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Year in Review: The Top Stories at Roger Williams University in 2016

Celebrate RWU's many successes in 2016 with a look back at the most-read stories of the year



December 27, 2016 | Jill Rodrigues '05

BRISTOL, R.I. – There's no doubt that 2016 was a very big year for Roger Williams University, with the opening of a new campus in the heart of downtown Providence at the same time the University welcomed its largest class ever with the Class of 2020. From sending off more than 1,000 graduates into the world with Commencement 2016 to the launching of a student-led Conservation Corps, the construction management program earning a top-five national ranking, the creation of a real-time financial trading room, students landing prestigious honors and faculty experts making a difference with their work, celebrate RWU's many successes with a look back at the most read stories on PDQ@RWU.

- Leading off as the top story of the year, Roger Williams' Class of 2016 found "Passion, Potential and the Power of 'Yes'" at a beautiful outdoor Commencement ceremony on May 14.
- Soggy fries? Sad salad? Not at Roger Williams! With everything made from scratch and as many ingredients sourced locally as possible, the Dining Commons and retail cafés operated by Bon Appétit Management serve more than 1 million meals annually and still capture regular honors in Best College Food surveys – like claiming the number-one spot on USA Today's 'Best College Food' ranking in Rhode Island.

- With top-notch faculty leading hands-on training in classrooms and at HawkWorks, the University's 5,600-square-foot fabrication facility, RWU recently ranked among the top five for four-year construction management degree programs.
- In March, the University launched a student-led Conservation Corps, joining with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse in a call to action to encourage college students and community partners across the state to help address climate change with achievable action.
- When a hurricane recently devastated the island of Haiti, whose people were still reeling from a natural disaster several years ago, two alumni and a faculty member pooled their expertise and local connections to collect donations and bring them directly to those most in need. Earlier this month, Bernard Georges '14, executive director of the nonprofit New Bridges for Haitian Success, traveled to Haiti to hand-deliver money, medicine and food.
- Art Spiegelman, the controversial political cartoonist who brought the graphic novel recognition as serious literature, came to campus to assert the value of his medium with a lecture titled, "What the %@&*! Happened to Comics?" as part of the President's Distinguished Speakers Lecture Series.
- At a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September, Roger Williams celebrated the significant expansion of its presence in the heart of the state with the opening of a new building at One Empire Street, while showcasing the University's growing impact on the city's social and economic fabric.
- RWU alumnus Cy Thompson '11 sailed his way to an impressive showing in the quarter-finals of the Rio Olympics, chalking up another great run in his second Olympics Games competing for the U.S. Virgin Islands sailing team. (Although these stories didn't make the most-read list, the University would be remiss to not take a moment to celebrate Hugh Freund '11 capturing the silver medal in the 2016 Paralympics and freshman Maia Agerup bringing her Olympic experience to the RWU sailing team.)
- Thanks to the Robert F. Stoico/FIRSTFED Charitable Foundation, the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business received a \$200,000 renovation that created a trading room where students work with real-time data from financial markets around the world.
- With the release of the highly anticipated sequel to *Finding Nemo*, marine science expert Andrew Rhyne examined the impact of the wild marine fish trade from films like *Finding Dory*. A few months later, Rhyne and a co-researcher won the grand prize award in the inaugural Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge, which will fund the development of their tech solution to detect the hidden illegal wildlife trade coming into U.S. ports.

- This past January, students traveled to the island of Hispaniola to study the history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic through the lens of the political, social and economic climates, while also exploring public health issues and volunteering at a local health center and school via the nonprofit FIMRC (Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children).
- To help keep the native Arabic language intact for young Syrians who fled their war-torn country, Professor of Literacy Education Rachel McCormack launched a "Books for Refugees" initiative to bring children's books written in Arabic to refugee camps across Europe. Her effort was featured in *The Atlantic's* article, "Losing Identity During the Refugee Crisis."
- Roger Williams' marine biology program has created a pipeline of students over the years to receive the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Ernest F. Hollings Scholarship, and sophomore Danielle Lavoie was the most recent student to be named a Hollings Scholar – and with the honor, she will get \$19,000 in tuition aid and a 10-week, paid internship to conduct research alongside the nation's top marine scientists.
- At the end of each academic year, Roger Williams undergraduate and graduate students demonstrate their academic scholarship with research presentations, artistic performances and more, in the Student Academic Showcase and Honors (SASH) celebration, which brought together nearly 650 students this year.
- Building on previous successes in a highly competitive student advertising competition, an interdisciplinary team of 22 students captured third place in the National Student Advertising Competition.

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