Dream Team
Fery Sutyawan took this photo in summer 2017, when he did a field observation at Nizam Zachman for his dissertation research. The fishing port is the largest in Indonesia, home to more than 1,200 industrial-scale fishing vessels. Indonesia is the second largest marine fisheries producer in the world, and there is not enough port space to accommodate the country’s fishing boats. URI is involved in numerous projects and partnerships with Indonesia, most of which relate to fisheries, marine affairs, and sustainable development. Sutyawan explains that this photo depicts the strength of the country’s fishing fleet, while also illustrating the problem of increasing global exploitation of fisheries resources. This spring, Sutyawan will defend his dissertation, which focuses on marine fisheries governance in Indonesia.
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URI’s medicinal gardens are a unique resource for faculty and students. They are integral to URI’s prominence in natural products research.

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51 NEXT STOP: EVERYWHERE
Corey Pavino ’18 has an eye for adventure, and international brands like Sperry have taken notice.

10 THEY’VE GOT THIS
Aria Mia Loberti ’20 and her guide dog, Ingrid, are extraordinary. They share the routine of a typical day with us, from classroom etiquette for working dogs, to navigating the grocery store, to teaching yoga.

At left: Popular in landscapes, Madagascar periwinkle is grown in URI’s Medicinal Gardens. It contains two of the most toxic substances on Earth, which are used in chemotherapy. Story on page 34.
Qubits and Quahogs
An unexpected juxtaposition. And the unexpected is often what leads us to new ideas.

Zapata Computing, a cutting-edge company modeling chemical reactions at the subatomic level using powerful quantum computers that could lead to a new generation of materials and medicine? Qubits and quahogs—a fascinating juxtaposition. Not exactly what you might expect from the smallest state’s public research university. Think again. This is the place where award-winning British-Iranian journalist Christiane Amanpour '83 started her remarkable career. And this is a university dedicated to ensuring access to the highest quality education that changes people’s lives: Henock Constant '18, a father of four from Haiti—and recent 10 Under 10 alumni award honoree—attempted college twice without finishing. Through our Finish What You Started Program, he completed his degree last year.

In short, we are an amazing kaleidoscope of experiences, talents, and dreams. And our perspective continues to evolve in unexpected ways as we imagine new possibilities.

Ryan Vallee ’19, who is now mentored by Christopher Savoie, clearly gets this. He traces his love of chemistry to the fact that “You never know what’s going to happen.” He explains: “Say you’re doing synthesis and you have to leave the reaction overnight—you can’t see if it works until the next day. I like not knowing what will happen next. It’s all about infinite possibilities.”

Our confidence in the power of infinite possibilities spurred the launch of three exciting new Innovation Campuses: URI and Arizona State University Innovation Hub; the Rhode Island Innovation Hub; or “iHub”; and the URI AgTech Park. Each campus, publicly and privately funded, will catalyze academic research into new commercial products and businesses. Together they are expected to create hundreds of jobs in cybersecurity, data analytics, the Internet of Things, and agricultural technology; bridging the gap between world-class research at Rhode Island’s universities and high-tech jobs. These campuses exemplify how thinking big has translated into taking bold actions with new partners Cisco, IBM, MassChallenge, RI Agricultural Technologies, Verinomics, and VoloAgri. While much of this work revolves around industries that no one could have imagined when URI was founded as a land-grant college in 1892, the URI AgTech Park is fittingly built on URI’s agricultural foundation.

And that makes perfect sense. Because connecting our past and our future is what URI—and the University of Rhode Island Magazine—is all about. Like Ryan Vallee, we should all be excited at the prospect of not knowing what will happen next.

Until next time,
We invited you to share your ideas, stories, and feedback, and you did! We heard from many of you. You told us what you liked and what you didn’t. You remi-
nanced. You gave us ideas for stories. You sent Class Notes. You entered the photo caption contest. You told us about your newly published books. And, much to our delight, you shared surfing stories and photos! You can see them all at uri.edu/magazine/sharing-waves.

Shortly after the last issue of the maga-
zine went out, I received a phone call from an alumnus who is the assistant principal of a middle school in the Bronx. After reading the stories on hip-hop and Masta Ace, he was inspired to reach out and ask Ace to come and speak to the kids at his school. An alumni magazine has its most important roles to play. A couple of its most important roles are to inspire readers and to connect them with their alumni community. This exchange exemplifies both in the best possible way.

Both of these alumni make me proud to be part of this community: a middle school educator who sees and pursues a novel way to inspire his students, and a legendary hip-hop artist who sees the value in that pursuit and is willing to share his time and talent to make it happen.

Please keep sharing your feedback by email at urimag@uri.edu or online at uri.edu/magazine.

—Barbara Caron, Editor-in-Chief

We want to hear from you! Tell us about your most memorable URI class or professor. urimag@uri.edu

Social Snaps

Lots of Love for Masta Ace and Hip-Hop on Social Media

INSTAGRAM
@mastaacepics shared his cover story from the Fall 2018 issue, generating lots of comments:

@atrebiel “Thank you for this beauty. Too many people make the assumption that hip-hop cats are uneducated, both formally and informally. The reality is that MOST of the pioneers were well-educated dudes, with the paper and without, including mastaacepics #koolmoedee #xsi#tiebees and a host of others! You can’t build the platform for an entire culture without being bright, gifted, and driven. Those qualities mirror what is needed to earn a college degree as well. Much love Ace O!, and I’m still bumpin’. Acknowledged!”

@calvindidd “Putting Rhode Island on the map.”

@lisaloveseen1972 “Yes Rhode Island on the map.”

@sabir_tabib_mohammad “Yes! Of All Universities, URI... gets it!”

Crescent Moon Over Green Hall
Great twilight shot by: Brandon Fuller.
@universityofri on Instagram

Rhody Swimming Celebrates Seniors
Rhody helped celebrate Senior Day and a win over Central Connecticut.
@rhodyswimdivde on Instagram

College Student Personnel Representing

Poenignant Memories

The new magazine is fantastic, a home run. I go back many years for my memories of life on campus, and those memories remain poignant. My great luck in meeting, and later marrying, my wife of 40 years, Rosemary LeVasseur ’53, is the most memorable. But there was also a special prof, John Stitely, who convinced me to follow URI at Michigan in pursuit of a city manager career. In 1978, I left city management to become vice chancellor of the University of Colorado, Boulder. A few years later, a Phi Mu brother, Bob Crandall, helped me to hire him run American Airlines. I retired to Santa Barbara where I have lived since. Sadly, Rosemary died in 1995. URI has meant so much to me over years and I try to follow and support its various achievements…now, including this new magazine!

—Ted Tedesco ’56

Feeling Old

Nice job on the new magazine. I enjoy the old pictures and short history info. I enjoyed the “All Quiet Undersea” article (good length). But 14 pages on hip-hop? Wow, I feel old. Sure doesn’t interest me. Keep up the good work. Best wishes.

—Matt Perry ’83

Correction:
The caption for the photo of the ram statue in front of the new Welcome Center in the Fall 2018 issue mistakenly stated that the statue was a gift from Joan Libutti and Dean Libutti ’83. The statue was a gift from Joan Libutti and Dan Libutti ’83. Our apologies to the Libutti family for the error, and our sincerest thanks for their generosity.

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Gratitude for a URI Education

I appreciated your new and improved URI Magazine—the photos, the articles, and the whole layout. I also wanted to express my appreciation for my wonderful edu-
cation at URI. It was the first time that I left home. Even though I lived in Milford, Connecticut, and it was only 100 miles to Kingston, it seemed like a long way from home. I was a surfer then and loved the ocean and beaches so close to our campus. My undergraduate edu-
cation got me off in the right direc-
tion, both as I was to continue to develop as a person and toward my rather unconventional career.

—Jeffrey Fortuna ’71

Kudos

Congratulations! The magazine is outstanding! I love the short articles—“Language Lessons” and “Why I Teach: Scientific Method” were two favorites, but I was also happy to see in-depth coverage of one idea through the longer central articles on hip-hop. I loved Ann Hood’s piece, as well, and shared many of her memories, especially Dr. Warren Smith’s class.

—Debra De Jesus Marble ’81, ’16

I very much like the new format! Good stories of URI and its folks.

—Leslie Coleman, M.S. ’86, Ph.D. ’74

Delighted to see the major upgrade to the URI Magazine. The quality of the contents has always been high. Now you have the packaging to match it.

—Tony Dibiella, M.B.A. ’86
How to Read *Moby-Dick*

2019 marks the bicentennial of Herman Melville’s birth. For lit lovers, reaction to this news will depend almost entirely on their feelings about just one of his novels, *Moby-Dick.*

MOBY-DICK IS ONE OF those novels that, let’s face it, many readers avoid or abandon. For those readers, mere mention of the novel may trigger anxiety that looms like its namesake: an intimidating, inscrutable monster. If Melville’s 200th spurs you to take on the tale of the great white whale, English Professor Martha Elena Rojas has a few suggestions:

**Pick a version that works for you.**

In addition to the familiar editions you might remember, there are *Moby-Dick* picture and pop-up books for children, and graphic novels for young adults. A favorite of Rojas’s is Matt Kish’s monograph, *Moby-Dick in Pictures: One Drawing for Every Page.* The book is 600 pages long with a shipping weight of 4.3 pounds. Melville would be proud.

**Commit to reading the first 50 pages.**

“Even if you read only one chapter, you will take something from it,” Rojas says. “I think of the first chapters as Melville’s long ramp into it, his way of drawing you into the text. Ishmael’s perspective as a somewhat experienced sailor who nonetheless ventures into unknown territory is much like the reader’s, and the friendship that unfolds between Ishmael and Queequeg models a positive encounter with the new and unfamiliar.”

**Begin at the end.**

If you get really impatient, stop and read the last three chapters. “Most people already know the plot of *Moby-Dick,* so that’s one of its challenges: We think we already know it,” Rojas says. “So read the end first, and then pick up the book again to experience how Melville gets us there.”

**Listen to the audio.**

On the website *Moby-Dick Big Read,* each chapter is read by a different person. Actor Titus Swinton reads the opening chapter. Beloved poet Mary Oliver, who died in January, reads the epilogue. In between, you hear the voices of Royal Shakespeare Company actors.

The novel with its scenes of sailors telling yarns and tall tales, of sermons, speeches, and soliloquies is inherently theatrical.

**Get in the mood.**

Tracks from Laurie Anderson’s multimedia translation, “Songs and Stories from *Moby-Dick* appear on her album Life on a String. (I’m partial to ‘The Island Where I Come From,’ with its strains of calypso, and the haunting, poetic ‘Pieces and Parts,’” says Rojas.

**Set aside time, but not too much.**

The key to success, Rojas says, is setting aside time specifically for the purpose of reading. In the classroom, she gives her undergraduates three weeks. “Two weeks is not enough and four is too much,” she says.

ENG 396 The Oceanic Nineteenth Century: What is Oceanic Literary Studies? The Rumors of the Sea

Martha Elena Rojas

This course introduces oceanic literary studies and aims to broaden students’ conception of maritime literature. Readings include:

The Odyssey

by Homer

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written by Himself by Olaudah Equiano

A Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

*Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville

**Be ready to be rewarded.**

National Book Award–winner Nathanial Philbrick argues in *Why Read *Moby-Dick* that the novel is “as close to being our American Bible as we have.” It’s also a great read, says Rojas. “And *Moby-Dick* has proliferated and permeated modern culture. There are plays, movies, paintings, operas, even rap songs devoted to it.”

—Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I’ve been passionate about understanding the universe—learning about the rules that govern space and time at their most fundamental levels. Entering URI as a wide-eyed freshman in the fall of 2000, I set swiftly on that course. By the end of that year, I had earned a scholarship from the physics department. The next fall, I landed a teaching assistantship for the introductory physics labs in East Hall. I was on track to become a scientist, like those I had revered since I was enraptured by NOAA specials as a child, setting out to explore all the big ideas in the cosmos, so many of them yet to be discovered.

One of my favorite spaces to contemplate those big ideas was the expanse of green fields behind Mackal Field House. Throughout my first two years, I would jog from Barlow Hall down to those fields and run. In the early days, I’d think about the mysteries of the universe, but over time, I began to focus on a growing uncertainty about my place within it.

In the spring of my sophomore year, it was on one of those runs that I admitted to myself that I was not going to become the physicist I had dreamed of being—a revelation sparked by a brief, but dramatic, chapter of my college life that could best be titled, “Math Is Very Difficult and I Am Very Bad at It.” I was disappointed and embarrassed—still am, to be honest. But I accepted it as entropy at work, and searched for a direction that would allow me to continue exploring big ideas—just with less calculus. It wasn’t long before I found the Honors Program, where I could do exactly that. Through courses that blended critical thinking, peer teaching, and cross-disciplinary studies, I was exposed to a range of big ideas, and I found a path for myself—teaching.

My choice to pursue a career in teaching was cemented by a 2002 Honors Colloquium lecture given by the renowned scientist and author, Oliver Sacks. He spoke enthusiastically about space and time. Sometimes, just not in ways we can calculate.

Ben Leveillee is a 2004 graduate of URI. He is an information technologist in URI’s Instructional Technology and Media Services. He spoke at the February 2019 TEDxURI event. See his talk at ur.edu/tedx.
Aria Mia Loberti ’20 is a triple major, honors student, world traveler, activist, yoga teacher, United Nations youth delegate, aspiring philosophy professor, and Harry Potter fan. This inspiring young woman also happens to be visually impaired. Her guide dog, Ingrid, is her exceptional teammate.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF HER junior year, Aria Mia Loberti ’20 learned just how far her guide dog, Ingrid, would go to keep her safe. The pair left their dorm room in Burnside Hall—Ingrid in her harness on Loberti’s left—and approached Lower College Road. Loberti, who was born legally blind, didn’t hear the approaching car, whose driver was texting and careening toward them. But Ingrid knew what to do. The petite black Lab made a sharp left and sudden right, body-bumping Loberti back to the safety of the curb.

Ingrid, who will turn 4 in September, was schooled intensively for 20 months at the Blind in her first month of life, and with California-based Guide Dogs for the Blind in her har-ness on Loberti’s left—and approached Lower College Road. Loberti, who was born legally blind, didn’t hear the approaching car, whose driver was texting and careening toward them. But Ingrid knew what to do. The petite black Lab made a sharp left and sudden right, body-bumping Loberti back to the safety of the curb.

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Ingrid, who has a passion for philosophy and rhetoric, gave a TEDxURI talk last spring on the importance of speaking up and being a good ally. “People assume that because I can’t see, I shouldn’t care how I look. It’s the exact opposite,” Loberti admits to having a “slight obsession” with Doc Martens, and Ingrid, equally fashion-conscious, wears her pearls daily.

Ingrid enjoys daily playtime on the volleyball court next to Loberti’s dorm. When Ingrid’s leather harness and head collar are on, she’s been trained to be all business. But when the harness comes off, Ingrid knows she can play and snuggle to her heart’s content.

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS
WHEN A FOREIGN ENTITY ENTERS the body of an oyster—it be a grain of sand, a parasite, or some other material—the animal attacks the invader by encapsulating it in a crystalline substance. That encapsulated invader eventually becomes a pearl.

When Brendan Breen ’18 learned in his URI aquaculture class that the natural pearl production process can be induced by implanting a foreign object, he was inspired. He had known since his teenage years that he wanted to be an entrepreneur in the fishing industry, and that lesson in cultivating pearls pointed him in the direction he sought.

He decided to become the first person to make pearls from quahogs, Rhode Island’s official state mollusk.

“Quahogs produce pearls naturally, but it’s a very rare process because they have a good means of expelling objects,” Breen says. “Only about a dozen wild quahog pearls of notable quality are found on the Eastern seaboard each year.”

Since no one had ever tried to culture pearls from quahogs before, his first challenge was figuring out how to induce the shellfish to produce pearls without expelling the implanted foreign object.

By the time he graduated last May, Breen had applied for a patent for his culturing process and started work on a business plan. His company, Mercenaria—Latin for quahog—now has hundreds of quahogs growing pearls in an undisclosed coastal location in southern New England. By late 2020, he’ll be ready to harvest his first commercial crop and market the pearls to jewelers and other prospective clients.

“I’ll be bringing something to the market the likes of which there hasn’t been before, so it’s already generating lots of excitement,” he said. •

—Todd McLeish

= RHODE TO A DEGREE =

First Job in High School

Artisanal rod and reel fisherman

College Decision Moment

Sold on URI at an open house during discussion of career goals with Professor Marta Gomez-Chiari, chair of the Department of Fisheries, Animal and Veterinary Science

Turning Point

Molluscan aquaculture class and a lesson about how oysters make pearls

Mentor

Fisheries professor Michael Rice, who provided inspiration and guidance on research techniques, grant funding, and patents

Funding

URI Undergraduate Research Grant to develop procedure for inoculating quahogs to trigger pearl development

Work Space

A laboratory in the Aquarium Annex at the Narragansett Bay Campus

Unexpected Challenge

Reading thousands of pages of aquaculture patents to be sure his procedure qualified for a patent—while also taking classes during his last semester before graduation

Leadership Outside the Classroom

President of the Aquarium Club, URI 101 Mentor

Degree

B.S. ’18, aquaculture and fishery technology

= RHODE TAKEN =

The Pearl Maker

BRENDAN BREEN ’18

2013 Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher, and the recipient of numerous URI teaching and advising awards, Foster says, “I have a whole box of numerous URI teaching and advising awards, Foster says, “I have a whole box of notes from students who have written to me over the years. I have kept them all. On my hard days, I go look at some of them and they remind me why I do what I do.”

And why philosophy? “Philosophy is a gift to people in that it liberates them to think for themselves, to have an inner life. That’s why I’m a believer in its democratic nature.” That idea brought her to URI in 1992.

Foster says teaching at URI enables her to honor her commitment to public service while practicing her discipline. A 12 SPRING 2019

= WHY I TEACH =

Freedom of Thought

Cheryl Foster, Professor of Philosophy

When Foster transferred into Edinburgh’s philosophy Ph.D. program, she unexpectedly found she could apply her prior experiences as a journalist and director to teaching first-year moral philosophy. Additional teaching gigs in philosophy as well as her specialty, aesthetics, materialized at the Open University, which created one of the world’s original distance-learning models. Flexible learning of the highest standards for adults, the working class, those with disabilities—anyone at all. She loved the idea of education as democratizer. That idea brought her to URI in 1992.

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Foster says teaching at URI enables her to honor her commitment to public service while practicing her discipline. A
IT'S A FIRST FOR URI, AND A BIG one: the first time the University has sponsored a clinical trial of a drug treatment. Its outcome could change how we treat Alzheimer’s disease. Based on the research of Paula Grammas, executive director of the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience at URI, the BEACON Study will be the first Alzheimer’s drug trial to explore whether a specific kind of inflammation in the brain’s blood vessels plays a role in Alzheimer’s—and will help shed much-needed light on the disease.

Most Alzheimer’s research has focused on the beta-amyloid protein that over-accumulates in the brains of people with the disease. Hundreds of clinical trials have sought to remove this buildup, but so far have not been effective in stopping or slowing the disease. When you repeatedly test the same hypothesis and it doesn’t work, a broader approach is necessary,” Grammas says. “I hope the BEACON trial is validation of her decades of research, and also a sign of progress in Alzheimer’s research. Amid growing evidence of the connection between heart, gut, and brain health, she is encouraged by the shift away from a single line of attack.” This is a ‘highly complex disease,” says Grammas. “The puzzle of Alzheimer’s won’t be solved without looking into the multiple factors that are likely part of its development and progression.”

The BEACON Study, which is funded by the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation, will begin enrolling in April. For information, contact the study line at 401.874.5650 or beaconstudy@uri.edu.

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URI DINING SERVICES NOW FEATURES sustainable, locally sourced fish through the Catch of the Month Program. The initiative began in September 2017 when the department hired graduate assistant Jacob Albernaz to help design and promote the effort. “Instead of relying on frozen fish from large distributors, we decided to look for fresher, cheaper fish that is better for the environment,” says Albernaz ’17, who is currently a URI M.B.A. student. “Since we are the Ocean State, we focus on sourcing local fish that are underutilized.”

Albernaz explains that fishing for underutilized fish helps the local marine ecosystem by alleviating pressure on overfished species. Dining Services has included bluefish, scup, John Dory, monkfish, and skate in recent Catch of the Month offerings.

“The program is beneficial for local fishermen since we can schedule with them and pay a slight premium to target the fish we need,” says Mark Pirri, a consultant at Tony’s Seafood, one of the distributors Dining Services works with. “Any time you pull product locally instead of using imported species, you are helping the local economy. Long term, we are helping to introduce local species to students who otherwise would not be consuming them, which potentially creates a customer for these locally fished items. For example, John Dory, a little-known species, is a bycatch of Rhode Island’s huge squid fishery. The more exposure this fish gets, the more it can become a part of people’s consumption habits. If we create demand, it increases the value and the boats will potentially be paid more for this bycatch.”

Albernaz earned his undergraduate degree in supply chain management from URI’s College of Business. After working for five years as a caterer with URI Dining Services, he welcomed the opportunity to deepen his connection with the Ocean State since, as a Tiverton, Rhode Island native, he grew up near the water. “Supply chain is often thought of globally, but can be local when you think about the food industry,” says Albernaz. “It is important to focus on not shipping food across the world and instead focus on agriculture and seafood locally to keep miles down and food fresher.”

“Local and sustainable sourcing is economically, socially, and environmentally beneficial;” says Albernaz. “Economically, this project is good for Rhode Island because it keeps dollars in the state. Socially, it helps provide work for local fishermen year-round, furthering their sense of purpose. Environmentally, the fish are caught sustainably and travel a shorter distance before arriving at their destination.”

“We feel that dining should not only be a feast for the senses, but also a feast for the mind,” says Pierre St-Germain, URI’s director of dining and retail services. “Exposing our student body to delicious recipes utilizing underappreciated fish, informing them about local fisheries and the processes of bringing these fresh-catch meals to campus is just part of how we can help create a more holistic dining experience.”

“This is not Dining Services’ first sustainability initiative. In 2017, it established a relationship with a local vendor for compost waste, which has allowed the University to divert a large amount of food waste from landfills. The vendor turns the waste into beneficial compost for local farmers and gardeners. In addition, Dining Services serves fresh, local produce in the dining halls through a partnership with Roch’s Fresh Foods.”

— Jacob Albernaz

CATCH OF THE MONTH

What’s new on the menu at URI dining halls? Fresh, locally caught fish.

Economically, this project is good for Rhode Island because it keeps dollars in the state. Socially, it helps provide work for local fishermen year-round, furthering their sense of purpose. Environmentally, the fish are caught sustainably and travel a shorter distance before arriving at their destination.”

— Jacob Albernaz
Christopher Savoie ’92 has founded a string of cutting-edge, high-tech companies. He developed a natural language interface that became the basis for Siri. Now, he’s set his sights on revealing the deepest secrets of chemistry through quantum computing—and changing the world in the process.

Quantum Quest:
Entrepreneur Christopher Savoie contends qubits will change everything.

By Lawrence Goodman

Quantum computing could lead to 100 percent-efficient fuel cells, sweeping advances in drug discovery and personalized medicine, and possibly even a catalyst for removing pollution from the air.

A Revolution Begins
When Christopher Savoie was 7, he got a chemistry set for Christmas. A smart, inquisitive child, he set about mixing and matching compounds. He produced multicolored liquids, heated beakers over Bunsen burners, and took measurements of compounds’ pH levels. Then he set his mind to mischief. “What can I get away with?” he remembers thinking. One day, he sprinkled powdered potassium with water and set it ablaze. Boom—it exploded. It was pretty much the coolest thing he’d ever seen. Other highly combustible experiments followed, though thankfully he never did very much harm. “I survived,” he says. “I still have all my digits.”

In fact, Savoie did more than survive. Combining an extraordinary intellect (he earned an undergraduate degree in biology from URI in just three years, has a doctoral degree in molecular medicine, and also has a law degree) with uncanny business acumen, he’s founded a string of cutting-edge, high-tech companies. In the early 1990s, the fledgling days of the internet, he built a web design firm that made millions. Later, at the Japan-based Gene Networks International (GNI), Savoie pioneered the application of big data and bioinformatics to genetics in pursuit of new drugs. A few years ago, the world’s largest financial newspaper, Japan’s The Nikkei, cited Savoie as one of the nine most influential leaders in global biotechnology.

Now at the helm of Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Zapata Computing, he’s back to doing chemistry experiments. “I still get to play with toys,” he says; although these days, the toys are quantum computers, potentially the most powerful computers ever designed. Zapata uses quantum computers to model chemical reactions at the subatomic level. Far from causing mayhem or destruction, these “toys” could reveal the deepest secrets of chemistry and enable Zapata to create a new generation of materials and medicines. According to Savoie, quantum computing could lead to 100 percent-efficient fuel cells, sweeping advances in drug discovery and personalized medicine, and possibly even a catalyst for removing pollution from the air.
Christopher Savoie at the Kingston, Rhode Island, train station, where he begins his daily commute to Zapata in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Brains and Blackboards
Zapata Computing’s Cambridge office doesn’t look like ground zero for a scientific revolution. Housed in The Engine, MIT’s startup incubator, it comprises a few small rooms filled with filing cabinets and tables pushed together to create makeshift workspaces. The 15 staffers scribble linear algebraic formulas on blackboards and pass around hand-drawn diagrams of computer circuitry on paper. They are a cutting-edge tech company, but they keep it old-school.

And I can only work with bali bali people.” The hard-charging Aspuru-Guzik insisted that Savoie join him in starting Zapata. In fact, he was introducing Savoie as the CEO before Savoie had officially accepted the job.

The Strange World of Quantum Mechanics
The idea for a quantum computer originated in 1982 in a lecture by Nobel Prize-winning scientist Richard Feynman. Reality at its most fundamental level, the level of subatomic particles, is governed by the very strange, counterintuitive laws of quantum mechanics (QM). Therefore, Feynman said, to understand reality, you need a computer that runs according to the laws of QM — to wit, a quantum computer.

Zapata staffers in the company’s Cambridge, Massachusetts office, which is housed in The Engine, MIT’s startup incubator. Left to right: director of technical and strategic alliances Boris Peropadre, application scientist Max Radin, and quantum scientists Peter Johnson and Yudong Cao.

Christopher Savoie, and possibly even a catalyst for removing pollution from the air.

Savoie lives in Kingston, Rhode Island, with his wife, Amy Vican Savoie ’93, a patent attorney with a Ph.D. in immunology from Dartmouth Medical School. He commutes by train each day from Kingston to Cambridge, where his partner at Zapata is scientist Alán Aspuru-Guzik. Aspuru-Guzik named the company for Emiliano Zapata Salazar, leader of Mexico’s early 20th century peasant uprising.

Savoie quickly grasped the significance of the name. If Zapata succeeds, he says, “It’s going to be a revolution.”
From Scholar to Entrepreneur

Savoie was born in Warwick and grew up in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. His parents were both schoolteachers. His mother, Crystal Brown Savoie, was a 1960 URI graduate; she died when Savoie was an infant.

As a child, Savoie got his first computer around the time he got his chemistry set. He taught himself Logo, an early computer programming language for kids. When he arrived at URI, a graduate of Bishop Hendricken High School in Warwick, he’d already taken several AP science classes. As a result, “I got to take some very advanced classes at URI starting out,” Savoie says. “This allowed me to really stretch my mind.”

Marian Goldsmith, professor emerita of biology, accepted Savoie into her 500-level molecular biology class. “He aced it,” she says. “He loved solving problems and he thought outside the box.”

For his senior project, Savoie analyzed a data set from the federal government on what happens to kids who suffer childhood trauma. “It was my first crack at doing big data,” he says. He found that suffering emotional neglect and having alcoholic parents left a longer and more damaging impact on children than physical violence. “I wasn’t expecting that outcome,” he says.

Former URI sociologist Richard J. Gelles, who guided Savoie’s research, says, “Right away, you could tell Chris was really smart and highly motivated. The average undergraduate is not inclined to plunge into statistical analysis, but he was really good at it.”

The summer after his sophomore year at URI, Savoie interned at an immunology lab at Kyushu University in southern Japan. When he graduated from URI, he returned to Kyushu, enrolling in the molecular medicine Ph.D. program there. He intended to become a doctor, but—a hypochondriac with an aversion to blood—he thought better of it (though not before completing his medical degree). He also gravitated away from academia. “I was not happy doing medical research that would only become useful 20 or 30 years in the future,” he says.

A new platform called the internet was starting up around this time. Kyushu was installing what, by today’s standards, was a very rudimentary campus network. Savoie was asked to help with the implementation. He agreed, and in the process of programming the network, learned the web’s lingua franca, HTML.

People began asking him to design their websites, and Savoie realized this could become a side business. He called his company Atmark, and it soon became much more than a side gig, raising $8 million from investors. “It grew and grew,” Savoie says. Atmark designed the first-ever website for a Japanese professional baseball team—not a coincidence, as Savoie is a huge fan of the sport. It broadcast live scores from the stadium via a 14,400-bits-per-second modem.

Savoie also served as Atmark’s pitchman. He traveled around Japan by bullet train, returning in the afternoon or evening to work on his Ph.D. “I would race back to Kyushu, change out of my suit, and put on my lab coat,” says Savoie. “It was an interesting double life for a while.”

Then, one night at a dinner party in 1997, Savoie complained to his friend, Babak Hodjat, about how hard it was to program a VCR. He thought there should be a way to give the machine voice commands in natural language. He wanted to be able to say, “Can you record all the baseball games on TV over the next month?” and have the VCR do it.

Savoie began working on a computer program utilizing artificial intelligence to achieve this. Hodjat, skeptical at first, joined the effort. Eventually, they built a system for talking into a microphone connected to a computer. The computer parsed the instructions and relayed them to the VCR. “We basically had Amazon Echo working in our living room by 1998,” Savoie says.

They called their company Dejima, after the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki Bay that linked Japan and the rest of the world in the 17th and 18th centuries. Dejima was eventually sold to software company Sybase, now part of the German conglomerate SAP. But the natural language user interface Savoie and Hodjat developed eventually found its way to Apple, where it became the basis for Siri.

Christopher Savoie at Beavertail State Park in Jamestown, Rhode Island.
Clearing the Entanglement Hurdle

Last year, a report from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) cast doubt on the possibility of creating a fault-tolerant quantum computer—one that remains operational even if one of its components fails or encounters an error. Significant technical hurdles remain, the report said. URI’s Kahn agrees with the report’s conclusion that it may be at least a decade before we see a completely fault-tolerant quantum computer that can live up to the technology’s full promise and potential. “This is something that’s been on the threshold for at least a couple of decades,” he says. “With all the resources and the great minds that have been working on this, we’ve made some progress, but we’re very far away from having something that’s workable.”

The difficulties stem, in part, from a feature of QM called entanglement. When two particles are entangled, they exert a mysterious influence over each other. To understand this, picture two spinning coins. If the coins behave like entangled particles, then one way the landed would determine how the other coin would land. In other words, if one landed on heads, that would cause the other to land on heads, too. If one landed on tails, so would the other.

So, with entangled particles, when you measure one, the second will have the same value. It’s as if the particles are somehow in communication with each other, the first telling the other what to do. In theory, entanglement can stretch over vast distances, even in cases where the particles are on opposite sides of the universe. Einstein called this phenomenon “spooky action at a distance.”

Qubits also become entangled. This offers a huge advantage because you need less computing power to manipulate the qubits. A change in one instantly transforms the other. “You can do multiple things at once,” Kahn says. “It’s much more efficient than conventional computers with traditional bits at one at a time.” But entanglement is a very transitory state, lasting milliseconds. And when qubits fall out of entanglement into what’s called decoherence, they no longer possess the special properties that make them so powerful inside a quantum computer.

Engineers of quantum computers need to go to extreme lengths to ensure entangled qubits stick around long enough to carry out the desired calculations. “It’s a technologically daunting problem,” says Kahn. IBM’s solution is to lock the qubits into an entangled state by freezing them. Its quantum computer is chilled to almost -459.67 degrees Fahrenheit, almost absolute zero. This is one reason you shouldn’t expect to see a quantum computer in your home or in your iPhone any time soon.

Quantum computers also need to be heavily shielded from the outside environment. Stray heat, electromagnetic noise, or vibration can disrupt a qubit’s functioning and cause the loss of data. It’s no easy feat to build a quantum computer’s contaminant-free container.

But the NAS report talked about another type of quantum computer that’s easier to build, known as Noisy Intermediate-Scale Quantum (NISQ) technology. A fault-tolerant quantum computer will need millions of qubits to reach its full potential. NISQ-era quantum computers only require between 50 and a few hundred. NISQ machines already exist, built by IBM, Google, Microsoft, and others. The most powerful one to date runs on 79 qubits. Zapata’s software is designed to run on the NISQ platform. Even if the full error-corrected quantum revolution isn’t here yet, the company can still be profitable and the solutions will still far exceed what traditional computers are capable of.

Zapata’s algorithms could potentially reveal this, Savoie says. We might be able to harness the power of Rubio’s to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to combat global warming. The field of chemistry “is about to change, because we will know exactly what the system is doing on our quantum level,” Savoie says. “It’s going to be ground-breaking.”

Savoie points out that if Zapata’s software can shave even three-quarters of a percent off a Fortune 500 company’s supply chain or sales expenses, it would result in tens—if not hundreds—of millions of dollars in savings. Savoie thinks Zapata could become a major player in business logistics.

The Next Challenge

Lately, Savoie has been thinking about another opportunity—curbing global warming with Rubio’s. It’s an enzyme involved in photosynthesis that enables plants to draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. The molecular structure and chemical makeup of a Rubio’s molecule are well-known, but we still don’t know how it works at the subatomic level.

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URI Theatre Department faculty and guest artists are innovating the New England theater scene and giving students opportunities to practice their craft with the pros. It's never been a better time to be a theater major.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

EDITOR’S NOTE: THERE’S A METHOD TO OUR SPELLING MADNESS
Why do we sometimes write ‘theatre’ and other times ‘theater’? The answer dates to the 1800s, when Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary established the American spelling of many words, like ‘color’ instead of ‘colour’ and ‘center’ instead of ‘centre.’ Likewise, ‘theater’, spelled ‘-er’ has become (mostly) standard in the U.S. But many theaters and schools of theater—including URI, the GAMM, and others—honor the British ‘-re’ spelling. So when we write about them, we use their spelling. But when we write about theater in general, we use the standard American ‘-er’ spelling.

TONY ESTRELLA ’93
Theatre 411: Acting
Artistic Director, The GAMM Theatre

On a sunny Friday afternoon, David Howard and Tony Estrella chat in Howard’s office about a recent theater graduate working in software systems processing. Inadvertently, their conversation turns to the question that dogs theater professionals, their students, and their students’ parents: What’s the ROI on the B.F.A.? “The thing about theater is, you build skills you can use in new ways,” Estrella says. “Theater is an entrée, a foray, into a lot of different worlds.”

Estrella is in his 17th year as artistic director of the GAMM Theatre in Warwick, Rhode Island, and in his 21st year teaching at URI. Students will tell you that Estrella’s approach is to treat students as professionals, collaborators engaged in essential work: the exploration of radical, challenging, and even ugly ideas. “An art form needs a place where it’s safe to be unsafe,” Estrella says. “Theater is an act of citizenship. It is an act of engaging with the community.”

And engaging through teaching, Estrella says, has made him better at his craft. “You learn so much. You have to be honest—interrogating, practicing what you preach, examining, articulating, and making it all plain to students who are not as experienced. It makes you a better actor. No question.”

Estrella’s method for teaching acting is rigorous engagement with the material. “You’re using the text, the language, doing a deep dive, a close reading. You follow that with your own experience and what those experiences cost you. It’s not always a direct one-to-one correlation, of course,” Estrella notes. “None of us has died yet, but we have to die on stage. You build off what you have.”

“We’re helping to create people who can deal with adversity, who can work collaboratively, and who can think creatively.”

“FINALS WEEK:
The Theatre Department is buzzing. Students run lines outside the Robert E. Will Theatre, sing in G Studio, and, in J Studio, double paddle turn and twist to Hairspray’s “The Nicest Kids in Town.” No finals fatigue here; it’s opening-night energy.

With more than five productions each year, URI’s theater production schedule is on par with a professional theater’s, says department chair David T. Howard. Without the budget, though. “We’ll do a whole show for around the price of a single costume on Broadway,” Howard notes.

How? Hard work, dedicated faculty, and a group of artists—most of them URI graduates—recruited both for their skills as educators and their impressive theater pedigrees.

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“After all, what is our job as actors but to walk in each other’s shoes?”

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen
You will find URI graduates working in almost every theater in the state, from the established—Trinity Repertory Company, Theatre By The Sea, and the GAMM Theatre—to up-and-comers such as the Wilbury Theatre Group, OUT LOUD Theatre, the Burbage Theatre Company, and the Epic Theatre Company.

One reason URI's theater graduates are sought-after is the nature of URI's B.F.A. program, which requires concentrated study in acting, design and theater technology, directing, and stage management. While students specialize in one of the four areas, they must be familiar with all. It's an education directors appreciate, says Hawkridge, who directed URI Theatre's production of Women and War last fall. OUT LOUD's last ensemble boasted four URI alumni among the eight members. "That's a testament to how the department creates a community that people like me want to return to," Hawkridge says. "There's something about how we were all trained that is special. All students participate in every role at least once: costume shop, box office, design, auditions for shows." Students develop an appreciation for one another's work and have ample opportunities to do the work they want to do. "And jobs lead to other jobs and collaborations are born," Hawkridge says.

"When students say, "What if I go out for it and don't get it?" I say, 'Well, what if you do?'"

Raymond Patriarca crime family. Martin Sconese is one of the film's backers. "The main thing I try to instill in students is that you've got to keep showing up. And being on time is a huge thing for me," Lutes says. "After that, it really is about the work. Do your homework. The only time I was nervous for auditions was when I wasn't prepared. No one else is going to do it for you." And be multifaceted. "Don't just be an actor. Have other interests. You bring all that to acting anyway, and there's so much else to life," Lutes says.

RACHEL WALSH '01
Theatre 211, 321, 338G, 383 Acting and Playwriting Director and Teaching Artist, The GAMM Theatre

"Art can accommodate complexity, nuance, and ambiguity like little else in the human experience. It is a practice and a technique I would regard as core to the human experience and necessary to do this thing called life."

Two years after graduation, Josh Short (yes, he's Joe's brother) founded the Wilbury Theatre Group in Providence as a way to act and be in plays more often. Eight years later, he accepted a 2018 National Theatre Company Grant from the American Theatre Wing—the organization behind the Tony Awards. Trinity Repertory Company is the only other Rhode Island theater that has received this recognition from the American Theatre Wing. "Our goal is to become a nationally recognized theater that provides a platform to show new work from diverse voices," Short says.

Short credits URI with hampering home discipline and commitment to the craft.

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"Storytelling, creating empathy: It's a noble thing."

"URI's theater students are trained to work hard. They have an understanding of what it takes to be good."

The Wilbury's commitment to new work and diverse voices extends to education outreach, youth programs, including a "pay-what-you-will" acting class, Camp Shakeswedd, a two-week camp for children ages 8 to 11; and the Youth Playmaking Program, an all-expenses-covered opportunity for teens interested in producing theater. And through the annual Providence Fringe Festival, the Wilbury Group and other arts organizations draw more than 350 artists from around the world to Providence for a weeklong celebration of the arts.
WHAT'S THE ROI ON THE B.F.A.?

URI's B.F.A. program requires concentrated study in acting, design and theater technology, directing, and stage management. While students specialize in one of the four areas, they must be familiar with all. That's an education directors appreciate. It also prepares URI grads to enter the professional world—in theater or in a variety of other fields.

PHOTO: AYLA FOX

ENSEMBLE CAST
Front row: Brooks Shatraw '19, acting and directing student; Emily Turtle '19, acting and management student
Middle row: Tony Estrella '93, acting instructor; Bonnie Bowserth, publicity director and administrative assistant; Kira Hankridge '12, guest director; Gavin DiFranco '20, management and directing student; Lorraine Guerra '20, acting and communications student; Paula McGlasson, acting and stage management professor; Sil DiSignore, Theatre Department secretary
Back row: Eric Lutes '91, theater instructor; Rachel Walsh, acting and playwriting instructor; Jake Magner, resident technical director and instructor; Max Pintoelli, theater and theater design instructor; Dean Hernandez '20, acting performance and costume and lighting design student; Magenta Kobakowski '20, acting and costume design student.

"The Inheritance is one of the most emotional things I've ever experienced," he says. "People were crying. People were stunned at intermission. It's incredible seeing him in the roles he plays and to think that's the same guy I grew up with. He fills every stage," Gross says. "He's outstanding in every setting." Burnap appreciates accolades but has his own ideas about success. "To me making it is when others in your field come to see your work," he says. "My goal is to tell the stories I want to tell, to be with the people I want to be with, to have a life and a family and to walk down the street unnoticed. Theater gives me the opportunity to understand what it means to be human—flawed, a walking contradiction," Burnap says. "I get to celebrate the beauty and the horrors of this life. And I've learned that love is the greatest thing life has to offer."
You may know that echinacea wards off colds, or that garlic reduces blood pressure. But you might not know that here at URI’s College of Pharmacy, the medicinal garden and greenhouse help students understand the plant/medicine connections and how to look for new medicinal uses. The College of Pharmacy’s founding dean, Heber W. Youngken Jr., planted the original garden in 1957 near Fogarty Hall. In 2013, the garden was expanded and moved next to Avedesian Hall with glass frieze panels and a living art installation.

Today it’s one of the largest and most established in the region, with more than 200 medicinal plants that help treat diseases ranging from anxiety to heart disease to cancer. “URI is one of only a handful of colleges of pharmacy affiliated with a medicinal garden in the U.S.,” says Navindra Seeram, a professor in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, who teaches classes such as Medicinal Plants (BPS 533) and Herbal Medicines and Functional Food (BPS 203), as well as for a graduate course on natural products. It also serves as a home base for the Pharmacy Gnome Club, which is open to students from all disciplines who are interested in medicinal plants. Rowley calls the garden an organic continuum of the college—a place to meet colleagues, eat lunch, host functions, or just sit, think, and de-stress.

The medicinal garden is a unique resource, and an important part of URI’s prominence in natural products research.

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“URI is one of only a handful of colleges of pharmacy affiliated with a medicinal garden in the U.S.,” says Navindra Seeram, a professor in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. “We are well-known for our pharmacognosy leadership. In fact, the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy is an important part of URI’s prominence in natural products research as well as a resource for students and faculty. “We can’t be a leader unless our students are well-versed in medicinal plants and the molecules they possess; the garden helps us in our teaching and training. It also brings prestige to our college and our research. When we produce and publish research, it demonstrates the quality of our natural products group’s work, and we’re very proud of that,” says David Rowley, chair of the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

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Take a tour with garden coordinator Elizabeth Liebovitz and you’ll find her enthusiasm is contagious as she points out different plant species and their uses. Guava berry to treat inflammation, cinnamon to settle gastrointestinal upset, and foxglove, which is used to make the heart medicine digoxin.

Liebovitz explains that plants are used in three levels of medicine, the first being nutraceuticals, foods you eat for their benefits beyond basic nutrition, like pomegranate. Second is herbs for self-care, including dietary supplements and home remedies, like ginger taken for nausea. Third, there are more clinical uses for plants, where are compounds are dried and isolated. She points out a pretty purple-flowered shrub. “The Madagascar periwinkle, for example, is very popular in landscape use, but it contains vincristine and vinblastine, two of the most toxic substances on Earth, which are used in chemotherapy.

Seventy percent of FDA-approved drugs come from natural sources or have been inspired by natural products. That’s where Matthew Bertin, assistant professor of biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, comes in. His class, Techniques in Medicinal Chemistry and Molecular Biology (BPS 451), focuses on the medicinal plants in the garden, which Liebovitz collects and dries. Each student lab group chooses a plant and works with it for nearly the entire semester. Because the garden is on campus, students can analyze the raw plant rather than relying on someone else’s data.

Students use high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), and mass spectrometry to identify plant compounds and their properties. It’s the same high-tech analytical equipment you’d find in an industrial lab. “The industry needs folks who can perform analytical techniques. You may find a product from a plant, but there’s an analytical procedure you have to conduct to figure out elements such as potency and effectiveness, or if it’s not perfect, how to optimize it. The garden helps bring this learning to life. Having hands-on knowledge of these systems helps hone students’ skills and makes them more marketable,” says Bertin.
Meet Garden Coordinator Elizabeth Leibovitz

Elizabeth Leibovitz is the medicinal garden coordinator for URI’s College of Pharmacy. Armed with an environmental studies degree and a decade of experience in commercial-scale farming, she jumped at the chance to expand her knowledge of traditional and modern natural plant medicines, as well as other organisms that potentially contain bioactive components with therapeutic applications. Kelly McM anus ’19 says she learned more about plant uses through an herbal recipe project in that class.

“We took plants from the garden and created things that can be taken for a chosen indication,” she says. “I made gummy bears with elderberry and other supporting herbs to boost the immune system and prevent or treat the common cold. We were able to see the end product of many herbs used in different ways for medicinal purposes.” Other projects in the class yielded lip balms, teas, face masks, tinctures, and more.

Beyond the classroom, there is a huge appetite for nutraceuticals and herbal supplements. URI students well-versed in plant analysis can travel many different diseases and conditions to study their bioactive compounds. We are undoubtedly the world’s leader in maple research based on the amount of peer-reviewed publications we have on the different species of maple and their derived food products. We have been funded by the USDA twice, and that speaks to our ability to lead research on this unique botanical,” Seeram explains.

One of the many familiar plants in the medicinal garden is black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta). Its roots have medicinal uses, including making teas and juices to treat ailments from snakebites to earaches.

“Chaga (Inonotus obliquus) is a mushroom that grows on the roots of birch trees. It is known for its anti-inflammatory and immune-stimulating properties. Chaga has been used traditionally in Russia and other Eastern European countries for treating various ailments, including gastrointestinal problems, cancer, and immune system issues. It contains a high amount of antioxidants and can help reduce inflammation. It is often used in the form of a tea or as a supplement.

Japanese Barberry (Berberis thunbergii) is another popular medicinal plant. It is used for its antiviral and antibacterial properties, making it a popular addition to medicinal gardens. It is also used to treat cardiovascular diseases and gastrointestinal disorders.

Green Tea (Camellia sinensis) is a well-known tea that is rich in antioxidants and has been studied extensively for its potential health benefits. It is used to treat various ailments, including inflammation and oxidative stress.

”We are undoubtedly the world’s leader in maple research. We have been funded by the USDA twice, and that speaks to our ability to lead research on this unique botanical.” —Navindra Seeram

Good for What Ails You

“Meet Garden Coordinator
Elizabeth Leibovitz

James Lotti ’19 worked with Bertin to analyze the chemical components of the Korean balloon flower, Platycodon grandiflorus. “We performed the analytical techniques and ran an assay for antioxidant bioactivity on the various fractions of the extract,” says Lotti. “We then compiled the results from these techniques into a publication-style lab report.” The experience taught me a lot about the potential pharmaceuticals from natural products.

Students in the medicinal plants class rely on the garden to learn about traditional and modern natural plant medicines, as well as other organisms that potentially contain bioactive components with therapeutic applications. Kelly McM anus ’19 says she learned more about plant uses through an herbal recipe project in that class.

“We took plants from the garden and created things that can be taken for a chosen indication,” she says. “I made gummy bears with elderberry and other supporting herbs to boost the immune system and prevent or treat the common cold. We were able to see the end product of many herbs used in different ways for medicinal purposes.” Other projects in the class yielded lip balms, teas, face masks, tinctures, and more.

Beyond the classroom, there is a huge appetite for nutraceuticals and herbal supplements. URI students well-versed in plant analysis can travel many different diseases and conditions to study their bioactive compounds. We are undoubtedly the world’s leader in maple research based on the amount of peer-reviewed publications we have on the different species of maple and their derived food products. We have been funded by the USDA twice, and that speaks to our ability to lead research on this unique botanical,” Seeram explains.

What’s next? Future plans for the garden include a Native American plant collection, where Leibovitz hopes to establish a local medicinal plant collection based on plants the Narragansetts and other local tribes used as medicine.

Students rely on the garden to learn about traditional and modern plant medicines.

One of the many familiar plants in the medicinal garden is black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta). Its roots have medicinal uses, including making teas and juices to treat ailments from snakebites to earaches.

“"It’s a really unique job, giving students a living platform for learning.” —Elizabeth Leibovitz

Good for What Ails You

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A Perfect Fit

By Nicole Maranhas

The Human Side of Wearable Technology

Kunal Mankodiya is a collaborator, a team leader, a people person. Mankodiya and his students are developing wearable technology to monitor, treat, and help people with Parkinson’s and other medical conditions. Much of what they’re doing is unique, but perhaps the most notable thing about this team is that it is as focused on the people it’s designing for as it is on the technology itself.

He remembers the morning inspiration struck. Over a cup of chai, Mankodiya was thinking about a smartwatch app he had developed with a neurologist during his postdoc research. Designed to help monitor the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease, a nervous system disorder that causes the progressive deterioration of motor function, the watch had potential for Parkinson’s treatment, but ultimately wasn’t ideal for capturing the data needed. As he sipped his chai, Mankodiya’s mind drifted to another past collaboration—a heart-monitoring belt he had developed while earning his Ph.D. at University of Lübeck in Germany. The belt had been designed to measure the heart’s electrical activity, an at-home electrocardiogram of sorts. It provided a more accurate reading than an in-office stress test—where a patient’s anxiety might skew results—and also could monitor heart activity over a prolonged period of time.

Perhaps in part because of his childhood days spent helping in his family’s store, smart textiles intrigued him. As he reflected again on the watch, Mankodiya wondered if a belt, or maybe a glove, would be a better way to measure Parkinson’s symptoms. Later that day, in his URI lab, he turned to his students and said, “Let’s begin a new project.”

Mankodiya envisioned that a smart glove could enable patients to perform some of these tests at home, with a tablet or phone app to record data for their doctor to view remotely.

For a cricket team, you need 11 players. This was a typical problem on Kunal Mankodiya’s mind as a teenager in the small town of Dhrangadhra, India, where as a team captain, he spent much of his free time going door-to-door rounding up enough players and strategizing how to use everyone’s strengths on the field. He never imagined a future in research, though he was a good student. Off the field, he frequently helped out at his family’s business, a clothing and textiles store in town.

When it came time to apply to universities, Mankodiya’s curiosity was piqued by an unusual major in one course catalog—biomedical engineering—not only because he wasn’t sure what it was (“it was before Google,” he recalls), but also because there was only one university that offered it. “I figured it must be something new,” he says.

The three seem unrelated: cricket, a clothing store, biomedical engineering. For Mankodiya, a College of Engineering assistant professor who is breaking new ground in wearable technologies, they are interconnected keys to his success.

Assistant Professor Kunal Mankodiya demonstrates his smart glove technology, which provides a user-friendly way for people with Parkinson’s disease to monitor symptoms and send the information to their doctors. Along with his research, Mankodiya is an active supporter of initiatives such as the annual “HealthHacks” design competition at URI to help students build their creative and entrepreneurial skills.

PHOTO: NORA LEWIS
Mankodiya's smart textiles connect to a digital app, which can be viewed on a phone or tablet, that records information for a doctor to review remotely. Icons on the app (pictured) indicate exercises such as finger tapping, fist opening and closing, hand flipping, and finger pointing that the wearer performs to measure movement and other indicators that help the doctor monitor how well a treatment plan is working.

Mankodiya’s popular Wearable Internet of Things (ELE 491/ELE 591) course have devised wearables including a baby onesie to treat jaundice (created by Joshua Harper ’18 and James Baer ‘18) and a bionic hand to help stroke victims regain movement (Mary Ellen Sweeney ’18, Tian Chen ’18, and Scott Baurt ’18), to name just two. In the course, students from various disciplines create wearable technologies and tap into their inner entrepreneurs, some even market their designs and ultimately multiple users. “Each human is different, each hand or foot is unique,” says Mankodiya. “You need to create something that is personalized, yet is also for many people.” Above all, it must be something the wearer will want to use.

In many ways, Mankodiya is still grounded in the lessons he learned at his family’s clothing store, where pleasing the customer meant paying attention to the individual’s needs. In other ways, he’s ever the cricket captain, rounding up teammates and strategizing how to maximize their on-field strengths. As he gains increasing attention for his innovative work—he recently helped establish URI’s Artificial Intelligence Lab, which opened in fall 2018—it seems his story is still only beginning—the one that began with a teenager who became curious about biomedical engineering simply because he couldn’t fathom what it was. “Our neighbor, who was a doctor, explained that it meant creating medical devices,” Mankodiya recalls. “I could only imagine stethoscopes, but I thought I’d give it a try.”
ON FAKE NEWS AND THE METOO MOVEMENT

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

FAKE NEWS

Amanpour says President Donald Trump’s denouncements of “fake news” represent a unique challenge for the journalists who cover him, although she notes that Trump is hardly the first president to change the media with producing falsehoods. She asserts, “In President Trump’s view, fake news is just ‘stuff I don’t want to hear,’ she says, ‘stuff I don’t like.’”

#METOO

Energized by the challenge of covering the MeToo movement, Amanpour notes that the issue directly affects half the world’s population. She describes it as “the desire for simple justice and a level playing field. Up until now, if it’s happened at all, it’s been in teeny-weeny baby steps.”

Incidentally, the MeToo movement indirectly led to Amanpour taking on a new show, Amanpour and Company. Her show replaced Charlie Rose’s PBS talk show, which was canceled after sexual misconduct allegations against him surfaced.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR WAS inducted into the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame for her standout 35-year career in television journalism. She was honored alongside CBS Morning News anchor Gayle King, NBCUniversal advertising chief Linda Yaccarino, and Charlie Collier, then-president and general manager at AMC/SundanceTV, among others.

On October 29, 2018, the CNN anchor and chief international correspondent was inducted into the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame. Mike Malone ’91 attended the event and talked with Amanpour about starting her career in Rhode Island, fake news, #MeToo, and her new show, Amanpour and Company.

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STAYING STEELY

Masterfully negotiating war zones and TV network politics, acclaimed journalist Christiane Amanpour ’83 has earned great trust and respect for her award-winning coverage of foreign conflicts—from the Gulf War to the breakup of Yugoslavia.

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When Blaine Hymel ’17 was living in Tiverton, Rhode Island, she found an injured bird on her porch and didn’t know how to help it. After searching the web, she discovered the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, which cares for sick, injured, and abandoned wild animals until they can be released back into the wild. After dropping off the bird, Hymel investigated the organization further and decided to volunteer. “I’ve always known that I wanted to become a veterinarian,” she says. “Growing up, I lived next to a cow farm and always had animals at home, and I always tried to take care of any animals I found.”

Her first months volunteering at the clinic, located in Saunderstown, Rhode Island, just a few miles from URI’s Kingston Campus, found her preparing food for the animals and cleaning their cages. “At first I was terrified of touching the animals because I was afraid to do the wrong thing or do something that would hurt them,” Hymel says. “It took time to get used to it, but it was a good environment to learn in.” She quickly realized that she wanted to become a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, but the initial licensing class is only held once a year and she had just missed it. Eager to get started, she flew to Texas to take a similar class. For the next three years—until she enrolled in vet school last year—she volunteered at the clinic every week, and she even set up a rehabilitation space at her home. “I was sort of an in-between babysitter,” Hymel explains. “I would accept animals and care for them at home until I could get them to the clinic or to other rehabilitators. And sometimes I would care for adult animals that needed a higher level of care.”

The Wildlife Clinic—along with its network of about 35 in-home rehabilitators—fields about 50,000 phone calls each year from Rhode Islanders who come across wildlife in need of assistance. Most of those calls are for trauma caused directly or indirectly by humans: animals struck by cars, attacked by pets, or entangled in fishing line; and birds that collide with windows. Extreme weather events add to the injuries, like when hurricanes take down trees where squirrels and birds are nesting. After receiving critical care, most animals are transferred to private homes where licensed rehabilitators nurse them back to health and then release them.

For nearly 10 years, many of the calls to the clinic were answered by Arianna Mouradjian ’07, a Providence native who earned a bachelor’s degree in wildlife conservation and biology from URI before going to law school. Mouradjian served the clinic first as a volunteer, then as a staff member, and later as the director of the nonprofit clinic. She now serves on its board of directors.

Arianna Mouradjian ’07 has done just about every job at the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island. She calls it a “labor of love.” At the clinic, where caring for orphaned and injured wild animals is a rewarding effort, URI students fill an urgent need for volunteers.

During baby season—April to September—more than 50 animals may be delivered to the clinic’s doorstep each day. URI students fill an urgent need for volunteers.

“‘There’s also the emotional toll of dealing with the public—people who are stressed out over an animal they’re found and want to make sure it gets taken care of,’ Mouradjian adds. ‘We’re a small all-volunteer group, and someone isn’t always available to rush across the state to assess the situation. Managing the expectations of the public versus the resources we have is a big challenge.’”

The clinic and the rehabilitators care for between 4,000 and 5,000 animals each year—from bats and bunnies to owls and others. About 50 to 60 percent are eventually released back into the wild, a higher rate than the national average.

Baby season—April to September—is the busiest time of year, when more than 50 animals may be delivered to the clinic’s doorstep each day, mostly baby birds, squirrels, and rabbits. That’s when volunteers are especially necessary. URI students often meet that need, some as interns arranged through URI’s Department of Natural Resources Science, and others who are simply committed animal lovers who want to help.

Josh Brancazio ’21 heard about the Wildlife Clinic his first day on campus, and within a month he began volunteering. Every Saturday during the school year, he spends four hours feeding animals, dispensing medication, constructing outdoor caging, and doing whatever else is needed.

“One of the more difficult parts for me is restraining some of the animals that have a lot of character,” says Brancazio, a double major in animal science and technology and wildlife and conservation biology. “Last year, there were some crows that were very flappy and noisy and hard to catch, and that was pretty intimidating for me. The animals were in charge, and I was trying to figure out how to take control.”

His favorite animals to work with are baby opossums, which he says are “wonderfully adorable and so funny. They try to be intimidating when you grab them to move them to another cage. They open their mouths wide, showing their tiny baby teeth. It’s really funny.”

Samantha Ward ’19 says the baby opossums are also her favorite animals to care for at the clinic. A marine biology and Spanish double major, she says she “was always that animal girl, always interested in trying to work to mitigate some of the effects that humans have on wildlife.”

Like Brancazio, Ward discovered the clinic and started volunteering before the end of her first semester at URI. After three years, she is now comfortable assessing animals as they arrive and developing treatment plans for them.

“I like that every day is different,” she says. “I still encounter animals that I haven’t cared for before, and every situation is different. Every time an animal comes in, it’s a challenge to figure out what’s going on with it. I’ve always appreciated animals, but seeing them up close and getting a feel for their personalities is really rewarding.”

“And,” she adds, “holding a snowy owl is a feeling like no other.”
1963 = Matthew Perry writes, "I just received a copy of the Fall 2018 URI Magazine and thought I should give a yell-out to Phi Sig folks. I note with sadness that Bob Sproul '52 has died. I remember his pony loafer, his good looks, his T-shirt and him being attacked by our Doberman pinscher. The good news is that Dan Libutti and his wife Joan just donated to URI a beautiful life-sized bronze sculpture of a ram in memory of Dan’s father (Class of 1925). I welcome any addresses) from you."

1965 = Joyce Gunter writes, "At the JetBlue gate in Aruba, my husband and I met the mother of a URI pharmacy graduate. Their daughter graduated soon after her graduation and was working at a hospital near her hometown. Her daughter graduated soon after her daughter graduated as well and is retiring. She has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years, most recently as first vice president, regional sales manager. She is responsible for building and managing the mortgage loan origination team,cultivating new business, and increasing profitability for the residential lending division, while improving the bank’s visibility. She has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years, most recently as first vice president, regional sales manager at Coastway Community Bank.

1972 = L. Vincent Murray ’77, M.C.P. ’89 shared this photo, with the simple caption, "Retirement Hobby!" He adds, "Go Rhody!"

1990 = Kimberly Wolff Thompson resides in Connecticut and continues her career as a clinical specialist in cytogenetics and molecular genetics as well as a new career consulting in pharmacogenomics alongside fellow alum Michael Robarge ’89 who recently opened Advanced Genetics Lab. Her two sons now attend URI Keith Jarrett Thompson ’20 majoring in cell and molecular biology and Zack Steven Thompson ’22 majoring in accounting.

1997 = Erik Johnson, M.A. ’97 of Needham, Massachusetts, has joined The Bulfinch Group as managing director. Prior to joining The Bulfinch Group, Erik spent 10 years as a Division I women’s basketball head coach, most recently at Boston College in the ACC and previously at the University of Denver. Before becoming a head coach, Erik spent 14 years as a Division I women’s basketball assistant coach at Boston College, the University of San Diego, and the University of Rhode Island. Erik also conducts workshops for the Positive Coaching Alliance, which teaches character through sports to young athletes, young coaches, and sports parents.

1998 = Michael Nula ’96, M.S. ’01, owner and founder of Elite Physical Therapy, announced the opening of the group’s 10th location and first in New England.

2019 = Violet Krikorian, of Cranston, Rhode Island, has joined Centreville Bank as vice president, regional sales manager. She is responsible for building and managing the mortgage loan origination team, cultivating new business, and increasing profitability for the residential lending division, while improving the bank’s visibility. She has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years, most recently as first vice president, regional sales manager at Coastway Community Bank.

CORRECTIONS: We are sorry to have erroneously listed George W. Crowninshield, M.M.A. ’84 in the "1995 Memioran" section of the fall 2018 issue. Our sincere apologies to Capt. George Crowninshield, USN, Ret., of Middleton, R.I., who wrote to inform us of our error and of his present good health.

Our apologies to the Hydes, the Tyrrells, and the Erb/Fanning family. Their birth announcements appeared with the wrong photos in the last issue. They are included again in this issue, under “Births and Adoptions,” with the correct photos.

Upon an empirical analysis of assets under management, revenue generated, and client satisfaction.

1963 = Stanley Strembicki ’75

1969 = Bill Simonson reports, “Our 50th reunion is just about all set! Please save May 17-19, 2019 for a wonderful series of events and plenty of time to socialize with friends. Please visit alumn.uri.edu/50threunion for registration and details. There is only one 50th reunion and we hope to see you!”

1971 = Jeffrey Fortuna writes, “I am about to turn 70 years old and am doing more reflecting these days on what was and the changes that came along. In 1981, I was living in Boulder, Colorado, and had just graduated from a master’s program in Buddhist and western psychology at Naropa University. I had the great good fortune to meet wonderful teachers and mentors there, as I had at URI. A close group of friends/therapy colleagues and I founded an innovative approach to providing home and community-based care for persons with mental illness, based on our study of eastern and western psychology. We called our work the Windhorse Project. We brought the practice, attitude, and way of life of mindfulness to our clinical work, long before mindfulness became fashionable and trendy. Our seminal work has continued to evolve and spread, and there are now communities in the United States and Europe, forming a vibrant international community. I currently work with Windhorse Community Services in Boulder.”

1975 = Joyce Gunter writes, “At the JetBlue gate in Aruba, my husband and I met the mother of a URI pharmacy graduate. Their daughter graduated soon after her graduation and was working at a hospital near her hometown. Her daughter graduated soon after her daughter graduated as well and is retiring. She has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years, most recently as first vice president, regional sales manager. She is responsible for building and managing the mortgage loan origination team, cultivating new business, and increasing profitability for the residential lending division, while improving the bank’s visibility. She has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years, most recently as first vice president, regional sales manager at Coastway Community Bank.

1982 = Michael T. Halliwell been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Rhode Island Housing Corporation. Mr. Halliwell has been a leader in the housing and real estate industries for many years, serving in a variety of leadership roles including president, senior mortgage banker and director of mortgage banking at Reville Bank. In his new role as President of the Rhode Island Housing Corporation, Mr. Halliwell will work closely with the Board of Trustees to ensure that the Corporation continues to meet its mission of providing affordable housing to those who cannot afford it. Mr. Halliwell has a long history of service to the Rhode Island Housing Corporation, having served on the Board of Trustees for over a decade. He is a skilled banking professional with over 30 years of experience in the mortgage industry, during which time he has held a variety of leadership positions at Reville Bank.

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BIRTHS AND ADOPTIONS

Eric Alexander ’11 and Lauren Alexander ’11 welcomed their baby girl Elena Maddalyn Alexander on August 24, 2018.

Janna Tyrrell ’08 and Matthew Tyrrell ’06 welcomed daughter Anneliese Camilla Hyde on November 2, 2017; she joins older brother Harrison, 3.


Matthew Tyrrell ’06 and Janna Tyrrell ’08 welcomed baby girl Alessandra Gia. She joins big sister Lucianna.

Hector Lopez, M.B.A. ’01 of Portsmouth, R.I. has been selected as head of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) Division Newport Undersea Warfare Weapons, Vehicles and Defensive Systems Department. In this role, he is responsible for technical leadership and full spectrum engineering in support of research, development, acquisition, and in-service activities associated with torpedoes, unmanned vehicles, countermeasures, and towed defensive systems.

Read about Joseph Short on page 29.

Read about Arianna Mouradian on page 44.

Read about Joshua Short on page 29.

Ashlee Hudson was recently awarded the Golden Apple from Patrice Wood at NBC 10 news. Ashlee is a second-grade ESL teacher at Baldwin School in Pawtucket, R.I.

Read about Kira Hawrckide on page 28.

Kris Monahan, Ph.D. ’12 of Tiverton, Rhode Island, has been named director of sponsored projects and research compliance for Providence College. Kris has been at PC for seven years, before which she held positions at Wellesley College, Bridgewater State College, and the Tiverton school system.

Read about Andrew Burnap on page 32.

Read about Jacob Albernaz on page 16.

Read about Justin Bristol on page 52.

Elizabeth Cyganoski Decker ’05, ’06 of Exeter, R.I., recently joined University Gastroenterology (UGI). Dr. Decker is fellowship-trained in gastroenterology and board-certified in internal medicine. In joining UGI, she will contribute to the group’s mission to provide cutting-edge care to their community of patients. Dr. Decker received her medical degree from the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2011. She trained in Florida at St. Petersburg General Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospital, then returned to Rhode Island for specialty training in gastroenterology at Kent Hospital.

Read about Andrew Burnap on page 32.

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WEDDINGS

Lindsay Costa ’14, M.S. ’16 of Brookline, Mass. to Stephen Pasquale Petrarca ’14 of Brookline, Mass. on October 6, 2018.

Elizabeth Cyganowski Decker ’05, ’06

Meghan Menard ’12 to Michael Viscusi ’13 on September 17, 2017.

Hector Lopez, M.B.A. ’01

Brigid Corcoran has joined Pinckney Hugo Group, a full-service marketing firm in Syracuse, New York, as an assistant digital strategist. Prior to joining Pinckney Hugo Group, Brigid worked at Worldwide Social Marketing in Newport, Rhode Island.

Read about Blaine Hymel on page 44.

Read about Brendan Breen on page 13.

Read about Honock Constant on page 53.

Read about Corey Favino on page 51.

Read about Matt Fuller on page 52.

IT WAS THE FAMOUS SUMMER OF ’69, AND MY junior year at Rhody was history. Now it was time to get my summer job lined up.

I had worked as a construction laborer for the previous two summers in the Providence area, but in May, my fraternity brother, Dave Destefano, told me they needed help building some new dorms on campus that summer. Four friends were going to be living down the line and they had room for one more. How could I pass on this adventure?

I was used to hard work, but I was assigned to assist the brick layers, lugging their bricks and stirring their mortar. Not easy, but I got a terrific tan, became very strong, and was making more money than my father. The rooms of that dorm became like my day home. When I punched out at 5, the “down-the-line” party atmosphere of Narragansett kicked in. The summer of ’69 was a wonderful time for me. I don’t recall if I even knew what that dorm would be named, and I really wasn’t concerned.

Thirty years later my daughter Katie was accepted at Rhody and was assigned a dorm room. I drove down and brought her some of her clothes. As I looked around the building, it started to look familiar. Turns out I had lugged nearly every brick that was used to construct that section of Heathman Hall! Some students leave a legacy of sports accomplishments or financial donations after college. My legacy was sweat, bricks, and mortar. That will have to do!

Go Rhody!

—Norm Schoeler ’70
I STARTED PLAYING GUITAR WHEN

While we took the photo, I mentioned my songwriter/guitarist/producer aspirations and said he should hit me up if he wanted to spice up any of his instrumentals with live guitar samples. We exchanged info, I figured he gave me a fake number. Turns out he’s a legit, down-to-earth dude.

We started collaborating. He would invite me to studio sessions with other artists, but I could never really get a second with him to build a new song from scratch. Being in the studio with him and other famous artists was amazing—and stressful. Initially, I didn’t possess the confidence in my abilities, and worried too much about others’ opinions. But over the next two years, I perfected my craft and gained that confidence. I started consistently sending tracks to Metro. Then one night he hit me up for some guitar samples to inspire his session. My girlfriend was already asleep in our small studio apartment. I knew I had to stay up and get to work. It was go time. I might never have this opportunity again. So I put on my headphones, plugged in my guitar, and started playing a spooky loop in a minor key that occurred to me after listening to some ideas I had laid down with my best friend and primary collaborator, Matt—

•••

I sent Metro the recording that night, and a few days later he responded with a fire emoji. A few days after that, he responded again, saying “I’m using that guitar for something!”

Fast forward a couple months, and he’s rolling out some crypto promo for his No. 1 debuting album on the Billboard 200, “Not All Heroes Wear Capes.” He released the track listing on Halloween night and told me my guitar was on the last song, “No More.” I couldn’t believe it. I listen to the song now and I still have a hard time believing it. The hottest rappers in the game—Travis Scott, Kodak Black, and 21 Savage—are flowing over my guitar track. If hockey taught me one thing, it’s this: Shoot your shot. You never know if the puck will go in. I have to thank Metro for the assist though. My dad always said, “Sometimes the assist is just as pretty as the goal.”•

—Sean O’Neil ’14

SCROLL THROUGH SHOE BRAND

In addition to surfing and sea photog-

Favin9 shoots adventure and land-

raphy, Favino shoots adventure and land-

Reto. Besides Sperry, he has also worked

ator. Besides Sperry, he has also worked

SPERRY’s Instagram feed and, if you’ve

We operated under the moniker, “Hypothetical” on all streaming platforms (shameless plug).

畀k, and the resulting images have

the shoreline wearing Sperry sneakers, among others.

Favino, who grew up in Wave-

scapes images, often including himself

ning album on the Billboard 200, “Not All Heroes

With all he’s accomplished, it’s difficult to believe that Favino first picked up a pro-

Togetherness

The skateboarder is Corey Favino, a

Behind the Scenes

A friend told me, ‘Dude, you’re always taking photos, why not pur-

fledgling career as a digital content cre-

We operate under the moniker, “Hypothetical” on all streaming platforms (shameless plug).

Favino, who grew up in War-

and try to have a conversation. I called his name—

rofessional camera only three years ago. A
time believing it. The hottest rappers in the game—Travis Scott, Kodak Black, and 21 Savage—are flowing over my guitar track. If hockey taught me one thing, it’s this: Shoot your shot. You never know if the puck will go in. I have to thank Metro for the assist though.

Says Favino, who grew up in War-

I didn’t say anything to him in

bring a picture? ’ Michael O’Neil ’83 wrote to tell us about his

Right after reading “Why Hip-Hop Matters” (November 2018), Mike O’Neil ’83 wrote to tell us about his son, Sean O’Neil ’14, an engineering/business grad and URI hockey alum, who collaborated with hip-hop producer Metro Boomin. Mike said, “Sean’s story of how he

unifier!”

people together. Music is a wonderful testimony

with his—to elude the crowd he was attracting

It was either seize this moment, or wonder in

ot the moniker, “Hypothetical” on all streaming platforms (shameless plug).

songwriter/guitarist/producer aspirations and

ve and live guitar samples. We exchanged info, I figured he gave me a fake number. Turns out he’s a legit, down-to-earth dude.

ing Metro. Then one night he hit me up for some guitar samples to inspire his session. My girlfriend was already asleep in our small studio apartment. I knew I had to stay up and get to work. It was go time. I might never have this opportunity again. So I put on my headphones, plugged in my guitar, and started playing a spooky loop in a minor key that occurred to me after listening to some ideas I had laid down with my best friend and primary collaborator, Matt—

A friend told me, ‘Dude, you’re always taking photos, why not pursue that?’” Favino says. “So I invested in a real camera, and haven’t put it down since.”

“Sean’s story of how he

Metro Boomin. Mike said, “Sean’s story of how he

their favorite songwriter/guitarist/producer was

I started collaborating. He would invite me to studio sessions with other artists, but I could never really get a second with him to build a new song from scratch. Being in the studio with him and other famous artists was amazing—and stressful. Initially, I didn’t possess the confidence in my abilities, and worried too much about others’ opinions. But over the next two years, I perfected my craft and gained that confidence. I started consistently sending tracks to Metro. Then one night he hit me up for some guitar samples to inspire his session. My girlfriend was already asleep in our small studio apartment. I knew I had to stay up and get to work. It was go-time. I might never have this opportunity again. So I put on my headphones, plugged in my guitar, and started playing a spooky loop in a minor key that occurred to me after listening to some ideas I had laid down with my best friend and primary collaborator, Matt—

I got a job offer in Atlanta and decided to take it. I was spending the weekend there, look-

While we took the photo, I mentioned my songwriter/guitarist/producer aspirations and said he should hit me up if he wanted to spice up any of his instrumentals with live guitar samples. We exchanged info, I figured he gave me a fake number. Turns out he’s a legit, down-to-earth dude.

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I spent the summer of 2018 touring the U.S. on metro Boomin’s World Tour and got to

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND MAGAZINE

With all he’s accomplished, it’s difficult to believe that Favino first picked up a professional camera only three years ago. A longtime lover of the ocean, he entered his first year at URI as a marine biology major. It wasn’t a good fit, and he spent the summer before sophomore year trying to figure out what to do. “A friend told me, ‘Dude, you’re always taking photos, why not pursue that?’” Favino says. “So I invested in a real camera, and haven’t put it down since.”

Favino, who grew up in Warwick, Rhode Island, and currently lives in Narragansett. “So I steer more toward the content development side of social media.” There’s a difference between what he does and being a brand ambassador or influencer, he explains. As a content creator, he creates images for companies to use on their own marketing and social media channels, rather than spreading the word via his accounts.

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BRISTOL. “WE WERE INTERESTED IN MAKING PROVOKING QUALITIES OF THE BUSINESS, ” SAID IN A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT. OPERATED BY CHEFS AND OTHER ENTREPRENEURS BUILT SOLAR-POWERED FOOD CARTS THAT ARE WITH FRIEND MATT FULLER ’18, SOLARCART CO., SELLING CREPES.

IT INTO AN EYE-CATCHING, MOBILE VENUE FOR TRAILER AND SPENT THE NEXT YEAR CONVERTING AND SNACKS. A YEAR LATER HE BOUGHT A CART WHERE PEOPLE COULD CHARGE THEIR PHONES, SOCIALIZE, AND ENJOY SMOOTHIES. A food cart like this can create just as much volume as a restaurant but in a smaller space, ” he said. “And it can be more creatively designed because we don’t have to be restricted by building permits. ”

Bristol describes his carts as “creatively built, solar-powered, prefab, affordable restaurants. And the business is taking off.

A food cart like this can create just as much volume as a restaurant but in a smaller space, ” he said. “And it can be more creatively designed because we don’t have to be restricted by building permits. ”

After modifying their original design multiple times, Bristol and Fuller came up with a standard design that chefs can personalize based on their menus, themes, and styles. They built one that looks like a tiny house for a client in Vermont, and another—seen selling poke bowls at URI football games last fall—is operated by Jen Wells Fogarty ’99 and business partner Michelle Frank. And now they’re working with Roaming Hunger, a California food truck-booking service that provides food trucks to corporate clients and major promotional events.

“Cities are starting to get concerned with the noise and pollution that food trucks produce,” Bristol said. “But ours are quiet and don’t pollute, so we’re optimistic for our future.”

This spring, Bristol hopes to have a solar cart operating as an outdoor café in a permanent location somewhere close to the Kingston Campus.

“It will have seating cabanas, industrial planters, and an inviting eating experience around green energy and social interaction with good people,” he said.

“But it will still have the flexibility to travel to events. In 10 years, we’ll be franchising them.” •

—Todd McLeish

THE FUTURE OF FOOD TRUCKS IS HERE

JUSTIN BRISTOL ’17 AND MATT FULLER ’18

WHEN JUSTIN BRISTOL ’17 WAS A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT, HE IMAGINED HOW FUN IT WOULD BE TO HAVE A SOLAR-POWERED FOOD CART WHERE PEOPLE COULD CHARGE THEIR PHONES, SOCIALIZE, AND ENJOY SMOOTHIES AND SNACKS. A YEAR LATER HE BOUGHT A TRAILER AND SPENT THE NEXT YEAR CONVERTING IT INTO AN EYE-CATCHING, MOBILE VENUE FOR SELLING CREPES.

TODAY, THE COMPANY HE ESTABLISHED WITH FRIEND MATT FULLER ’18, SOLARCART CO., SELLS SOLAR-POWERED FOOD CARTS THAT ARE OPERATED BY CHEFS AND OTHER ENTREPRENEURS IN A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT.

“What kept us going was the thought-provoking qualities of the business,” said Bristol. “We were interested in making people think about the food they’re eating and the setting it’s served in. Eventually we realized that we were more interested in the process of building the carts than we were in serving food. So now we’re creating a unique setting for chefs and customers.”

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FINISHING IS JUST THE BEGINNING

HENOCK CONSTANT ’18

AS A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHING assistant at E3 Academy in Providence, Henock Constant ’18 toured URI’s Kingston Campus so often with his students that he memorized the tour. But the parent of four who attempted college twice without finishing never imagined attending himself.

So, for Constant, the October 13, 2018, URI football game proved surreal. He sat in the president’s box as a URI 10 Under 10 Alumni Award recipient after a college career spanning two decades. “Sometimes I forget I’m a college graduate,” he says. “People have to remind me.”

Constant emigrated from Haiti in 1994 at age 19. He attended various schools in New York—earning a certificate, but no degree. Marriage and children came next. At E3 Academy, his colleagues saw his potential. The principal encouraged him to earn a college degree. In 2013, he called URI’s Alan Shin Feinberg College of Education and Professional Studies.

He met with now-Assistant Dean Tammy Warner and mapped a plan to earn a bachelor’s degree. The degree was within reach and he could enroll in evening classes in Providence—close to home.

“I just sat there and said, ‘Why didn’t I do this before? Why did I wait that long?’” Constant says.

For the next five years, Warner and academic advisor Jeff Johnson rallied Constant to finish. When he hit low points, a perfectly timed, encouraging email would arrive from Nancy Rabidoux, coordinator of Finish What You Started, a program that’s steered more than 300 people like Constant to a URI degree. Johnson says the team effort, and Constant’s genuine desire to learn, set him apart. “We could all see a person who was going to be successful,” he says.

At home, Constant was motivated by his children and wife, Daphney, who was seeking her first college degree at the Community College of Rhode Island. Now, with a bachelor’s degree done, he’s considering a master’s program with hopes of returning to Haiti to improve education for students with special needs. “Going in, I just wanted to finish college. Then I realized there are so many other things I can do now,” he says. “A degree has opened a lot of doors.” •

—Chris Barrett
IN MEMORIAM

Yuzuru Shimizu, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering
Edward Grove, professor emeritus of mathematics
Leslie J. DeGroot, former Faculty and Staff

BOOKSHELF

Julien Ayotte ’63, M.B.A. ’69

Gina Macdonald ’75

Norah Pollard, M.A. ’68
Lizard Season (2018)


Evan P. Schneider, M.A. ’07
The Best of Bonsheaker: A Bicycling Almanac (2018)

Neil D. Desmond ’92
Angels of Stockholm: Short Stories (2018)


Kerri Lanziere ’97
Roger Williams Makes Resistance (2019)

James Takach, M.A. ’79, Ph.D. ’86
Lincoln and the Natural Environment (2019)

Susan Greenberg Forman ’59, M.S. ’71

Patrice McCandless, M.S. ’75
Becoming Jesse: Celebrating the Everyday Magic of Childhood (2018)

Ariane Tokyo Rosenthal ’73
Our Last Seder (2013)

Debra Levine Weissman ’91
Lucky Twice (2018)

Check out the latest books by alumni authors—and share yours! Please send a cover image, along with author, title, and year published, to urimag.uri.edu.

NETWORK
Photo Caption Contest

Do you have a funny idea for a caption for this photo from the URI Archives? Email your caption to urimag@uri.edu or respond at uri.edu/magazine.

Submit entries by May 15, 2019

THIS PHOTO FROM THE 1969 GRIST GENERATED LOTS of caption ideas and notes from alumni who remember that year’s snowy weather. The undated photo was likely taken during the “1969 Nor’easter,” which blanketed Rhode Island with more than a foot of snow in early February of that year. Mike Pilla ’72 wrote to say, “I remember the two back-to-back storms in February 1969 that begot this photo!”

We were surprised and delighted to hear from Jane Owen ’72, who wrote, “OMG! I’m too young to be in a throwback photo. By the way, I’m the girl in the minidress.” Jane recalls: “I was getting out of class and heading toward the Student Union for a cup of hot chocolate. This idiot with a big camera was blocking the walkway in front of the Union. I was thinking of pushing him into a snowbank if he didn’t move out of the way—pedestrian rage.”

Jane continued, “I remember that storm. There was no snow on the ground when it arrived. It went from zero to 10 inches in three hours while my family was attending a Cub Scout Banquet at Wright’s Farm. Needless to say, I missed classes the next day since I couldn’t get back to school that evening.”

We also heard from Cap Frank ’70, M.S. ’73, who said, “It’s fun to think that I was probably walking across campus when this photo was taken, and my mother, who graduated with me in 1970 after returning to URI to complete her degree after leaving during WWII, was perhaps also there, going to class in the snow.”

Another note from Marilyn Bator Goktuna ’68 said, “This photo reminded me that it was sometimes challenging to make those Saturday morning classes. My grown children were so surprised to hear that I had Saturday classes way back when! Thanks for the memories!”

We received lots of captions that were variations on the “No school Foster-Glocester” theme, the “Wish I’d gone to school in Florida/Hawaii/California” theme, and the “Wish I hadn’t worn a miniskirt today” theme. Hopefully, by the time you’re reading this in the spring issue of the magazine, snow will not be in the forecast. Thank you, readers, for all your fun, creative, nostalgic captions!

FALL WINNERS: BLIZZARD ON THE QUAD, 1969

Winning Caption
“Im freezing, I’m late for class, and I’m pretty sure the Marlboro Man is following me.” —John Levesque ’72

Runners-Up
“I think I’m still on the Quad…” —Denise Van Tassell ’82

“Winter be damned! I’m wearing my new skirt!” —Tara Simonetti Mohn ’90

Long-Term Planning, Here and Now

A planned gift can leave a lasting impact while helping you achieve your financial and philanthropic goals. Explore a variety of options for tax savings, estate planning, receiving payments for life, and more.

We cordially invite you to join the Oliver Watson Society, which honors alumni, parents, faculty, and friends who contribute to the University through a planned gift.

Your commitment today will ensure excellence at URI for generations to come.

Visit uri.planmygift.org, email plannedgiving@uri.edu, or call 401.874.2042.
Gulf Stream Mission

This wind- and solar-powered ocean drone was launched from Newport Shipyard in January to spend a month in the Gulf Stream collecting data about heat transfer and carbon exchange. The data will help researchers better understand the ocean's effect on the Earth's climate. Assistant Professor Jaime Palter of URI's Graduate School of Oceanography received a Saildrone Award from California-based Saildrone, which provided use of the drone for 30 days of data collection.