under way now for an undergraduate environmental studies major.

Other changes include the restructuring of the University. In 2003 the College of Engineering, the Ward College of Technology, and the Department of Architecture merged to become the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture. Hartford College for Women lives on through the work of the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund, which provides grants to faculty, staff, and students who propose new initiatives in support of women’s education and leadership.

Among the many things to celebrate in the last 10 years have been outstanding athletic achievements, including three trips to the NCAA Big Dance for Coach Jen Rizzotti and the women’s basketball team. Another high point was the 50th anniversary of the University of Hartford’s founding in 1957. The yearlong celebrations concluded with a concert in Lincoln Theater by Dionne Warwick (Hon. ’86) at Fall Weekend 2007.

To paraphrase our president, it’s been a great decade to be a part of the University of Hartford.
Judge Sotomayor Gives Jon O. Newman Lecture

In late October, Federal Appeals Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor gave the Jon O. Newman Lecture on Law and Justice, established in 2005 as part of the University’s Pre-Law Advising program.

Sotomayor, who has been mentioned frequently as a possible nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court, delivered a talk in Wilde Auditorium titled “No Lawyer, Bad Lawyer—What’s a Judge to Do?”


An adjunct professor at New York University School of Law from 1998 to 2007, she is currently a lecturer-in-law at Columbia Law School.

The annual lecture is made possible through the generosity of Jon O. Newman, a senior judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Newman is a past chair of the board of regents and a life regent of the University of Hartford.

Laura Johnson’s Legacy Lives On

The names of 15 women faculty and staff members have been announced by President Walter Harrison and Provost Lynn Pasquerella as participants in the 2008–09 Laura Johnson Initiative for Women Leaders. The initiative is a pilot program offered by the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund (WELFund), one of the legacies of Hartford College for Women (HCW).

The program was named for Laura Johnson, third dean and first president of HCW, who opened doors for women through her professional activities and her advocacy for her students. Participants will attend monthly workshops throughout the academic year, with the goal of providing the knowledge, skills, and networking necessary to facilitate both career enhancement and advancement for women.

At the first meeting of the group in late September, a panel discussion, moderated by Pasquerella, consisted of women leaders in higher education from the Greater Hartford area. Panel members included HCW alumnas Valerie Lewis, former Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education, and Rosanne Druckman, executive director of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education. Other panelists were Betty Ivy, former provost of the University of Hartford and former president of the Association for Women in Science; Merle Harris, former president of Charter Oak State College; and Estela López, former vice chancellor for academic affairs for the Connecticut State University System.

The panel spoke of the need to take advantage of sudden opportunities, the importance of retaining one’s values throughout one’s career, and the critical role leaders must play in ensuring equal access to education.

“The panelists stressed relationships—partnerships—working collaboratively for the good of the whole,” said Pasquerella. “The community established in programs like the Laura Johnson Initiative is important for participants, but also important for our institution as a whole. I’m pleased to be a partner to WELFund in launching this vital program.”

Student Wins NCAA Division I Sportsmanship Award

Latasha Jarrett ‘10 is a thoroughly modern student-athlete who firmly believes in old-fashioned values—particularly the idea that honesty is the best policy. Her belief was rewarded in September, when she was named NCAA Division I Sportswoman of the Year for a compelling act of integrity at a track meet in the spring.

The story unfolded at the America East Outdoor Track and Field Championship last May. Jarrett was competing in the high jump and heptathlon at the same time. She started the high jump competition on a positive note, clearing the bar at 5 feet. She then signed out to run the 800-meter race for the heptathlon.

When she returned to the high jump competition, the judge had mistakenly already given her credit for clearing the bar at 5 feet, 2 inches, which she hadn’t done. She corrected the judge, faulted on the jump, and narrowly missed out on a chance to go to the NCAA Regionals, a lifelong goal.

“Naturally, I was disappointed that I didn’t make the regionals,” Jarrett admits, “but I knew I could never live with myself if I cheated. It’s great to win medals in competition, but medals only mean something if you actually earn them.”

Currently majoring in physical therapy, Jarrett plans to complete her Doctor of Physical Therapy but is still undecided about what career path she will select. Whatever she chooses, Jarrett is convinced that her traditional values will make her an outstanding clinician.

“I genuinely care about my patients and work very hard to understand their problems and find a solution that’s right for them,” she says. “I’ve always been an honest, caring person, and I truly believe these values will continue to serve me well when I go into practice.”

Based on her track record so far, it would be hard to disagree.
What caused the economic crisis?
For Susan Coleman, professor of finance at the Barney School of Business, the trigger was “a period of dramatically relaxed mortgage-lending standards” in the United States from 2005 to 2007.

Coleman says the Federal Reserve’s lowering of interest rates after 9/11 kicked off a chain reaction. Lower rates prompted banks to give initially low-interest housing loans to people who found they couldn’t afford the higher interest rates that hit later.

“Until the beginning of this year, everything was rolling along as planned,” Coleman explains. “Easy credit allowed lots of people to get easy mortgages and buy lots of houses. Low interest rates fueled the housing bubble that helped Wall Street make lots of money.” Many of those subprime mortgages were packaged into new, supposedly safe types of securities and sold off to buyers both inside and outside the United States.

As variable interest rates rose, many homebuyers began to default; foreclosures and house auctions drove down housing prices. Coleman says that as mortgages went bad, so too did the suddenly risky new-investment instruments that had been sold all over the world, creating a global crisis of confidence.

Who was at fault?
Professor of Economics Demetrios Giannaros, who is also deputy speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives and a Democrat, believes the ultimate responsibility lies with what he calls the “irresponsible and ridiculous fiscal and monetary policies” of Congress and the White House at the very start of the 21st century.

Giannaros says major tax cuts at the same time the nation was fighting two costly wars led to massive federal debt and sent a signal that it was okay for individuals to borrow beyond their means.

“You had a doubling of outstanding federal debt. You had more than a doubling of mortgage credit,” he says. Giannaros believes the situation was made more dangerous by the reluctance of Alan Greenspan, then Federal Reserve chairman, and President George W. Bush’s administration to regulate risky instruments linked to mortgage debt.

“In all honesty, the only way we can learn from mistakes is by penalizing those that caused them,” Giannaros says.

But Barney’s executive-in-residence, Gerald V. Vitkauskas, draws a different conclusion from his experience as a former president and CEO of AIG Credit Corp., a financing subsidiary of AIG, Inc., one of the corporate giants caught in the meltdown.

Vitkauskas says problems began before the start of the 21st century and the Bush administration, when “the government started to put pressure on banks” and institutions like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to lower their mortgage-lending standards.

What can be done to fix things?
Like lots of taxpayers, Coleman isn’t thrilled with the big $700 billion Wall Street bailout plan passed by Congress.

“But I would like the collapse of the global financial system even less,” she says. “The bailout really was essential to stem the tide of losses.”

Giannaros and Coleman agree that “global solutions” are needed as this has become a global economic crisis. These solutions might include greater transparency and greater uniformity, and enforcement of regulations and reporting. Once again, Vitkauskas disagrees, saying that economies around the world are too different.

As he wrote in mid-December 2008, Vitkauskas is looking for a solution closer to home, saying he believes that “the government is going to have to provide funds [for the Big Three automakers], but only after the unions and the automakers have agreed to a major restructuring of the industry.”

Now what?
All three of our experts agree that the current situation is the worst recession the U.S. economy has experienced since the Great Depression. But they do offer reassurance.

“We know how to prevent things from getting worse,” says Giannaros.

Coleman agrees. “We have tools of monetary and fiscal policy that we didn’t have in the 1930s.”

Vitkauskas adds, “What’s driving all this is a lack of confidence.” He believes that restoring confidence in the economy could bring about a fairly rapid recovery.
President’s College Showcase
a ‘Smashing Success’

In early September, the President’s College, a noncredit continuing-education program at the University of Hartford, held its first Showcase, a full day of lectures and discussions featuring many University faculty members.

Held on campus in Dana Hall, the event was followed by a reception at Russell House, the home of President Walter Harrison and his wife, Dianne Harrison, one of the day’s presenters.

Fourteen 50-minute sessions ran concurrently in two adjacent rooms all day. The approximately 100 attendees were faced with a difficult task: deciding which of the sessions, with a wide-ranging list of topics, to attend.

Describing the day as a “smashing success,” University President Emeritus Humphrey Tonkin, director of the President’s College, announced he is already thinking about doing it again on the first Sunday after Labor Day in 2009.

Election Night 2008
Students gather to watch returns during historic race

Hawk Hall’s first-floor lounge filled with well over 100 students who attended an Election Night party sponsored by a variety of campus organizations, including the Campus Activities Team, Brothers and Sisters United, Student Centers and Activities, the Office of Residential Life, and the Freshman Success Center.

In a Regent’s Park residence hall lounge, the University of Hartford chapter of the Roosevelt Institution, a nonpartisan student think tank, sponsored another event that drew dozens more students to watch the returns.

Daron Bishop ’10, who attended the Hawk Hall party, said, “[Obama’s election to the presidency] makes me proud to be an African American. I feel that we took a big step tonight, and we may finally get past the race issue in this country and all be one people.”

Fall Commencement 2008
Former Wesleyan president honored

Douglas Bennet, a former president of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., was the speaker at Fall Commencement on Dec. 7 and also received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. Bennet, who previously held posts as assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs in the Clinton administration and as chief executive officer and president of National Public Radio, encouraged graduates not to fear the current bleak economic situation but to see it as a catalyst for change.

“I urge you to seize the moment. You will change the world,” Bennett said. Both he and President Walter Harrison reassured the graduates, saying that their University of Hartford education will serve them well.

Approximately 175 graduates and their families and friends attended the annual Fall Commencement held in Lincoln Theater. The ceremony celebrates the achievements of students who complete their degree requirements in September or January.

Rogow Lecture Draws Sell-Out Crowd

Lincoln Theater was the site of a passionate lecture delivered to a full house by Azar Nafisi, author of the national bestseller Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books.

Nafisi, whose talk was the September Rogow Distinguished Visiting Lecture, discussed her book, a poignant account of her time in Iran and her efforts to introduce Western literature to her female students—a practice forbidden by religious fundamentalists there.

When introducing Nafisi to the audience, President Walter Harrison called Reading Lolita in Tehran “one of the most moving descriptions of teaching and learning I have ever read.”

In short...

Here are just a few notable achievements by members of the University's faculty and administration.

Susan Coleman, professor of finance at Barney, has been named vice president of research for the U.S. Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship for 2009. The USASBE is the leading nonprofit national organization dedicated to training the next generation of entrepreneurs and supporting the vital entrepreneur sector of the nation's economy.

Ann Courtney, associate professor in ENHP, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to lecture and do research in Limerick, Ireland, during the 2008–09 academic year. Courtney will compare and contrast the ways that educators shape literacy practice in Ireland and the United States.

Andrew Craft, associate professor of chemistry, A&S, has received a grant from the Petroleum Research Fund. The grant provides $65,000 in funds and supports Craft’s continuing research on the use of hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels and the storage of hydrogen in metals. Like Craft’s previous support from the Petroleum Research Fund, the current grant includes funds to support student involvement in the research.

Mari Firkatian, associate professor of history, Hillyer, has published Diplomats and Dreamers: The Stancioff Family in Bulgarian History. Firkatian, who received a Women’s Education and Leadership Fund grant from the University to extend her research on Bulgarian diplomat Nadeja Stancioff, is designing a course that will use the life experiences of the book’s principals to expand student learning about European and world history in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mark George, director of Hartt’s Community Division, has been appointed to the governing board of the Suzuki Association of the Americas. George is serving a three-year term that began in August. The Suzuki Association of the Americas is a nonprofit organization that guides and supports Suzuki education in North, Central, and South America.

Ingrid Russell, A&S professor of computer science, and her students in a spring semester ‘08 class developed prototype software for Literacy Volunteers of Connecticut. The software, called App-Trac, helps to monitor literacy application usage in order to evaluate student needs. The App-Trac software is being made available at http://sourceforge.net/projects/apptrac.


Faculty in CETA have received a $492,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to evaluate the potential economic benefits to electric utilities of distributed photovoltaic systems operated by third-party owners who provide additional power during times of peak demand. The project is to be based on conditions specific to Connecticut to determine these value streams and what is termed the effective load-carrying capacity of an installed and operating photovoltaic system. Barry Lubin, director of cooperative engineering education in CETA, is leading the grant project.

Trio Wins $18,000 in Cash Prizes
van Rooy competition recognizes three Hartt students

The van Rooy Competition for Musical Excellence, now in its ninth year, was held at the University in mid-November. The three prizewinners are all seniors in Hartt’s instrumental performance program.

Erberk Erylimaz, winner of the Grand Prize of $10,000, is from Samsun, Turkey. He studies piano with Oxana Yablonskaya and composition with Stephen Gryc. The $5,000 Second Prize went to Corbin Beisner, who studies piano with Luiz de Moura Castro. He is from Las Vegas, Nev. Nick Statzer, who is a saxophone performance and acoustical engineering and music major, won the $3,000 Third Prize. He studies with Carrie Koffman and hails from Zelienople, Pa.

The van Rooy Competition for Musical Excellence was established in 2000 by Jean-Pierre and Marie-Claire van Rooy. Marie-Claire serves on Hartt’s board of trustees. Jean-Pierre, a former president of Carrier Corporation’s international division and a former president and chairman of Otis Elevator Company, is a regent of the University. In 2008 the van Rooy’s presented the University with a $2 million gift to found the van Rooy Center for Complexity and Conflict Analysis. ■

(L–r) J. P. van Rooy; Marie-Claire van Rooy; laureates Caitlin Eger, Heather Pulkowski, and Michael Linert; Second Prize winner Corbin Beisner; Third Prize winner Nick Statzer; Grand Prize winner Erberk Erylimaz; and Hartt Dean Malcolm Morrison. Photo by Roger Castonguay ’07.
"I'm a teacher and I truly believe education is the beginning of freedom."

That philosophy sent Beth Richards, director of rhetoric and professional writing in the College of Arts and Sciences, to Afghanistan for a month this past summer to teach English to engineering students at Herat University. The students use English-language texts in science, math, and engineering courses.

Several faculty members from Herat University are currently studying at the University of Hartford for master's degrees in engineering. Grants from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank have funded the alliance between the two universities and made the exchange of faculty possible. M. Saleh Keshawarz, associate professor of civil engineering in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA), and his colleagues Hisham Alnajjar and Ivana Milanovic at CETA are the recipients of the grants.

"If there's anything Afghanistan needs, it's civil engineers who can rebuild infrastructure," says Richards. Richards started by creating a new textbook to replace the old ones, which she found inadequate. She also hopes to bring more advanced technology to Herat University when she returns in May 2009. Currently, access to the Internet is very limited, and there are no computers in the classrooms. Those are only two of the many differences between Herat University and American universities. In Afghanistan, men and women sit on opposite sides of the classroom and do not mingle. Women, particularly those studying engineering, stick very close together. But they told Richards they felt free to go anywhere they wanted and that men did not try to stand in the way of their education.

Richards says many of the Afghan men she met "clearly believe women have a place in education, academia, and engineering." But she also knows that a few of her male students were not happy to have a woman teaching their class. Female students, however, "were thrilled to have a female professor."

"Certainly at the university there is progress, and opportunities [exist] for women," Richards points out. "But there need to be more."

Being a woman and an American, Richards says she was the subject of intense curiosity. She often caught people staring at her fair skin and gray hair. Because the life expectancy is less than 45 years in Afghanistan, gray hair is very unusual. In fact, one child even asked her if she came from outer space!

Most people asked her another question: "Why would you ever want to come to Afghanistan?" For Richards, the answer was simple. "It seems to me I've lived a life of intense privilege as a person and as a female," she says. "I couldn't live with myself if I didn't do something to pass that on. I feel that I've gained so much [by coming to Afghanistan]. I worked hard, but I learned so much, met so many wonderful people. It's a whole new dimension of life I never anticipated five years ago."

Editor's note: While at Herat University, Richards wrote about her daily experiences in Afghanistan, both as a professor and as an American woman. To read "Letters from Herat," visit the online journal ePluribusMedia at www.epluribusmedia.org and type "Beth Richards" into the search box.