Determined to Succeed
FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT ARIANA TARPINIAN JUGGLES CLASSES, JOBS, AND LIFE

Like a large percentage of Hartford undergraduates, Ariana Tarpinian ’11 receives some University-sponsored scholarship assistance. She has worked multiple jobs on and off campus and taken significant student loans to help cover the costs.

“It was never a question as to whether or not I would go to college—that was a definite,” says Tarpinian. “A college education is very important to me and to my family, and I was not going to let anything get in my way. My mother is a single parent, and even though things may have been a little tighter financially, my education was very important to the both of us.”

An excellent student, Tarpinian will graduate this spring with a degree in marketing from the Barney School of Business and a minor in rhetoric and professional writing from the College of Arts and Sciences.

“The University of Hartford has given me an incredible education, and although it is a tough economy and the job market is a little rough, I am not concerned. I believe in this University and the education it provides students. I am excited to graduate and to see where the future takes me, and I am confident in myself and my abilities, thanks to my education here at Hartford.”

Her studies and multiple jobs don’t keep Tarpinian from being involved in student activities. She is president of the student chapter of the American Marketing Association, was a student member of the University’s board of regents in 2010, and has held other leadership positions on campus.

Tarpinian has a paid internship to work two full days each week in the strategic marketing department at UnitedHealthcare in Hartford, Conn. She also worked for the company during two summers.

Tarpinian confers with Nels Hihberg, associate professor and chair of the rhetoric and professional writing department. He uses creativity—from wearing a toga to YouTube clips of Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure—to introduce his students to ancient Greek rhetoric.

On campus she has held jobs at the Sports Center, in the Office of Residential Life, and in the Department of Management and Marketing in Barney.

“From the moment I stepped onto this campus, it felt like home. I knew this would be the perfect place for me.”

— ARIANA TARPINIAN ’11
Three young women with a passion for research and learning more about their chosen fields spent last summer working on independent projects with three University of Hartford faculty members. The three—Dana Kephart ’12, Karrie Bordalo ’11, and Brittany Durden ’12—each received a $5,000 scholarship from a pilot program launched by the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund (WELFund) as the first Dorothy Goodwin Scholars.

The scholarships will be awarded each year to women who are second- or third-year students at the University with a 3.0 or above overall GPA and a 3.5 or better GPA in their majors. Candidates propose an original scholarly or creative project to be explored in partnership with a faculty member for a minimum of 10 weeks, 20 hours per week, during the summer.

Kephart is a vocal performance and musical education major in the five-year program at The Hartt School. She chose to research six different female composers from different time periods and study their career success. Kephart worked with Kevin Jones, an adjunct faculty member in the vocal department at Hartt.

“I had an interest in these women composers, and I wanted to find out why some of them were not as well known but did great work,” explains Kephart. “I found out that the women who were successful usually were successful because they had a male influence, someone who was also strongly into music, like a father or a husband. I wanted to show how powerful the women were who were on their own,” says Kephart.

The other two recipients are both in the science field. Bordalo is a health science major who plans to attend the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in the fall. She partnered with Peter Angelastro, assistant professor of biology in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S). Bordalo’s project was a study of chemotaxis, which is the movement of cells based on chemicals in their environment. Chemotaxis is what propels bacteria toward food and sperm toward an egg.

“The [Dorothy Goodwin Scholarship] is a great opportunity. It really gave me an insight into research. I thought it was going to be easy. I discovered the truth that you fail more than you succeed, but it is worth it when you see the end result of all your work,” says Bordalo.

Durden, a biology major, loved the fact that the professor that she was paired up with was so passionate about the project and that the professor’s passion rubbed off on her. That faculty member, Aime Levesque, also is an assistant professor of biology in A&S. In 2009 she received a $125,000 Young Investigator Research Grant from the Breast Cancer Alliance. Durden’s genetics research project has applications to the study of breast cancer.

Dorothy Goodwin, a life regent of the University and a state legislator, died in 2007. She was a longtime trustee of Hartford College for Women and received an honorary doctorate from the University in 1982. Goodwin was known for her commitment to education and inspired many women and girls to exercise their full potential. The Dorothy Goodwin Scholarships were established in her honor.
Alex Schettino ’11, a mechanical engineering major in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, had a larger goal than just getting an A when he created his senior project. The piece of farming equipment that he made, called a thresher, will help farmers in Kenya more efficiently separate seeds from stalks and husks of the amaranth plant, a grain crop grown in the region.

Schettino’s thresher is the latest part of the University’s project to help the people of Kenya’s Lake Region. Students and faculty have made three trips to the country and plan to return this summer. During one of those earlier visits, Bernard den Ouden, a professor of philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences, recognized the need for a thresher. Farmers in Kenya can only farm an acre-and-a-half or two of the four or five acres they own because of the intensity of the labor.

“The thresher is about improving their crop yields and freeing up their time to do other things,” says den Ouden.

Schettino decided to create the thresher after den Ouden spoke to members of the University’s student chapter of Engineers Without Borders. He was further inspired by Clarice Odhiambo, CEO of the Africa Center for Engineering Social Solutions, who has worked with the University of Hartford groups who have gone to Kenya.

“She told me, ‘When you’re walking down to get your diploma, you’re going to know that this thing that you made is going to save hundreds and hundreds of lives,’” Schettino explains. “It was very motivating.”

To create the thresher, Schettino used lessons from his engineering courses, coupled with hands-on trial and error. He began with a design, which he then developed into a three-dimensional model. Schettino engineered the thresher with several requirements in mind: it must be inexpensive and relatively simple to build, and the design must be capable of being adapted by Kenyan farmers to fit their particular needs.

“I used the materials I had at my disposal,” says Schettino. “Once it gets to Kenya, they’ll use the materials at their disposal. I could engineer it for months and give it to the people, and then find out it won’t work the way they need it to. It’s better if I bring the thresher to Kenya, let the villagers try it out, and then make any needed changes.”

Schettino and den Ouden hope the threshers will be replicated in Kenya so that more farmers can own one. They also hope that some residents may even make the threshers in quantities and sell them to make money. Helping the people of Kenya develop microbusinesses is part of the project’s larger goal of developing sustainable solutions to problems residents face.

EDITOR’S NOTE: To watch a video of Alex Schettino demonstrating how the thresher works, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCjiktinyZ6I.
Student Selected for Poetry Tour

For the third year in a row, a University of Hartford undergraduate has been chosen as one of five Connecticut Student Poets.

Tim Pettus, a fourth-year majoring in English/creative writing, was selected from a group of undergraduate student poets from across the state to join the spring 2011 Student Poetry Tour. Each Connecticut college and university nominates a student for consideration in the statewide competition.

The tour, which is sponsored by the Connecticut Poetry Circuit, takes the student poets to colleges and universities across the state to recite their work. In mid-February, Pettus and four other Connecticut Student Poets read from their work in Auerbach Auditorium on campus.

Pettus, who considers himself primarily a fiction writer, says he has only been writing poetry for about two years. Matthew Gilbert '09 was selected in 2008, and John Dudek '10 was chosen last year. Pettus says he plans to go on to graduate school and teach English and creative writing at the high-school or college level.

Hartford Students Rally at State Capitol for Student Aid

Second-year student Mackenzie Manning testifies against proposed cuts to the Connecticut Independent College Student (CICS) grant program at a hearing at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, Conn., in late February. Manning was one of a group of University of Hartford students who joined college students from around the state to rally at the State Capitol and meet with legislators to express their opposition to Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy’s proposed cuts. The CICS program is a need-based financial aid program for Connecticut residents who attend private colleges and universities in the state.

Hartt Student Sings at UN Human Rights Day Observance

When we first met Nelson Ebo ’12 two years ago, he was fresh off his victory in the prestigious Lakes Region Opera Idol competition in New Hampshire. Since then, his strong voice has taken him across the world.

In December, Ebo traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, to perform in the United Nations’ Human Rights Day observance. Event organizers chose Ebo because they were impressed by his talent and his inspiring personal story. Ten years ago, a UN human rights officer discovered Ebo singing in a restaurant in his native Angola, where he was working to support his family during that country’s civil war. That officer helped Ebo secure a scholarship to Carlos III University in Madrid, Spain, and Ebo began a journey that eventually brought him to the University of Hartford.

In January, Ebo attended a master class given by Marcello Giordani, widely hailed as one of the top tenors in opera today. Giordani was so impressed by Ebo that he invited him to perform with him in his “Marcello Giordani & Friends” concert in New Rochelle, N.Y.

“The house was completely packed,” says Ebo. “It was the most people I had ever sung for. But it was amazing. I sang well and everybody liked it.”

In the spring, Ebo will star in a concert presented by the Connecticut Concert Opera. He beat seven other promising young singers to win the group’s “American Opera Idol” competition in the summer of 2010.

Ebo, who studies with Wayne Rivera at The Hartt School, has also performed in various on-campus productions like The Tender Land and scenes from Carmen and Iolanthe.

With several concerts and auditions already planned for 2011, expect to see and hear much more from Ebo.