

# UB Knightlines

## Head of the Class

Four teachers in the United States have been nominated to become the National Teacher of the Year. Alumna Jahana Hayes is one of them.



UNIVERSITY OF  
BRIDGEPORT

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ALSO INSIDE • Heart of the City • Image Making • Space Grant • Got Code?

# President's Line



**Neil Albert Salonen**

The debate over economic opportunity has never been greater. We may disagree about proposed remedies, but it's clear that institutions of higher education play an important role in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to seize opportunity.

Currently, more than 5,400 students are enrolled at UB. As they have for generations, they come determined to work for top employers in fields ranging from technology to health care, education and design. But the employment landscape has changed, too; today's graduates are increasingly determined to start their own businesses. UB is helping them.

As you'll read in this issue, the University recently opened its doors to the Student Entrepreneur Center. Staffed with professionals who've started companies of their own, the Center is open to all students who want practical guidance—and the help is free. We couldn't be prouder of early results. Approximately 50 UB students are now working at the Student Entrepreneur Center, and some have already won awards at Connecticut Startup Weekend and other competitions for ventures involved in fields like green energy and social media.

Yet providing innovative programs is not always enough when students cannot get to college in the first place. Our School of Education has a proven track record of training highly skilled teachers who are successfully helping at-risk and low-income students get to college and pursue bold professional dreams. They include School of Education alumna Jahana Hayes '14, who is one of four finalists in the running to become the 2016 National Teacher of the Year. Hayes's achievements in the classroom are breathtaking to witness, but we must remember that she and other great teachers aren't miracle workers. Educators and students need all of us to join their efforts. Affordability remains a critical issue that should concern every one of us. The University awards at least some financial aid to 98 percent of students, and we're committed to serving deserving students, regardless of their economic circumstances. As you'll read in this issue, UB recently announced two new full scholarships for students who are currently served by the Boys and Girls Club. The scholarships have been donated by an alumna who wished to make a "transformational" gift. I invite you to join her by giving to UB.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Neil Albert Salonen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Neil Albert Salonen  
President

President  
Neil Albert Salonen

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*Knightlines* is published three times a year for University of Bridgeport alumni and friends by the Office of University Relations.

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## Editor's Note

Were you lucky enough to have a teacher make a difference in your life? This issue of *Knighthlines* celebrates School of Education alumni who've distinguished themselves by their ability to connect with students and help them achieve breathtaking success—even when barriers are high.

Take Jim Forde '14, who was honored as a White House Champion of Change for his work in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Education in January. No one talked about STEM education in 1989 when Forde began teaching special-education students at the Astor-Byron School in the Bronx. But Forde was determined to teach the boys and girls under his care about computers and technology. So he hefted an Apple IIe onto a cart and wheeled it into classrooms where youngsters in kindergarten through grade four got their hands on the keyboard. Computers have changed over the years, Forde now teaches in Stamford, Connecticut, but he and his students remain ahead of the STEM curve.

Jahana Hayes '14 may soon be honored at the White House, too. She's among one of four 2016 National Teacher of the Year finalists and the 2016 Connecticut State Teacher of the Year. The first in her family to go to college, Hayes recalls the day she asked a college secretary she didn't know to show her how to complete financial aid forms. Hayes shares this and other stories with students at Kennedy High School in Waterbury, Connecticut, providing living proof that despite obstacles and economic hardship, a college education can be attainable.

In her moving essay, "Resident Alien" (page 46), alumna Roxie Ray '93, '95 remembers being a first-generation college student and one of the few African Americans at her northeastern university. "I could not wait to learn what was outside my known world. But as ready as I thought I was, I was not prepared for what lay ahead," she writes. Ray's journey through higher education was circuitous, reflecting societal and personal transformation. As the director of UB's Learning Resource Center, Ray leverages her teaching expertise with personal experience to guide students who look to her for academic support.

As you read this issue, I invite you to think about the great teachers in your life, and honor them by sharing your knowledge with a student, volunteering, or donating to UB. By pitching in to support the work of teachers who've done so much for us, we can help make a great education attainable for others.



Leslie Geary  
Founding Editor, *Knighthlines*

## Pipelines

### Musings

Dear Editor,

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading your latest edition of *Knighthlines*. "Saving History" (Fall/Winter 2015) was marvelous. I have always wanted to visit Petra. "Honoring Their Service" was very heartfelt for me. I am a graduate of the associate degree program in nursing, Class of 1966. I was unaware of the loss of '66 and '68 graduates of UB in Vietnam. Remembering them is essential.

Thank you for your wonderful work.

**Zelda Shuster '66**

Jersey City, NJ

Dear Editor,

Since I left UB in June 2014, I have been missing my UB family. I was so excited to receive the latest issue of *Knighthlines*! I realized that I had a connection with the individuals featured in almost every story: "Tough Mudder," written by Larry Orman; the feature articles ("Saving History," "Summer Break"), featuring two CPIA students whom I know personally; and "Stranger in a Strange Land," the article by College of Chiropractic professor Dr. Stephen Perle (my husband is graduating from the chiropractic program in December).

Yes, I do miss my UB family; the issue made me take out the checkbook and make a donation. UB is a wonderful, special place, and I am grateful for having had the opportunity to not only serve in its mission, but to be a student as well.

**Kristine LeBlanc '15**

Bangor, ME

Dear Editor,

I was happy to read about the preservation of Cortright Hall in the Fall/Winter *Knightlines* (“Introducing . . .”).

I have pleasant memories of my graduate work at UB (1973-1975), where I studied voice in the top of the ‘tower’ with Zelda Manacher. While at UB, I performed in my first professional opera, *Die Fledermaus*, at the New Haven Opera, and won a doctoral fellowship at Ball State University the following year.

I will sing in the chorus of *Carmen* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City next spring, my 93rd production with them.

Thanks, UB, for giving me such a great start in the opera world!

**Thomas Garrison '75**  
Kansas City, MO

## Saluting UB Veterans

Dear Editor,

After reading *Knightlines* this week, I wanted to thank alumnus John Buckman '68 for organizing the Vietnam AGP brothers' Memorial Plaque at Veteran's Park on University Avenue (“Honoring Their Service,” Fall/Winter 2015).

I knew John Corr '66 very well at UB. Besides being an outstanding UB quarterback and humble, he was one of the nicest guys I have ever known!

As a former UB soccer player and runner, I remember coming back to the University for the Fall Sports Banquet in 1968 and hearing the sad news that John had been killed in Vietnam.

He and the other four AGP brothers who gave their lives in Vietnam will be remembered.

**R. Brent Smith '64**  
LT, USCG, active duty 1964-1969  
Huntsville, AL

## One Student at a Time

Dear Editor,

In October, I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the University of Bridgeport's Welcome Back Weekend. I attended several events and also volunteered to help with registration. There, I got a chance to hear the stories of so many interesting alumni who shared the road they had traveled in their life after attending UB. It was inspiring to learn how their UB education led them to operate more effectively and successfully in the world.

The experience prompted me think about the many students I have met at UB. One was a student from Syria and shared about the war raging in his home country and how three of his best friends had been killed that day. I listened quietly as he spoke, and finally suggested that one way he could vindicate their deaths was to become a leader and share a vision of how people can work together democratically. He had learned as a UB global family member how people can peacefully coexist. We discussed how he could begin that process using Facebook here, and as he walked away I knew he was thinking very seriously about how to put his plan into action.

This story was not an isolated incident. Many times I have realized the power of a UB education to give hope and understanding to our students.

**Betsy Orman '10, '14**  
Milford, CT

## John Rassias

Dear Editor,

John Rassias was my teacher and mentor in the late '50s and early '60s at UB. At that time, he was a French professor. Because I had a background and a proficiency in the French language, he suggested I major in the language, which I did. He had great

enthusiasm as an instructor and his classes were full of energy and fun. He possessed enormous charisma and was universally liked and admired by students and faculty. He was accessible to students and I never observed him being impatient or in a bad mood—such a positive attitude always. I happened to be in his office when he received his initial call from Dartmouth offering him a position in their language department. He was taken aback at the offer, and soon thereafter accepted.

After graduating, I entered the Peace Corps and subsequently married. Over the years, I occasionally I caught sight of him on TV or in the newspapers. It was not surprising that he became a celebrity. John Rassias was unique. I feel honored to have known him.

**Anne LaBarre O'Connor '61**  
Carrollton, TX

*Ed. Note: Alumnus and UB professor emeritus John Rassias '50 passed away on December 2, 2015. He developed an immersive approach to teaching foreign languages, known as the Rassias Method, which has been used by the Peace Corps and teachers around the world.*

## What do you think?!

*Knightlines* would love to hear from you!

Please send Letters to the Editor to [knightlines@bridgeport.edu](mailto:knightlines@bridgeport.edu) or at Knightlines, Cortright Hall, University of Bridgeport, 219 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604.

Please be sure to include your full name, contact information, and UB class year (if applicable).

Letters may be edited for length, clarity, style, or accuracy.



Bridgeport finds its voice at the city's hottest new venue: a story slam created by UB student Sam Orman.



1



# of the City

By Leslie Geary

It's the first Monday of the month, and for those in the know, that means it's time for Heart of the City, a live storytelling series that on this night draws approximately 300 individuals to a funky workspace in downtown Bridgeport. Over the next hour, people will tell stories based on a given theme (tonight's: Mortifying Memories).

Matthew Sulzicki steps up to the mic. "I was a lunch lady," he says, diving right in, "and I'm here to tell you what it's like to be a lunch lady."

Sulzicki ticks off the facts: His mom made him earn money for college. Jobs were scarce. So he went to work at the only place that was hiring: the local high school where he struggled to maintain his dignity while serving up fried foods to fellow teenagers.

"But I took the hat over the hairnet," Sulzicki boasts. "I had a choice!"

The crowd roars at the punchline. Sulzicki grins. For a guy who says his day job "does not include storytelling or anything creative," he nailed it.

For thousands of years, individuals like Sulzicki have told stories for a variety of reasons: to explain the universe, impart wisdom, celebrate heroes, honor the gods, entertain. No matter the epoch, the culture, the purpose, or the venue—Greek amphitheater, campfire, pub—simple, old-fashioned storytelling has a pull that's timeless. In New York, Los Angeles, and other big cities where there's no shortage of entertainment options, storytelling slams like The Moth or the National Storytelling Festival currently attract thousands of fans.

Now, thanks to UB undergraduate student Sam Orman, Bridgeport has storytelling, too.

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“In order to change the perception of the city, we need to start speaking differently.”

—Sam Orman '16

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4



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1. Videographer Maya Oren picked up a mic to share her story at Heart of the City (HOTC) in October. 2. Open to all, HOTC kids stepped up to tell stories, too. 3. HOTC founder and UB student Sam Orman '16 encouraged live music. 4. Amateur storyteller Scott Davis was one of dozens who took to the mic. 5. and 6. Donations and a grant made HOTC events possible at the B:Hive, where bikes and lights create its in-the-moment vibe. 7. B:Hive owners Marcella Kovac and her husband Luke Scott listen in. 8. Mary-Jane Foster, UB vice president of university relations and storyteller 9. Storytelling and ... dancing! 10. July's storytellers shared “Fireworks! Stories of Triumph and Celebration,” complete with sparklers. 11. Lena Ruth Yasutake read a “Love Letter to the City” at the inaugural HOTC event.



### “Powerful, hip, creative”

Connecticut’s most populous city, in fact, inspired Orman to launch the storytelling program. As a UB student, Orman said he was surprised to discover that Bridgeport “is a powerful, hip, creative place.” He wanted to help it shake its chronically down-and-out reputation.

His idea: give Bridgeport an open mic.

“In order to change the perception of the city, we need to start speaking differently,” says Orman. “It’s about creating a space where people can express themselves and listen to each other—be a community together.”

Fittingly, Heart of the City is a thoroughly grassroots affair. When looking for a place to host the series, Orman zeroed in on the B:Hive, a shared office cooperative in the middle of downtown Bridgeport.

Nestled amid cafés, restaurants, and the Bijou Theatre, the B:Hive has a powerful of-the-moment Instagram vibe (glittery lights strewn on exposed piping, kitschy flea-market art, communal couches for lounging, and locally sourced antiques). It is, in fact, the perfect living room in which to share stories.

When Orman proposed Heart of the City to B:Hive manager Becca Bryan, she loved the idea. Inspired by similar programs, they decided to establish loose themes for the monthly events (“From Scratch: When Passion Leads to Business”; “Fireworks: Stories of Triumph and Celebration”; “Friendsgiving”). But neither Bryan nor Orman had any idea how popular the series would become.

“We thought it’d be a small, cozy event that would be pretty limited in terms of how many people would come,” says Bryan.

When they took the idea to B:hive founder Marcella Hawk “she was the one who said, ‘Make it bigger. Let’s have it be impactful. Let’s do it every month; let it be open to anyone who wants to experience anything unique,’” says Bryan.

Turned out that plenty of people were hungry for something different.

### Stories for all

Since its launch in May 2015, the monthly events have grown to approximately 300 attendees. And it’s not just would-be artists or hipsters who show up: storytellers have included retirees, a local preacher, a candle maker, a bookkeeper, Gen-Xers, hippies, musicians, techies, entrepreneurs, foodies, University of Bridgeporters, middle school students, and community organizers.

Yet this diverse group shares a common bond: “Most of the storytellers have a Bridgeport connection,” says Orman.

Orman and Bryan credit the community for making Heart of the City come to life. There is no cover charge for storytelling events—though donations are gladly accepted in a small cup next to the dessert table. A grant from local sources provided \$4,500 to cover much of the operational costs for the 2015 season. Area businesses like Two Boots Pizza, Bijou Wine, and Leisha’s Bakeria contribute much of the food and drink that give the storytelling nights a partylike atmosphere.

Bryan and Orman are now seeking funding for the 2016 season.

At the same time, Heart of the City has quickly become an important player in supporting other Bridgeport institutions. December’s storytelling session (theme: “If I Were 25”), for instance, kicks off with Bryan making a plug for the Black Rock Farmers Market. During the summer, the market provides a convenient place in the city’s Black Rock neighborhood for residents to buy local produce, baked goods, hand-crafted jewelry, or even take a free yoga workshop.

Market cofounder Karyn Leito has been to plenty of Heart of the City events, but tonight she’s in the audience because her 12-year-old son Rocco is about to take the mic and tell everyone what life will be like when he’s 25.

“When I started the market I had the same feeling as Sam: the dialogue needs to change about Bridgeport. There are so many wonderful, creative people within the city. Events like Heart of the City highlight that, and they build community,” says Leito. “It’s about getting off the computer, gathering around the campfire, meeting people, and making human connections—that’s something you can’t put a price tag on.” ■







# Erin LaFavor's Entrepreneurial Journey



By Jackie Hennessey

Erin LaFavor was ten when she started customizing her own scrunchies and making bracelets, threading the tiniest beads onto row after row of safety pins. She and her best friend would roll a wagon full of their handmade creations and set up shop outside the village store in Cos Cob. “They were so nice at the store. They’d say, ‘What do we have today, girls?’ ”

“I was always making things and selling them,” LaFavor said. “I’ve always had an entrepreneurial spirit.”

Her artist’s eye was taking things in—especially outside in nature. Images would become an idea, and then, a creation.

That’s how it still is for LaFavor, owner of Foosie Design LLC, a “homegrown art to life design studio,” specializing in home décor, textiles, custom stationary, and human-centered Web design.

She’s also a student in Shintaro Akatsu School of Design’s (SASD) Master of Professional Studies in Design Management program.

One day, LaFavor might be struck by the soft blue of an afternoon sky or, if she happens to be in Manhattan, by the art deco stylings of the Chrysler Building, or when at home in Milford, Connecticut, by the dozens of songbirds darting in and out of the snowy brush in the sprawling marshland that fringes her backyard. “The birds out back right now—they’re amazing,” she said.

She'll take a photo or just tuck the moment away until she gets to her studio in the home she shares with her husband, Brandon LaFavor, UB's overseas study coordinator, and their four-year-old daughter, Jillian.

Abundant light spills in from many windows and a skylight onto her inspiration wall where she's strung sketches, paintings, wallpaper patterns, and one of her daughter's watercolors along a thin strand of cord. "I'll go to the computer, open Illustrator, and just start playing around, creating a pattern or putting together a certain block of type, and then it all morphs from there," she said. "I love it when an idea starts to take shape." Soon: the glimmerings of a new design or collection.

Her designs have long captured the attention and affection of Etsy shoppers and the press. Foosie Design was named to the annual "Best Locally Made" list by *Serendipity* magazine, featuring artisans from the around the region; her wallpaper was part of *People Magazine's* 2015 Celebrity Baby Nursery feature, and her designs have been chosen for the Etsy Wedding's "Weekly Picks for Tying the Knot."

When she's creating a website or developing branding for, most typically, a health- or wellness-related company, natural-food business, or a non-profit, LaFavor begins another way—by listening. "I spend a lot of time listening to my clients talk about their business or their project and about the people who will be using their product or their services," she said. "I listen for a feeling." She builds images and text from that.

This human-centered approach is something she has always instinctively used. "But [SASD professor] Alex White and the UB Design Management Program helped me to really focus on it and to give me strategies to create in that way," LaFavor said. "To functionally solve your client's design or business problems, you have to be empathetic to both your client and the end user. When it comes to a branding project or anything containing imagery, I try to tap into visuals that represent how their clients will feel after using their services."

One of the best lessons in this came in the Collaborative Design Studio course, she said. LaFavor and a small team of classmates worked with the staff of the Bridgeport YMCA as their clients to help them build their volunteer base and, ultimately, to reach more people. "They really needed volunteers," LaFavor said. So she tapped into the resources on campus, inviting YMCA staff to attend campus volunteer fairs. She also talked with Steve Hess, the UB Peace Corps Prep

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campus coordinator, and he developed an internship program with the Y. “The YMCA board was incredibly enthusiastic about our ideas,” she said. “It felt pretty great to know that we served them as well as we did.”

LaFavor is drawn to so much about the Design Management Program—the blend of design and business courses, the learning and networking opportunities that occur because so many design professionals come to speak in her classes, and the collaborative projects that center on doing good. “I think all of us in the program want to use design thinking to find solutions, to in some way make the world a better place,” she said. “I like that.”

The courses have also crystallized just how vital a human-centered approach is when she’s dealing with her clients on Etsy.com. “I typically work with brides and new homebuyers who are looking to identify their style and taste through my designs, while inviting me into some of the most important moments of their lives,” she said. “I always keep this in mind when I’m working on new pattern and textile designs for my wallpaper or imagery for my throw pillows.”

While Foosie has its roots “back to when I was selling homemade bracelets,” LaFavor’s career journey first took her to TracyLocke, a leading marketing communications company in Wilton, Connecticut, where she was an art director, working on national accounts like Pepsi Cola, Grand Marnier, and Starbucks. It was heady business for someone just 22 and fresh out of Keene State College with a degree in graphic design. “I loved the energy there. The people were great,” she said. “But it just wasn’t the right fit for me for the long term.”



When a friend asked her to design her wedding invitation, she discovered that she “loved everything about it.” She moved on to Kate’s Paperie in Greenwich where, as the design coordinator, she worked with brides on wedding invitations and with the printers, engravers, and other designers in the field, particularly with printers from Real Card Studio, a wholesale letterpress stationery company in Seattle. “I got to know the whole backend of the business,” she said. “I asked so many questions. I wanted to know everything.”

After a few years, she decided it was time to venture somewhere new and chose Seattle. She inquired about a job at Real Card Studio but when there wasn’t one; she moved out anyway. She stopped by to say hello and was hired within weeks. She enjoyed creating high-end wedding and event materials, and might have stayed at that job for a very long time, when she met Brandon LaFavor at a Dave Matthews concert. (“We’re both huge music fans.”) For a while they commuted back and forth from Seattle to Eugene, Oregon, where he lived. But when he asked her to marry him, she decided to move to Oregon and launch the business she’d always hoped to start.

To prepare, she designed an entire wedding, baby, and holiday stationery collection and, with that, started her firm, calling it Foosie. “It’s what my family in Ireland called dessert,” she said. She liked the whimsy that lived in the word. “I thought it would be a great way to keep what I offered my clients fun while adding a personal touch,” she said.

“It was 2008; the economy was shaky, and people said, ‘You’re crazy to start your own business,’” she

said. But, she smiled, “I didn’t listen.” Around that time, Etsy, the e-commerce site where artisans set up their own shops and sell their products to customers online, was taking hold. “I said, ‘That’s it. That’s my outlet.’ I had been thinking I’d do the traditional wholesale retail setup but this was an opportunity to work directly with clients.”

Her business took off and grew, expanding to include a full-service graphic design boutique. When Brandon had the opportunity to take the position at UB, they decided to move to Connecticut.

She loves the flexibility her job gives her, with time to focus on work and on family, to pursue her graduate degree, and to travel with Brandon and her daughter, accompanying him on some University trips to places far-flung. There’s also a lot of nearby travel. Her extended family lives in Connecticut, and the beach and the park are just a walk away from their home. Invariably, when they go for a wander, she returns with all kinds of design ideas.

LaFavor is excited about the possibilities yet to unfold with her business. “The two avenues I’d love to further explore are licensing my artwork and textile designs to an already established manufacturer or potentially partnering up with an angel investor to produce higher volumes of my wallpaper and throw pillows for wholesale distribution,” she said. “With both of my little ones being of school age in the next five years, I feel like these are very attainable goals. The Design Management Program has definitely given me the tools and guidance to make a pointed road map to get me there.” ■



# Head of the class

It's been a whirlwind at the School of Education, where two alumni are making national news. Jahana Hayes '14 is one of four finalists for this year's National Teacher of the Year Award. Jim Forde '14 is honored at the White House as a Champion of Change.



**There are only four National Teacher of the Year finalists. School of Education alumna Jahana Hayes '14 is one them.**

# America's Best Teacher

**By Leslie Geary**

Jahana Hayes still remembers them: The third-grade teacher who baked her a birthday cake. The teachers who gave her books to take home. The teacher in the blue floral dress who commented that no one in her family worried about Hayes because no one had taken the time to attend Parent-Teacher Night.

“We used to put all of our work in a folder for parents to see. They were left on the desks. Our parents were expected to take the folder,” said Hayes, recounting the exchange at a ceremony where she was named Connecticut’s 2016 Teacher of the Year. “My grandmother didn’t drive, and there were no late buses in our neighborhood, so my folder was always left on my desk. I tried to be the first one in class so I could remove the folder before anyone noticed. I remember overhearing my teacher telling another teacher in the hallway, ‘Their parents don’t care, and no one ever comes to inquire about those students.’ I knew exactly what she meant, and in spite of everything that has happened in my life, and all the amazing interactions I have had with teachers, I remember the razor-sharpness of that comment.”

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Yet all of those teachers inspired Hayes to pursue a career in education. She earned her Certificate of Advanced Study at the University of Bridgeport's School of Education in 2014, and now teaches history at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, Connecticut.

Then the unexpected happened.

In November, Hayes was named State of Connecticut Teacher of the Year. Two months later, she was selected as one of four finalists to become the 2016 National Teacher of the Year.

### **A girl from Waterbury**

If she is tapped as America's Best Teacher (the winner will be announced in April), Hayes will be recognized at a White House ceremony by President Obama. She'll also spend a year crisscrossing the United States to advocate on behalf of educators and students.

She'll be more than prepared. Long before she was named Connecticut Teacher of the Year or a National Teacher of the Year finalist, Hayes fought for in-need students who don't allow themselves to dream of something bigger. She fights for them because she's

one of them: a girl who grew up in Waterbury, went to its schools ("Chase, Wallis Middle, Crosby High," she says with pride), and stayed to teach and raise her own family.

To an outsider, Waterbury's statistics—the 24 percent of households living below poverty level, the nearly 80 percent of adults without a college degree, a 14 percent unemployment rate—may add up to a simple sketch of urban poverty. But to Hayes, those statistics paint a far more vivid and complicated reality.

Her family was poor, but they loved her fiercely and without question. She wanted to go to college, but none of her relatives had ever been. Even if they had the money for tuition, their instinct was to protect her. So they counseled Hayes to hew to safety, embrace the familiar.

"At the time I told my grandmother, 'I want to go to college,' I was working," said Hayes. "It was a pretty good job. She said, 'Why would you want to leave your job? Why would you want to risk that?'"

Without direction from home, Hayes sought out help from teachers, strangers—anyone who could





unravel the mysteries of higher ed. A secretary at a local college helped her fill out financial aid forms because, she said, “I didn’t know how.”

Yet, Hayes hastened to add, “I think the only way I am the teacher I am is because I work in this district, and I share my experiences with my students.”

She also insists on sharing her experiences with fellow teachers. When she gave her Connecticut Teacher of the Year acceptance speech on November 10, Hayes announced that she would deliver her remarks “from the perspective of a student.”

After talking about teachers who encouraged her and the humiliation of Parent-Teacher Nights, Hayes turned to the educators, administrators, and other experts who filled the Bushnell Theater in Hartford. “How,” she asked, “will your students remember *you*?”

“Jahana was always looking for ways to ensure that every one of her students could be successful. She was looking for ways to get parents involved who really were not yet involved. She was always trying to find the path so every student could achieve the success she had,” said UB School of Education professor Gail Perilli, who

taught Hayes in her Educational Leadership class. “She wanted equality for all students. It was about breaking through the economic divide.”

#### All about the students

Kennedy High School student Lynadia Whiting, 17, has known Hayes for four years, but lately she’s been spending more time with her. Whiting’s dilemma: she’s been accepted to ten colleges, and has whittled her final decision to two out-of-state universities. But it’s hard to pick. “Sometimes,” said Whiting, “you don’t feel like you’re getting the guidance you should be.”

So she talks to Mrs. Hayes. “She’s been where we’ve been. She grew up in Waterbury. She’s had her struggles, and she can relate to us, so she has more experience helping kids. Even if you’re not in her actual class, you see her in the hallway, talking. ‘Hey, how are you? I’m Mrs. Hayes.’ She makes it her job to guide everyone,” Whiting said.

Kennedy High School sophomore Syrenitee Kee echoes the sentiment: “The way she encourages her students to be the best—she really cares. It’s so amazing that she won.”

*(continued on page 16)*

**Kennedy High School senior Lynadia Whiting gives her teacher Jahana Hayes an apple at pep rally held when Hayes became Connecticut Teacher of the Year. “She can relate to us,” said Whiting.**

Hayes is quick to say that *she* didn't win Connecticut's Teacher of the Year Award or the national finalist nomination; the prizes reflect a *group* effort. "If it were about me, I wouldn't be doing it," she said. When a photographer arrives at Kennedy High, Hayes immediately darts out of the classroom to round up students to be in the photograph.

"You'll never hear her say 'I,'" said Hayes's friend and Kennedy High teacher Cassandra Fann-Pierce. "With Jahana, it's always 'we.'"

Fann-Pierce wasn't going to let Hayes scoot out of the room when Hayes was nominated to become Connecticut Teacher of the Year. Instead, she organized a pep rally. Everyone in the school had a hand in planning the big event—and keeping it a secret from Hayes. They made dozens of Jahana masks. Hid them in Fann-Pierce's classroom. Ordered up bright yellow Kennedy High School T-shirts. Bought flowers. Invited the mayor. On the day of the rally, the auditorium thrummed with cheers. Caught off-guard, an emotional Hayes pressed her hand over her mouth and fought back tears.

"She knew something was up because she wasn't allowed in my classroom, but she didn't know what it was," said a delighted Fann-Pierce. "We got her!"

### Do unto others

In her application to become the National Teacher of the Year, Hayes cited her determination to pass on her teachers' gifts to her by promoting a culture of service at Kennedy High and the larger Waterbury community.

"It is of no benefit to anyone if a student achieves high grades and tremendous academic success if they have no desire or knowledge of how to help others," she wrote to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which runs the National Teacher of the Year program.

"Excellent teachers have an impact on students that extends beyond classroom walls," agreed CCSSO Executive Director Chris Minnich. "They work to ensure every child receives a quality education that will set them on a course for success after graduation. These professionals are educators, engaged citizens, and role models. [They] meet young people where they are, and help to guide them, enrich their lives, and build character."

Once again, Hayes adjusts the lens ever so slightly to view the value of service from the perspective of a student who has only a few resources. "When you're



**Hayes's belief in her students has engendered their loyalty and respect.**

**Next page, top: Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, one of many who congratulated Hayes when she became Connecticut Teacher of the Year, prompting Kennedy High School to throw a massive surprise pep rally.**

always on the receiving end, when you can't make million-dollar donations, it's easy to feel like you have nothing to give," said Hayes. "But with service, *everyone* is equal. The person who benefits is *you*."

Five years ago, Hayes invited students to participate in a local porch clean-up—an "organic" approach to service learning, she said. She was delighted when 50 students showed up to pick up litter in local parks, paint porches, and plant. Now she's teamed up with Fann-Pierce, who started HOPE—Helping Out People Everywhere. It's a student-service club that continues to grow in number and scope. Recently, students have raised over \$23,000 ("Yes, \$23,000," Fann-Pierce confirms) at annual Relay for Life Rallies and have held fundraisers to travel to New Orleans and Charleston to restore homes for Habitat for Humanity.



Photos of the trips are prominently displayed outside of Fann-Pierce's office, and on a late February afternoon, she and Hayes stop to look at them. They've just finished a meeting with the club to discuss upcoming events. It had been a productive session, and there's a possibility that a new transfer student may join the club. He had been amazed to hear that on one Habitat trip, Hayes had crawled under a dilapidated porch, slid right into the dark, cramped space, and shored it up with wood blocks she'd painstakingly measured to fit just so.

"And there were snakes down there!" Fann-Pierce interjected

"Snakes?!" the boy asked. "Why would you do that? They could bite!"

Hayes smiles her broad, easy smile. "If I told you to do something I wasn't willing to do myself," she replied, "what would you think?"

Nope. That's not her style. Snake or no snake, she'll pick up a hammer, dive under the porch, and lead the way. ■



Together, HOPE club founder Cassandra Fann-Pierce and Jahana Hayes have shown Kennedy High students they have valuable gifts to contribute by participating in outreach campaigns like Habitat for Humanity. Photos of Habitat trips are prominently displayed outside of Fann-Pierce's office.

# Champion of Change

**Alumnus Jim Forde '14 is honored at the White House for his work in STEM education.**

**By Leslie Geary**

Back in the seventies when he was a kid, Jim Forde's home was a happy clutter of batteries, Radio Shack catalogs, cathode ray tubes, and bits of hardware that he and his father turned into homemade radios and other contraptions.

"My dad loved electronics, he was a tinker and he turned me into one," says Forde, who remembers building a Heathkit television set. "That's old school, but Baby Boomers will remember them."

It may be old school, but those childhood projects hard-wired Forde to become an innovative and charismatic leader in STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Math) education.

Forde's childhood home? Today, it would most likely be called a "maker space," those hands-on workshops brimming with electronics, 3-D printers, and other bits of equipment that schools across the country are adding to their campuses in a nationwide surge in STEM education. Though he didn't think about it much, Forde has always been ahead of the STEM curve. As far as he was concerned, "I was always gadget-y," he says.

When he enrolled at Manhattan College as an undergraduate, for instance, Forde was the guy who fiddled around with Apple II's in the computer lab. "The professors weren't comfortable using them, so I was hired to do remedial work with students."



Over the arc of his career, as a new teacher and later, earning a graduate degree at UB's School of Education, Forde leapt at the chance to use the latest technology: floppy discs ("What a nightmare! If you bent them you lost everything!"); dial-up Internet ("Expensive, and we didn't have much of a budget; I had to work fast."); laser printers. At the same time, Forde continued to share his knowledge with students and fellow educators. He's even attracted a following of STEM teachers who heed his advice on Twitter.

On January 26, Forde—the boy who grew up fiddling with electronics and building machines—was named a White House Champion of Change for Computer Science Learning.

The Champion of Change program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities.

Forde and other Champions of Change for Computer Science Learning winners were selected by the White House for their leadership and innovation in expanding access to computer-science education and for inspiring the next generation to use 21st-century tools.

Those who know Forde say the White House honor is well deserved.

"Jim's an amazing person and an amazing teacher," said UB School of Education Leadership Program Director Ethan Margolis. "I had him for numerous classes. He was an active participant, and in some instances took over class to share activities, national trends, his own knowledge about science education, and what it should look like. He is nationally recognized for his computer work and his STEM work. And he made a conscious decision to lead from the classroom instead of becoming an administrator. He is totally committed to students."

Forde began teaching science in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1991, and started a student computer club, Hyper Card, the following year. To connect to the Internet, Forde ran a 50-foot phone line from a school computer to a telephone in the teacher's lounge. As an added precaution, he propped up a sign, "Please don't pick up phone," so the computer wouldn't disconnect when students went online.

*(continued on page 20)*



“This was before the World Wide Web was available, but the software allowed the kids to create hyperlinking programs. The concept of connecting content in a weblike manner was so exciting, and the potential was so obvious to the kids and me, even at that point, we had a gas,” said Forde.

In 1995, he was named Stamford, Connecticut’s District Teacher of the Year. In 2013, he earned a Certificate of Advanced Study, or Six-Year Degree, at UB, paving the way for him to become a principal.

Yet Forde has no immediate plans to leave his classroom at Cloonan Middle School, where he currently teaches seventh-grade science.

“I missed the classroom greatly when I was an administrator for two years,” he says. “I’d try again, but I’d rather be in the schools where I can be close to where kids are learning and teachers are delivering curriculum so I can help.”

Today, Forde sponsors the Computer Coding Club and a 3-D printing club at Cloonan School. Always eager to share information, Forde said: “We use a free coding program for kids developed by MIT. You might want to put that in the article for parents to know about. It’s [www.scratch.mit.edu](http://www.scratch.mit.edu).”

He has also served as the district’s STEM professional, in charge of developing STEM curricula, planning of a citywide STEM festival, providing STEM professional development, and promoting STEM education. That roll as Stamford’s Gadget-y Guy in Chief enabled him to work with district teachers “whose great ideas were too valuable to lose,” Forde added. Forde solved the problem by creating @stemnetwork, a Twitter feed where teachers could easily share ideas and resources about STEM education.

Today, @stemnetwork has more than 3,000 followers, including STEM teachers and organizations like Amy Poehler’s Smart Girls Build, Latinas in STEM, and Black Girls Code.

“It kind of took on a life of its own,” said Forde, who didn’t miss an opportunity to Tweet updates from the White House Champion of Change awards program in January. ■



# Roll Call 2016!

It’s starting off as a great year for School of Education alumni. In addition to being named Teacher of the Year at schools across Connecticut, alumni were selected as their 2016 District Teacher of the Year. They include:

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**Aaron Jon Bunel ’06**

Thomaston School District

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**Christina Rose Flaherty ’06**

Regional School District # 10

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**Jahana Hayes ’14**

Waterbury School District

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**Leah Tarnowicz ’09**

Hartford School District

## News Lines

# Prayer Vigil

**UB Chaplain and area religious leaders warn against bigotry.**

Amid the din of terror, intolerance, and violence, UB Interfaith Chaplain Sara D. Smith joined religious leaders from Greater Bridgeport on December 22 to call for peace.

Despite a torrential downpour, approximately 100 Christians, Jews, and Muslims gathered under umbrellas at an outdoor interfaith service held in downtown Bridgeport to pray for cooperation, respect and peace among people of all faiths.

“I want you to hear my outcry as a religious leader—and frankly my embarrassment and sorrow—for all the misguided prejudice and vitriolic words toward our Muslim brothers and sisters. Those who condemn all Muslims, those who do not take the time to distinguish between faithful people and terrorists—they do not speak for my faith; they do not speak for me, and I cannot stand silently by and let people assume they do,” said Reverend Smith in the final speech of the day.

Prayers were led in English, Creole, Spanish, Hebrew, and Arabic.

Rev. Smith was joined by 11 other leaders, including Rabbi James Prosnit, of Congregation B’nai Israel; Imam Musa Abdul-Ali, from Al-Aziz Islamic Center; Rev. Anthony Bennet from Mt. Aery Baptist Church; Rabbi Amy Levin, of Congregation Rodeph Sholom; Dr. Ahmed Ebrahim and Rachid Chughatta, from Bridgeport Islamic Community Center; Fanel Merville, of St. John’s Episcopal Church; Rev. Alida Ward, from Greenfield Hill Congregational Church; Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport Bishop Frank Caggiano, Rev. Aaron Best, from St. Matthew Church; and Interdenominational Ministers Alliance Bishop Theodore Plummer. ■ – L.G





# Model UN's Massive Win

**UB team sweeps top four awards in the Czech Republic.**

The most artful diplomacy results in thoughtful victories, not bloody conquests.

With that in mind, members of UB's Model United Nations Team have promising futures, judging by their stunning victory sweep at the National Model United Nations Europe Conference held in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Their art of diplomacy put them ahead of more than 50 teams from 30 universities.

Student delegates Simon Alejandro Arias, Khrystian Pereira, Bianca Diaz, and Youssef Agiez emerged at the head of the crowded field to win every top award, including the Outstanding Delegates Award, the Outstanding Position Paper Award, and the Outstanding Delegation Award.

The team was also "surprised to receive an award for 'Good Citizenship' based upon our additional service and volunteering at the conference," said team adviser Dr. Steve Hess, an assistant professor of political science at UB's College of Public and International Affairs.

The UB team represented the Czech Republic in the General Assembly Plenary and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), submitting position papers on topics ranging from



"International Cooperation Against Terrorism" to "The Protection of UNESCO Sites in Conflict Zones."

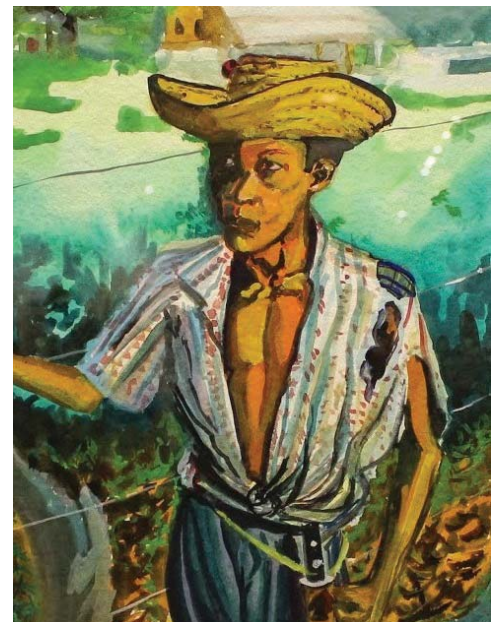
The team's stunning performance marked another important highlight: the tenth anniversary since the Model UN club was founded at UB. ■ – L.G

**From left: Khrystian Pereira, Bianca Diaz, CPIA professor Dr. Stephen Hess, Simon Arias, Youssef Agiez with some of their prizes at the Model UN competition**



**Going up! The University's newest residence hall is on track to open in 2016. When complete, the 60,000 square-foot, four-story building will house 220 students.**

**"Jibaro" by Ramon Peralta '93 from the UB Alumni Art Show, on view at the Shelfhaudt Gallery, Arnold Bernhard Center, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays through April 9.**



## News Lines

# By Its Cover . . .

SASD design majors on view at book fair.

**Excellence by design:**  
SASD graphic design majors and professors Karl Heine and Emily Larned (far right) put their books on view in December.



Students from UB's Shintaro Akatsu School of Design (SASD), along with leading artists and art book makers, invited the public to judge their books by their covers at a unique exhibition held at the Yale University Art Gallery in December.

The show, "Odds and Ends," showcased books by ten student graphic design majors from SASD; small independent publishers who focus on art, architecture, photography, and design; rare and limited-edition books; and 'zines printed in short runs.

"We were really excited to give students an opportunity to develop their own ideas from scratch, and share them in a broadened context," said Emily Larned, chairperson of the Graphic Design Program at SASD.

"Many students were in control of every aspect of production of their books, and they learned a lot from those processes. And now to be part of this really dynamic, exciting event where their work is attracting a lot of interest—it really gives them confidence in their abilities. [SASD professor] Karl Heine and I are very proud."

SASD students produced an astonishing range and diversity of books.

YoungHee Do, a senior graphic design major at SASD, hand silkscreened images and printed copy using a letterpress to produce a traditional Korean fairy tale about *dokkaebi*, or spirits. Her old-fashioned printing techniques reflected the story's longevity, which Do said has been told and retold for generations.

"These creatures love mischief and playing mean tricks on bad people. They also reward good people with wealth and blessings," she added.

Student Erin McNally took a more contemporary approach, utilizing computer-generated digital pictures, each slightly different than the other, to create a flipbook animation of a cat trying to get into a goldfish bowl.

SASD student T.J. Sallah wanted to pay tribute to Connecticut, so he created "a consumable book" of high-quality art postcards—which he said he hoped people would use—illustrated with vintage drawings of sea life from Long Island Sound.

"A book can be utilitarian," said Sallah, underscoring both the beauty and functionality of nature and art.

■ — L.G



# Space Grant

Students win Connecticut Space Grant Awards to launch robotic monkey 100,000 feet above earth.



A University team working to send a robotic monkey 100,000 feet into space moved closer to liftoff when two of its members were each awarded \$5,000 scholarships from the Connecticut Space Grant Consortium to further their work on the project.

Industrial design majors Phillip Carroll and Joshua Hauge were awarded the scholarships after joining the team led by UB Technology Management Professor Dr. Neal Lewis.

The two students are helping to develop a small robotic puppet that will be launched on a high-altitude balloon and used to educate young students about space flight.

Carroll is developing animation of the robot's motions and physical appearance. Hauge is focusing on structural housing for the robot.

"A lot of redesigning and testing goes into a project like this," said Hauge said. "I really enjoy doing the research on high-altitude payloads in order for me to gain an accurate understanding of how to design and fabricate the capsule for this environment."

The hope is that the UB team can launch the monkey

—nicknamed "Ham" (High-Altitude Monkey) after the chimpanzee NASA launched into space in 1961—into space so he can be viewed live on monitors at the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport. He will land or splash down near Long Island Sound, and hopefully be sturdy enough to take additional trips.

"As a kid, I loved those interactive areas where you could also learn something, so to create something like that for a new generation of kids sounded amazing," said Carroll.

Meanwhile, the project is providing ample learning opportunities for the UB team, said Lewis. "We've learned a lot about the harshness of the 'Near Space' environment while at the same time we try and make the robot's housing look like a 1960's Project Mercury space capsule to help teach young students about the history of the American space program," he noted.

Dr. Jani Macari Pallis, who is the Connecticut Space Grant Director at UB, added: "Phil and Josh are a critical part of our student team and Connecticut Space Grant has recognized their work with the award of these scholarships." ■ — L.G

Phillip Carroll, left, and Joshua Hauge with Ham, the robotic monkey headed to space



## News Lines

# Image Making

Take the selfie challenge! What's real, what's not?

By KD Walker

“Is this a pipe?”

That was the question UB film and literature professor Elizabeth Haas posed to the 20 or so in attendance this past November at the “Our Bodies (& Phones & Pop Culture) Ourselves” workshop.

Co-organized by UB English professor Diane Krumrey, Haas, and her colleague, filmmaker Roxanna Walker Canton, the interactive seminar was designed to explore “the power of commercial images to affect self-perception and identity, including standards of beauty, racialized bodies and stereotype, gender and sexuality,” said Haas.

Back to the question posed at the outset: “Is this a pipe?”

Most nodded or answered in the affirmative. The consensus seem to be that yes, “it” was most definitely a

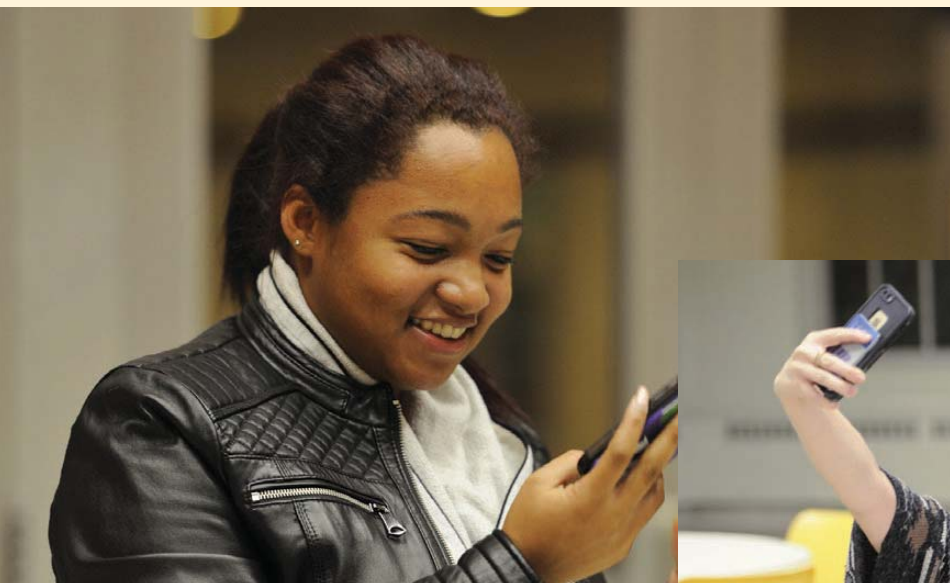


pipe. Again, Haas gestured to the massive image displayed on the projection screen, and pushed back, “Are you sure?”

In a blink of an eye, the atmosphere in the room shifted. For some, the confident assurance displayed just seconds earlier seemed to be replaced by looks of confusion and intrigue, which were followed by whispers and quiet murmurings.

What did Haas have up her sleeve?

The image in question was of surrealist artist Rene Magritte’s infamous painting, *La Trahison des Images* (*The Treachery of Images*). The participants would soon find out why this was such a perfect starting point for the presentation. To add to the mystery, it was clear that few if any read French. Had the opposite been true, someone



Aim, snap, share! Selfies are fun to take, fun to share, but they also tell us a lot more than meets the eye as UB students and faculty learned at a winter Necessary Voices workshop presented by the Department of English.



would have quickly translated the caption below the artwork, 'ceci n'est pas une pipe,' French for "this is not a pipe." Simple as it may seem, the reality was: no one was looking at an actual pipe, but instead, only the image of a pipe.

UB Dean of Students Edina Oestreicher had this to say about Haas's unique introduction, "I thought it was a clever and engaging way to introduce the topic!"

For the next two hours, Haas and Walker Canton encouraged participants to consider the impact of images (self and otherwise) vs. reality. The photos of the pipe were followed by images of celebrities, such as Kim Kardashian and the Human Barbie, who are perhaps more famous for their self-promoting images than anything else. Photos of athletes, poseurs, and ordinary people ensued.

Each photo initiated an interesting variety of dialogue and opinions from the group. The audience was challenged to consider not only what they observed, but also, what feelings the images inspired. They also were asked to evaluate the possible motives and intended messages the poser might be attempting to relay. More specifically, how do images of ourselves and others represent who we are?

To answer that question, everyone was asked to list their top five intentions for taking and posting selfies on social media. Among them: "It's fun." "Impress members of the opposite sex." "Sharing memories with family and friends."

Walker Canton then took to the podium to lead participants through the "Selfie Challenge." Armed with a picture app, smart phones, and other personal electronic devices they'd been instructed to bring to the workshop, teams downloaded images from their electronic devices to make photo collages.

When asked what she took from the session, alumna Elena Cela said, "We all leave our mark in a different way. We always need to remember that the way a picture looks does not define who we are. We need to remember that we are all beautiful in our own way." ■

## New Scholarships

**Generous gift from UB alumna gives hope to at risk students served by Boys & Girls Village.**



**(From left) UB President Neil Salonen, BGV Board Vice Chairman Joseph Tramuta, Esq. and BGV President and CEO Dr. Steven Kant announced full scholarships that will provide BGV clients with the opportunity to attend UB.**

The University's notable alumni include men and women who would have never gone to college if someone hadn't awarded them a scholarship.

In December, UB and Boys & Girls Village (BGV) were proud to announce a gift from a UB alumna that ensures

other in-need students served by BGV can follow in their footsteps.

BGV provides services to youth and their families where often there is extensive history of trauma, significant emotional instability, and struggle with life in impoverished inner-city settings. Its Charles F. Hayden School currently enrolls approximately 90 students from 30 Connecticut communities.

The donation of two full scholarships can be used for four years of undergraduate or graduate studies and were provided by a donor who wished to make a gift that will have a "transformational impact" for BGV's youth.

"These generous scholarships will open doors for our clients who may not otherwise be able to consider the possibility of attending college," said Dr. Steven M. Kant, president and CEO of BGV. "Connecticut has one of the largest academic achievement gaps in the country, and this gift of higher education is a wonderful opportunity to bridge that divide for some of our most vulnerable youth."

Said UB President Neil A. Salonen: "We look forward to welcoming these students to campus. They will be guided by award-winning faculty and encouraged to immerse themselves among abundant academic, social, and cultural resources that can transform their futures."

■ – L.G.

# News Lines

## Got Code?

**The Connecticut Technology Council and UB host programming challenge.**

Connecticut’s tech sector—eager to hire savvy programmers—got a massive boost in finding skilled employees when the Connecticut Technology Council (CTC) and the University cohosted the Connecticut Skills Challenge in January.

It was one of nine Skills Challenges held at various Connecticut universities.

“We started the Skills Challenge this year because our members, who include some of the fastest-growing technology companies in the state, have a large and growing need for programmers,” said CTC spokesperson Katie Magboo. “They have to fill jobs in order to grow, and sourcing talent locally is ideal. So the goal of this project is to connect our member companies to students as potential employees and to let students know that there are abundant job opportunities in Connecticut. They don’t have to leave the state.”

The challenge allowed 65 UB students to showcase their skills as they completed a series of programming, SQL and HTML challenges in under two hours. Ten finalists from UB were picked to compete and network with employers later this spring.

“Anytime we can collaborate with groups like Connecticut Technology Council, it’s a good thing. Our students have a chance to get noticed, and employers can find talent to develop and grow,” said Khaled M. Elleithy, associate vice president for graduate studies and research at UB’s School of Engineering and a professor of computer science and engineering and electrical engineering. ■ — L.G



“Our students have a chance to get noticed, and employers can find talent to develop and grow.”

—Khaled M. Elleithy



# Smart Business

## New Student Entrepreneur Center opens its doors.

Just weeks after the University opened its new Student Entrepreneur Center this fall, a group of UB students won the Crowd Favorite Award at Connecticut Startup Weekend, a 32-hour challenge that invites contestants to pitch business ideas and compete for prizes to help bring them to market.

Giovana Soares, the undergraduate design major at UB's Shintaro Akatsu School of Design who led the winning team, pitched Brighten Me Up, an app she invented that rewards users for waking up on time.

A few weeks later, UB student Mayank Nath won \$2500 worth of legal counsel at another entrepreneurs' competition that was held at Yale. He won for his eco-friendly energy company, Green Heat, which creates electricity from recycled dry products.

"These kids are rocking," said Elena Cahill, who directs the Student Entrepreneur Center where Soares, Nath, and dozens more UB students are developing their ventures.



Opened in September, the Center is staffed by entrepreneurs-in-residence who provide free help to UB students from any academic department who have ideas for start-ups. By opening its doors to all-comers, the Center has a multidisciplinary ethos that makes it unique, said Cahill.

Mike Roer, one of the experts-in-residence, said that within weeks of opening its doors, 50 students had signed up.

"An executive from the reSET incubator in Hartford did say to me, 'Wow! What is the secret to the enthusiasm at the University of Bridgeport?'" said Roer. "The SEC has been an instant success." ■ – L.G.

**Student Giovana Soares (far right) led a winning team at Connecticut Startup Weekend. She is one of more than 50 students developing ventures at the University's new Student Entrepreneur Center.**

# UB Students Give Back for MLK Day



## Meals for the needy and more

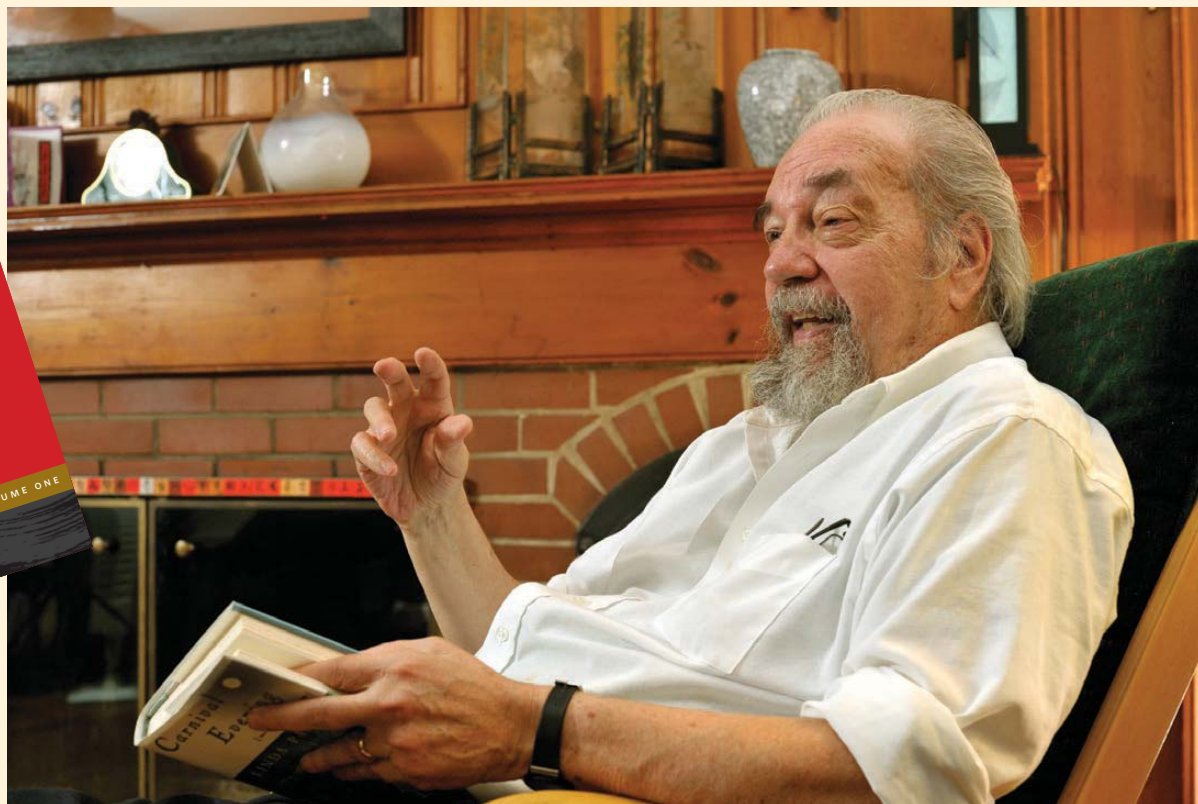
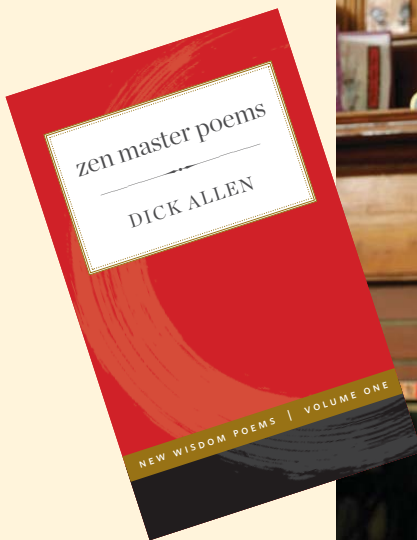
Students and community volunteers honored the legacy of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at UB's 15th annual Day of Service on January 18. They pitched in at local churches, prepared more than 14,000 meals for Feeding Children Everywhere, and helped other area nonprofits before joining at a fellowship luncheon and viewing of the documentary "Free at Last," hosted by filmmaker Jim Desmond. ■ – L.G.

**Student Kwabena Antwi was interviewed by Channel 12 news, one of several media outlets to report on UB's Day of Service. Antwi led the team that made over 50 fleece blankets for the homeless.**

## News Lines

# Love Story to America

Professor Emeritus and former Connecticut Poet Laureate Richard Allen appears on the “Prairie Home Companion.”



Dick Allen's *Zen Master Poems* will be published in the summer of 2016.

Alumni who tune their radio to “Prairie Home Companion” may have heard a familiar voice this fall. That’s when UB Professor Emeritus and former Poet Laureate of Connecticut Richard “Dick” Allen was invited to share his magisterial work with millions of listeners on the nationally recognized variety show hosted by Garrison Keillor.

The show was broadcast live from the Palace Theater in Waterbury, Connecticut, on November 21.

Allen’s work has been published in *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Hudson Review*, *New Republic* and other anthologies. His numerous awards include the Pushcart Prize, the Robert Frost Prize, and the 2013 New Criterion Poetry Prize.

Allen taught creative writing at UB for 33 years, working with generations of writers as the former Charles A. Dana Professor of English and chairman of the English Department.

A diligent writer who works up to 18 hours a day, Allen has been prolific in his retirement. His eighth book of poetry, *Zen Master Poems*, will be published in the summer 2016 by Wisdom, Inc.

“There’s life after retirement,” Allen told Keillor, before reading a variety of works, including the sestina “If You Visit Our Country, Sleepy Old Towns.”

“It’s a love poem to America,” said Allen. ■ — L.G

### Tune In!

Want more news about Dick Allen? Check out his 2010 interview with Knightlines at <http://www.bridgeport.edu/alumni/alumni-magazine/>

To see Allen on *Prairie Home Companion*, go to <http://prairiehome.org/shows/november-21-2015/>



## If You Visit Our Country, Sleepy Old Towns

At night, in the little towns that crop up in America  
Where the highway curves beside a riverbank  
Or lifts you suddenly up a drumlin to the lights  
Left burning in closed restaurants and filling stations,  
Someone is always walking with a dog, and someone  
Is always standing at a window looking pensive.

And if you drive on further through the pensive  
Fields and leaning forests of America,  
Singing or dreaming, and you share the wheel with someone  
You love, you will likely see a bank  
Of stars in the west. Tune to an all-night station  
Playing crazy rock. The world will be blinking lights

Racing toward you or away, your headlights  
Picking up old things along the highway: pensive  
And dilapidated barns, abandoned railroad stations,  
The culverts, junkyards, flagpoles of America  
That never left the Thirties—the small-town bank  
Closed for the Depression, then reopened. Someone

Is always starting out or starting over; someone  
In jeans and open shirt has seen her name in lights  
Or told a cowlicked boyfriend he can bank  
Upon the future. In every town a pensive  
Father reminisces to his son about America,  
Or a priest is walking slowly through the Stations

Of the Cross, praying he might rise above his station  
In this anguished life, becoming someone  
Truly worthy, truly, truly worthy. All across America  
You will find embracing lovers under streetlights,  
Tiger lilies, Queen Anne's lace, the pensive  
Look of high schools closed for summer, empty banks

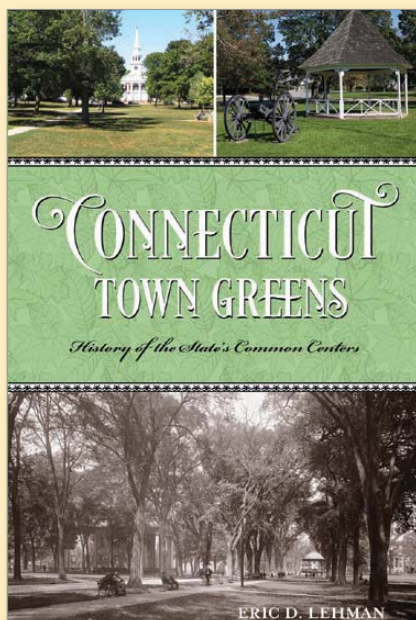
Of bleacher seats at baseball games; and if you bank  
Hard where the highway curves, and if you station  
Yourself securely at the wheel, sooner or later pensive  
Thoughts will overcome you. Try to be someone  
For whom the country opens, for whom traffic lights  
At empty crossroads signify America:

The shades and awnings of America, the kid who banks  
A billiard shot, fizzed neon lights, the military station  
High on Someone's Bluff, the sentry walking pensive.

—Dick Allen



## Book Lines



Creative Writing Director **Eric D. Lehman**

continues to explore Connecticut's rich history with his eleventh book, **Connecticut Town Greens** (Globe Pequot). The Nutmeg State has 170 town or village greens that still exist today.

Dating back to Colonial times, they served as the physical and spiritual centers for the state's first communities. Today, many town greens continue to be the center of town events, fairs, and other gatherings.

*Connecticut Town Greens* explores the history of these remarkable greens and provides a guide to current events.

— Leslie Geary

## Faculty Lines



### Bridging the Digital Divide

STEM—the acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math—may be the key to future success, but studies show that too many urban and low-income students are missing out because they don't have access to information technologies.

That concerns **Dr. Navarun Gupta**, chairman of UB's Department of Electrical Engineering. For the past decade, he's teamed up with Bridgeport public school teacher Ron Rapice to lead semester-long computer classes for eighth graders at Columbus School, where 99 percent of the students are from low-income households.

"STEM education is very much desired now, and schools are not providing enough skills for students to succeed," says Gupta. "This will prepare them."

Gupta, who volunteers his time, and Rapice recently kicked off their latest course, which is bigger than ever. This semester, approximately 15 students from the Talented and Gifted Program at Columbus, Roosevelt, and Cesar Batalla Schools in Bridgeport meet

with Gupta at UB's Technology Building to learn computer skills that they'll use on a final project.

"They get exposed to the University, and they get to meet other students and faculty," says Gupta. "Hopefully, this will encourage them to go to university after they graduate."

Adds Rapice: "It is so important for students now to have a good grasp of STEM principles, and for the past decade, [School of Engineering Dean] Tarek Sobh and Dr. Gupta have been so generous in donating their time and facilities to help our students to reach this goal." ■ — Leslie Geary



## Academia on Stage

A staged reading of *The Search*, the newest play by drama professor **E. Kyle Minor**, was held in December at the Theatre for the New City in Manhattan.

Three college professors, two veterans and one young, seek to replace a beloved colleague whose recent suicide devastates his colleagues, especially his husband, Peter Blyth, who chairs the search committee. As their process unfolds, the characters discover exactly what they seek in themselves and each other, questioning their biases, belief systems, and roles in higher education.

“It’s based on things I’m familiar with,” said Minor, who teaches in the English and Drama Departments at UB. “It looks at prejudices, some of which you might not have thought about: ageism, racism, differing opinions about the role of higher education, old school vs. new school.” ■ – **L.G.**



## On Cue

UB’s tireless choral director **Frank Martignetti** has been named a finalist for The American Prize in the national competition’s Choral Conducting division. He is in the running for his work with the Mystic River Chorale, an auditioned community choir he’s led as its artistic director since 2008.

At UB, Martignetti leads the University Singers and Chamber Singers. Under his direction, those groups have performed throughout the region, collaborating with a variety of other organizations, and have made their Avery Fischer Hall and Carnegie Hall debuts.

Says Martignetti, “I have long admired my friends and colleagues recognized in this competition. I am very grateful for the recognition I’ve received this year!” ■ – **L.G.**

# Faculty Lines

## New Role

**Gad Selig** has been appointed Dean of Industry Outreach. In his new role, he will be the coordinating administrator for industry outreach activities for UB's Graduate Studies and Research Division. His duties will include managing the high-tech business IncUBator on campus and coordinating industry outreach and development activities across UB's schools and colleges. ■ – L.G.



## Hunting for Fossils

“As a student I remember good field trips to this day, but I don’t remember too many lectures,” says **John “Doc Rock” Nicholas**, UB’s inimitable geology professor.

For more than 30 years, Nicholas has taken his Science C101 (Introduction to Geology) class on biannual geology trips to the Catskill Region. With his encouragement, students are urged to hunt, look, and collect whatever looks interesting to them: minerals, fossils, crystals. Armed with hammers, they tap open rocks to peer what’s inside.

“I tell them, ‘You’re breaking open a rock that hasn’t seen the light of day for 400 million years, and you’re the first person to look inside the rock, and you’ll see a fossil. It won’t be a dinosaur because they weren’t around then, but it will be something you’ll treasure as long as you keep it,’” Nicholas says.

Nicholas has a preference for fossils, but he still marvels about the trip when a student found a quartz crystal the size of a baseball. Alumni remember, too. “They write to me and say, ‘Do you remember me? We went on the field trip?’” says Nicholas. ■ – L.G.

## Risk and Reward

**Philip Maymin**, associate professor of analytics and finance at the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, was recently presented the Wolfram Innovator Award for advanced uses of analytics. He also won the 2015 One-liner Wolfram Language Programming Competition with a Tweetable 125-character file system browser. Even more: Maymin was interviewed by the *Journal of Portfolio Management* about a recent paper he coauthored on risk parity optimality.

■ – L.G.





Photo Credit: Mandi Martini.

## Rock on, Katie!

When not guiding prospective students on campus tours, you can find admissions counselor **Katie Chamberlain** on stage. In February, Chamberlain played a waitress in the '80s-inspired musical, *Rock of Ages*. The Tony-winning production's two-week run at the Warner Theatre in Torrington, Connecticut, was promoted as one of the things to do by the *Connecticut Post*.

Chamberlain began performing in stage shows when she was 4 years old. "I play guitar and have been singing in shows, in bands, and at special events for most of my life, but being a part of this production was the best experience of my life. It's not every day you get to work with the amount of talent that our cast had in a show that received multiple five-star reviews. It truly was a show for the ages," Chamberlain says. "My character in the show sang and danced. I was lucky enough to have two of my coworkers and their friends come see the production" ■ – L.G

## Conference Happenings

**Dr. David Brady** served as conference chair for the inaugural Clinically Applied Scientific Insights Conference (CASI-CON) in New York City this November. As conference chairman, he was responsible for developing content regarding preventative and integrative medicine. He also selected speakers.

To better leverage the expertise shared at the event, CASI-CON presentations were archived and are now accessible to medical and healthcare professionals.

"Conferences and symposiums come and are gone, often with the excellent content and ideas shared evaporating into thin air when it is over without a record or legacy,"

said Brady, who is vice provost of the Health Sciences Division at UB. "CASI-CON brings together some of the best minds to share ideas, insights, and new approaches. We're capturing this information in the form of live lectures and written documentation on an online knowledge-transfer site, known as CASITalks.com. Each year, new content will be added to the existing/previous content to form a digital repository of information."

**Dr. Steven Lindner**, from the Human Nutrition Institute, and **Gabrielle Martire**, coordinator of the Division of Health Sciences, attended CASI as UB representatives. ■ – L.G



## Focus on: Shawn Sequeira '03, '10



“I actually didn’t know I was the first minority administrator; when I found out I was honored to be breaking barriers like that.”

**Background:** To say that Shawn Sequeira '03, '10, is on a fast track is an understatement. When he was still finishing his bachelor’s degree in social science at UB, he applied for and was offered a job with the Department of Children and Families as a social worker/case aide. He hadn’t planned for a career in social work. Nor did he plan for a career in police work, one that would make him the first minority supervisor of a Connecticut Valley police force, second in command over 70 officers, and then, Shelton’s acting chief of police. But that’s what happened.

He took that first chance and immediately found he loved social work, helping families in crisis, working on custody cases, supervising parental visits in homes, at the mall and in prisons around the state. It was challenging, sometimes heart-wrenching, but always important work, he said. When a chance to apply to the state Connecticut State Police

Academy, he decided to apply. Sequeira graduated from the academy, was hired as a state trooper, and quickly discovered that he had a passion for police work, too. When his supervisor encouraged the first-year troopers to take the detective test, he did. “He told us junior troopers that we are not going to make detective with just one year on the job, but he said it was good practice.” Sequeira scored number one on the test and he was hired as a detective in the state police’s major crimes unit, just a year into his tenure there. “It was some kind of record at the time,” he said.

**Accomplishments:** During his nine years with the state police, Sequeira pursued his master’s degree in human resource development at UB while moving up the detective ranks, conducting investigations into government corruption, police shootings, and assisting in some of the state’s major cases, including the shooting at

Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, for which he received distinguished medals of honor. He attributes much of his career success to a strong work ethic and to his two UB degrees. “My professors taught me so much that I’ve used in my career,” he said. In 2015, he received UB’s Distinguished Alumni Award.

**What are your feelings, particularly as the first minority administrator/supervisor in a police department in the Valley?**

I was very proud and honored to be chosen from among the other candidates. It was a big decision to leave the state police early but I got to know the city of Shelton as I did many investigations there as a state police employee of the Major Crimes Unit. It’s going very well so far. I actually didn’t know I was the first minority administrator; when I found out, I was honored to be breaking barriers like that and to be looked to as a leader and an example for others.



**You were involved in some of the state's biggest cases in recent years, including the Sandy Hook investigation. How did you get through that?**

A lot of people ask me that. At that point I had done a lot of investigations and seen so many things but this—children are so helpless and you think of children as so innocent and having their whole life ahead of them—it was very hard but we had people to talk with. So I took it one day at a time and did my job.

**During those very busy years as a state police investigator you were also pursuing your master's at UB? What prompted that decision?**

My sergeant at the time, Bill Kelly, was big on education and he said, 'You have an opportunity to go back to school now that you're on the day shift.' UB offered a program that was flexible and accessible to people who were working full-time—and I had already had a great experience at UB as an undergraduate.

**You started your career with DCF and you said that you worked with families so they could be reunited with their children. At times you had to terminate parental rights. That must have been very challenging work.**

You really feel for the families and the children, but at the same time you have a job to do. When you are trained properly and mentored and coached properly like I was by a great staff, it became easier. I've seen both sides when families got reunited after months and months of supervised visitations and completing their court-mandated courses, and I've also seen families where parental rights were terminated.

**How did it feel to win a Distinguished Alumni Award?**

I was very honored. I'm proud to have attended UB. I always mention the University—to everyone! I know that my degrees helped me significantly; it's why I was able to make detective so quickly and it helped to qualify me to apply for the position of captain.

— Interview by Jackie Hennessey



# Alumni Lines

Would you like to share news of your own or nominate an alumnus to be interviewed for a "Focus On" interview? We're interested in what you're doing, and so are your classmates! Contact: Knightlines, Cortright Hall, 219 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604 or [knightlines@bridgeport.edu](mailto:knightlines@bridgeport.edu).

Be sure to include your full name, contact information, and class year.



## 1963

Since meeting for the first time last fall, alumni **Akihiko Yanagihara** and **Koji Okada '83** have become good friends. They were introduced by their mutual acquaintance, **Chika Honjo '12**. "I am very happy to see two of them together like brothers," she writes. "This is the picture I love!"

## 1987

Love of soccer reunited UB alumni **John Bagdonas '70** and **Michael Szakacs**. The two were part of an "all-Connecticut" officiating crew at soccer games held in Wellington, Florida, in January. "We had a great time reminiscing about our time at UB," Szakacs reports.

## 1989

**Steven Eliach** has been named to head Marks Paneth's tax service line. The accounting, tax, and advisory firm is headquartered in Manhattan.

## 2010

After earning her IPED degree from UB, **Elizabeth (Liz)**

**Hempowitz** went to law school and now works as a public policy associate for Project for Government Oversight, a nonpartisan government and military watchdog. In November, Hempowitz testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee about how whistleblowers, including doctors and nurses, within VA clinics have been punished and intimidated for objecting to how patients are treated. "In Appalachia, a former VA nurse was intimidated by management and forced out of her job after she raised concerns that patients with serious injuries were being neglected," Hempowitz told committee members, including Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

## 2013

College of Chiropractic alumnus **Reza Eftekhar, DC**, has been appointed to a clinical instructor at University of Maryland School of Medicine, in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. Dr. Eftekhar will also see patients at UM's Center for Integrative Health and Healing. He is the vice president of the Council on Occupational Health and Ergonomics.

## In Memoriam

### 1937

**Henry Lichtman Katz** passed away on November 6, 2015. Mr. Katz earned an associate's degree from the Junior College of Connecticut (now UB) and a bachelor's degree Magna Cum Laude at NYU in 1939. He passed the CPA exam in 1941 and was the longest living member of the CT Society of CPAs. He went on to join Milton H. Friedberg now known as Friedberg, Smith & Co., where he

was a principal partner. He was a UB Distinguished Alumnus.

### 1951

**Brig. Gen. Lawrence R. Seamon** passed away on June 7, 2010. Over his distinguished career, he was awarded several medals for heroic action. Some include a Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V;" Meritorious Service Medal; Purple Heart Medal with two gold stars in lieu of a second and third awards; United Nations Service Medal; Korean Presidential Unit Citation; the Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation Gallantry Cross Color with Pal; and the Vietnamese Service Medal.

### 1968

**James A Sabia** passed away October 1, 2015. He worked as a librarian for the Stamford Public School District and for the Ferguson Library. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Louise, and children Annette Sabia '85, James Jr., Joseph, Fred, and David.

**Robert George "Bob" DiSpirito Sr.**, UB's longtime football and baseball coach, passed away on December 21, 2015.



The UB Music Department presented its 10th annual Holiday Concert on December 2, featuring favorite carols from the Golden Age of American popular song performed by the UB Chamber Singers, UB Fusion Ensemble, UB Percussion Group, and University Singers.



The September 15 Innovators Series, "Taking your company from long shot to Snapchat," focused on effective fundraising for your start-up, best practices in crowdfunding, venture capital, and family financing.



The 19th Annual UB Athletics Golf Classic, which was held on September 28 at Race Brook Country Club, raised over \$130,000 to enhance the University's athletic facilities.



Over 600 alumni, students, families, and friends gathered for UB's Welcome Back Weekend in October 2015. The weekend featured a range of social, athletic, and academic events. Be sure to join us next year when we host Homecoming Weekend October 14-16, 2016.





# Powerful Reunion

**African-American alumni celebrate their UB experience.**

**By James Swain '75**

This past October, UB's African-American alumni met in Washington DC for their most recent and much-anticipated reunion. The group primarily consists of staff and alumni who met each other at UB during the 1970s. "Our growing appreciation for our experiences at UB have made us feel like a kind of extended family," said Eddie Lane '75, a key organizer since the first reunion, held in the Poconos in the late 1980s.

The University's black student population in 1973-1975 peaked at about 100 students enrolled in classes. "We used to joke that the 100-student total included folks taking one or two classes at night and employees auditing classes," said one of the participants, who took on head counting responsibilities as an officer of the Organization of Black Students (OBS). Nevertheless, these students were a close-knit group that has only grown closer as the years have gone by.

"One of my big brothers [during Omega Psi Phi fraternity pledging] used to say, 'What's so hard to endure is so sweet to recall.' That says it all about our UB experience and these reunions," said Gerald Devaughn '75, now a cardiologist practicing in Philadelphia.

"I think it is great that we can come together and share in each other's success after all these years," said Denise (Lykens) Jones '75, a former OBS president.

The 2015 meeting in Washington featured a Friday evening reception, a Saturday morning White House tour, and a Saturday evening boat ride and gourmet dinner. Sunday featured a Current-Issues Forum, with a presentation on the use of deadly force by police by the Honorable Sheridan Moore '75 and James Swain '75, a former federal prosecutor. The event closed with a parting prayer service. The organizing committee included Ed Lane, Lorraine Taylor '75, Cheryl Dunham '75; Rhonda Anderson '75 and Dr. Devaughn.

Attendees sported their Purple Knight Pride by wearing T-shirts and baseball hats donated to the event by the Office of Alumni Relations, which was hosting



(From left): Class of '75 alumni Edward Lane, James Swain Esq., Mike Deshields M.D., and Gerald DeVaughn M.D. at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Washington DC

Welcome Back Weekend on campus that same weekend.

"We were happy to support the OBS Reunion, and have their alumni participate via 'satellite' in Maryland with our homecoming events on campus," said Mary-Jane Foster, vice president of University Relations. "Their reunions have continued successfully throughout the years, and we are looking forward to supporting the next event in Philadelphia, as well as hosting one of their future reunions back on campus."

The core group of attendees consists of about 50 UB minority graduates, current students, and their families. These schoolmates have gone on to successful careers as educators, businessmen and women, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals, as well as lawyers, judges, and scientists. The group has met periodically over the years in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and Miami.

"The hope is that we can begin to expand the group, and the UB experience years covered by reunion participants," said Eddie Lane.

## Join OBS Alums!

OBS reunions are open to all UB alumni. The next reunion, a grand celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of OBS, will be held in Philadelphia from October 7-9, 2017, during Columbus Day weekend.

## Side Lines

# UB's Ruben Gimenez Honored



**UB's Ruben Gimenez is Honored by the NCAA with a 2016 Today's Top 10 Award.**

By Chuck Sadowski



University of Bridgeport's Ruben Gimenez, a standout swimmer for the Purple Knights who completed his career in 2015 and who currently serves as graduate assistant coach for both the UB men's and women's swimming teams, was awarded a NCAA 2016 Today's Top 10 Award, one of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's most prestigious prizes.

Gimenez accepted his award during the NCAA Honors Celebration during the Association's annual convention held in San Antonio, Texas, on January 15.

The NCAA Today's Top 10 Award recognizes former student-athletes for their successes on the field, in the classroom, and in the community. Recipients completed their athletics eligibility during the 2014-2015 academic year.

A four-time individual NCAA champion, Gimenez currently holds six UB swimming records, including three individual times and three relay times. A 20-time All-American, he won 24 Metropolitan Conference championships, and led his team to four top-three finishes at the conference championships.

His academic accolades are also plentiful. Gimenez earned back-to-back Division II Capital One Men's Academic All-America of the Year At-Large honors, and was a four-time College Swimming Coaches Association of America Academic All-American. Gimenez served on the University's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and volunteered with several local organizations.

He interned at Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., in 2014, and is now working with BlackRock, Inc., the largest asset manager in the world. ■

# International Study Scholarship for Top UB Student

**CPIA student Jessica Swanson is awarded CIEE funds to study in Brazil.**

By Leslie Geary

University of Bridgeport student and world-class jujitsu athlete Jessica Swanson has been awarded a \$1500 academic scholarship to attend classes in Rio de Janeiro during the summer of 2016.

The award from the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) will support Swanson, 19, as she takes intensive Portuguese language lessons and classes about Brazilian culture at Pontifical Catholic University from July 4-July 29. She also will continue her jujitsu training as a member of the Rio-based team, Soul Fighters.

Swanson is a sophomore, majoring in International Political Economy and Diplomacy at the College of Public and International Affairs (CPIA).

Her interest in Brazil, she said, is inspired by her jujitsu training. Swanson began taking jujitsu classes when she was nine years old to keep up with her older brother. She has trained with Rafael “Formiga” Barbosa, one of the founding members of Soul Fighters. Last fall, she was ranked number 1 in the world at Purple Belt No Gi.

The CIEE scholarship and study-abroad program will enable her to visit her team’s headquarters for the first time. “I hope to communicate with my teammates and to understand their lifestyle and where they come from,” she said.

“CPIA requires its students to speak at least two languages in order to graduate, and many complete internships abroad,” said CPIA Dean Thomas Ward. ■



Jessica Swanson was ranked number 1 in the world at Purple Belt No Gi.

## Side Lines

# Soccer Wrap

**Record-setting women's soccer season rolls all the way to NCAA Division II National Semifinals.**

By Chuck Sadowski

It has often been said though that sports are, without question, the best reality programming that exists, and what a show the 2015 University of Bridgeport women's soccer season was from start to finish, as the Purple Knights reached the NCAA Division II National Championship Semifinals for the first time in history. From the opening of practice in the heat of mid-August to the National Championship Semifinals in early December in Pensacola, Florida, the 2015 UB women's soccer season was a magic carpet ride like no other team has provided Bridgeport fans since the glory day of men's basketball in the early 1990s.

The Purple Knights opened their record-setting 2015 campaign with their first of a single-season school record 21 wins on September 4, a 1-0 triumph over American International College in the opening match of the University of Bridgeport Women's Soccer Classic. The only goal of that contest came from the talented boots of freshman Jess Laszlo, who netted the first of her 23 goals on the year from a free kick with just over

12 minutes to play. Laszlo would finish the season

with a team-high 52 points on those 23 goals and six assists, as she earned East Coast Conference Rookie of the Year accolades and All-American recognition from several organizations.

The Purple Knights opened the season with five consecutive wins, outscoring the opposition by a total of 7-1 in those five outings. At the end of the season, Bridgeport would finish with an

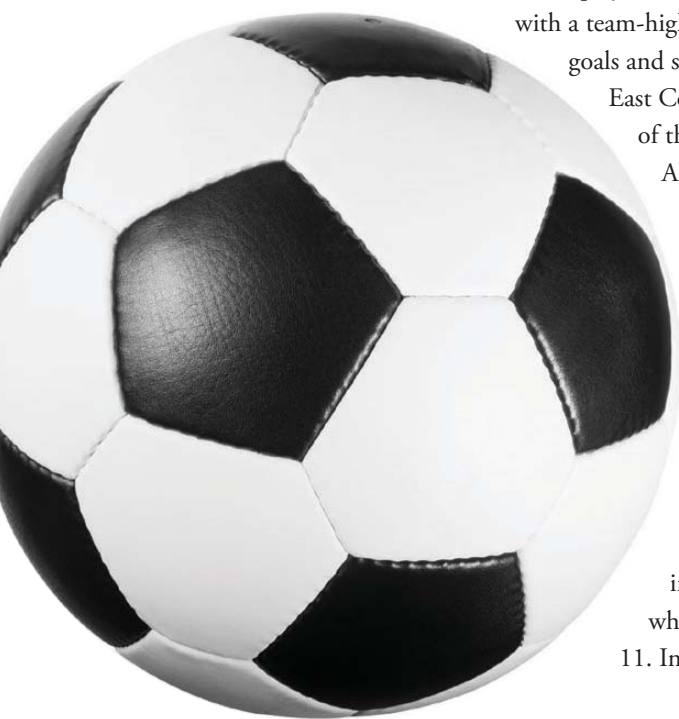
impressive 55 goals scored; while allowing just a total of 11. Included in those five open-

ing wins was a key 2-1 comeback victory over Adelphi University on September 9, as the Purple Knights got scores from senior Gabby Reis and Laszlo in the final 10 minutes of action, to give themselves a victory that kept UB above Adelphi in the regional rankings for the entire season and gave the team a huge, home field advantage in the NCAA Championship Tournament later in the year.

A trip to Texas during the opening three weeks of the schedule would give Bridgeport valuable experience and an opportunity to bond as group despite the team suffering its only loss of regular season during its time in the Lone Star State, a 2-0 defeat at St. Edward's University in Austin on September 20.

After returning from Texas, UB would close the scheduled portion of its season out unbeaten in 12 matches at 11-0-1 to take the 2015 East Coast Conference Regular Season Title for the fourth time in the last six seasons with a conference record of 8-0-1 and head into the postseason at 16-1-1 overall.

As the top seed in the ECC Tournament, the Purple Knights would host the fourth seed, Mercy College Mavericks, in the conference semifinals at Knights Field, and UB would dominate the match winning, 2-0. In the ECC Finals, Bridgeport would host the second seed, Roberts Wesleyan College Redhawks, who managed to tie the Purple Knights, 1-1, in Rochester during the regular season, and the UB would continue to roll on running its unbeaten streak to 14 matches with a 4-0 whitewashing of the visitors. The win over the Roberts Wesleyan gave the team its second East Coast Conference Tournament crown in the last three years, and the ECC's automatic bid into the 2015 NCAA Division II Women's Soccer Championship Tournament. This year's NCAA Tournament bid marked the eighth time in the last nine seasons that head coach Magnus Nilerud's program advanced to the National Championship Tournament since its first appearance in 2007. By virtue of his team's record-setting performance in 2015, Nilerud was





named both the East Coast Conference Coach of the Year by his peers, and the National NCAA Division II Women's Soccer Coach of the year by the National Soccer Coaches' Association of American (NSCAA).

When the NCAA Tournament pairings were announced, the Purple Knights received the top seed in the East Region meaning the team would get a bye into the second round of play and also host NCAA matches at Knights Field for the third time in program history.

In the NCAA Second Round, UB faced a familiar foe in ECC rival LIU Post, as the Pioneers advanced through penalty kicks over Roberts Wesleyan, another ECC team, in the First Round.

Against the Pioneers, Bridgeport would show just how magical their NCAA postseason run would be as Ariana Weingrad scored a long-distance goal with just 56 second to play in regulation to lift the Purple Knights to a 1-0 victory and a date with Adelphi in the East Regional Final which would again be played at Knights Field the following week.

In the East Regional Final, UB again fell behind Adelphi, 1-0, in the second half before rallying to win on goals by Lauren Mengel and Nicola Worthington. Worthington, the 2015 East Coast Conference Defensive Player of the Year and an All-American selection, showed her offensive prowess when she buried a free kick into the back of the Panthers' net with just over

nine minutes to play to give Bridgeport its first-ever NCAA Division II Women's Soccer East Regional Title and a shot at the 2015 National Semifinals in Florida if the team could win its next match against Atlantic Region Champions, East Stroudsburg University.

In the East Regional Final match, Bridgeport goalkeeper Jenifer Wendelius played her strongest match of the season making nine saves to keep her team in the match, as the Purple Knights were outshot by Adelphi, 19-8. Wendelius, who was selected as the East Coast Conference Goalkeeper of the Year plus earned All-Region and All-American recognition, finished 2015 with an 18-2-1 record and a goals against average of 0.50. Jennifer also recorded 12 solo shutouts and shared two other clean sheets.

With a trip to Pensacola, Florida on the line, the Purple Knights thrilled a large and enthusiastic crowd at Knights Field with an impressive 2-0 victory over East Stroudsburg. In the ESU contest, Jess Laszlo scored both goals, and the Purple Knights dominated play all day outshooting Warriors, 14-2, on the afternoon, as Bridgeport pinched its ticket for the program's first trip to the NCAA Division II National Semifinals with a 21-1-1 record.

The Purple Knights were joined at the NCAA Division II National Semifinals by Western Washington University, Grand Valley State University (Mich.) and Columbus State University (Ga.).

In the national semis, UB drew the talented Cougars of Columbus State who only had lost twice during the 2015 season. Unfortunately for Bridgeport fans, the Cougars would score two first half goals and add an own goal off a UB defender to take a 3-0 lead midway through the second half before Jess Laszlo would break the shutout with a score with two and a half minutes to play, as the Purple Knights saw their magical season come to close by a 3-1 score.

While the final results for the NCAA Division II National Semifinals may have been a disappointment to the team and the growing legion of University of Bridgeport soccer fans, nothing can take away from the magic that was the Purple Knights' 2015 season, and with only three seniors leaving the program and a talented group of newcomers scheduled to join the Purple and White in the Fall, the prospects for another long run in the NCAA Tournament look bright. ■

## Side Lines

## Top Coach



### UB's Magnus Nilerud named NCAA Coach of the Year.

By Mike Patrick

Women's soccer coach Magunus Nielrud was named the NCAA Division II National Coach of the Year by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) in December.

Nilerud, who completed his 17th year as the team's coach, led the Purple Knights to a record-setting single season 21-2-1 record. Among this year's highlights: the team's first trip to the NCAA Division II semifinals and first East Region title.

The Purple Knights won the East Coast Conference Championship Tournament and regular season titles to finish No. 4 in the nation in the final NSCAA NCAA Division II national poll.

The honor is the latest in a string of awards for Nilerud, who has been named ECC Coach of the Year selection five times and who was NASCAA East Regional Coach of the Year honoree in 2011 and 2015.

During his time at UB, he has amassed a 229-98-20 record while the women's soccer program has made eight NCAA Division II appearances in the last nine seasons. His teams have also won three ECC Championship Tournament titles—in 2009, 2013, and 2015—and captured ECC regular season titles in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2015. ■

# Snapshots



Freshman D'Vonne Trumbull, a member of the cross country and men's basketball teams, and associate head coach of the men's basketball team, Kranthi Senadhi, team up at a Make A Wish bake sale in October.



The mayor's a fan! Bridgeport Mayor Joseph P. Ganim, along with UB President and Mrs. Neil Salonen, stopped by Wheeler Recreation Center on January 31 to support the women's gymnastics team during one of its meets. A few days earlier, the mayor and city leaders honored the women's volleyball and gymnastics teams at the Bridgeport City Council meeting.

# Closing Thought:

## Resident Alien



Roxie Ray traveled more than miles when she graduated from John M. Langston High School in Virginia to attend college in the northeast during the 1970s.

By Roxie Ray

The turbulent sixties were my coming-of-age years. The Civil Rights Movement brought opportunities for “worthy” black youth. I was deemed worthy, and was offered academic scholarships from a variety of colleges. I don’t know on what I based my decision, probably nothing logical, but I do know I made it alone. My parents never attended college. In any case, I choose Brandeis University.

I started college during a time of evolution and revolution—mine and the country’s. Raised the sheltered youngest child, I never had a chance to grow beyond what was acceptable in a small provincial town in the South of the 1950s and 1960s. I felt there was more to me than what had been allowed to surface. Inside me was—what?

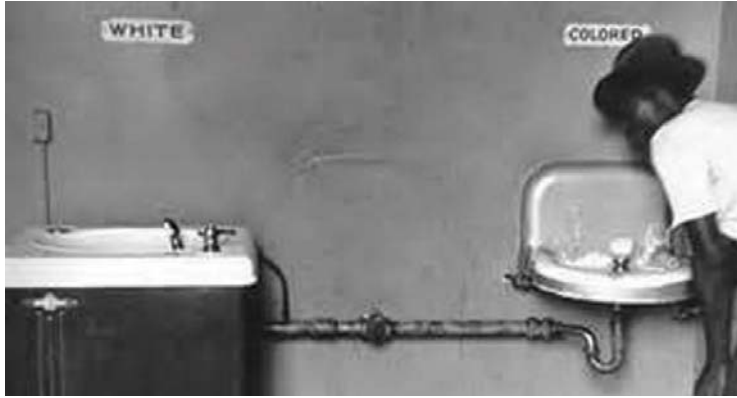
I could not wait to learn what was outside my known world. But, as ready as I thought I was, I was not prepared for what lay ahead.

At Brandeis, I am viewed with interest as the residents gather around me. They stare at my hair. They surreptitiously feel my skin while pretending to shake my hand. It’s all right. I am doing the same to them. They seem friendly enough, and apparently they form the same impression of me.

One female, slightly older than the others, reaches for one of my bags.

“Hi, I’m Rachel, the residence counselor. In the old days I would have been called a housemother. Let me show you to your room.” As she leads me upstairs, she keeps up a constant stream of chatter trying to put one or the other of us at ease.





“I understand you were planning to attend Lincoln University and decided on here only last week. Well, we’re glad you decided in our favor. Ordinarily you would have been assigned to Gold Hall, but it’s at capacity. This house is usually reserved for juniors and seniors,” Rachel continues. “You will be the only freshman living here. But don’t worry, I’m here to help you get acclimated. Come back downstairs when you finish putting your things away. We’ll be in the lounge.”

When Rachel finally leaves me alone to unpack, I am seized not so much by panic as by shyness. Who are these people? How do I act around them? Mama said to just be myself, but I’m not sure I know who myself is. I came here, far away from anyone I know, to find out.

Unable to prolong my stay upstairs without appearing uncivil, I take a few steadying breaths and go downstairs. At the lounge door I fix my face with a noncommittal smile, take a deep breath, and go in. The residents look up expectantly as I enter. Suddenly, I feel like I’m in biology class—and I’m the frog.

Rebecca, a beautiful dark-haired girl dressed completely in black and smoking a cigarette, smiles at me. She leans forward, and when she speaks, her voice is low and husky. “So, Roxie, is it? Where are you from? I thought I heard a hint of a southern accent. Am I right?” Rebecca leans back in her seat after flinging her waist length straight hair from her face with red-tipped fingers.

“I’m from southern Virginia,” I answer, even more conscious of my accent.

“Oh, that must be exciting. Have you been involved in any freedom marches or sit-ins? It must be terrible for your people down there.” This comes from Leah of the bare feet, earnest eyes, and blond afro. I didn’t know white people could get afros. I tense slightly, partly because I’m not in the mood to be the resident Civil Rights Movement spokesperson and partly because her afro looks better than mine.

In my best southern ice-water voice I reply, “I can’t speak for all my people, but my life’s been okay.”

Leah blushes.

I realize I am being unnecessarily sensitive. Leah is only asking questions about a culture of which she knows nothing. I must seem as alien to her as she seems to me. I try to soften my tone and add, “I’ve not been much involved in politics. I’m from a small town. We lead a pretty sheltered life there.” I think Leah accepts my unspoken apology. We smile a pact.

You bet we led a sheltered life. At least I did. When Dr. King organized a march in our town, I was forbidden to participate. Mama wouldn’t even let me go downtown. At the time I thought she and Daddy were the biggest cowards alive.

“We’re only trying to keep you out of harm’s way,” they responded when I questioned their decision. Looking back from the perspective of one who has

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*“I am viewed with interest as the  
residents gather around me.  
They stare at my hair.  
They surreptitiously feel my skin  
while pretending to shake  
my hand. It’s all right.  
I am doing the same to them.”*

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become a mother and a grandmother, I can now understand their desire to keep me in their protective cocoon as long as possible. There would be time enough for me to join the revolution.

Conversation becomes more general. Nancy, who I gather is a psychology major, bemoans the fact that she will not be able to study with a certain professor. “I am so disappointed that Dr. Maslow is leaving. I was so looking forward to taking his senior seminar. He’s the last word in humanism, you know.”

Who the devil is Maslow, and what is humanism? I don’t give these questions voice. There’s no reason to show my ignorance yet.

By the time I refocus on the conversation, they are discussing their summer activities. “I ran into Josh while I was in Israel. His father was working there.” Those words are spoken by pretty, petite Amy who turns to me to explain that she means Josh Mostel, son of Zero. “Josh is a student here. We hang out together sometimes.”

*(continued on page 48)*



Roxie Ray (back row, right) and fellow student members of the National Honors Society at John M. Langston High School in Danville, VA.

At least I know who Zero is. But why is she bothering to explain her references to me? Am I supposed to be impressed?

“We didn’t do anything special this summer. I worked for my dad but lived for my weekends at the Cape.” I’m not sure of this speaker’s name. She looks like she has spent her whole summer on a sailboat. She has the healthy outdoorsy look of a tanned Doublemint twin.

I try to follow the various meanderings of the conversation, but the strain of finding a familiar reference point gives me a headache. I excuse myself, explaining the bus ride has tired me out.

The culture shock extends beyond getting to know my housemates. Getting ready for classes is not much better. Accustomed to being a star student in high school, I struggle to learn the language and ways of this new land. The traditions of this civilization elude me. How do things work around here? Are the denizens born knowing how to navigate the labyrinth of selecting classes, filling out forms, and finding buildings? Maybe I did not read all the paperwork that came with my acceptance letter. Somehow, I get through the beginning-of-the-school-year ritual.

And then the first day of classes arrive. I’m scared but excited. Finally there will be something familiar.

“Just close your eyes and listen to the silence. Let the rhythm of the nothingness suffuse your being. Free yourself.” The sandal-shod professor stands at the front of the classroom with his eyes closed, his arms outstretched. I look around at the other students. They are falling for this hippie professor’s line. Accustomed to more practical instruction, I feel uncomfortable and a little annoyed. What is the point? How can I take notes on this? I leave. Years later as I am reading the book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, I realize that it was Morrie’s class I walked out of. In the book I learn about the professor’s passion for his subject. I learn about his love for his students. What I didn’t know then was how to learn the

lesson by listening beyond the facts. It was years before I learned to do that. At the time, I still needed concrete. So on to the next class I go.

Ah, Humanities 101. Now that is something I can handle. Read the book, memorize the plot and characters, and answer straightforward questions. Problem: there are no straightforward questions or answers in Humanities 101.

It becomes a pattern with me when faced with the strange and uncomfortable: I run. Morrie’s class is above my head; I run. My English instructor urges me to be more insightful in my essays; I don’t return his phone call, and I don’t attend the next class. All this running is a good thing when I’m offered a variety of mind-altering drugs at parties, not such a good thing when I don’t understand what is going on in class.

I do grasp one tradition of this strange land. Early on I notice that professors do not check attendance. If the class is large enough, I won’t be missed. That makes missing my 8:30 a.m. math class a new guilt-free tradition for me. I don’t quite think this through until midterm exams. With no Academic Resource Center around, I must rely on friends to get me up to speed. Other students don’t seem to be having any difficulties

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*“Sometimes, when I am tired or homesick, I unconsciously slip into the soft, easy rhythm of my mother tongue.”*

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with getting acclimated. But how do I know? They could be just as much at sea as I am.

I observe. I listen. I begin to pick up the jargon, understand the expectations, and find my element. While I am still an alien, I am no longer overthinking my every move. Evolution is taking hold. Each time I return to my home planet for a visit, I have mutated a bit. I never completely lose what is native to me. I remain me, but the evolved me. I allow what is useful and beneficial from Brandeis to become part of me. I don’t realize at the time that I am mutating. My mother notices the external differences. She remarks on my hair, my clothing, my granny glasses—the standard uniform of the black-and-proud college student. She never quite understands the internal changes. She just looks at me and mutters something about, “That girl’s getting too sassy. Who does she think she is? Angela Davis?”

While the evolution is taking hold, so is the

revolution. Hundreds of miles away from parents or anyone who knows me, I am free to experiment with different personae. Finding myself is still on the agenda. Freed from the pressure to be the dutiful daughter/student, I revolt with full force. If there is a demonstration, I'm there. With the war in Vietnam a common cause for dissent among my classmates, I join with a group providing sanctuary for a conscientious objector. I add my name to a petition to the administration demanding Black Studies and briefly occupy the administration building. On a less political note, I have my first drink. I make friends outside my ethnic and cultural group. I'm not yet me, not the myself I'm going to become, but I'm doing the research and evaluating the findings. Amid all that revolution, I still find time to go to class. During the occupation of the administration building, I go to Humanities 101. I get a quizzical look from my classmates. My professor actually drops his jaw upon my entrance.

"Good morning, Miss Lea," he says a little more loudly than necessary. I'm surprised he knows my name, but I give him a weak smile back.

"Morning," I mumble in response. I am uncomfortable, but belligerent. To answer the unasked questions, I summon my courage and, sounding braver than I feel, I announce to all around me, "I came to Brandeis to get an education. That means coming to class."

Being a stranger in a strange land takes its toll on me. Sometimes, when I am tired or homesick, I unconsciously slip into the soft, easy rhythm of my mother tongue. It is unintentional; it is unnoticed by me, that is, until someone remarks, never laughs, at how I pronounce genuine as "gen-u-wine." Genuine is my shibboleth. Somehow I manage to become bilingual.

Eventually the stress of maintaining dual citizenship gets the best of me. I leave in my sophomore year. I experience other places; I even go home again. I become a regular bicultural/bilingual expert.

So what did I learn from my first foray into the unknown? Was it simply a waste of time and anxiety? Not really. I had credits to transfer for when I finally did return to school. I learned that there is much I don't know, and not just about academics. I developed a more open mind, which forced me to develop critical-thinking skills. Most importantly for me was that I stepped outside my comfort zone to experience the alien. I have done so ever since. ■

**Ray began writing in middle school and won her first national award with the Gertrude Johnson Williams Writing Contest.**



*After leaving Brandeis, Roxie Ray married and went to work, but never stopped being a student. Always an independent learner, she read anything she could find, eventually attending NYU in between working full time and taking care of her family. She earned a master's in Education at UB, where she is now the Director of Learning Resources. "Resident Alien" was first published in The Commons, a series showcasing faculty work produced by the School of Arts and Sciences.*





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