

# UB Knightlines

## Harvesting the Future

How UB business students are bringing  
hope to a Costa Rican farming community





# President's Line



**Neil Albert Salonen**

Summer is a time of paradox and transition. We launch the season with Commencement, a closing ceremony celebrating graduates' milestones, and we end the season with freshmen arriving for their first year, the reopening of residence halls, and new programs. Yet both the rites of May and August are imbued with momentum and promise. UB's story is ever-evolving, with the end of one chapter quickly opening to something new. There is much to celebrate.

Our faculty and students understand this perhaps better than most. So it's of no surprise that they embrace innovation. When not studying, competing in sports, or working, a great many are applying newly acquired skills and creativity to solve problems. As you'll read in this issue, they are inventors, seeking to create products and services to benefit us all. The University supports their spirit of bold experimentation and inquiry through its academic programming, internships, multidisciplinary labs, and annual gatherings, like Faculty Research Day. This year's seventh annual event featured 174 projects from every academic department, attracting visitors from both campus and Greater Bridgeport, who increasingly recognize UB as a locus of cutting-edge research and innovation. As a result, alumni like Dusan Bogunovic '04 leave the University prepared to ask bold questions and lead in their fields. A native of Serbia, Bogunovic came to UB to earn a bachelor's degree in biology. He now leads a team at Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City, where he is on track to developing a broad-spectrum antiviral drug capable of keeping us safe from Ebola to Zika. (See his interview on page 40.)

Faculty and staff are equally committed to innovation. Recently, they have launched an inaugural and highly successful Giving Day drive and found better methods to identify people through voice and facial-recognition systems (see "Faculty Lines," starting on page 37, for details). Professors Elena Cahill and Tim Raynor turned a Costa Rican farming community into a living classroom for undergraduate business majors. Thanks to their creative outreach, their students are both helping farmers develop much-needed jobs and learning to put business theories into practice. The program will grow and evolve, just like UB.

What will UB look like in ten years, when it celebrates its Centennial? It's impossible to know for certain, but it will be a very different UB from the one I remember in 2000, when I began serving my presidency. After 17 years at the helm, I am stepping down next summer, in June 2018. It is time to pass the baton to someone else who can guide the University toward its 100th year and beyond. And summer, fittingly, is a perfect time for this end and this beginning.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil Albert Salonen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

**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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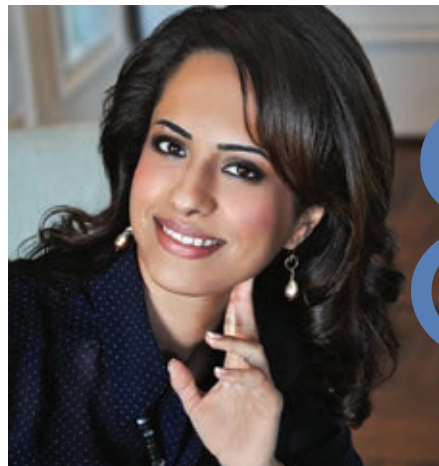
Bold and inspired, students across campus are busy inventing new products to improve our lives.

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# Editor's Note

Creativity is no longer optional at work, experts tell us. And companies large and small, service providers, nonprofits, schools, and even places of worship have taken notice. Rather than accomplishing tasks by rote, employees are now urged to propose unique ways to engage, sell, heal, connect, and build.

But what does it really mean to be creative? As we prepared this issue of *Knightlines*, I concluded that creative people possess flexible vision. That doesn't mean they're designers or artists or musicians—though they can be. Creative souls are individuals who see things from various perspectives, thus enabling them to propose fresh ideas. Consider alumni like Marla Pesce Stasaitis '10, '16, who developed a new way to teach writing, or bespoke shoemaker Tochukwu Mblamnoze '15 (both are featured in this issue). Or get to know UB students who this spring were awarded for their ingenuity. Thanks to their ability to look beyond entrenched practices, these out-of-the-box thinkers proposed a slew of super-cool inventions. You can read about them in “Napkin. Paper. Idea.” on page 8.

Creative ideas can spark from anywhere but collective support helps them come to fruition. Just ask Elena Cahill and Tim Raynor. This March, the two business professors led students from their International Entrepreneurship class to Costa Rica, where they helped coffee farmers create much-needed jobs by changing generations-old methods of selling crops. The students' marketing ideas and ultimate proposal, which you can read about on page 14, are now ushering in hope for the agrarian village, but work is just beginning. Cahill, Raynor, and UB business students will continue their efforts, thanks to a new faculty-guided, student-run campaign called *Coffee on the Farms* that aims to financially empower some of the world's poorest farming communities.

Collective support and a can-do spirit are critical to propelling positive change on campus, too. Lest anyone doubt that, they only have to look back to May 17, when UB held its first annual Giving Day. In 24 hours, more than 200 alumni and friends donated \$26,636 (for details, go to page 26). Whether they chose to give to the Annual Fund or to a specific program, donors' gifts manifested their personal hopes and visions for UB; their participation—gifts that reflect philanthropic values—will help shape the University's future. In that way, it's not so different than creative employees brainstorming at a revolutionary start-up or collaborating at a world-renowned research lab.

So stay in touch, weigh in. Share your news, your ideas, and your support for the University. Because creative institutions cannot flourish in isolation. We need your ideas and your input. We need you to get involved.

Leslie Geary  
Founding Editor



# Pipelines

## From the Press League

Dear Editor,

I just got the latest *Knightlines* and read the piece by Dianne Wildman about John Harper (“John Harper Knows Baseball,” Spring 2017).

I started at UB in 1967, majored in journalism, worked on the *Scribe*, was sports editor my sophomore year, loved the social life, was in the army for three years, got married, and graduated in 1975.

I started working in the sports department at the *New York Times* in 1977 and played in the modified fast-pitch New York Press League through the ‘80s. That is why I remember so well the best bit of bench-jockeying, accomplished from the field, I ever experienced.

The Press League was six newspaper teams playing three games against each other on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. at Hecksher Ballfields in Central Park. Playoffs to follow.

John played for the [*NY Daily*] News. I had known about him at UB in the ‘70s and was quick to pick up his byline, but now he was on the other team. I am sure I high-fived John during or after one game or another but never established our UB connection, as tenuous as it was.

**Peter Putrimas '75**

Simi Valley, CA

## Home Run

Dear Editor,

The recent issue was terrific and the article on John Harper super. *Knightlines* gives us a good feeling about UB again after many years.

**Fred Burgerhoff '72**

Basking Ridge, NJ

## A Story of Interest

Dear Editor,

My wife Susan and I, both UB graduates, thoroughly enjoy each issue of *Knightlines*. It brings back many outstanding and fond memories.

I owe a great deal to UB. First, I met my wife there, and secondly, I was able to obtain a full scholarship to NYU based on my four-year education.

Besides being a physical therapist, I have been writing fiction books for the past 30-plus years. All of my 42 books are currently sold on Amazon Kindle. One particular novel that might be of interest to my fellow UB alumni is *Coach Kay*. The idea for this book was derived from my past experiences at the University.

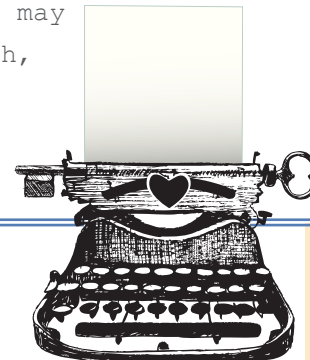
Thank you again for your good work, and we truly look forward to each issue.

**Stanley L. Alpert '64**

New City, NY

## Have an opinion?

We'd love to hear from you! Please send Letters to the Editor to [knightlines@bridgeport.edu](mailto:knightlines@bridgeport.edu) or to 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.





# When the Shoe Fits





Photos: Chad Anderson Photography

## Alumnus and entrepreneur Tochukwu Mbiannoze's love of bespoke footwear puts him a step above his competition

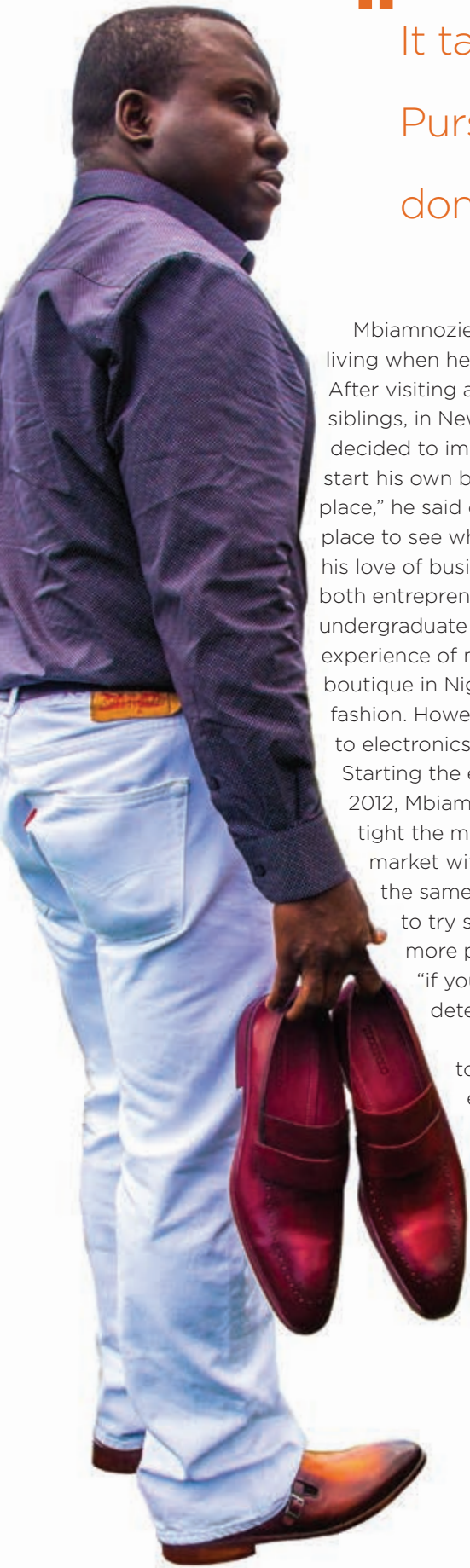
By Michele Meehan

What do you do if the shoe doesn't fit? Then you can just custom-order it from Tucci Polo Inc. Founded in 2015 by Tochukwu Mbiannoze '15, TucciPolo is well on the way to establishing itself in the luxury-footwear and accessories market. Designed by Mbiannoze and crafted by Italian artisans, TucciPolo shoes are considered by their creator to be wearable works of art for men and women who can appreciate something unique.

"That's what my company is," said Mbiannoze, who formulated the footprint for TucciPolo during his MBA program in international business at UB, "It's unique." With an eye toward affluent, fashion-conscious consumers, TucciPolo offers handcrafted leather bags, made-to-order belts, and ready-to-wear shoes in a variety of interesting styles and hues. But what sets the company apart from its competition is its ability to create custom-made shoes in sizes from six to 22 that can be hard to find in a typical brick-and-mortar shoe store.

*(continued on page 6)*





“ It takes patience and time to build something. Pursue your goals with passion and optimism; don't be afraid to fail.”

Mbiamnozie didn't plan to sell shoes for a living when he left his home country of Nigeria. After visiting a brother, one of seven other siblings, in New York City in 2010, Mbiamnozie decided to immigrate to the United States to start his own business. "I saw it was a good place," he said of his decision. "It is a good place to see what you can achieve." He ascribes his love of business to his parents, who were both entrepreneurs. Though he earned his undergraduate degree in architecture, it was his experience of managing his uncle's footwear boutique in Nigeria that sparked an interest in fashion. However, shoes would take a backseat to electronics upon his arrival in New York. Starting the ecommerce store Zenith-Mart in 2012, Mbiamnozie quickly discovered how tight the margins can be in the electronics market with so many companies offering the same products. He realized he needed to try something different, and a little more profitable, "With fashion," he said, "if you have a quality product, you can determine your own price."

Wanting further education to augment his new business endeavors, Mbiamnozie researched MBA programs

around the area. He selected the University of Bridgeport, based in part on the diversity of cultures that were represented within the school's community. He currently keeps an office at the Student Entrepreneur Center, where he conducts business and mentors current students. "I want to give back to UB by helping other entrepreneurial students," he said. "I want them to know they need to be persistent, have perseverance, and stay in focus in order to achieve their goals. It takes patience and time to build something. Pursue your goals with passion and optimism. Don't be afraid to fail."

That philosophy has served Mbiamnozie well. Two years since its inception, TucciPolo is still in its growing stages with projected sales of \$150,000 for 2017. The fully self-funded company is, however, beginning to garner notice on a larger scale. In 2016 Mbiamnozie was awarded \$10,000 for the Comcast Business I4E (Innovations for Entrepreneurs) Regional Award for companies using technology to enhance their business. In addition to winning awards, TucciPolo has also been spotted on the awards circuit in Hollywood, notching a few celebrity red carpet appearances on its belt, a luxury, made-to-order belt, of course. ■







TUCCIPOLO

TUCCIPOLO



# Napkin. Pen. Idea.

## Student inventions capture handfuls of prizes this spring

By Leslie Geary

A napkin. A pen. An idea.

It's tantalizing; start with the basics and over time . . . the stuff of dreams, and not so far-fetched. Author J.K. Rowling wrote down ideas for *Harry Potter* on a napkin. Southwest Airlines cofounders Rollin King and Herb Kelleher mapped out plans for their low-cost carrier on one, too. The font on your credit card? Designed on a napkin from the Waldorf Astoria.

Of course, a napkin isn't necessary for an invention. But ideas are. So is a dogged willingness to try, even in the face of potential failure, which may explain the profusion of invention at UB. Students are generally a dogged bunch, brimming with optimism. They don't seem to care if inventions can blow up like an over-heated Hoverboard. They invent anyway, and this spring, several UB student-inventors were rewarded for their ideas.

Will their products make history or even make it to market? Impossible to say, even with an award. But the point is, they got their proverbial napkins, their pens, their ideas, and they went for it.







## Hot ice

“More than 800 people die each year in the U.S. in vehicle crashes caused by snow, sleet, and freezing rain. In the case of snow, it can be predicted and seen on the roads, but that’s not the case for black ice. Every year, it causes hundreds of accidents for unsuspecting drivers,” says design student Diana Inga. “We see drones being used in the military and even for package-delivery systems. So why not use them to make highways safer?”

Why not, indeed? Inga’s Black Ice Drone, which won a Traffic Safety Award at the New York Auto Show this April, locates often hard-to-see black ice on roadways and melts it using an eco-friendly saltwater solution.

Guided by a global positioning system, the Black Ice Drone uses an infrared temperature sensor to detect changes in road temperature in less than .01 seconds. It can detect black ice anywhere within a three-mile radius.

After Black Ice Drone has monitored its designated route, it returns to a solar-powered recharge station and refills on salt solution. The recharge station would be placed on the back of freeway signs, where the height keeps the drone safely out of traffic.



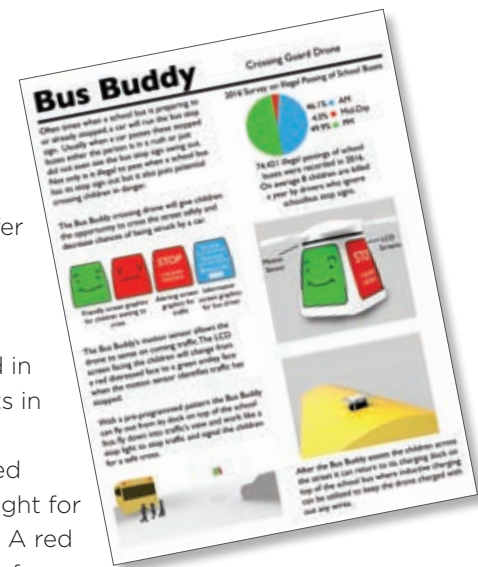
## High-tech crossing guard

Next time you’re stuck behind a big yellow school bus, waiting for the last of a very long line of children to get on or off, you may want to think about the UB industrial design student Kristofer Fujii.

After learning that 74,400 vehicles illegally accelerate around stopped school buses per year, killing an average of eight children, Fujii decided to invent a crossing guard drone that keeps children safe. His invention, Bus Buddy, caught the eye of auto industry executives and in April won \$2500 at the New York International Auto Show, one of the biggest industry events in the world.

Bus Buddy protects students by monitoring traffic around a stopped school bus. Equipped with a motion sensor that watches oncoming traffic, it launches into the air like a flying stop light for pedestrians and, using an LCD screen, lets kids know when it is safe to move toward the bus. A red distressed face says, “stop,” and a green smiley face says, “proceed.”

Bus Buddy can return to its charging dock on top of the school bus, where inductive charging keeps the drone operational without any wires.



(continued on page 10)



### Smart helmet

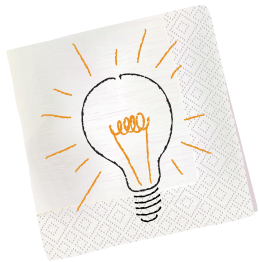
Reem Alattas's safety helmet for cyclists is designed to help grab motorists' attention and keep cyclists safe. By moving their heads, bikers can activate lights that flash right or left as they're about to make a turn. But the high-tech head gear is also capturing plenty of notice at competitive start-up events, like the Connecticut New Venture Competition, where Alattas won the Best Presentation Award and \$500 for her invention in May.

Alattas '17 earned her master's degree in computer science and engineering at UB and began creating the patented helmet when she took a New Product Commercialization class.

Now back in her native Saudi Arabia, where she works for Microsoft, Alattas is currently developing prototypes for the head gear and hopes to get it to market in the near future.

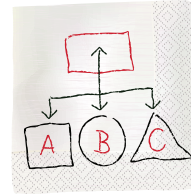
In an interview last year, Alattas said she didn't realize "that UB would open the door of invention for me. I have always wanted to invent useful stuff to improve people's lives, but coming from a pure scientific background, I only knew how to simulate devices I thought of on computer programs. The engineering side of the doctoral program simplified making the physical prototypes, and the technology management classes helped in creating a plan for commercializing these devices."

Hats . . . er, helmets off to you, Ms. Alattas.



“I have always wanted to invent useful stuff to improve people's lives.”

### Next-gen bar code



Eugene P. Gerety's research involves something people use every day: two-dimensional bar codes.

Found on driver's licenses, identity cards, boarding passes, as QR codes on marketing materials, and even at sports events to track athletes, 2D bar codes use shapes and symbols to pack in a ton of data, from someone's address to their fingerprint.

The hitch: retrieving information. Says Gerety, a PhD candidate majoring in computer engineering at UB and staff systems engineer at Philips Respironics, in Wallingford, Connecticut. "The current practical limit on data density is about 2K bytes per square inch, using standard bar code printing/scanning hardware. Beyond that, the features of the bar code become so small that a type of image distortion known as aliasing occurs, making it impossible to obtain information," said Gerety.

That's where Gerety comes in. His research, "Code-Independent Technique with Alias Disambiguation for Data Extraction from Extreme High-Density 2D Printed Bit Field Images," aims to make it easy to retrieve information from 2D bar codes that have density limits as high as 8K bytes per square inch. At the same time, he has ways to make the 2D codes highly durable and copy-proof so they can withstand high heat (e.g. the clothes dryer), get torn in half, or be exposed to electrical and magnetic conditions that would destroy a chip card. That would make them more secure, more usable, and cheaper than data chips.

Gerety's project uses spectral and spatial processing techniques to model and reverse the aliasing process. The work was one of three UB projects awarded at the 25th annual Connecticut Symposium on Microelectronics & Optoelectronics (COMC) for work involving sensors, image processing, and other technologies.







Photos: Chad Anderson Photography

### A swimmer's best friend

Wonder Woman deflects bullets with a wristband, but powerful arm accessories don't have to be the stuff of fantasy, if Nawar Najjar has anything to do with it. The UB technology management major is inventing a high-tech, waterproof wristband to keep swimmers from drowning.

"About 10 swimmers drown in the U.S. per day. It's a big problem," says Najjar, who patented his device and is currently working on prototypes.

Named Poseidon, after the Greek god of the sea, the band is equipped with a sensor, inflatable flotation balloon, and gas unit. Before they dive in, users preset a pressure sensor to open a gas valve that automatically inflates flotation cushions based on a swimmer's time and depth under water.

"Drowning people are confused. They can't control themselves. But the sensor opens the balloon when it senses that it's dangerous," says Najjar, who began inventing the band this

year when he took a New Venture Creation class with technology management Professor Lesley Frame. He also sought help from Student Entrepreneur Center Director Elena Cahill and Gad J. Selig, dean for industry outreach and business development.

In April, judges awarded Najjar's device the \$500 Third Place prize for "Best Venture Plan" out of field of 40 semifinalists at the 2017 Connecticut New Venture Competition held at Yale University. Still, there's a long way from napkin to store shelves. "I'm working on the prototype now," says Najjar, who hopes to begin testing in a few months.

Still, if you find yourself strapping on a life-saving watch before you dive into the pool, you can remember it might have started with a napkin, a pen, and a UB student with a really good idea. ■

Lisa Calderone contributed to this story.



# What's

# your point?

## How teacher Maria Pesce Stasaitis made it a lot more fun for teenagers to learn

By Leslie Geary

Teenagers may have perfected the snappy comeback, but when it comes to positing a considered point of view? That's an entirely different issue, says School of Education alumna Maria Pesce Stasaitis '10 (CAS), '16 (Ed.D).

Stasaitis should know. As a seventh grade language arts teacher at North End Middle School in Waterbury, Connecticut, she spends her days with students who do what young people do best: react emotionally rather than respond dispassionately.

So Stasaitis decided to teach them how to argue better—and master critical literacy skills in the process. Her trick: have students write about hot-button issues on a classroom blog.

"It's a different way of writing argumentative essays, which is a requirement for middle schoolers by Common Core standards," she says.

Stasaitis developed the program, which she

calls *KidBlog*, while she was completing her Ed.D dissertation at UB. Educators like it because it incorporates professional literature about socio-cultural learning, Common Core state standards, and so-called integrated writing interventions.

More important, teenagers like it, too. That's because *KidBlog* contains key ingredients to entice even the most reluctant student to learn: computers, controversial social issues, and plenty of debate.

Summed up one of Stasaitis's students, Lara Colon '14: "One way *KidBlog* helped me was making me want to do it."

The program recently caught the attention of Connecticut Association for Reading Research. In April, the professional group honored Stasaitis with its Wirth-Santoro Award for Literacy Research and invited her to discuss *KidBlog* at its annual awards ceremony in Hartford. The \$1000

**Maria Pesce Stasaitis and her daughter at Commencement in May 2016**





Wirth-Santoro Award will help Stasaitis to share her work with other literacy teachers.

“Maria is most deserving of this award,” said Patricia Mulcahy-Ernt, director of graduate programs in literacy at UB’s School of Education and Stasaitis’s doctoral dissertation adviser.

“She has a creative approach that involves peer collaboration and feedback, teacher guidance, and student self-assessments to instruct students in a sophisticated level of writing that is marked by high levels of cognitive complexity. She has blended together a significant approach for teaching writing with newer technologies in which students are engaged.”

Stasaitis introduced *KidBlog* to North End Middle School in the fall of 2015. Every week, students are asked to think about violence in the media, the benefits or pitfalls of school uniforms and homework, soda and junk food in the cafeteria, and other issues that affect them. Students can’t simply react. They already know how to do that. Instead, Stasaitis directs her class to relevant articles, data, and other sources for information about the subject at hand. Research leads to analysis, the weighing of different perspectives, and—finally—to conclusions. Students share their final opinions, backed by thoughtful arguments, on *KidBlog*, where the entire class can post written responses and thoughtfully share different points of view.

“They really like seeing what their peers write,” said Stasaitis. “It helps them come up with ideas.”

On this point, student Jadan Marquez ’13, agreed. “With the help of Mrs. Stasaitis and my peers, I feel that my blogs have gotten better as have my classmates’ blogs. I’ve learned a lot from this project.” ■



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**How UB's new class in International Entrepreneurship is bringing hope to a Costa Rican farming community**

# Harvesting the Future

**By Leslie Geary**

On a perfectly sunny day in March, a small white motor coach loaded with 18 business students and two professors from the University of Bridgeport pulled out of San Jose, Costa Rica, headed east on the Pan American Highway, and began its steady climb over Cerro de la Muerte Pass, some 11,322 feet above sea level. The road—an innumerable series of U-turns sliced into the mountain's punishingly steep face—seemed to grow narrower with every foot along the route, and if one was candid about it, the breathtaking journey, (for certainly, the distant tufts of clouds—now *below* the bus—and expanse of green mountain range were impressive), was suddenly unnerving for this one small yet significant deficit: there was not a single guardrail in sight.

Better to think about Biolley.

That was the coach's destination. It lay approximately four hours away, nestled in the shadows of La Amistad International Park, a 479,000-acre World Heritage Site brimming with puma, monkeys, jewel-colored birds, and equally varied ecosystems, from rain and cloud forests to grasslands. Plenty of flower and fauna. Human inhabitants? Not as many. There are, in fact, fewer than 100 families—mostly cocoa and coffee farmers—living in Biolley, but their ranks are dwindling. The young people of the village have been boarding the bus back to San Jose, looking for jobs and more promising futures.





“Last year, 23 kids graduated from the high school, and a few months later, 18 of them had moved to San Jose,” says Estasania Pulgarin, one of the UB students sitting at the rear of the bus.

That’s why some six hours and 237 kilometers later, the motor coach finally grinds to a stop on a red dirt road in front of the Asoprola Lodge. It’s run by the citizens of Biolley, and as the coach rattles up to the building, spraying great plumes of mud in its wake, a small crowd of men and women emerges from the building to welcome the UB passengers.

For the next six days, the business students, guided by professors Tim Raynor and Elena Cahill, will stay with local families, tour the village and farms, and gather as much information as they can. Their goal: to find a way for Biolley to prosper without destroying its culture.

### **From classroom to farms**

For Raynor and Cahill, the trip represents a tantalizing opportunity to apply classroom lessons to the real world. Raynor, an entrepreneur and former owner of an independent coffee com-

pany, and Cahill, the CEO of an energy company and other successful start-ups, have guided dozens of managers and moguls throughout their professional careers. Now they both teach at UB’s Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, where this year they cocreated an entirely new class called International Entrepreneurship. It launched in January 2017, and rather than relying on books, Raynor and Cahill, both ardent disciples of you’ve-got-to-experience-it-yourself learning, invited students from the inaugural class to Biolley. It’s here, amid a canopy of strangler fig, palm, and cocoa trees, that students will put management theories into practice. The trip isn’t required to graduate, but it is a draw for undergraduates like Christian Hernandez, a senior majoring in finance.

“It’s my first time going to a global community, and I wanted to make the trip,” he says. “It’s a great opportunity.”

The villagers are equally excited. Thanks to various contacts and sometimes-spotty Internet access, they reached Cahill and Raynor through email, and have spent months coordinating the

*(continued on page 16)*





trip. Now, as luggage is unloaded from the coach, they are eager to escort the UB visitors back to their various homes and welcome them properly. They head out, walking past fantastical Gaudi-esque concrete-and-tile buildings, including an improbable mushroom-shaped ice cream stand in the center of their town. Everyone will regroup in the morning. Tonight is about food: giant platters of chicken, home-grown vegetables, and glasses refilled with freshly pressed fruit juice. Some students like Hernandez chat easily in fluent Spanish. Others rely on a hodgepodge of English and mime to make their point. No matter. Whatever form it takes, communication is the key to any successful business venture, and tonight, the villagers will begin to explain their hopes for the future.

### Percolating

Although farming is in their DNA, the villagers are desperate to create jobs and additional income for their young people. They've already formed the Asoprola Association, a consortium that uses surrounding natural resources to drive the local economy. The inn down where the motor coach parked? It's integral to the village's eco-tourism business that caters to hikers, nature photographers, and other adventurers. There's

**From left: UB students Lukas Ivanovic, Christian Hernandez, and Edgar Velez with Professor Tim Raynor (second from left)**



talk about adding a restaurant, too. A few women make jewelry and sell homemade preserves, but none of these ventures is large enough to lift a village. Perhaps the UB group will have other ideas once they get to know Biolley.

At 8 a.m. the next morning, appointed tour guides lead everyone to farms scattered above the village. At one, a labyrinth of white PVC piping extends from a homemade sewage system used to treat animal waste back to a main house, where it supplies methane gas to power the family's stove. Hernandez is wide-eyed. "This guy has found the best possible way to recycle and to creatively make money and live on his land!" he says. "It's ingenious!"

Next, the coffee groves. "Coffee is very important because it is what we have always done," explains villager Yendry Suarez Chacon. "But we face many challenges now. The disease of the crop, the economic part. The way we work now is not profitable."

Indeed, some farmland sits fallow, too costly to cultivate. Nonetheless, Raynor is delighted by the tidy rows of coffee bean trees he does see. Soon, thousands of tiny white flowers will burst among deep green leaves, filling the air with the aroma of citrus and jasmine. The buds will turn into red coffee cherries, and as they have for generations, farmers will wait patiently as spring cherries fully ripen into summer fruit filled with coffee beans.

The beans, Chacon explains, are harvested at a communal drying center run by the Asoprola





Association. Now silent, the cavernous space will thrum with gossip by late summer as neighbors work side by side, setting their fruit to dry on large concrete tables before they extract coffee beans by hand. Beans then go into 50-pound burlap sacks, ready to be trucked down the mountain by a distributor from San Jose who pays approximately 17 cents a pound for the bounty. That works out to \$2300 a year per farmer, the UB group is informed.

Suddenly, as they stand among now-empty drying beds, listening to farmers talk about the local coffee trade, it becomes abundantly clear that what Chacon says is true: Biolley's farmers have been giving away their profits.

"They're getting abused by the market," says business student Edgar Velez.

Cahill is animated, too. "There's so much more they can do! They're only participating in one small segment of the market. This is a perfect opportunity for Asoprola and us to team up to be more impactful!"

What the village really needs to tip the economic scales in its favor, and what the UB group is about to propose, is quite simple: a 14-kilo coffee roaster.

### Value chain

In development circles, it's called a value chain. Instead of selling unfinished commodities for pennies on the pound, transform raw materials into something else, something worth more. Take cotton. Rather than export it, turn it into cloth, then use the cloth for clothing or towels or throw pillows. Do that, and you'll make more money *and* create jobs for people searching for options.

It works with coffee, too. Instead of selling unroasted beans, which will get somebody else rich, Biolley's farmers could roast their own beans, and, with a business plan, brand, market, and sell them directly to customers who are willing and able to pay for high-quality boutique coffee.

"Assuming that they are going to get the roaster, the No. 1 recommendation we made is that they sell to customers directly on e-commerce platforms like Amazon or their own

*(continued on page 18)*

“Coffee is very important because it is what we have always done . . . but we face many challenges now. The disease of the crop, the economic part. The way we work now is not profitable.”

- Yendry Suarez Chacon







**Biolley's shopkeepers (above) contribute to the local economy, but the village needs more jobs. (Below) UB students toured coffee and livestock farms.**

website. With the Internet, they can participate in the revenue stream," explains Raynor. "Instead of pennies on the pound, they can make \$5 or \$6 a pound."

Of course, the old adage about spending money to make it holds true—even in Biolley. The tab for a good roaster runs at least \$18,000 and climbs to as much as \$40,000. When farmers' typical earnings run a couple thousand dollars a year, a five-figure investment is impossible without help.

Suddenly, the class has a clear purpose: it will help the Asoprola Association secure funding for a roaster. The government of Costa Rica has a grant program, and Cahill and Raynor are hopeful that the village can provide sales totals, inventory records, and other data so students can complete a persuasive grant application on behalf of the village.

The magnitude of the project, its potential to positively impact the village well into the future—well, it's a heady and inspiring thought. But the responsibility to make sure they get the funding? That's scary, say students like Estesania Pulgarin, a first-semester senior majoring in marketing. "I think we're all a little nervous," Pulgarin admits. "We're all trying to do our best work."

Classmate Arianna Shams-Kollar agrees. She is staying with a single mother of five, her host for the week. Her first morning in Biolley, Shams-Kollar woke to the sound of the children getting dressed and heading out the door. Yet when she opened her eyes, it was dark except for a canopy

of stars stretching as far as she could see. "The kids are up at 4 a.m. before school, working on their uncle's farm. When they come home, they work some more. They grow what they eat. If we're successful, we'll help change their lives."

### **A new way of doing business**

Changing business practices also means changing minds. The Asoprola Association is eager to get the roaster, but it is nervous about taking over the marketing of their product.

"Our fears have to do with doing things right, not that we don't want to try," says Chacon, the Asoprola member. "Saying selling coffee online is easy, but the details are very important. We know that to sell online we need to have working capital with a good financial cost, which is not very expensive. That for an organization like us, it is not easy. Our farmers, they know little of languages, computers, Internet. Our young people are our opportunity. It is our eagerness that they find work opportunities in the community and do not immigrate to other regions."

Eager to allay fears, the International Entrepreneurship class dives into research to prove it can and has been done. They start by identifying three Costa Rican coffee companies that sell coffee directly to consumers via the Internet. But, they quickly add, the Asoprola Association

*(continued on page 20)*







“Our farmers, they know little of languages, computers, the Internet. Our young people are our opportunity. It is our eagerness that they find work opportunities in the community and do not immigrate to other regions.”







“This experience definitely changed me. It made me realize you don’t need extravagant things to make life meaningful.”

- Christian Hernandez

has something extra, something more than tasty coffee to offer discerning buyers: the perfect ingredients to craft a distinctive brand and effective marketing campaign. Student Ariana Shams-Kollar ticks them off quickly: Biolley is a small community. It’s situated next to La Amistad International Park, world-renown for its pristine and natural beauty. Farmers don’t use pesticides so their beans are organic. They work cooperatively and qualify as a fair trade organization. Coffee is a way of life, not just a business.

“They have a great story to tell. They’re sustainable, organic—all the things that people connect to,” Shams-Kollar concludes. “So the biggest thing is getting their story across. They need to incorporate marketing and brand development.”

There are myriad other challenges, like creating the name and look for the business, sourcing materials, such as labels and coffee bags, and finding someone local to run a website. Yet with each step, there’s opportunity to retain profits and create new jobs in marketing, inventory control, and management. As the lists of needs and ideas grows, it’s clear that six days isn’t long enough for the UB group to accomplish everything. Soon, it will be time to return to Bridge-



**Biolley’s landmarks include surreal Gaudi-esque buildings, such as the home of Pancho, a local architect and artist.**



**UB students at one of the several homes where they were hosted by villagers during their stay (above)  
Ripening coffee cherries (right)**







port. Cahill and Raynor aren't disappointed. The class will polish the grant application for the coffee roaster in time for its May deadline and email it back to the village. By July, they should know if there is money for a roaster. They'll also return in the fall 2017,

"This isn't a one-semester project for the Trefz School students nor is it a quick fix for Biolley," says Cahill. "Start-ups require nurturing. The class and the coffee business can grow together."

Hernandez, who graduated in May 2017, won't be among those students who return to Costa Rica, but the experience has been transformative all the same. After he returned from Biolley in March, he scuttled plans to pursue a corporate career and applied to the Peace Corps. If all goes well, he'll use his business skills to do similar economic-development work.

"Originally, I planned on getting a 9-to-5 job and staying in Connecticut," he says. "But this experience definitely changed me. It made me realize you don't need extravagant things to make life meaningful. I loved it."

His classmate, Edgar Velez, a junior, will return to Costa Rica. In fact, he's already started to think about how the International Entrepreneurship class can find additional grants to pay for the farmers to attend a coffee trade show or two. "They can go and see what other companies are doing!" Velez says, "They can get ideas."

Bit by bit, a road map for Biolley's future takes hold. It includes a very steep and curvy road that goes up *and* down the mountain. Round trips, not dead ends. It may be difficult to see what lies around the next U-turn, but the village, guided by Cahill, Raynor, and their Trefz School students, are helping to find the way.

At the end of six days, the white motor coach returns to fetch the UB group. There's time for last-minute selfies, a hug, and then the coach rumbles away. Yet as the students peer out its windows, the view no longer looks so scary—just expansive. ■



**UB students at a farm. Each day ended with sunset meals and laughter.**



## President Neil A. Salonen to Leave the University Next Year

President signals time to “pass the baton” as UB looks to its Centennial Anniversary

By Leslie Geary



UB President Neil Albert Salonen will step down on June 30, 2018, he announced.

Board of Trustee Co-Chairman Frank N. Zullo, Esq. named Trustee Robert Berchem as chairman of the University’s Presidential Search Committee, which is expected to soon name a firm to launch a

national search.

Salonen, 72, joined the UB Board of Trustees in 1992, becoming chairman in 1995. In 2000, he was unanimously appointed the school’s ninth president, succeeding Dr. Richard L. Rubenstein, who served as president from 1995-2000.

“It has been my great privilege and joy to serve the University of Bridgeport and to work with the Board of Trustees, whose steadfast confidence in UB enabled us to reach significant milestones on behalf of our students and faculty,” President Salonen said. “UB has much to be proud of, and as it looks to celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in 2027, much to look forward to.”

Appointed in the midst of an economic crisis that roiled much of New England and its institutions during the 1990s, Salonen recalled “rolling up shirt sleeves” and working with trustees, faculty, and other supporters to shore up deficits and steer the University in a new direction.

Under his stewardship, UB more than tripled its revenue, balanced its budget, and established an endowment of approximately \$34 million. Enrollment has climbed to a current 30-year high of nearly 5700 students, up from a low of roughly 1500.

The campus has visibly and dramatically evolved, too. In the past decade, UB has invested more than \$90 million to reopen and enhance shuttered buildings and cut ribbons to gleaming

new facilities, including the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, a nursing school, and University Hall, UB’s newest residence hall.

Collaborative programs, from health clinics to an on-campus resource center for area entrepreneurs, reflect UB’s more than \$435 million annual economic impact in Connecticut.

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Salonen recalled  
“rolling up shirt sleeves”  
... to shore up deficits  
and steer the University  
in a new direction.

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Salonen also pushed the campus to evolve its curriculum with multidisciplinary programs that reflect changes in the global marketplace. Its robust online curricula, geared to meet the needs of working and professional students, have been consistently named among the best by *U.S. News & World Report*. Students include a record number of Fulbright Scholars as well as recipients of prestigious grants and prizes from the U.S. Department of State, NASA, and the National Institutes of Health. Athletics also rebounded.

“We are all proud of the great accomplishments at UB during Neil’s tenure,” said Co-Chairman Zullo, the former mayor of Norwalk. “It is difficult to even think of the University without Neil at its helm, with [his wife] Rebecca at his side. We all know that their wholehearted investment in the campus community has been a big factor in our success.” ■



# Stellar Year

## Faculty and students awarded \$40,000 from the Connecticut Space Grant College Consortium to support their work for NASA

By Leslie Geary

Four faculty members and two students have been awarded approximately \$40,000 from the Connecticut Space Grant College Consortium to further their work in support of NASA's mission.

Abdel-shakour Abuzneid, associate professor of computer science and engineering, was awarded a Faculty Research Grant of \$10,000 for "Computer-Aided Simulator and Benchmark Testbed for the Internet of WSNs Using Satellite Link Communications." The Internet of Wireless Sensor Networks (IoWSN) consists of many sensors and collects data from remote areas, which are used to help science labs located in space. The contributions of this research will include the implementation of an application to integrate space station and satellites to control the IoWSN efficiently.

Nancy DeJarnette, associate professor of teacher education, was awarded a \$4000 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education Research Grant for a "Children's Engineering K-5 Initiative." The project explores if the rate of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) implementation will increase and become a permanent fixture within the classroom curriculum through professional development, resources, and consistent support for K-8 teachers. Working directly with an urban high-needs K-8 school, the initiative provides professional development and consistent in-class support for STEAM implementation with a NASA space focus.

Ryan McCulloch, assistant professor of mathematics, was awarded a \$10,000 STEM Education Programming Grant to develop and offer two Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) K-12 Engineering Design and Earth and Space Science Workshops. With a primary focus on K-12 teachers who work in the cities of

Bridgeport and Hartford, teachers are provided professional development on the newly adopted NGSS as well as ways to incorporate engineering design and earth and space science into their science curriculum. The workshop curriculum will also be available online through University of Bridgeport's Global Learning Initiatives.

Xingguo "Michael" Xiong, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, was also awarded a Faculty Research Grant of \$10,000 for "Balloon/Drone-based Aerial Platforms for Remote Particulate Matter Pollutant Monitoring." Detailed data about distribution of Particulate Matter (PM) pollutants and their diffusion are essential to evaluate their effects on human health and environment. This research aims at developing balloon and drone based aerial platforms for remote PM pollutant monitoring. Compared to ground-mounted PM sensors, balloon/drone based aerial platforms cover much wider areas with better flexibility. They can monitor remote, dangerous or difficult-to-access locations.

Ervin Lara, a freshman majoring in electrical engineering, received a \$5000 scholarship. Lara is a first-generation college student who developed his Space Grant application as part of a writing assignment in an introductory engineering class.

Gukyoung An, a junior in computer science, received a \$429 project grant for materials to build his School of Engineering team's payload as UB advances to its fourth international CanSat (small satellite) competition this summer in Texas.

"We are once again grateful to the Connecticut Space Grant College Consortium's continued sponsorship of UB student and faculty research in support of NASA's mission," said Dr. Jani Macari Pallis, UB's space grant director. ■



# Solar Eclipse 2017!

**The total solar eclipse on August 21, the first in nearly a century, will be available to all, thanks to UB engineers who will live-stream the historic event with NASA**

By Leslie Geary

For the first time in 99 years, a total solar eclipse will cross the entire nation on Monday, August 21, 2017. Over the course of 100 minutes, 14 states across the United States will experience over two minutes of darkness in the middle of the day.

The total eclipse will be visible on a path from Oregon to South Carolina. But even those who aren't in its pathway will be able to witness the historic event, thanks to a NASA Connecticut Space Grant Consortium (CTSCG) team comprising of students and faculty from UB and the University of Hartford.


The NASA CTSCG team will launch two high-altitude, helium-filled balloons equipped with video cameras and other

equipment on August 21 as part of a nationwide, NASA-sponsored project to live-stream aerial video footage of the "Great American Eclipse." The roughly eight-foot-tall balloons are expected to reach up to 100,000 feet at approximately 12 p.m. CT (1 p.m. ET) near Cadiz, Kentucky.

Live footage from the camera will be available for public viewing on NASA's website, <http://nasa.gov>.

As part of the Eclipse Ballooning Project, 55 teams from across the country will launch high-altitude balloons and live-stream footage of the total solar eclipse. The moon will block the sun





entirely for approximately two minutes on a path progressing from the Pacific Coast in Oregon (1:17 p.m. PST) to the Atlantic Coast in South Carolina (2:47 p.m. EST).

The NASA-sponsored project has been years in the making. According to Montana State University's Angela Des Jardins, the project marks the first time that high-altitude video footage of a total solar eclipse has been broadcast live. "We're excited to provide a unique perspective of this rare phenomenon," Des Jardins said. "The live-stream video will show the curvature of the planet, the blackness of space, and the whole of the

moon's shadow crossing the Earth during the eclipse."

For the past two years, the NASA CTSGC team has been preparing for the event. "Our team members have built payloads, learned about the freezing, near-vacuum environment in which the balloons will operate, and practiced launches," said University of Bridgeport faculty lead, Professor Jani Macari Pallis, UB's space grant director.

In addition to a video camera, the team's balloons will carry a GPS tracking system, a camera to capture still images of the eclipse, and a small "bacterial coupon" as part of a NASA astrobiology experiment. Once the eclipse has passed, the balloon will burst and the payloads will parachute to Earth. ■

The University raised \$27,636 during its inaugural Giving Day

# Giving Day

Hundreds of donors jump in to support the University during this spring's inaugural 24-hour fundraising event

By Leslie Geary

The University raised \$27,636 during its inaugural Giving Day on May 17, when 220 donors and alumni logged online to support and, more often than not, express heartfelt gratitude for their UB education.

"I graduated 51 years ago," Sandra Skalkos Will '66 wrote to University officials. "It was the best investment I ever made."

"Thanks for everything UB!" Andre Legister '09, expressed in a note added to his gift. "You have made a difference in my life."

Gifts ranged from \$5 to \$5000 and were matched by a \$5000 challenge gift from UB Trustees Tom '84 and Sue O'Hara '84.

"We give to UB because we want to help make a difference," Sue O'Hara said. "We hope to encourage other alumni to get excited about the future of UB. Ultimately, financial gifts will impact so much more than what we can ever plan for. The domino effect is endless."

University President Neil A. Salonen agreed, saying: "Participation in this event has a tremendous impact on the entire University community, and we're most grateful to Sue and Tom as well as to the hundreds of other supporters who gave. They should take pride in the difference they made today."

Donors were invited to give to UB programs of their choice, but over half made unrestricted gifts to the Annual Fund, thereby allowing the

University to direct funds where they are most needed.

Alumnus James Loh '74, founder and CEO of JL Capital Partners Ltd., an asset-management fund in Singapore, gave \$5000 to the Trefz School of Business, where he earned his bachelor's degree.

"I'm indebted to my professors, Sue Atkinson and Peter Costello, who introduced me to the field of

economics. They went out of the way to provide me with invaluable advice and guidance in my application to graduate studies after UB, and their letters of recommendation had to be the key reason for me to gain admission to the MBA program at the University of Chicago. Thereafter, I had a good career on Wall Street before moving back to Asia," Loh said. "I was fortunate that Professors Atkinson and Costello took an active interest in helping me. My gift, which is a tribute to them, will hopefully support UB's business faculty and students today."

Alice Scalfi '17, a graphic designer, also expressed gratitude for UB by volunteering to create the Giving Day promotional materials that were used online and mailed to donors.

"The University of Bridgeport offered me all kinds of academic and professional opportunities during my graduate studies. I would not be the professional I am right now if it hadn't been for the exceptional help of faculty and staff," said Scalfi, who earned a master's degree in design management. "As an alumna, I felt it was important to find some way to participate and give back to the institution through my skill set."

Director of Annual Giving Arielle Purcell, who organized Giving Day, admitted that "there's always some uncertainty when you host a new fundraising program."

But as donations began accumulating early in the day and some, like Alumni Association President Dennis Brotherton '86, visited her office in Cortright Hall to personally deliver contributions, Purcell was glowing.

"Giving Day has been a celebration of UB's dynamic community as much as it has been about fundraising," she said. "Students, alumni, faculty—so many gave today and so many connected with us online to share their memories and hopes for the University's future. We're thrilled, and we're listening." ■

**James Loh '74 recognized his former business school professors when he participated in Giving Day.**





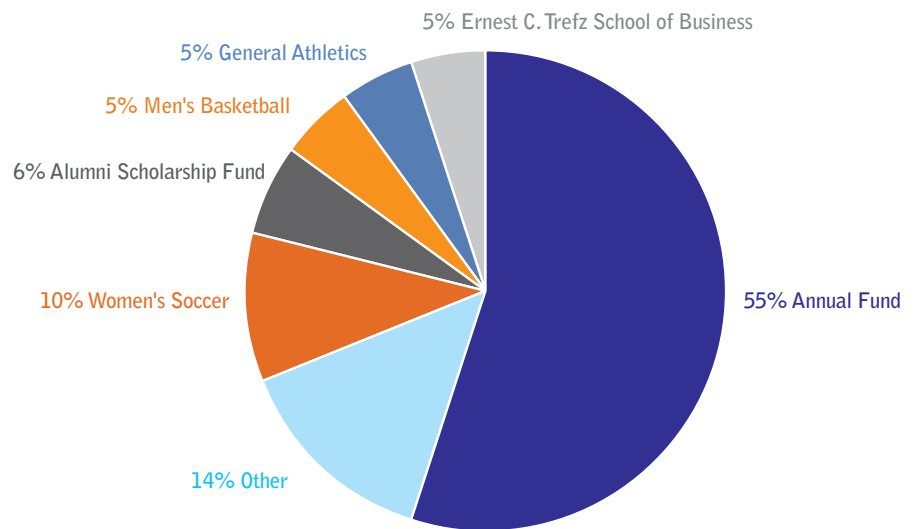
# Where Did You Give?

## Inaugural fundraiser reflects donors' priorities and hopes for UB

At UB, we believe your gifts should reflect your values.

That's why on Giving Day, our first annual 24-hour fundraising event held on May 17, 2017, you were invited to contribute to the UB program of your choice—from scholarships to any one of the University's outstanding academic schools and athletics teams. More than half of you who participated chose to contribute to the Annual Fund. Your unrestricted gifts allow the University to use funds where they are most needed. But no matter where you directed your gift or how much you contributed, your participation ensures that UB delivers the kind of education you believe in.

Thank you for shaping our future. ■ —L.G.



Missed Giving Day? It's never too late to donate at [give.bridgeport.edu](http://give.bridgeport.edu) or call (203) 576-4542.

## Why I Give

**John Mayer '74**  
Spring Hill, Florida



**Assistant Director of Development**  
**Josh Parrow with fellow alumnus**  
**John Mayer '74**

“ I just finished coaching high school sports after 44 years, and I wanted to make this donation in honor of the following UB people who helped me along the way:

Walter “Mort” Faherty. He was a UB alumnus and my high school soccer and baseball coach.

Fran Bacon, UB's soccer and baseball coach, helped me get into UB and kept in touch as I started my soccer coaching career.

The faculty from Arnold College from 1970 to 1974. They gave me the foundation to be a physical education teacher and coach.

Roswell “Bud” Harris, a UB alumnus and alumni director, gave me a job in the Alumni Office. It would take an hour to walk across campus with him as it seemed he knew nearly everyone. ”

# Four Win State Department Scholarships

**Students from the College of Public and International Affairs win Critical Language Scholarships to take immersive language programs**

By Leslie Geary

Four UB students have won U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarships (CLS), among the most competitive in the field, to spend this summer abroad at intensive language programs.

Students Ana Rena, Justin Sabo, and Fernando Gonzalez have been accepted into the Arabic language study program in the Middle East. Sung Soon Gavel won a CLS to study Korean at Chonnam National University in Gwangju, South Korea.

The program is part of a U.S. government effort to dramatically expand the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages deemed to be of particular importance. They include, but are not limited to: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Chinese, Persian, Russian, and Urdu. The program fully funds eight to 10 weeks of group-based intensive language instruction at 24 locations.

The scholarships are highly competitive; just 10 percent of students who apply for a grant win one.

Eight University of Bridgeport students have won CLS scholarships since 2011.

The four UB students who won CLS grants for the summer of 2017 are all enrolled at the College of Public and International Affairs (CPIA). The school's six undergraduate and four graduate programs groom students in fields related to diplomacy, international security, and global development. CPIA alumni have gone on to work for the FBI, the Department of State, Defense Department, United Nations, Council of Europe, as well as global NGO's (non-governmental organizations), and private industry. ■



**From left: Ana Rena, Justin Sabo, Sung Soon Gavel, and Fernando Gonzalez**



# Internet of Things for Teenagers!

Hands-on fun as students learn from the University's engineering faculty

By Leslie Geary

The Internet of Things (also referred to by its acronym, IoT) describes the vast network of smart phones, home-security systems, televisions, 3D printers, and other devices that connect to and share data with each other.

As IoT expands—up to 50 billion gadgets will be connected by 2020—the number of professionals working in the field is expected to soar by 4.5 million over the next five years. But despite its reach and effect on our daily lives, many students still don't know much about the fast-growing field.

That bothered Abdel-shakour Abuzneid, an associate professor at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, so this spring he created and launched a free training course called Internet of Things for Teenagers! The five-week course began in March and introduced 12 Bridgeport high schoolers to all things IoT. It will be offered again next year so other teenagers can participate.

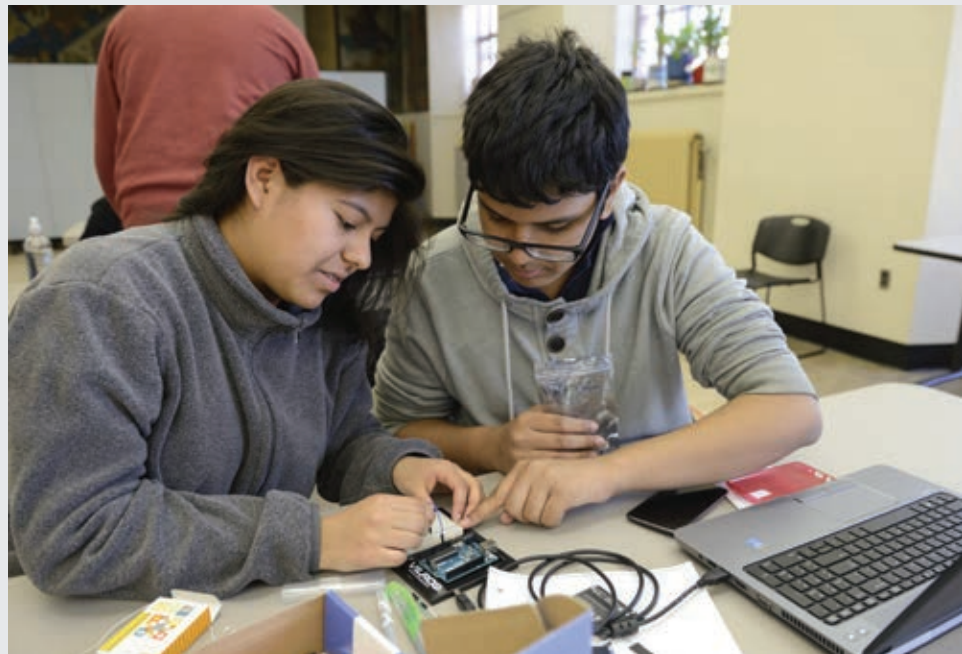
During the program's inaugural sessions, students like Sayem Fazal spent five 90-minute classes performing hands-on labs, such as building circuit systems and Arduino and Raspberry Pi. Fazal

is captain of the robotics club at Bassick High School in Bridgeport and signed up for training because

"no one from our team knows how to program, and I thought it would be helpful," he said a few weeks after the course concluded. He shared his knowledge with classmates back at Bassick, but said the club is eager to learn more. "We just know the basics so it would be great to get more help from a UB student or somebody else." No

**"It would be great to get more help from a UB student or somebody else."**

**— Sayem Fazal**



**Briseida Escobar and Sayem Fazal were among the first Bridgeport students to sign up for Internet of Things for Teenagers!**

prior knowledge of programming was necessary to participate in the program.

"Students just need to be interested in computers and engineering," Abuzneid said.

"There are many opportunities in terms of their future, but we're finding that too many teenagers don't know about IoT or engineering in general. We want to

expose them to the field, but telling them about it isn't enough. Teenagers get enough lectures. They want to try things themselves, and they should! So, we're setting up labs and showing them how to build circuits, program microcontrollers such as Arduino Uno, and get to know more about a field that's growing." ■

# Faculty Research Day

Annual day of ideas and innovation draws hundreds

By Leslie Geary



Faculty Research Day was held on March 24 and featured 174 projects from all academic departments, making the seventh

annual event bigger than ever. Research was organized into five categories: undergraduate student research, graduate student research, doctoral student work, faculty competitive research, and non-competitive faculty research.

“Faculty Research Day has become firmly established as the premier campus venue to showcase the diverse array of faculty and student research,” said School of Engineering Dean Dr. Tarek Sobh. “For many of its participants, Faculty Research Day is the first stop before competing in professional conferences throughout the U.S. and around the globe.”

The daylong celebration of ideas drew more than 350 attendees, including members of the University’s Board of Trustees and local elected officials. Covering a range of subjects, research included case studies, such as “The Influence of Emotional States on Short-Term Memory Retention by Using Electroencephalography (EEG) Measurements,” conducted by School of Education Professor Joanna Badara. Maxime Altidor, an undergraduate from the School of Arts & Sciences, examined “Physical and Emotional Impacts of Paternal Absence on Young Men in College.”

Two groups of students from the Fairchild Wheeler Inter-District Multi-Magnet School, where UB education and engineering faculty have been active in shaping the school’s STEM curriculum, showcased their “Low-Cost Home Animation System.” ■



President Neil A. Salonen (top) and others at Faculty Research Day

- Nicole Valentine**  
1st Place, Undergraduate Research
- Shrishti Singh**  
1st Place, Graduate Research
- Sandra Stramoski, RDH, M.S.**  
Fones Faculty
- Isaac Macwan, Ph.D**  
Engineering Faculty
- Lesley Frame, Ph.D**  
Engineering Faculty, Faculty Research Winner
- Prabir Patra, Ph.D**  
Engineering Faculty
- Khaled Elleithy, Ph.D**  
Engineering Faculty
- Richard Yelle, MFA**  
Director, Industrial Design
- Justin Collado**  
Honorable Mention, Undergraduate Research
- Tarek Sobh, Ph.D**  
SVP, Graduate Studies and Research
- Chunjuan Nancy Wei, Ph.D**  
Faculty Winner
- Samuel Ojetola**  
Honorable Mention, Graduate Research
- Paul Gruhn**  
3rd Place, Doctoral Research
- Linda Paslov, ED.D**  
Education Faculty
- Oluwatosin Akegbejo Samsons**  
Honorable Mention, Graduate Research
- Robert Riggs, Ph.D**  
Faculty Research Day Committee Chair





# Religion 101

**UB professors and other religious leaders welcome area teenagers during a day of interfaith exploration**

By Leslie Geary

On a recent afternoon in May, a dozen teenagers solemnly intoned the Salat al-Zuhr, one of five daily prayers of Islam, at the University's mosque. The words were unfamiliar to them as the teenagers were not Muslim, but they were respectful—and curious to know more.

Before the day was over, the students, all juniors at Fairfield Warde High School, would also spend time at a Catholic chapel, a Congregational church, and a Jewish synagogue on May 20.

For anyone who has watched the news or read a Twitter feed of late, a day devoted to interfaith learning seems particularly current: religious tolerance has become a much-discussed topic. But the program held at UB and other sites this spring actually began in 1997. That's when Fairfield Warde High School social studies teacher Jim D'Acosta began inviting students to visit various places of worship to learn about religions that have shaped history for thousands of years.

The interfaith day program is voluntary, but more than 400 students have participated in it since its inception.

Three years ago, D'Acosta reached out to UB computer science and engineering professors Abdel-shakour Abuzneid and Miad Faezipour to see if the University's mosque would consider participating in the program.

He didn't have to ask twice. "This is something we do. We work with other groups, too, like the police. It is part of our commitment to the community," said Abuzneid. "I tell the students, 'Don't be shy about interrupting! Ask me what you want to learn! What do you want to know about?'"

Abuzneid's informality helps to dispel what he calls "many misconceptions about Islam." For example, students often don't realize that it is the world's second-largest religion, Abuzneid noted, or that while the media associates Islam with



**Fairfield Warde High School students were welcomed to the University's mosque on May 20.**

the Middle East, more Muslims live in India and Pakistan.

Abuzneid also tells visitors that "Islam shares 70 percent of customs and beliefs with other religions," but it was a point that Fairfield Warde student Sara Burkhart, 16, quickly noticed.

"I think generally the religions were the same. They all spoke about how we should accept everyone. And a lot of them used music to connect with people, which I really enjoyed because I'm a big music-listener. The differences [among the faiths] seemed small," said Burkhart.

The mosque at UB, she added, "is so sacred and not many people know about it, so I thought that was cool . . . I know I'll remember the day."

Molly Tanis agrees that the interfaith day can trigger a lifelong curiosity about different faiths. Tanis, a Fairfield Ward alumna, participated in the interfaith event in 2007.

"It was a whirlwind day, but it made me want to know more. I think it's good for students to have a day of that and not just textbooks," said Tanis, who has since studied and lived abroad. "I was curious about how religious leaders from different faiths interacted with their communities on a daily basis, not just for something big, like a wedding or a funeral. I looked at [the interfaith day] as an opportunity to encounter people on their spiritual journeys." ■

## Milestones and Loved Ones

Thanks to live-stream, more than 16,000 around the world logged on to watch friends and family graduate

By Leslie Geary

It was a time to celebrate milestones and acknowledge loved ones on May 6, when the University held its 107th Commencement, a boisterous but sometimes bittersweet event that underscored the hard work and sacrifices made by graduates and their families alike.

For Joan Trefz, the day meant accepting an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, which was awarded posthumously to her husband, UB Trustee Dr. Ernest C. Trefz '17, who passed away on February 25, 2017. A staunch advocate of education in general and of the University in particular, Dr. Trefz served in the army as a young man because he could not afford to attend college. Nonetheless, he became one of Connecticut's most important entrepreneurs and philanthropists after cofounding the state's first McDonald's restaurant with his brother Christian. That first franchise in Hamden, Connecticut, was the genesis of the Trefz Corporation.

"Make him proud," Trefz told approximately 1500 graduates at services that were streamed

live from Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport to more than 16,000 viewers around the world. "You are our hope for the future."

The following day, ceremonies were broadcast again at UB's Health Sciences Commencement. The special ceremonies are held annually for graduate students from the Acupuncture Institute, Fones School of Dental Hygiene, College of Naturopathic Medicine, the Human Nutrition Institute, and Physician Assistant Institute.

Trefz's message resonated with Michael Asmerom '17, a business major who wished his mother could have seen him receive his diploma. Asmerom's mother, who passed away last August, was a single parent worked as a nurse to send her children to school.


Messages of gratitude and persistence also resonated with student Audrey Whitfield '17, who earned her master's degree in elementary education.

*(continued on page 34)*



Joan Trefz accepted a posthumous honorary degree on behalf of her late husband, former UB Trustee Ernie Trefz.





“Set the world ablaze with your passion, and in so doing, make it a little brighter for everyone else.”

- Neil Salonen



**Alumnus Ramon E. Peralta Jr. '93, '17 addressed graduates, who often celebrated and thanked family for their support.**



"I always wanted to be a teacher," said Whitfield. "I used to set up a little chalkboard, sit my younger sister Rachel in a chair, and make her play school." Whitfield's dream of inspiring young people became possible thanks to UB's "amazing education program," which allowed her to intern at a New Haven elementary school while completing coursework at UB, she said.

Alumni from the Class of 1967 also celebrated as they were honored as Golden Knights on the 50th anniversary of their graduation. Donning yellow robes, they waved enthusiastically to cheers and well wishes before UB President Neil Salonen addressed graduates. "Set the world ablaze with your passion," Salonen urged, "and in so doing, make it a little brighter for everyone else."

Graduation Speaker Ramon E. Peralta Jr. '93,





**Members from the Class of 1967 became Golden Knights (above). Graduates were all smiles for selfies.**



'17, told a cautionary tale about fighting racism with violence. It was a "stupid choice that took 15 minutes to make" and nearly undid years of sacrifice by his parents who spent "factory wages" to send him to school, he said. Given a second chance, he graduated from UB's Shintaro Akatsu School of Design. He eventually founded Peralta Design, a marketing-and-branding firm. "How you respond to difficult moments will shape your lives forever," said Peralta, who also received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

Class Speaker Louse Ovner '17 reminded peers to "take the time to thank the people behind our successes."

Amanda Genovese said she was eager to embark on a new career. She earned a bachelor's degree from the Fones School of Dental Hygiene and already has a job at a private dental clinic in

Branford, Connecticut, her hometown. Treating patients as a student-clinician at the Fones dental hygiene clinic "was a useful experience, and I'm thankful for it," she said.

Bilal Quadri Syed also credited practical in-the-field experiences for helping him to obtain a full-time job before he graduated with a master's degree in mechanical engineering. Syed was hired by Nano Solutions LLC, which produces carbide materials used in semiconductor equipment, after he finished his internship with the Bridgeport-based company earlier this year.

With so many milestones reached, Syed's mother flew from their home in Hyderabad, India, to celebrate with him. His father stayed at home but was among the thousands who watched ceremonies via the live stream. ■

# Book Lines

**Michael Asmerom '17** was about to start his senior year at UB when his mother passed away from breast cancer on August 1, 2016. Rather than derailing him, the unspeakable loss propelled Asmerom to write *African Booty Scratcher* (CreateSpace, 2017), a memoir about growing up in Harlem after emigrating from Ethiopia when he was in the second grade.

By turns funny and achingly sad, *African Booty Scratcher* gets its name from the derogatory term hurled at Asmerom by his American-born classmates. And while the book provides an unblinking examination of his immigrant experience and what it means to be black in America (versus black in Africa), it more poignantly reveals the hope of a mother who, lacking financial resources, nonetheless propelled her children toward a better life with an abundance of love, hard work, and rules backed by consequences.

“Growing up in an African household,” Asmerom writes, “I was



never allowed to go outside . . . Mom always made sure that after school, I came straight home, which meant I couldn't explore the city.”

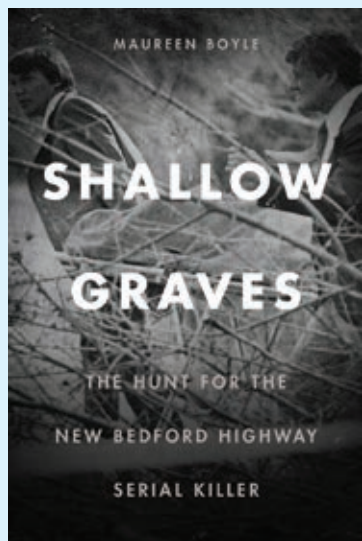
Yeshmebet Teshome worked in hotels at night, studied for and eventually earned her nursing degree during the daytime, and raised Asmerom and two younger siblings as a single parent. Expectations were clear. As Asmerom writes, career options for him were limited to:

“1) Doctor 2) Lawyer 3) Engineer 4) Disgrace to the family.”

Asmerom chose a career in business—his UB bachelor's degree is in management with a minor in communications—but he has nothing to fear. He was an honors student who won numerous awards for his business studies while at UB, started a club that gets unserved food to the poor in Bridgeport, and was a leader on campus. During his senior year, he helped to raise his two younger siblings, who still reside in Harlem, kept up his grades, and took on the challenge of writing *African Booty Scratcher* late at night. When he was tempted to fall asleep, he looked at his mother's photograph, which he propped by his keyboard for inspiration.

“The reason I even started to write this book was because of her,” he writes. “I wanted the world to know the kind of woman she was and the kind of son she helped create.”

Mrs. Teshome, you can be proud.

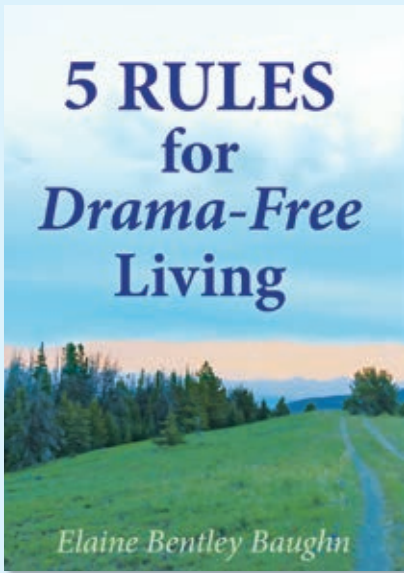


During the spring and summer of 1988, 11 women went missing in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Investigative reporter and alumna **Maureen Boyle '78** broke the story and stayed with it for decades. In her latest book, *Shallow Graves: The Hunt for the New Bedford Highway Serial Killer* (University Press of New England, 2017), Boyle once again rivets readers by juxtaposing the crimes and the

search for justice against a backdrop of a community increasingly shaken by poverty and social ills. Drawing on over 100 interviews, police reports, first-person accounts, and her own field reporting, Boyle leads readers behind the scenes of an investigation that was catapulted onto national news pages and into the homes of families still waiting for answers.







Marriage and family therapist **Elaine Bentley Baughn '92**, doesn't seem to have any issues with writer's block. She has authored professional articles, a book of poetry, and this May released *5 Rules for Drama-Free Living* (Elm Grove Press, 2017). In a market chock full of self-help manifestos, Baughn's offering distinguishes itself with its concise message, humor, and what she calls "good brain science." Other perks include writing exercises and strategies to help readers manage stress, make mindful life decisions, and, ultimately, regain joy and power.

The book is based on Baughn's work with clients at her private practice in Norwich, Connecticut.

Why five rules? "These are the rules I tell every client. I think of them as gravity. They're the law," says Baughn. "It's the book I've wanted to hand out. It's the tool I've wanted."

—Reviewed by Leslie Geary



## Familiar Faces, Familiar Voices

Classifying humans' age and gender from speech and facial images is a challenging task with important applications for law-enforcement investigations, human-machine interaction, computerized health and educational systems, and numerous other applications. So when doctoral candidates **Zakariya Qawaqneh** and **Arafat Abu Mallouh** and their adviser **Buket Barkana**, associate professor of electrical engineering, announced related breakthrough research to the field earlier this year, the team stirred considerable interest. Their research, entitled "Age and Gender Classification from Speech and Face Images Using Jointly Fine-Tuned Deep Neural Networks," has been published in *Expert Systems with Applications*.

Specifically, Qawaqneh and Mallouh, led by Barkana, are fine-tuning two deep neural networks (DNNs) and (convolutional neural networks) CNNs jointly. DNNs and CNNs are considered to be state-of-art systems in feature extraction and classification. The team is proposing two systems for age and gender classification tasks. The first system uses speech utterances; the second system uses unconstrained facial images, which are very difficult to recognize since they are taken under imperfect conditions. By using speech

utterances, the UB research team is using fundamental frequency (FO), the shifted delta cepstral coefficients (SDC), and mel-frequency cepstral coefficients (MFCCs), which describe audio components in order to identify speakers' age and gender. In the second system, the team is using facial appearance and the depth information from face images. Their proposed systems significantly improved the classification accuracies by minimizing the over-fitting effect for both speech-based and image-based systems.

The trio published two other full-length research papers in the same field in 2017. One, entitled "New Transformed Features Generated by Deep Bottleneck Extractor and a GMM-UBM Classifier for Speaker Age and Gender Classification," appeared in *Neural Computing & Applications*. Their second work, "Deep Neural Network Framework for Speaker's Age and Gender Classification using I-Vector," appeared in *Knowledge Based Systems* (Elsevier). The peer-reviewed publications are considered to be high-impact journals in the field of artificial intelligence.

■ - **Leslie Geary**



## Tax Tips



Do the good folks at the IRS target small businesses for audits? To find out, *Fairfield County Business Journal* turned to **Frederic J. Harmon**, a visiting professor of accounting at the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business.

“They try to go after cash-intensive businesses,” Harmon told the paper. “These can include restaurants, car washes, and nail salons.”

But rather than worrying about the IRS, Harmon advised business owners to be more concerned about the state’s Treasury. “In Connecticut, they are all over you like flies because the state is so broke. You have an equal, if not higher, chance to be audited by them,” he explained. ■ - **L.G.**

## Diving In



There’s a new guy with a whistle at Wheeler Rec pool: **Richard “Doc” Ludemann** has been tapped to lead the Purple Knights’ men’s and women’s swim teams as head coach and aquatics director. During the past season, Ludemann served as the teams’ assistant coach. He formerly served as head swim coach at Sacred Heart University, at UCLA, where he coached

swimmers who became part of the 1980 U.S. Olympic team, and at Yale. Recently, he coached champion swim teams from the New Canaan Aquatic Club.

Ludemann has also been involved with water polo for the past 20 years, serving as the conditioning coach for the Canadian water polo squad and as the training and conditioning coach for the United States water polo team. ■ - **L.G.**



## Introducing . . .

“I’m looking forward to helping bring bigger and better things to campus that will renew alumni interest in UB,” says **Pam Rentz**, who joined UB in March.

As the newly named administrative assistant for University Relations, Rentz is the person many alumni will first meet when they visit Cortright Hall, which is home to Alumni and Family Relations, too. In her new role, Rentz will leverage more than 20 years’ worth of administrative expertise as she helps University Relations host events like

the UB Golf Tournament. Rentz, the mother of twin boys, grew up in Wilton, Connecticut. As an artist with a flair for DIY projects and gardening, she said she was happy she arrived at UB just days before the annual UB Alumni Art Show.

“It was so much fun getting to know the alumni-artists and talking about their work,” she said. “As a Connecticut native, I always knew that exciting things were happening at UB, but it’s been fun to get to know the campus better.” ■ - **L.G.**



## High Note



On June 4, eight UB students, along with music alumna Jackie Sadowski '16, returned to Carnegie Hall for UB's fifth performance there since 2011. Led by Music and Performing Arts

Program Director **Frank Martignetti**, the UB singers, who auditioned for the opportunity, joined collegiate and community choristers from Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, and Michigan in performing Franz Joseph Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* under the baton of conductor Jerry Blackstone, of the University of Michigan.

"Performing in the world's most renowned concert hall with a professional orchestra and soloists as part of a 100-voice chorus was life-changing for these students," said Martignetti. "I always enjoy this performance as a teacher, but this time I particularly enjoyed it as a singer. Jerry Blackstone is one of the finest conductors alive today, and he evoked a memorable performance for the performers and the audience." ■ - **L.G.**



## Top Doc

**Anthony Lisi, DC**, has been named the 2017 Chiropractor of the Year by the American Chiropractic Association (ACA). Lisi, an associate professor of clinical sciences at the College of Chiropractic (UBCC), was recognized for his leadership at the Department of Veterans Affairs, where he serves as the national program director for chiropractic services.

In his role with the VA, Lisi oversees national clinical program and policy matters related to integrating chiropractic care into the VA health care system. He also serves as Chiropractic section chief at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System. The ACA recognized his work in establishing chiropractic residency-training programs within the VA, which provides care to more than 44,000 veterans in 79 clinics. Since 2007, UB chiropractic students have participated in clinical training rotation at VA facilities in West Haven and Newington.

Lisi received the prestigious award at the ACA's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. in March. UBCC also is the academic affiliate for the VA Connecticut's chiropractic residency program, one of only five such programs in the nation. ■ - **L.G.**

## Giving News

If you participated in Giving Day, then you already met Director of Annual Giving **Arielle Purcell**, who spearheaded the successful fundraiser. Purcell, who joined the University in February, is busy building a donor base that will support UB's growth as it prepares to launch its Campus Master Plan and building programs to support student scholarships and academic resources. She also will collaborate with the Vice President of University Relations **Rob Cottle** and newly named Assistant Director of Development **Josh Parrow** to engage with donors and alumni at various events on campus and across the country.

Since her arrival a few months ago, "people have come out to show their support in overwhelming numbers," Purcell said. "It's exciting to be part of this dynamic momentum."



Purcell most recently served as director of annual giving at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. Previously, she was assistant director of annual giving at Sacred Heart University. ■ - **L.G.**

# Focus on: Dusan Bogunovic '04



**Background:** Dusan Bogunovic '04 earned a bachelor's degree in biology from UB and a doctorate in immunology and molecular oncology from New York University School of Medicine. He currently is an assistant professor in the Department of Microbiology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York City. His research focuses on individuals with unusual clinical manifestations, such as infections or auto-inflammation, as a means to understand human immunology.

**Latest Accomplishment:** By studying the rare person, about one in a million, who can fight off viral infections more effectively than everyone else, Bogunovic's lab at the Icahn School of Medicine is pioneering the development of a broad-spectrum antiviral drug to keep us healthy. If successful, the drug will be capable of fighting off viruses from Zika to Ebola to herpes to the common cold. No such drug currently exists, and his research has attracted considerable worldwide attention.

In 2015, Bogunovic won a Milstein Young Investigator Award. Milstein Awards are given to individuals who have made an impact on interferon and cytokine research early in their careers. American Society for Microbiology presented him with its ICAAC Young Investigator Award in 2016. More

recently, *Scientific American* magazine included Bogunovic in its December 2016 cover story, "Top 10 Advances," citing his research among the "ten world-changing ideas" that have the power "to bend history." Earlier this year, he was awarded the Dr. Harold and Golden Lamport Research Award by the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. It is given to junior faculty for outstanding accomplishments in basic or clinical medicine.

**Scientific American says that what you do can "bend history." Do you agree that an antiviral can truly bend history and if so, how?** I truly think that. If you have a bacterial disease you go into a clinic and they say, "Let's give this broad-acting drug just in case." That doesn't exist for viruses. A couple of years ago, the Ebola virus in West Africa killed 11,000 people. Zika in the Americas led to thousands of infants born with microcephaly. The Spanish flu of 1918 infected 500 million and killed 20-50 million. Then there are the viruses that keep showing up, like SARS. The flu kills 3000-50,000 individuals in the U.S. every year, depending on the flu strain—most of them are elderly and children. History teaches us that every two to three years, there is an epidemic of virus that's extremely contagious. We're not ready for the future and what can

“History teaches us that every two to three years, there is an epidemic of virus that's extremely contagious. We're not ready for the future and what can come. So having a broad-spectrum antiviral in case of a pandemic can truly bend history and save lives.”

come. So having a broad-spectrum antiviral in case of a pandemic can truly bend history and save lives. I think it's an imperative, and I'm shocked we haven't poured more resources into a development. Part of the problem is that as soon as something passes, people think it will never happen again, and it does.

**Why has it been so hard to develop an antiviral drug?** It's extremely tough because viruses mutate. Bacteria also mutate and that's why we don't over prescribe antibiotics, because resistance builds up. With viruses, resistance comes up in an order of magnitude faster. It's a huge problem that is almost insurmountable.

**Where he is today:** Dusan Bogunovic at the Icahn School of Medicine





**So how does your proposed antiviral combat the problem of resistance?**

Instead of attacking a virus, what we're trying to do is enhance our own immune systems, which have developed over hundreds of thousands of years. We've discovered a group of very rare individuals who have augmented antiviral immunities. The idea is to create a drug that can inhibit a protein that these individuals don't have, so we can pop a pill when there's an outbreak. In essence, the drug kills two birds; we're attenuating the disease and allowing the immune system to establish a memory of that experience, so next time it happens, it has an immunity against it. I think that's a nifty way to trick a virus.

**Where are you in terms of progress?**

We've been making significant progress, much faster than I imagined, so I'm very hopeful. But there is work to be done. To do that, we need a lot of money, but I think we'll get there.

**The media has described efforts to create a broad-spectrum antiviral as a race. What's at stake?**

I think what's at stake is a global pandemic. Instead of killing 11,000, the next Ebola-like virus could be 11 million. The motivation should be for policymakers to protect the global community. It's not a race to be the first to market to get rich. Nobody's getting rich. It's a race to anticipate the need, which history tells us is going to happen. Unfortunately, it's coming. We just don't know when.

**The public isn't nearly as aware of antiviral research. Does your antiviral research need more publicity?**

We do. It's not as easy to get to people if they don't have a personal experience; if a family member died of Ebola there would be an acute awareness. So we have to get creative in raising

awareness. With a virus like Zika or the thousands who die of the flu in the U.S. every year, we can see what happens domestically. Viruses are a plane ride away from the U.S. So, yes, we need more public education and stronger campaigns so policymakers can be dominate in funding them. The flu of 1918 killed an estimated 20-50 million people. God forbid that would happen again. It's important to get there before that happens again.

**Tell me about yourself. Were your parents scientists? What sparked your interest?**

Both of my parents are economists. Mom was a banker and my dad was an executive in a media publishing company. I just fell in love with chemistry and biology. I had a great experience at UB with the mentors there, and performed undergraduate research at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York while I was at UB. That's when I thought, 'I'm definitely going to do this.' That's how it took off. My UB professors—Robert



**Where it all began: Dusan Bogunovic at the chemistry labs in Dana Hall**



**Bogunovic and his wife, Jelena Vukotic, who is a director at Fitch Ratings**

Singletary, [Spiros] Katsifis, Michael Autuori—Angela Santiago in Chemistry—told me about undergraduate research programs and helped get me accepted into them with their advice and by writing letters of recommendation.

**You spoke to the UB Biology Club this spring. What did you want this next generation of scientists to know?**

I think it's paying it forward and backwards. It's important to disseminate what you're doing and open up avenues for individuals to find their interest. Biology is biology. You can learn it at a small private school like UB or at a big state school, but it's the same textbook. It's up to you to create that passion and seek out opportunities at other places if you're limited by the size of the institution. So I really think the message for students who are 19, 20, 21 is to be diligent, work hard, and try options that exist, whether they're local or outside of UB. Connect with your network of professors and you'll be fine. That's true whether that's banking or biology. Coming back to UB was wonderful, and it brought me back to my undergraduate years. There were great questions from the students. I have little doubt that the next phenomenal generation is coming out of the institution I was in. ■

— Interview by Leslie Geary

# 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.

**1955**

## **Betty Ann Chickering**

**Tyler**, known as Liz to her UB friends, graduated from Fones School of Dental Hygiene and has been "looking on the Internet for . . . some of my wonderful friends I had during my time at the University," she writes. "I enjoyed many years of my profession. My first job in the public schools in Keene, NH, was a position previously held by two of my instructors at Fones." When not at Fones, Tyler spent much time swimming at UB, and for 52 years she operated Betty Tyler Swim School. "Now at 82, I am enjoying living on a beautiful lake, still swimming and reminiscing about all the wonderful experiences I have had."

**1963**

**Linda Krichman Bluhm**, an alumna from Fones School of Dental Hygiene, recently retired as a dental hygienist and educator after 53 years. She keeps in touch with fellow alumnae. "My UB education was great. It served me well and put me on the top of my profession. I have loved every day that I have served the dental community," she says. Bluhm, who "happily lives" in Naples, Florida, would love to hear from former classmates at [lkbluhm@aol.com](mailto:lkbluhm@aol.com)

**1967**

**Barbara Decter Weisbart** and her husband, Steven,

are getting ready to toast their 50th wedding anniversary. Weisbart, who earned a bachelor's degree in elementary school education at UB, says her training is still invaluable in her current role as the director of adult enrichment activities for Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey. "I have a classroom of seniors who want to stay mentally active. Each day, I'm doing a lesson plan, inviting speakers, trying to make a difference in people's lives," she writes.

**1972**

School of Education alumnus **George Matthew Jr.** wrote to express how pleased he was about UB's various initiatives on campus. "Thank you for giving me a new career, which I pursued for 23 years in Stamford, CT." Matthew now lives in Vermont.

**1976**

**Gil Castagna** writes in to remember his freshman year in 1972. "Schine Hall was just one year old. The Arts and Humanities Building was set to open the following year. The Music Hall was a small building and knocked down when the Arts and Humanities Building opened in 1973. I played ice hockey for the Purple Knights at the Wonderland of Ice in the MAAC League against Fairfield University, Iona, St. Francis, and so many more. Go Purple Knights!"



**Michael Hedden** has been elected vice chairman of the Board of Trustees for New Jersey Sharing Network, an organ-placement organization dedicated to saving lives through organ and tissue donations. Hedden, who majored in marketing at UB, lives in Lawrenceville, NJ.

**1992**

**Glen Colello** recently refereed the Connecticut high school boys LL Division state championships (that's him, third from left) at the Mohegan Sun Arena in March and wrote in to give *Knightlines* a thumbs up. "I love the magazine. Very well done." (Thanks, Ref!) A former member of the UB basketball team, Colello is now co-owner of the popular Fairfield vegetarian restaurant, Catch a Healthy Habit.



**Alumnus Glen Colello '92 (third from left) with fellow refs Vin Hirschbeck, Pete Vincente, and Joe Stage at Mohegan Sun Casino Arena**





### 2005

SASD interior design alumna **Kristine Gorman** has joined Jacobs, one of the world's biggest construction-services providers, as a principal and the New England regional manager of its Buildings & Infrastructure Business Line. Previously, she served as an architectural designer and project manager for STV, specializing in both building architecture and infrastructure. In her new role, she will focus on developing, maintaining, and advancing public- and private-client relationships, growing talent pool, expanding marketing activities, and contributing to the business strategy to increase revenue for Jacobs.

Gorman recently served as the lead architectural designer for the new boat and bus intermodal center in Hingham, Massachusetts. The project, commissioned by Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, officially opened on June 3.

"The building is named after Herbert Foss a Spanish-American naval war hero who lived for many years in Hingham," Gorman writes. "It's located at a former

WWII ship-building. The site required hazardous materials remediation, was designed to LEED Gold standards, includes a green roof and geothermal heat-exchange system. The concourse for the public is behind the more dynamic curtain wall enclosure and the offices are located within the more rectilinear and static area of the building. Conceptually, the two functions are separated by the divider wall."

Gorman also serves on the executive board of directors for the Women's Transportation Seminars Boston

Chapter as secretary and as the vice president of programs for the Construction Management Association of America New England region.

### 2011

SASD alumni **Senad Ibrahimbegovic** and **Ramon Peralta '93** have more in common than great design: they're both eager to give back. In May, the two joined other team members and ran the Ragnar Relay Cape Cod, raising nearly \$20,000 to support Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

### 2017

It's official. **Ryan Wirtemberg** is the first member of the Class of 2017 to submit an item to "Alumni Lines!" Wirtemberg, who just graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology and human services in May, was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi. Founded in 1897 to recognize excellence in all academic disciplines, Phi Kappa Phi invites only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors for membership. ■

The University hosted its sixth annual UB Alumni Art Show from April 6-16 at the Shelfhaudt Gallery at the Arnold Bernhard Center. Featuring 25 artists, this year's exhibit reflected the dynamic eclecticism of alumni who work in a range of mediums ranging from exquisitely executed watercolors and mixed-media colorographs to bold acrylics, digital collage, photography, porcelain, thread, video, and more.



"Pearl River" by James Kimak

## SASD honors Gary Van Deursen '69

Industrial Design alumnus recognized for hundreds of successful products

By Leslie Geary



Gary Van Deursen '69, founder of Van Deursen LLC and a recognized leader in the field of product development, was honored on Saturday, April 11, 2017, when the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design (SASD) hosted its annual alumni

gathering at the Arnold Bernhard Center.

Van Deursen earned a bachelor's degree in industrial design at SASD in 1969 and went on to lead innovation initiatives for Coleman, Black & Decker, General Electric (GE), and other firms. In 2006, he founded Van Deursen LLC, an independent design and new-product-innovation consultancy.

He is credited for conceiving of and designing hundreds of the world's most well-known and successful products, including GE's Spacemaker® series and the Helium Wheelchair, the world's lightest wheelchair. Van Deursen holds 84 U.S. patents. Nonetheless, he admits that he has two notable holes in his resume. "I always wanted to design a sports car and a wine bottle. I never have."

Van Deursen's interest in design began early, when he earned a reputation as a talented artist at Fair Lawn High School. His specialty? Fast cars.

"I thought I wanted to be an architect or a cartoonist," he said.

That changed the day he read a newspaper article about Walter Teague, the preeminent

American illustrator known as the "dean of industrial design."

"I never heard of industrial design. I never thought about it—that everything around you gets designed by someone. I thought that was pretty cool," said Van Deursen.

The 2017 SASD alumni event was hosted by UB Trustee Art Landi '74. ■





## A High-Five from Athletics

Five can't-miss days on the fall 2017 UB athletics calendar

By Chuck Sadowski



### 1-Thursday, September 7

#### Opening Day of the 2017 UB Men's Soccer Classic-Knights Field

The Bridgeport men's soccer program hosts its annual tournament with the Purple Knights taking on local rival Southern Connecticut State at 7 p.m. preceded by Merrimack and LIU Post at 4:00 p.m. Action will wrap up in the classic on Saturday, September 9.

### 2-Wednesday, September 20

#### So We Meet Again-Women's Soccer vs. Adelphi-Knights Field

The UB women's soccer team will take on the team that it has faced in the last two NCAA Division II Regional Finals in the Adelphi University Panthers. Game time is set for 6 p.m.

### 3-Saturday, October 7

#### Homecoming 2017-Soccer Doubleheader and Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Join us back on campus of Homecoming 2017! The UB soccer teams will have an action-packed doubleheader at Knights Field that day with the women playing Holy Family University at noon, followed by the men's team tangling with the University of the District of Columbia in East Coast Conference play at 3 p.m. Wrap up your day with the University of Bridgeport Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony that evening.

### 4-Wednesday, October 11

#### East Coast Conference Volleyball Powers Clash-Hubbell Gym

The winners of the last five East Coast Conference volleyball titles will take to the court in Hubbell Gym when the Purple Knights host NYIT at 7:00 p.m. in Hubbell Gym.

### 5-Saturday, November 11

#### Hoops du Jour-Welcome the 2017-2018 UB Basketball Season-Hubbell Gym

The Bridgeport women's and men's basketball team will open their 2017-2018 seasons with their annual four-team UB Crossover Classics in Hubbell Gym. There will be four games played (two women's and two men's games) and both Saturday and Sunday to tip-off the new season. ■

For more information about these events and all things pertaining to University of Bridgeport Athletics, please visit [www.ubknights.com](http://www.ubknights.com)

# A Day in the Life of UB Gymnasts: A Photo Series by Sasha Nialla

New York professional photographer turns her lens on the University's student-athletes

By Leslie Geary

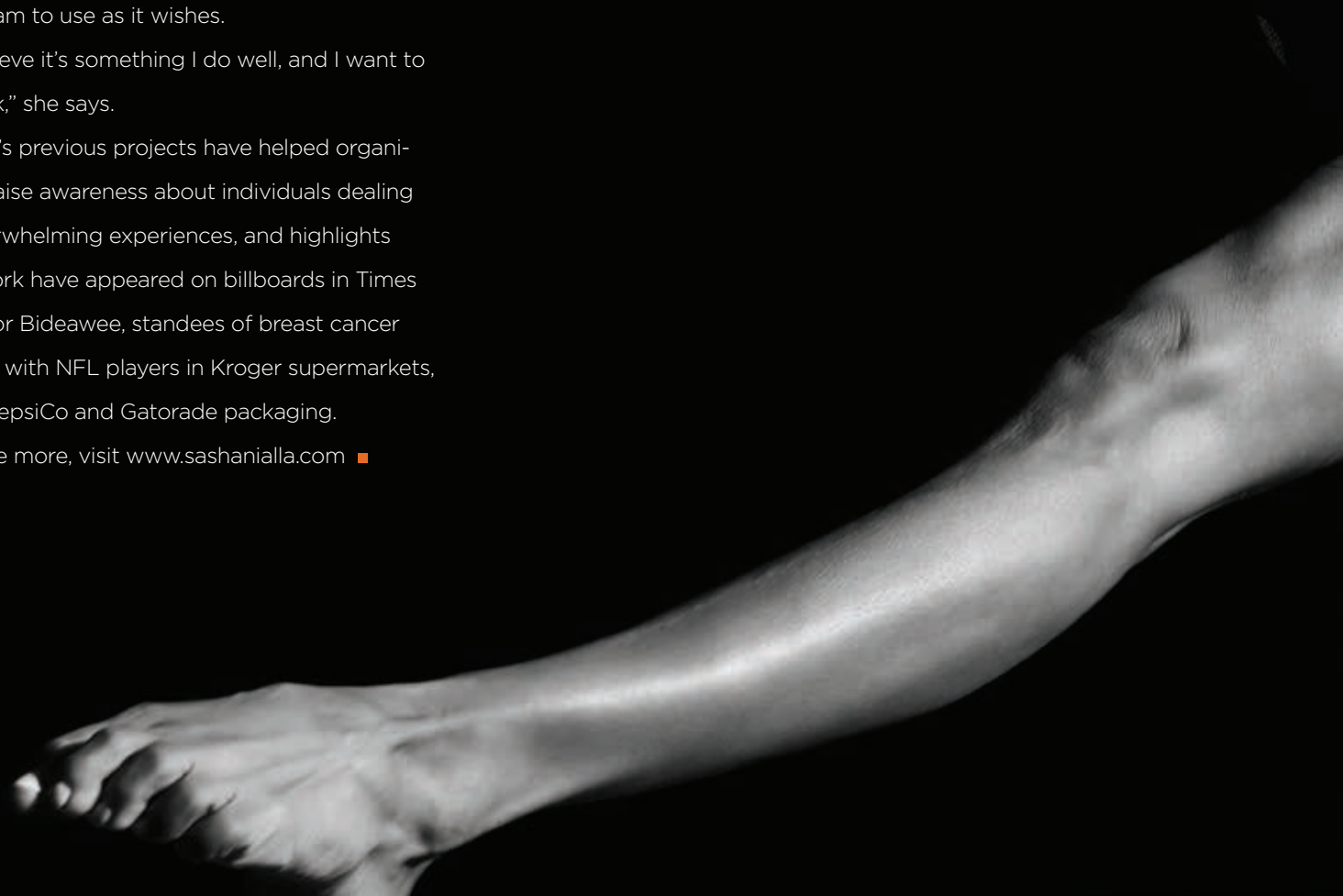
Every year, photographer Sasha Nialla donates her services to organizations she believes could benefit from professional portrait photography. This spring, she turned her lens on the UB women's gymnastics team, which she documented at Wheeler Recreation Center on March 23 and March 27.

The results are stunning. Capturing the student-athletes in mid-performance and in the quiet moments before they soar into the spotlight, the series "explores what the audience sees as the illusion created by all the hard work, pain, talent, love and commitment of this beautiful sport," says Nialla, who donated her time and all of the images to the team to use as it wishes.

"I believe it's something I do well, and I want to give back," she says.

Nialla's previous projects have helped organizations raise awareness about individuals dealing with overwhelming experiences, and highlights of her work have appeared on billboards in Times Square for Bideawee, standees of breast cancer survivors with NFL players in Kroger supermarkets, and on PepsiCo and Gatorade packaging.

To see more, visit [www.sashanialla.com](http://www.sashanialla.com) ■







Athlete: Kelly Aycock (below)



Athlete: Delaney Cahill



Athlete: Christine Liataud





Athletes: Maritza Futon (above)  
and Maya Reimers



# Around the World with Alumna Sidney Parsons '10

Continent hopping as UB's former point guard turns pro

By Wendell Maxey

Since graduating from the University in 2010, Sidney Parsons has been around the world and back again. The former point guard, who became the 13th player in program history to reach 1000 points during her collegiate career in Bridgeport, has now played professionally in Germany and Australia.

In 2011, femoral nerve palsy in her right leg threatened to permanently sideline Parsons, but she overcame health setbacks, made the jump to Germany, and played basketball until 2015. In her best season as pro, Parsons flourished throughout 2016-2017 for the Southwest Metro Pirates (Queensland/State League), where she led the league in scoring (26.8 points, 4.6 rebounds, and 3.6 assists per game).

Parsons also launched her own coaching and player-development programs in Australia and recently took time to share her journey from Bridgeport to "Down Under."

**Your professional career has been really interesting since coming out of UB. How would you describe the past few years of playing overseas?**

It certainly has been an interesting path for me along the way! Although there have been plenty of ups and downs, I've loved the journey. It's led me from Bridgeport to Nördlingen, Germany, to Brisbane, Australia. To be honest, my first few years were pretty tough—a new country and team, a coaching change, and a knee injury. It motivated me to pass up on my offer to take a full-ride scholarship to law school back home and to take an offer from a new team and continue to pursue my professional career.

**How have you grown as a person and a player during this time?**

After nearly having the game taken away from me, the time helped me regain my love for the game and to never take my health for granted. I came out of the injury stronger and more motivated than

I had ever been; the drive I felt after I was told I might never be able to play again has pushed me in my career every day.

**What's the biggest word of advice you would give to another college senior exploring their options to play professionally abroad?**

Pursue your dreams and don't be afraid to put yourself out there.

**Along with playing professionally, can you share more about your coaching and the player training/development program you're currently teaching in Australia?**

Yes, along with playing, I'm also working as a coach and with individual skills development and personal training. On the skills development and personal training side, I'm currently working with numerous basketball players throughout the local area. I've been working with some of the players for over three years now, and being a part of all of their development has been such a rewarding experience. I feel very lucky to call it my job!

**How have your previous coaches influenced your own coaching?**

I've been so lucky to have had some really amazing coaches throughout my playing path, and it's been those coaches who have inspired me in so many different ways to try and be the best coach that I can.

My most influential coach was University of Bridgeport. Coach [Steve] Pogue was there for me from my first day of college, to my first start as a freshman, to scoring my 1000th point, and to seeing me graduate. He was the most passionate coach I ever had and helped me develop into the player, person, and coach I am today. ■





Photo by Selena Huf, Little Champ Photography

# Bridgeport Athletics Mourns the Loss of Two

**Bruce Webster brought national attention to UB men's basketball program; Leo Uzcategui took the Purple Knights' women's volleyball program to unprecedented heights**

By Chuck Sadowski



(Above) Bruce Webster

The end of the 2016-2017 academic year was a tough one for the University of Bridgeport athletics family as two outstanding head coaches passed away: legendary men's basketball mentor Bruce Webster and former women's volleyball coach Leo Uzcategui.

Webster passed away in late April after Uzcategui was lost in a tragic accident on a South American beach earlier in the same month.

Webster, who came to Bridgeport after working as an assistant coach at Rutgers University, served as the Purple Knights' head men's basketball coach for 34 seasons, from the 1965-66 campaign through the 1998-99 season. During his tenure, his teams posted 549 wins, making him the school's all-time leader in career victories. Under his direction, the Purple Knights made a total of 12 NCAA National Tournament appearances, won five NCAA Regional Titles, and reached the NCAA Division II National Championship Game in 1991 and 1992.

Stated Director of Athletics Anthony Vitti, "Our deepest sympathies go out to Coach Webster's family and friends, including all of his former play-

ers who he had a special bond with. Our current athletic program is built on the success of those who were here before us like Coach Webster. He put a winning men's basketball program together and represented the University of Bridgeport with dignity and class throughout his storied career. He was and will always be a UB legend."

His family echoed Vitti's sentiments saying, "Coaching at the University of Bridgeport was not Dad's job; it was his life. His connection to UB is an extension of our father and of our family."

Webster brought international notoriety to UB during the 1984-1985 season when he recruited a 7-foot, 7-inch native of the Sudan, Manute Bol, to come to the Park City and play for the Purple Knights. During that season, the Purple Knights were a must-see and the talk of the entire college basketball community, as Bol, prior to his career in the National Basketball Association, helped Bridgeport post a 26-6 record and reach the NCAA Northeast Regional Finals.

In recognition of Webster's tremendous contributions to the basketball program, the University named the playing court in Hubbell Gymnasium in his honor in February of 2005.

In 1976, 1979, and 1992, Webster was named the Northeast District Coach of the Year, one of only two coaches to win the award three times. In 1992, he was cited as the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Division II Coach of the Year, and he also won a silver medal as an assistant to Mike Jarvis at the 1991 United States Olympic Festival.

He has been inducted into several Hall of Fames including the New England Basketball Hall of Fame (2003), the University of Bridgeport Athletics Hall of Fame (2006) and the Fairfield County Sports Hall of Fame (2007).

Uzcategui served as UB's head coach from 2009-2013 and took the women's volleyball program to unprecedented heights amassing a record of 128-27 in his five seasons at the helm of the





Webster and Manute Bol (second and third from left), who brought national attention to UB in 1984-1985

Purple Knights. During those five seasons, Bridgeport advanced to the NCAA Division II Championship Tournament each year and captured the NCAA East Regional Title for the only time in school history in 2011 to advance to the NCAA Elite Eight in San Bernardino, California. His teams also took home East Coast Conference titles in 2009, 2012 and 2013. The 2009 team set a single-season school record for wins with 33.

During his tenure on the Purple Knights' bench, Uzcategui also earned several conference and regional Coach of the Year Awards.

"All of us at the University of Bridgeport are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Coach Leo, stated Director of Athletics Vitti. He took our women's volleyball program to new heights during his time on campus. Along with being an outstanding coach, he was simply a great person who always put his student-athletes' welfare above anything else." ■



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