

SU People



Paul Gandel | Optimizing Info Technology

PAUL GANDEL G'86, SU'S CHIEF INFORMATION officer (CIO), began using computers more than 20 years ago when he was a Syracuse doctoral student in information studies. It was an inauspicious beginning. "There was a shared terminal and printer in one of the offices, and the secretarial staff would let the graduate students sneak in at night to work on their dissertations," Gandel says. But that was many operating systems ago. He returned to the Hill in 2004 to preside over a computing enterprise that has grown to an annual budget of about \$17 million, employing more than 200 specialists across campus.

Decisions on information technology are crucial factors in the health of educational institutions. As the University's

vice president of information technology, Gandel is charged with maintaining and improving information capabilities for the entire University. His duties include researching options, setting strategies, and implementing plans in such areas as computing systems, voice and data networking, distance-learning technology, and research facilities. In the decade preceding his return to SU, Gandel gained a national reputation for superlative results as CIO at the University of Rhode Island and Ohio University.

Though eclectic by some standards, Gandel's education makes perfect sense to him as training for his job. "My undergraduate studies were in history at the University of Buffalo, in my hometown," he says. "I became particularly interested in the history of technology—how it affects people and our understanding of the world." In a senior honors seminar, Gandel met renowned photographer Nathan Lyons and Beaumont Newhall, curator of the

George Eastman House, who were among the guest faculty. They helped convince him that photography was a particularly important innovation because it changed the way people see the world.

The experience inspired Gandel to earn a master of fine arts degree in photography at Buffalo. Putting theory into practice, he created a research center and library focusing on the presentation and organization of visual information. He then made a decisive move toward his life's work by completing a master of library science degree at the University of Wisconsin. His SU doctoral work in information transfer followed.

Gandel, who is also a professor at the School of Information Studies, claims to hold no prejudice for high technology. "I don't believe in technology for technology's sake," he says. "There's a wonderful essay by Richard Clark in which he gets to the heart of the matter. Clark reminds us that media are merely vehicles by telling us not to ascribe nutrition to a milk truck. The truck may be the best way to deliver the product—refrigerated, fast, and so on—but you only gain nutrition from the milk."

Among the first major tasks Gandel has set for himself is improving the campus network, a pioneer system that is beginning to show its age. He also wants to facilitate the University's entry into partnerships with local communities to create wireless networks that will help even the technological playing field in education and other services. "At some point, I hope we will create a high-speed cyber ring around the entire city to share information and connect up to the new network highways that are coming through Syracuse," he says.

Gandel and his wife, Kandice Salomone G'92, an associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, are avid sailors. They are circumnavigating the globe in bits and pieces, returning to their last port of call to embark upon the next leg of the voyage. The two met as Syracuse students. "One of the reasons Paul got into this business is because he believes in putting information into the hands of people who need it," Salomone says. "Not just the most 'important' people, but everyone."
—David Marc

Regina Jones

Kindness and Support

IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE, A PERSON MUST AGREE to help when asked to assist in a ceremony. Regina Jones, an Oneida Indian and program coordinator for SU's Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), has embodied this spirit of unconditional kindness and support throughout her life and in her work with students over the past 15 years. "That's how I was raised," Jones says. "You never refuse someone who needs help." She began at SU in the physics department as the undergraduate secretary. Whether a student needed to talk over a concern or just borrow a pencil, she was there. Others from around campus often directed Native American students to Jones for mentoring. "As with all of our students of color, they sometimes need to relate to someone and find support," Jones says.

For all those she assisted, she became affectionately known as "the physics lady," a moniker that followed her in 2000 when she became the office coordinator at OMA, which provides a support network for students and promotes diversity across campus through programs and educational initiatives. Jones also advises Native American Students At Syracuse (NASAS), a student association she helped build, and manages an e-mail listserv for Native American students. "Students of color are accustomed to living in communities where their support system is well outside their nuclear family," says Jones, who was honored as a 2004 Martin Luther King Jr. Unsung Hero. "The work of NASAS and the Office of Multicultural Affairs is to make sure our students have a place where they can feel safe and talk and feel at home," she says.

Her position at OMA has evolved to include chairing the committees that present the Irma Almirall-Padamsee La Fuerza Community Enhancement Award, named for OMA's former director, and the Chancellor's Feinstone Grants for Multicultural Initiatives. She was also involved in the creation of the Native American studies minor three years ago. "I think the Native presence is especially important with the Chancellor," says Jones, who took part in Chancellor Nancy Cantor's inauguration last November. She was one of the invited guests who stepped forward to describe herself and declare, "I am the soul of Syracuse," personifying the theme of the Chancellor's inaugural year. Jones was also deeply touched by the inclusion of the Six Nations confederacy in the ceremony. "The

proudest moment for me was when they announced the Haudenosaunee delegation and there were cheers as our flag came into the Dome," Jones says.

Jones remains close to her Native American roots. She lives on the Onondaga Nation where she grew up and has a special connection with many neighbors in her role as birth coach and assistant midwife. Whenever Jones conducts a newborn's exam, she revels in the connection with a brand new life. Her first experience was 23 years ago. "I had been asked to take pictures, but not one picture was taken," she says. Instead, she ended up helping the midwife. "I was so excited that night! I thought, 'If I died tomorrow, I would die a happy woman.' I



John Dowling

STAFF

helped one person's first moment of life to be nice."

Along with her work and community involvement, she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in child and family studies from the College of Human Services and Health Professions. "Those classes interest me," says Jones, who was a stay-at-home mom with her four children before coming to SU. She has also included Native American classes in her studies, and finds it invigorating to learn more about her own history. "You have to keep challenging your mind and belief system to make sure you're clear within yourself," she says. —Kathleen Haley

Melissa Beth Shakun | Forming Visions

MELISSA BETH SHAKUN '05 APPROACHES LIFE MUCH AS she does a lump of clay on her potter's wheel. Endless possibilities exist, depending on how she molds it; and should she not like how it is shaping up, she can simply start again. "You're supposed to have a vision in your head before you get going," says the art education graduate and a 2005 College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Class Marshal. "But I like to explore different shapes and will throw a bunch of forms on the wheel to determine what I like."

Shakun has been equally flexible in her survey of possible careers. In her West Hartford, Connecticut, high school, she volunteered with an archaeologist, envisioning her future as a forensic scientist digging up remains of ancient societies. But a potter at heart, she applied to Syracuse University's art education program "on a whim" and fell in love with the facility and the idea of studying art. "As soon as I visited the ceramics department, I knew I had to be here," she says. "It was amazing, and I was inspired by the quality of work being produced by the students." Midway through her sophomore year, Shakun saw her future taking a new form. A winter break theater course in London turned her interests toward theatrical set design. During fall semester of her junior year, she showed up at the drama department every day for two

weeks, pleading to get into theater design classes. Eventually her persistence paid off, and she crammed as many theater design classes into her schedule as possible while meeting her education and art requirements. "I wanted to get the most of my college experience, so I knew I could figure out a way to do it," she says.

Shakun had "one of the best experiences" of her life as an intern working with professional costume designer Randall Klein on Syracuse Stage's production of *Hamlet*. She crafted jewelry and distressed the costumes for the characters of Ophelia and the gravedigger. "Spending spring break in the costume shop was a great time in my life," she says. "I realized I really wanted to pursue theater design." She also assisted in creating scenery for the SU student production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, and designed sets for two student productions on campus last semester while student teaching at Jamesville Elementary School. This fall, she'll enroll in the M.F.A. program in set design at SUNY Purchase.

Despite a course load of at least 19 credits each semester, Shakun made time to chair the annual Share the Warmth blanket drive for Students Offering Service, serve as a VPA peer advisor, lead tours for the Office of Admission's Fall Friday programs for prospective students, and volunteer with the

Phi Sigma Pi service fraternity. Another highlight of her college experience was being named a 2005 Remembrance Scholar in memory of the 35 SU students who died in the 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. "It was an incredible experience because we went beyond mourning to celebrate their lives," says Shakun, who lost her mother to cancer while in high school.

Shakun anticipates a possible return to the classroom as an elementary school art teacher or a college professor, although she is not ready to take any one career to the kiln yet. "I am passionate about ceramics, theater, and teaching," she says. "I know all three will play a role in my life." As she leaves the Hill, she can look to lessons learned at the potter's wheel for inspiration. "You have a piece of clay, what do you make?" she asks. "You can do an exponential number of things. It's exciting."

—Margaret Costello



STUDENT

John Dowling

Brandice Bell | Designing with Care

DRAFTING PLANS FOR A NEW building is a lot like fashioning a prom gown. So says Brandice Bell '06, a fifth-year architecture student who has been designing her own clothes since she was 12 years old. "When you design a garment, you have to think about more than whether what you're creating will make a person look good," she says. "You have to ask, 'Will this make her comfortable? Will this keep him warm? Does it match her personal style?' Architecture is the same way. When I design a building, I have to do more than try to make the company look good, or make myself look good. I have to care about the people who use the building."

A native of Atlanta, Bell decided on Syracuse because of the School of Architecture's broad educational approach. "You get more than just a theoretical understanding of what architecture is," says Bell, an Our Time Has Come Scholar who received the David Bing Scholarship for undergraduate minority students and a scholarship from the American Institute of Architects. "The program at Syracuse grounds you. The faculty help you understand that, yes, you are a designer, but you are a designer of buildings that actually have to be constructed. At the same time, the faculty encourage your creativity."

Creativity is important to Bell, who, in addition to being a designer of clothes and buildings, is a writer, singer, and dancer. "Dance has always been a part of my life, and I still dance every opportunity I get," she says. "I also love writing, especially about black culture, which I get to do when I take an African American studies class." Bell is also a member of the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble, a Central New York gospel choir composed of University students and community members. "I really enjoy it," she says. "It is enlightening to be part of a group of young people who are so mature and dedicated, and who understand how powerful their voices can be in spreading the messages of God's love and God's word."

Those messages were instilled by her parents, whom she describes as extremely spiritual. "They taught me to treat

people with respect and to believe in myself," says Bell, the middle child of five, whose ages range from 12 to 29. "They taught me I can do whatever I want with my life." She sees architecture as a means of making a difference in the world and hopes to one day own a firm. "One of the reasons I chose this field is because I feel buildings are becoming dehumanized," she says. "Too many people design glamorous monuments to themselves, and too many buildings are built in the wrong places, for the wrong reasons. I want to design a homeless shelter or a center for battered women—a building that has practical uses, but also has a social connotation, and an impact on the actual community."

—Amy Speech Shires

