Lauren studied Mandarin Chinese at Beijing University, as part of URI’s Chinese Flagship Program. She credits a classmate with encouraging her to attend the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang, China. She had seen pictures of the festival in first-year Mandarin class and was excited to see it in real life. When the photo was taken, it was -9 degrees Fahrenheit. However, her cell phone and camera both succumbed to the cold, so she borrowed a friend’s phone to take the photo. She kept the phone warm under her coat until she was ready to take the photo. She loves this shot for many reasons, but mostly because it’s a reminder of her time in China. Buchholz says, “Studying in China completely changed my world view, and gave me some of the biggest challenges and joys of my life.”
COLLECTIVE PURPOSE
Just before classes began this fall, a group of engineering professors gathered in The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering. Representing the full engineering faculty, this group comprises 22 of the college’s 74 faculty members, whose research and teaching will be shaped by the open space, transparent walls, and bridge-like appearance of the new facility.

Engineers are unique—lending creativity and vision, they are also doers, with the ability and willingness to imagine technologies that will advance human potential, and construct the framework that will transform those ideas into reality. These engineers are also teachers, mentors, and guides—showing the next generation, who will be faced with some of the biggest problems the world has ever known, how to engineer solutions.

URI engineering is building the future.

Dean Raymond M. Wright
College of Engineering

College of Engineering at a Glance
The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering not only supports the college’s advanced research and innovative teaching, but also its continued growth and achievement.

1,663 Current enrollment in the College of Engineering, up from 900 ten years ago
26% of URI engineering undergraduates are URI-IUPUI dual-degree students
85% of undergraduates having completed one or more paid internships
240% minority enrollment increase since 2004
8 11.5-to-1 student/faculty ratio
Over 90% of URI’s engineering grads are employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation
88% of bachelor’s degree programs are accredited

KEY
1. K. Wayne Lee, professor of civil and environmental engineering
2. Harish Sunak, professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
3. Vinka Oyanedel-Craver, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering
4. Zongqin Zhang, professor of mechanical and industrial systems engineering
5. Ken Yang, professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
6. Daniel Roxbury, assistant professor of chemical engineering
7. Walt Besio, professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
8. Philip Daatseris, professor of mechanical engineering
9. Valerie Wazer Spektor, associate professor of industrial and systems engineering
10. Patrick Hoyt Story, professor of industrial and systems engineering
11. Otto Gregory, distinguished professor of chemical engineering
12. Maha Me, professor of mechanical, computer, and biomedical engineering
13. Mercedes Flores-Malas, associate professor of chemical engineering
14. Peter Franklin, professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering, and associate dean of academic affairs for the College of Engineering
15. Bin, assistant professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
16. Karel Workman, associate professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
17. David Taggart, professor of mechanical engineering
18. Argunen Kastirat, professor in residence of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
19. Chemye He, assistant professor of mechanical, industrial, and systems engineering
20. Mariele Sudol, professor of industrial and systems engineering
21. Tas Singh, chair of professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering
22. Richard Fares, professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering

When the engineering disciplines combine, the sum is greater than its parts.
URI engineering is building the future.

– Dean Raymond M. Wright
College of Engineering
Winter Blooms
This beautiful white poinsettia was grown by URI Cooperative Extension’s Master Gardener Program. Their poinsettia sale kicks off the holidays in Kingston each year, with sales benefiting Master Gardener educational services, including the gardening and environmental hotline, soil pH testing, and public programs and presentations. The poinsettias the Master Gardeners grow and sell are part of the North American Poinsettia Trials; they report data back to the growers that send the plant plugs. The growers use that data to help their breeding trials. uri.edu/mastergardener
HOW FORTUNATE I FEEL TO BE president at a time of such incredible growth and change! Working together with the state, we have made more than $1 billion in capital investments in our campuses since 2010. We’ve hired 350 new faculty and dramatically increased opportunities for internships and research for our students—all across the world—so that now more than 8,000 students are involved every year. This would not be possible without the increases we’ve made in financial aid. Today, we award more than $100 million in undergraduate merit- and need-based assistance. To stay competitive, keep URI affordable, and attract the most talented students, we are determined to grow that pool of aid.

Teaching capabilities, and elevating the student experience to levels we could only imagine when this decade began. Tom shares his story with us in this final 2019 issue of URI Magazine, explaining why he and his wife, Cathy Ryan, have so generously supported URI. Their most recent gift of $35 million is the largest private contribution in our history, and brings their cumulative giving to more than $56 million. The gift will strengthen the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience with $24 million to explore new treatments, therapies, and strategies for addressing disorders like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and ALS. Another $1 million establishes a challenge to inspire community support for a men’s and women’s basketball training facility. And $10 million establishes an endowment for the Thomas M. Ryan Scholars program, providing full scholarships and fees for four years for exceptional students, as well as access to URI’s Honors Program, Leadership Institute, and global Winter J-Term. The first Ryan Scholars will be enrolled next fall.

URI also celebrated other amazing gifts this year, including $4 million from Richard J. Harrington ’73, Hon. ’92, and Jean Harrington to the Harrington School of Communication and Media, bringing it to more than $12 million. Their support and engagement assures our communications students will benefit from a 21st century curriculum and learn in facilities furnished with state-of-the-art equipment, like the new Broadcast Center we unveiled this fall.

Speaking of state-of-the-art facilities, our cover story is the stunning new Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering, which opened this fall to great acclaim. We’re proud that Rhode Islanders supported the project with $150 million in bond issues. And we are grateful to Michael and Elizabeth Fascitelli for their $10 million gift, which will fund lab and research equipment and establish an endowed fund for the dean’s priorities.

Not only is The Fascitelli Center our largest academic building, it is also our most innovative and forward-thinking, organized around interdisciplinary research themes to stimulate the kinds of collaboration that will lead to discoveries today’s engineers can only dream of.

Even as we focus on science and engineering, we also recognize the intrinsic value and essential role of the arts. Our Fine Arts Center is undergoing a renovation as I write. And we are proud to share that music therapy is another new academic offering at URI. I hope you will read the story of VOICES 21C in these pages. A choir with a cause that includes four URI alumni, they are raising their voices, combining song, dance, and poetry to bring to life messages touting the transformational power of social justice.

Transformation is the word that best describes the past decade at URI. Momentum from that transformation will carry us forward into 2020. I can’t wait to see what’s next.

David M. Dooley
President, University of Rhode Island
Feedback

Write to us: urimag@uri.edu
Visit us and comment at uri.edu/magazine

From the Editor

I BECAME INVICTED IN THE STORIES you read in URI Magazine the same way I do when reading a good novel—the more I read, the more I connect with the characters. There are lots of great stories to tell about URI. Just take a look at Class Notes—URI alumni are out there working, creating, learning, living—changing the world. And there’s so much to say about the research, teaching, and outreach born in our labs, classrooms, and offices. What’s at the center of all these stories? Extraordinary characters—the people doing the work, coming up with new ideas, solving problems, and inspiring others. Take Tom Ryan, for example. You’ve probably heard his name and you might know he was the longtime CEO of CVS who’s given generously to URI over the years. When you read his story in this issue, you may also discover something new about the person behind the public persona. Everyone—a former professor, his family, his colleagues—says, in their own way, the same thing: He listens, he cares about people, he rolls up his sleeves, he never gives up. That kind of integrity is rare and remarkable. We are fortunate to have a strong character like Tom Ryan in our URI story; and, as is the case with strong characters, we are enriched and inspired by reading his story.

The same is true of house mother Deborah Lambrecht, ocean scientist/advocate Gyasi Alexander, artist/clinician Nicole Potvin, writer Evan Schneder—and all the other characters who come to life in the pages of this issue. I hope you will enjoy their stories as much as I have.

— Barbara Caron, Editor-in-Chief

Rhody Blue Minds

THE ARTICLE BY LAUREN POIRIER, “Got Blue Mind,” in the summer issue put into words everything that I feel whenever I am at the ocean, either on the East or the West Coast. Having grown up in Rhode Island and spent summers in Narragansett, as well as living in San Diego for 20 years, I have spent a large part of my life near the ocean. Now after living in Arizona for 20 years that part of my life is definitely missing. When I am able to get to the ocean, I treasure every minute of the peace, joy, and calm it brings.

I want to comment on the last photo caption contest—the photo of the two ocean engineers. Dr. Middleton was my father, and it was just sweet to see this picture of him with Gil pop up in the magazine. I have shared it with my three other siblings. Just thank you is all.

— Amy (Middleton) Brown ’04

Embracing Global Education

I READ WITH INTEREST and delight in the recent issue of the alumni magazine the feature about the impact of international education and influence on students and their whole educational experience at URI. I am so glad that the University sees the impact and value of cross-cultural studies, interdisciplinary cooperation, and experiences outside the confines of campus opportunities.

This summer, I look back exactly 50 years to my own experience of returning to Kingston after extended travel through Europe, a junior year of study at the University of Madrid, and a work/study opportunity in Switzerland. My return was made difficult by the lack of proper policies and very little flexibility in the educational requirements. It was a bitter experience, although it led me to change my whole college plan and put me on a trajectory for a fantastic experience in the Peace Corps (which laid a grand foundation for future endeavors). I have always felt that I and other students in similar situations were “punished” for stretching the edges of possibilities in our college education. So it was gratifying to see just how much policies have changed, how cross-cultural and interdisciplinary opportunities are embraced, and how the international experiences and backgrounds of students are encouraged and enhanced.

— Rev. Carol Snow-Asher ’70

All in the Family

The 1965 photo of engineers Foster Middleton and Gil Fain, which ran in the spring issue of the magazine, and again with winning photo captions in the summer issue, elicited some nice notes from members of both men’s families. Made our day to read these notes:

THANK YOU FOR SHARING THAT NEVER-seen-before photo of my cousin, Gil. His dad and my dad were brothers.

— Richard Fain ’69

I WANTED TO COMMENT ON THE LAST photo caption contest—the photo of the two ocean engineers. Dr. Middleton was my father, and it was just sweet to see this picture of him with Gil pop up in the magazine. I have shared it with my three other siblings. Just thank you is all.

— Amy (Middleton) Brown ’04

Rhody Blue Minds

AS ALWAYS, THE RECENT ISSUE OF URI Magazine made me proud and fondly brought me back to my alma mater and home state.

Got Blue Mind? Absolutely! I grew up playing and quahogging with dad on Greenwich Bay and spent many summer days “Down the Line” at those beautiful southern beaches. There must be something in the water in Rhody ... and I believe it’s all good!

— Kathy Perry Ojeda ’81

Correction

In “Prescription: Empathy,” on page 11 of the summer issue, Erica Estus was introduced as clinical associate professor of pharmacy. In fact, she was promoted to clinical full professor on July 1, 2019.

Congratulations Professor Estus!

In the story “Blue Minds,” on page 24, we should have introduced Brian Caccipullo ’11 as Brian Caccipullo ’11, M.S. ’15

Please note that the URI Alumni Board of Governors’ membership includes two individuals who are alumni of the University of San Diego, and two individuals who are alumni of Tufts University.

— Rev. Carol Snow-Asher ’70

Did you play a club sport at URI? We’d love to hear from you! Tell us why you played, what you remember most, or how the experience impacted your life after URI. Whatever your stories, please share them with us at urimag@uri.edu.

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The University of Rhode Island Magazine

Shoo! Professor Rebecca Brown is testing a laser scarecrow—with much success so far.
}(uri_calcs)
Breastfeeding Study Earns National Award

College of Nursing Professor Diane DiTomasso received the 2019 Best Research Award from the Journal of Human Lactation for her groundbreaking study about newborn weight loss after birth. It is normal for newborns to lose weight after birth; health-care professionals have generally agreed that it shouldn’t be more than 7 percent during the first two weeks. DiTomasso’s study found that the average breastfed baby loses 8 percent of birth weight during the first two weeks, but then gains weight at a similar pace afterward. DiTomasso says, “We want parents to be aware that a drop in birth weight is to be expected and that there are many health benefits of breastfeeding.”

Groundbreaking study about newborn weight loss after birth.

Disturbing Discovery

URI scientists discovered an abundance of plastics in sea ice cores collected from floes in the Arctic’s Northwest Passage. The team, led by URI’s Graduate School of Oceanography, was traveling aboard the Swedish icebreaker, Oden, with the NSF-funded Northwest Passage Project. “Even knowing what we knew about the occurrence of plastics across the globe,” said Brice Loose, associate professor of oceanography and chief expedition scientist, “for us, it was kind of a punch to the stomach to see what looked like a normal sea ice core taken in such a beautiful, pristine environment just chock full of this material that is so completely foreign.”

The Power of Music

The College of Arts and Sciences rolls out its new music therapy program beginning in fall 2020. The Bachelor of Music in Music Therapy will be the first of its kind at a public New England institution. The five-year health-based program is grounded in neuroscience. “This will be one of the premier programs at the University,” says Mark Conley, chair of the music department. “It will not just change the Department of Music; ultimately it will change the University’s understanding of the arts and its place in other professions.”

Confronting the Opioid Epidemic

A team from URI’s Colleges of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Environmental and Life Sciences received a $1 million grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide opioid education and outreach, and distribute naloxone to rural Rhode Island communities.

Superb September for Harrington School

“[As journalists] is not to be liked and not to take the easy route. Our job is actually to do the really hard things because we’ve been given this extraordinary responsibility, this extraordinary platform.”

— Christiane Amanpour ’83, Hon. ’95

In early September, the Harrington School of Communication and Media announced a $4 million gift commitment from Richard J. Harrington ’73, Hon. ’02, and Jean Harrington, for further renovations to Ranger Hall, the Harrington School’s home. Later in the month, CNN chief international anchor Christiane Amanpour ’83, Hon. ’95, delivered a lecture, “Truthful, Not Neutral,” to a capacity crowd this fall. Bottom: Harrington School director Adam Roth, URI President David M. Dooley, Christiane Amanpour, Jean Harrington, and Richard Harrington ’73, Hon. ’02 celebrate the official opening of the Broadcast Center.

Talking Fish

A team of researchers led by assistant professor of ocean engineering Brennan Phillips observed flashlight fish in the South Pacific using bioluminescent flashes to communicate and facilitate “schooling.” This is the first time this behavior has been observed and documented.

Infant HIV Exposure

Barbara Lohman-Payne, an associate research professor at URI’s Institute for Immunology and Informatics, and an interscholastic, global team of scientists established a link between prenatal HIV exposure and decreased infant immune system at birth.

Forecasting Tsunamis

Ocean engineering professor Stephan Grilli and his team have shown that modeling can accurately forecast tsunamis from volcanic events. Their research could lead to life-saving early warning systems.

Getting to Graduation

URI was named a national finalist for the Association for Public Land Grant Universities 2019 Degree Completion Award. URI was recognized for its innovative approaches to improving degree completion rates.

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WHEN I RIDE MY BICYCLE TO WORK, I look like a cross between Miss Almira Gulch—the cranky old lady in The Wizard of Oz who speeds off on her bike with Toto in her basket—and a crossing guard. That’s because my modified Bianchi Cortina hybrid has high handlebars to prevent wear and tear on my back and neck, a rearview mirror, and a carrier rack—not unlike Miss Gulch’s ride. And my bright orange, reflective vest, which helps make me visible to cars, is unmistakably crossing-guard-like. When fully tricked out for night riding, I look like a carnival ride—a rear red light on my helmet, reflective Velcro straps across my ankles, spoke lights, and my Tru headlight.

I’ve been making the 5-mile trip to URI and back just about every day for at least 20 years. I ride in snow, rain, wind, frigid cold, and, on a few occasions, when the forecasts have failed me, I’ve even braved the ride in thunderstorms. But still, a bad day on my bike is better than a good day in a car.

Why? Because I’m generating my own power, which makes me feel great and helps keep me relatively fit, notwithstanding my stomach bulge from eating too many chips and drinking too much soda. And when I blast down a hill, the sensation of speed and the wind in my face makes me feel great and helps keep me relatively fit, notwithstanding my stomach bulge from eating too many chips and drinking too much soda. And when I blast down a hill, the sensation of speed and the wind in my face make for a wonderful rush. I can also smell, feel, see, and hear the seasons changing. Each season offers its own treats for the senses, but autumn—which offers bright foliage, the pungent aroma of decaying leaves, crisp air, and the rustle of deer in rutting season—is one of my favorite times to ride.

I also bike to church (a perfect time to examine my conscience and get ready for worship), the library, URI football and soccer games, and Scarborough State Beach. I’ll even put my bike on a Rhode Island Public Transit Authority bus to get to Newport and Providence.

And, like Almira, I get cranky about:

1. Drivers who speed by when there is barely any room, almost taking the hair off my arms, and those who pull in front of me by just a few feet to make a right turn. Really?
2. Cyclists—especially the super-competitive folks—who don’t signal or obey traffic laws. Also cyclists who ride through intersections without stopping or ride against traffic and on sidewalks. And cyclists who wear earbuds—do you want to die?!
3. Shortighted state and municipal officials who fail to incorporate bike lanes and wider shoulders in their road planning.

But this is what keeps me going: getting the best parking on campus, keeping a car off the road (my little effort to combat climate change), and knowing I can still crank out 20-, 30- and even 75-mile rides on a hybrid bike at 62 years old.

Dave Lavallee ’79, M.P.A. ’87, is assistant director of communications for the University of Rhode Island. He has worked at URI since 1994 and has been a bicycle commuter for the better part of his tenure here.
Saturday Night Lights

8,511 fans packed Meade Stadium on September 7 for the first night game played there in more than 40 years. The Rams fell to Delaware 44-36 in a triple-overtime thriller, but the atmosphere was electric thanks to a $4.2 million renovation that included new turf and permanent lights. The new turf and lights create options for night games and increased use of the field for club and intramural sports and other University and community events.
As she learned more about her own disease, she spread the word. She helped organize the University’s first National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) Walk. She participated in the Body Project, a national initiative helping young people confront unrealistic beauty ideals. Her URI career ended on a high note when she was selected to be student speaker for the College of Health Sciences’ inaugural commencement. In her speech, she implored her peers to help others in times of need. And she notes that the college’s merging of disciplines—from nutrition to kinesiology—permits better inquiry into complex issues like anorexia.

Two years later, she has a master’s degree in counseling from Northeastern and is a clinician for Rhode Island’s Key Program, where she helps young adults in state care prepare to live independently. In addition, she gave back to URI by assembling a list of University resources for students being treated at URI’s Counseling Center.

“To make and sustain mental health progress, you need a whole team,” Potvin says, pointing out that her tight-knit college taught her this lesson through an internship at a local school where she provided critical support for others. “URI not only saved my life, but put me on a path that was meant for me,” Potvin says.

The Rhode Island native’s initial attempt at college out of state was marred by weight loss and a sense of isolation. She returned home to be treated for anorexia, then transferred to URI to be closer to home—and because URI friends assured her this was a supportive community.

Her first fall at URI passed and Potvin grew stronger. During Winter J-Term, she took a psychology course on eating disorders taught by Lindsey Anderson, director of URI’s Psychological Consultation Center. "URI led me to the most incredible parts of my life," Potvin says.

Rhode Taken = RHODE TO A DEGREE

Nicolle Potvin entered URI in Fall 2015, anorexic and desperately seeking support. She found it here, and with it, she made her way up from rock bottom. Now she’s found her place providing critical support for others.

URI Degree B.A. ‘17 psychology, summa cum laude; minor in justice, law, and society.

INTERNSHIP

Warwick, R.I., public schools. The internship “was really important because it helped show me I was on the right track.”

URI Degree B.A. ‘17 psychology, summa cum laude, minor in justice, law, and society.

Key Turning Point

In a J-Term class focused on eating disorders, she learned how to recognize anorexia, and she vowed she would take steps to help others.

Mentor

Lindsey Anderson, director of the URI Psychological Consultation Center.

From Despair to Dedication

Niccole Potvin ’17

Dogs wag their tails. It’s how we know they’re happy. But does that behavior separate your best friend from a wolf? Kate Fish thinks it might. And she spent her summer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City gathering data to test her theory.

Kate Fish ’20 was working as a research assistant for URI anthropology professor Holly Dunsworth a couple years ago when crews cleaning the Ranger Hall attic uncovered a cache of animal skeletons. Fish’s job was to clean the skeletons, identify them, and prepare them for storage. But many of the skeletons were postcranial—meaning they were missing their skulls.

The easiest way to identify an animal skeleton is by the skull. “If you have the head of a dog, you know you have a dog. If you have the head of a wolf, you know you have a wolf—or a pig, or whatever,” says Dunsworth.

Among the postcranial skeletons was a canid. Lacking a skull, it was nearly impossible to determine if it was a wild or a domesticated canid. That got Dunsworth and Fish thinking. How else would you identify canid skeletons? What distinguishes wolves and coyotes from domestic dogs?

“I started thinking about tail-wagging,” says Fish, who’s majoring in biology and anthropology. “While wolves do wag their tails, it is not a habitual behavior as it is for domestic dogs, who constantly communicate this way with humans. Habitual tail-wagging could influence the development of the skeleton, just as habitual tennis-playing influences the morphology of the racket-wielding arm.”

Fish identified the muscles involved in tail posture and wagging and where those muscles attach to the skeleton. She designed measurements to compare differences between domestic and wild canids.

Last summer at the American Museum of Natural History, with support from a URI College of Arts and Sciences Fellowship, Fish measured the bones of 87 skeletons from seven canid species; she did similar work the previous summer at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. She’s seen skeletons at large and small—multiple dog breeds and wild canids from wolves to foxes—to make allowances for size. She’s also examined skeletons for signs of osteoarthritis, noting an assumption that domestic dogs could be prone to arthritis from habitual tail wagging.

She is doing preliminary analysis of the data she’s gathered over the past two summers, using Excel to run statistics and create graphs. This fall, she will take a high-level statistics course to learn how to analyze the data using a coding language.

“If her theory plays out, Fish, whose interest in skeletons was sparked by the TV series Bones, plans to write a research paper and submit it for publication. “I still have a lot of data to analyze,” says Fish, “but with what I have done so far, I am seeing marginal differences in the bone anatomy that could verify my hypothesis about tail-wagging.”

Fish’s study on postcranial identification could add a new tool for researchers at archaeological sites who find canid skeletons without skulls.

“According to the published literature,” says Dunsworth, “Kate’s first person to investigate a link to tail behavior.”

— Tony LaRoche ’95

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS; COURTESY URI COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

For decades, he was the face of CVS and the CVS Golf Charity Classic. Though he retired as CEO and president of CVS Health Corporation in 2011, he’s not done yet. He’s busier than ever, striving to ignite transformative change through results-oriented philanthropy, including a record-breaking $35 million gift to URI this summer.

By Diane Sterrett
I HAVE A SAYING—IF YOU'RE THROUGH CHANGING, YOU'RE THROUGH—NO MATTER WHAT AGE.

Dressed casually in khakis and blue linen that sets off laughing blue eyes and an affable demeanor, Tom Ryan ’75, Hon. ’99, relaxes on the stone patio of his Narragansett home and reflects on career, family, leadership, and giving back. After a successful 37-year career at CVS, Ryan could surely trade in the spreadsheets for golf clubs. But he’s not built to be idle. “I have a saying—if you’re through changing, you’re through—no matter what age,” he says.

He radiates high energy, perhaps a result of his high-intensity training and Peloton workouts. “I tell my friends he’s my Energizer bunny, because he never runs out of energy,” says Cathy Ryan, his wife of 33 years. “When one thing’s done, he’s right on to the next.”

Right now, that next thing is starting a venture company with two friends, investing in young entrepreneurs, companies, and ideas. “These are just incredibly talented people who are trying to do incredibly hard work,” says Ryan. “It’s overwhelming how bright, how energetic they are.”

One of them is NexImmune, a biopharmaceutical company that’s trying to conquer cancer with a strong foundation, using the body’s own immune system to orchestrate a targeted T cell response. Their first product is expected to enter clinical trials this year. “They can actually turn on and off the gene that’s causing the problem. It’s fascinating,” Ryan says. Of NexImmune, he contends, “We’re focused on really big breakthroughs, not looking for incremental change. We want to do something that’s going to have a dramatic societal impact.”

That desire to create transformative change played a part in his family foundation’s largest gift that established the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience in 2013. That gift played a part in his family foundation’s largest gift that established the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience at URI in 2013. That gift combined with the newest record-breaking $35 million gift, and others over the preceding years, to bring the Ryan’s lifetime giving to URI to more than $56 million. That total enters rarefied company for public universities.

Of the institute’s origin and its family’s contribution, Ryan says, “I wanted to do something on a transformational level at the University. After talking to [URI President] Dave Dooley, my wife Cathy, and our kids, we came to the conclusion that Alzheimer’s and neurodegenerative diseases were where we wanted to focus. Alzheimer’s killed my dad and my mom—my dad from the disease, my mom from taking care of him. Alzheimer’s is a health-care tsunami coming at us. It’s going to be a trillion dollars in health-care costs per year, plus the impact on fami- lies. The fact that we were putting our family foundation money in, I wanted something meaningful that would also produce results. Results matter!”

Ryan says the institute is doing some incredible things already, recruiting and retaining top-notch scientists and researchers and being awarded millions in grant money from the National Institutes of Health. “For an embryonic stage institute, they’ve been incredibly well. I’m so proud of them. The institute changes things exponentially. It’s great for the University and raises our visibility around research. In recent years, we’ve expanded our research capabilities in important ways under President Dooley’s leadership.” The Ryan’s most recent gift will help the institute continue to do the kind of groundbreaking research it is already engaging in.

President David M. Dooley says he and his family have a strong commitment to finding ways for URI to advance both the science and the practice of healing and health, and he says Ryan inspires him with everything he does. “He’s relentless in his push for excellence, when Tom takes on a project, he’s all in until it’s accomplished successfully. With the institute, for example, Tom didn’t just give a gift; he was involved in its founding and development. We all aspire to become one of the leading research centers for neurodegenerative diseases in the country, and Tom remains engaged with that goal.”

As an example of Ryan’s characteristic loyalty, Jay’s Pharmacy would be the one independent that, later in his career, he didn’t just declare off limits for CVS acquisition and for building a CVS nearby. For college, he knew he wanted more than just a pharmacy school in case he changed majors. He visited URI on a bright sunny spring day and was seduced by the campus, the energetic people in the Quad, and the beach—and his choice was made. “Plus, URI had a great phar- macy reputation.”

A self-described OK student (“organic chemistry was the bane of my existence”), but a quick study, he credits his natural curiosity as part of what drove his success and longevity atURI—relationships formed with fellow students and profes- sors, and lessons learned in and out of the classroom. He knew he couldn’t study in the fraternity house he lived in, so he’d “lock in” at the library for several hours each night.

Rather than the typical drug research track, Ryan gravitated toward classes focused on the business side of pharmacy taught by College of Pharmacy Professor Emeritus Norman Campbell. Campbell says he taught Ryan in management, pharmacy law, and ethics courses. “For a student in the heavily science-oriented pharmacy program, it was a different viewpoint about the profession at a time when independent community pharma- cists still had a strong influence.

BUILDING A COMPANY
TRANSFORMING A CULTURE
Ryan credits his natural curiosity as part of what drove his success and longevity at CVS—he stayed, rising through the ranks. “There was always something new, and I loved the business. The company was changing around me—or I was changing the company with the help of a lot of good people—so I was not looking ahead to the next job. I was happy with the job I was
We talked about who we wanted to be as a company, what values we had. It really grew out of strategy sessions. Integrity, teamwork, urgency, openness, as a whole. Under his leadership, CVS had a good cadre of leaders, and good technology. "We had fantastic people all around us. I had a great board of directors, we wanted a cultural vision for the company, acquisitions were a big part of CVS’ strategy—helping others meet goals is, to Ryan, a significant measure of his own success."

"Every time I’m with Tom or interact with him," says O’Rourke, "I gain new perspective on leadership. He sets aggressive goals and he’s gotten us to stretch in our fundraising. He’s a quick thinker and is so experienced—he’s seen it all. When you think of his international business reputation, the Ryan Center, the Ryan Institute, and his influence in the state of Rhode Island, he has a deep impact that benefits the University immensely. Through his interaction with other donors and prospects, he gets people involved. The value of that kind of influence and leadership is difficult to calculate."

"If not for URI, I might not be in pharmacy," said Andrade. "Our success was due to him, to getting the match going. I knew he cared, he was with it. He’s the reason so many people gave back. Just two days long, the CVS Classic raises millions for our charities."

Two decades later, he’s proud of the amount of money the tournament gives back. Just two days long, the CVS Classic is one of the top golf tournaments in terms of the amount of money given to charity—over $30 million to date. And gifts benefit a diverse group of charities, with causes ranging from children’s services to homeless to the environment.

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Ryan partnered with PGA golfer Brad Faxon (left) and Billy Andrade (right) to launch the CVS Health Charity Classic in 1999. Ryan gives Faxon and Andrade credit for the tournament’s success. For Ryan, that assists who is success never won alone, sharing credit seems not simple modesty, but instinctive strategy—helping others meet goals is, to Ryan, a significant measure of his own success.

"I’VE NEVER WON ANY GOLF TOURNAMENT ALONE. IT’S ALWAYS WITH A GOOD PARTNER, JUST LIKE IN LIFE."
Tom and Cathy Ryan (center) with their children and grandchildren at a recent family gathering. They are all together, we're on a schedule and the whole family to rally and stay busy. When they come to visit, one of our rituals is to drink coffee and ask about you. They don't know what you should know about you, they don't know what they're doing right or where they can improve. It's a way to get to know each other. I think our country is in good hands with this family. I'm proud of all of them, of how they are as fathers and mothers. They are fantastic and just good people, which means the world to me. Cathy says when they get a chance to talk about their life, she gets to sit down and give them that kind of time.

IT'S NOT RETIREMENT. IT'S PHASE 2.

People ask how retirement is going. Ryan says, "I can never retire. I call it phase 2." He estimates 20 percent of his time is spent on his venture firm, 30 percent on other boards he serves on; then the institute, URI, and the URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement. "The rest of my time is spent with family and friends. It's nice to hang around with people you want to be with." Ryan has an ability to step outside himself and relate to each of his children in a different way, make each one of us feel special and draw us in a unique way. If I'm talking to him about fashion, or my stepbrother is talking about his beer company, he's trying to understand it. He's an immensely curious person who asks a lot of questions, which is why he has an amazing ability to be more accurate. He has a genuine interest in what people are doing, his mind never stops moving, and that's part of the reason he always has something interesting to say. He's very infectious to follow, a tremendously charismatic person.

Daughter Heather Leonard, an emergency department physician at Hartford Hospital, agrees. She describes her father as driven and hardworking, but with a gift for empathy—taking everyone around him comfortable.

"BE THE HARDEST WORKING PERSON IN THE ROOM AND LIFE WILL WORK OUT."

"He gives me perspective on life and what's important. For example, when you're young and all you want is to make a certain team, and you don't, you think your life is over. He'll tell us, 'When you fail or hit a roadblock, just pick yourself up and keep going. You can pick another avenue and still get where you want to go.'"

Whether it was sports or med school, he'd say, "If you want to go for something in life that is hard to attain, you're going to have to sacrifice something. If you really want to be somebody, you'll do whatever it takes to get there."

Ryan also worked with a nonprofit called Year Up, which gives at-risk young men and women an opportunity to go hand-in-hand. It's where capitalism meets education. We pay young adults to go to school. Show up, they get paid; don't show up, they don't get paid, show up late, they get docked. We teach them things you and I take for granted: Shake hands, look people in the eye, keep your head up. To me, 90 percent of life is showing up."

Community College of Rhode Island President Meghan Hughes worked with Ryan in her role as Year Up executive director from 2009–2013. "The two words that came to mind for Tom are: 'in it.' He was all in."

Tom and Cathy Ryan (center) with their children and grandchildren at a recent family gathering. Ryan also made it a point to get to know the students and their stories, sharing what's important. For example, when you're young and all you want is to make a certain team, and you don't, you think your life is over. He'll tell us, 'When you fail or hit a roadblock, just pick yourself up and keep going. You can pick another avenue and still get where you want to go.'

When you look at the value of pharmacy and what it does to reduce hospitalizations, reduce surgeries, and keep people at home longer, it's our most cost-effective tool. Whether it's for high cholesterol or high blood pressure or diabetes, think about it. Without pharmaceuticals, where would we be? It's going to happen with cancer, we're beginning to see it. And pharmacists are the most accessible health-care provider we have.

When they come to visit, one of our rituals is to drink coffee and ask about you. "What don't you know about you that I should know about you?" They come to anticipate it, and prepare for it. One day, "I was in a play!" Another will tell me his math is his favorite subject. This is the hardest test on any standardized test with eight times his grade."

Now a mom of two, she says her kids call Ryan "Poppy." A bright smile lights up his face when he talks about spending time with his eight grandchildren.

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When asked what he worries about now, his answer is thoughtful. "The lack of leadership in our country. Some say leaders don't matter, but I think they really do, they set the tone at the top. I've said that, I have full confidence in our country and our people that we can withstand some poor leadership for a while. Other than that, I am bullish on this country. I'm bullish on young people. I think our country is in good hands for future. That's what I'm thinking now." By any measure, Ryan's is an exceedingly accomplished life. But he's not comforted with accolades. Cathy says, "He's not interested in them."

This benefactor, grandfather, and influencer still has his sleeves rolled up at the right times and days on his schedule. It's a safe bet that Tom Ryan, phase 2, will continue to be anything but regular. •

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Studying marine invasive species is complicated. To begin with, not all invasive species are bad for the areas they invade. Others damage or destroy the habitats they migrate to. These URI scientists are working to monitor, understand, and manage these species.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

Millions have come by boat, tucked away in holds, shedding babies through ballast water. Swimming, scuttling, drifting, they deploy under cover of night or in broad daylight. It makes no difference. Covert operations aren’t necessary. And while there will be combat and casualties, maybe even annihilation, the campaign is waged quietly, often underfoot and, while not necessarily out of sight, nonetheless undetected by most.

Save for scientists such as Carol Thornber, Niels-Viggo Hobbs, Ph.D ’16, and Lindsay Green-Gavrielidis, who’ve made it their work to research invasive species and to train new generations of scientists in monitoring and mitigating them. Because the effects of invasive species can range from nuisance to deadly.

Invasive species are nonindigenous plants or animals whose arrival often adversely affects habitats—economically or ecologically. Management of invasive species varies. In some cases, physical or mechanical control, i.e. removing the invasive species from the habitat through traps or barriers or, in the case of plants, mowing, is possible. In some instances, chemical (pesticides) and biological controls (introducing predators, parasites, or pathogens) have been employed. Still another option is cultural management: manipulation of the habitat that makes it less hospitable to the invader.


Once they arrive, the invaders’ strategy follows a predictable, four-pronged plan: eat, reproduce, fight, endure. Trouble is, things are often out of hand by the time human beings catch on. Case in point: the red Asian seaweed *Grateloupia turuturu* that was first discovered in Narragansett Bay in 1996. Twelve years after this species was introduced through ballast water from trans-Atlantic ships, it had spread across more than 400 miles of New England coastline from Maine south. It is a nuisance for fishers, gumming up lobster traps and pots, and it blankets beaches. It also smells when dried. Not great for a state whose primary industry is tourism.

And that’s just one invasive species. Scientists estimate at least 25 new fish and invertebrate species have arrived in New England over the past couple of decades. Some have substantial ecological impact, says Hobbs. Scientists like Hobbs are quick to note, though, that invasive species aren’t all bad. They’ll tell you the term “invasive” is generally pejorative and, so, a seriously problematic word to use when classifying a species new to town. “Invasive” is likely both incorrect and very troublesome, Hobbs says.
It's a sunny day in June. Hobbs and a group of students are in Newport, drawing up submerged slate plates tethered to docks and weighted with bricks to see what's growing underneath, on, and around them. Docks are considered disturbed habitats, and boats are vectors for invasive species. A marina, then, is the first line for the introduction and propagation of an invasion.

A side conversation about an invasive jellyfish has Hobbs excited. There have been reports of a new-to-the-area type of jellyfish that has been attaching itself to eelgrass. Hobbs warns those present not to touch the jellyfish should they see them, as the jellyfish produce hallucinogenic effects—and “not in a pleasant way,” Hobbs quips.

Back to the invasive species at hand. Hobbs is looking at a dark, bushy growth. It’s actually a group of organisms, colonial creatures, with the scientific name bryozoa. Hobbs notes that three years ago, they wouldn’t have encountered this, but it’s proved a hardy creature (remember that four-pronged plan: reproduces faster, better able to adapt, fast grower, not a picky eater). “Pretty much everything on this plate is invasive,” Hobbs says, looking at its occupants. “Ninety-nine percent of what we’re seeing is invasive species.”

In 2018, Hobbs became the first winner of the part-time faculty excellence award given by URI’s Office of the Provost. Hobbs, an adjunct instructor in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, began teaching in 2003. He is an expert on invertebrates and marine communities in New England and is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Environmental Protection Agency. He studies crustaceans and has “heavily dabbled” in other species.

Hobbs notes the various creatures present on the slate to his students, who fill out pre-printed data sheets. “They’re a crash course on how to ID this stuff,” says Megan Majoe ’20, an undergraduate studying animal and veterinary sciences and wildlife conservation. Hobbs and his students check the plates every month. Some plates are left in the water for the whole season. Up close, the plate’s residents collectively resemble a forgotten sandwich in a bagged lunch that has been sitting in a backpack all summer. Think slime in varying shades of rust, upon which sit squishy colonies of beetle-sized tunicates, or sea squirts, aptly named as they squirt seawater when pressed. “They’re actually closely related to us,” Hobbs says.

Hobbs picks up a bug-ish looking invertebrate from the slate and holds it in his hand—a tiny, many-legged crustacean you’d freak out to find in your bathing suit. “Isopods are adorable,” one student enthuses. “They’re so cute.”

“You have to admire what a species is capable of,” Hobbs says. The conversation turns to how invasive species can be a boon for the environment. That’s why some would prefer the term “introduced,” saving “invasive” for those species causing ecological or economic damage. An invasive species of crab, for instance, may push out native species, but also be a huge food source for commercially important fish. “Some species have so much value that people look past it,” Hobbs says. “Once an invasive species is introduced, though, it’s hard to eradicate it.”

Hobbs: “Isn’t it amazing what some of these little critters can do.”

PHOTOS: AYLA FOX ’20; NORA LEWIS
One way to mitigate an invasive species’ impact: Eat it.

To say Lindsay Green-Gavrielidis studies seaweed is certainly true, but that just doesn’t begin to cover it. A seaweed enthusiast, she’ll tell you it’s a foundation species, providing habitat and structure for innumerable organisms. It is the base of many food webs. It serves its ecosystem through the extraction of excess nutrients from coastal waters. And it’s great in lemon cake.

Green-Gavrielidis has her Ph.D. in plant biology and is at URI as a postdoctoral researcher. She studies sustainable aquaculture, the ecology of seaweed blooms, and the impact of introduced non-native species on native faunas and floras, among other things. She and Hobbs regularly dive 24 sites around the state, monitoring seaweed activity.

“I always wanted to be a marine biologist,” Green-Gavrielidis says. “I wanted to study dolphins and whales.”

Green-Gavrielidis grew up in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, nowhere near the ocean. “My mother said my first word was ‘whale,’” she recalls. As a girl, she sat and read encyclopedias and typed up little profiles of whales. College introduced Green-Gavrielidis to other compelling things that lived in the ocean, such as seaweed blooms and excess nitrogen.

Seaweed blooms can smother other things living in an area. Microbial decay reduces available oxygen. Seaweed blooms are encouraged by excess nutrients in the coastal environment, Green-Gavrielidis says. “We’re putting too much nitrogen into the water,” she says. Like Hobbs, Green-Gavrielidis is hesitant to categorize a species as good or bad for the environment. “We don’t know enough to determine whether something is of benefit or not. That takes time and research,” she says.

Green-Gavrielidis is working with local oyster fishers on kelp farming. She’s studying whether this type of brown seaweed might be a food source as well as examining quantitative data on changes in the local habitat over the past 30 years. It is a great field for students to get into, she says. And URI’s proximity to the ocean makes for unparalleled learning opportunities.

“I’m a proponent of getting your hands wet and observing the things that you study in their natural environment,” Green-Gavrielidis says. “It gives us a good sense of what’s happening in essential habitats.”

“Narragansett Bay is one of the best-studied estuaries in the country. It’s easily accessible, well-populated, and has a good collection of vigorous research universities in the area, as well.”

Green-Gavrielidis is also interested in seaweed as a food source. The invasive species Grateloupia turuturu, for instance, is a commercially important food source in East Asia, its native habitat. “Marine life factors into toothpaste, ice cream, and powdery non-dairy creamer. It’s a clarifier in beer brewing,” she says. “The vast majority of seaweeds are edible.”

For Green-Gavrielidis’ lemon cake recipe (with seaweed!) and for her tips on where to buy seaweed, go to uri.edu/magazine.
When Carol Thornber was six years old and vacationing in Oregon, she picked up a book about whales and dolphins at the public library. The New Jersey native, now a professor of natural resources science and associate dean of research in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, fell in love with the ocean and its creatures in that moment.

As an undergraduate studying biology at Stanford University, she learned how to scuba dive in Monterey Bay. “And I saw all this life there: fish, seaweeds, crabs scuttling around—the whole bit.”

She gravitated to marine biology and ecology as she studied the rocky shores and tide pools of California. “There were lots of scientific studies done on crabs but little was known on the basic biology of some species of seaweed.”

Further investigation raised questions. “Seaweeds don’t live in isolation,” Thornber says. “As I’ve gone along in my career, I’ve seen things start to change and wondered why. Species disappear or new species come into the mix.”

In graduate school, Thornber studied invasive seaweeds that had become established in Southern California. “If you lie down on a floating dock, there’s all sorts of stuff there, primarily because of boat traffic.”

Invasive seaweeds are a tricky thing to manage. Harvesting some types actually triggers reproduction. Eradicating other types is an expensive and disruptive process. Thornber maintains a lab and has an active research program. She is particularly interested in another species of red seaweed, Dasysiphonia japonica, which reproduces with disruption.

“It’s a good invader because it can fragment easily. A piece breaks off and starts to grow,” Thornber says. “This species is appearing on both sides of Cape Cod. South of the Cape the water is warmer than the north because of currents. This one quickly spread around.”

“We see huge piles of it washing up on beaches. It’s an eyesore for coastal communities. little red puffballs in the water,” she notes. “It’s become a dominant seaweed on the Eastern Seaboard.”

Species are changing due to human action.”

So what’s to be done? This is not a field of quick fixes or simple answers. In monitoring the spread of invasive species, scientists can make recommendations ranging from containment to eradication, as well as prevention of future invasions. What is certain is that international trade and travel are not going to cease—so these issues will amplify over time.

And, not all introduced species survive in their new habitats. The Chinese mitten crab, Eriocheir sinensis, for instance, which has done millions of dollars’ worth of damage on the West Coast, started showing up in New York. It didn’t fare well, though, and ended up failing to establish itself. And a species of European shrimp that showed up in Narragansett Bay appears to have recently disappeared in Salem Sound, where it was first introduced. “It’s important for us to understand our natural environment because species are changing due to human action,” Thornber says. “We track these populations and see what happens to them. Sometimes species just disappear,” Thornber adds. “That kind of ebb and flow happens in nature.”

Homo sapiens: Take note. •
ENGINEERING FOR A NEW WORLD

The largest construction project in University history, The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering opened its doors this fall, bringing all the engineering disciplines together in a space that actively supports hands-on, interdisciplinary research and defies departmental silos. The center features state-of-the-art research labs, student-oriented open space, and bold, modern design—transparent, airy, and centered around common work areas.

By Janine Liberty

From the smartphone to the Large Hadron Collider to France’s Millau Viaduct, some of the world’s greatest engineering marvels have been created in the last 20 years. Rapid advances in technology and material sciences have changed not just what’s possible in engineering, but what’s imaginable. Engineers are at the center of an era defined by unprecedented technological capabilities, and their creative and practical achievements are shaping the world in entirely new ways.

A New Space for a New Era of Research

URI’s College of Engineering is positioned to push the rapidly expanding boundaries of science and technology, and its new home, The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering, is designed for this new era. “With the opening of The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering this fall,” says College of Engineering Dean Raymond M. Wright, “students can be educated differently, and researchers can collaborate more easily across disciplines.”

During preliminary meetings with the project’s principal architect, Terry Steelman, of the firm Ballinger of Philadelphia, Wright explained that he wanted to bring faculty together through research areas, not departments or disciplines. “One thing we know for sure is when we bring people together to solve challenges, it gets done,” says Wright.

The college will be organized around critical interdisciplinary research themes that address some of the biggest challenges the world faces: alternative energy, nanotechnology, robotics, cybersecurity, water for the world, biomedical technology, advanced materials and structures, and sensors and instrumentation.

The Fascitelli Center will support and encourage this interdisciplinary research by physically locating faculty from different disciplines near one another and adjacent to common research and meeting spaces. “Almost nothing in engineering anymore exists solely within a single discipline,” says Steelman. “This building is designed not just to advocate for, but to stimulate interdisciplinary discovery, so students can be educated differently, and researchers can collaborate across disciplines.”

“Our faculty are designing and building the infrastructure modern society relies on; finding innovative ways to harness energy from our sun, ocean, and even highways; building new medical diagnostic methods and devices; and racing to ensure every man, woman, and child has access to clean, safe water,” says Wright.

“Increasingly, our engineering students and faculty are not only working in interdisciplinary teams within the college, but with students and faculty from across the University in oceanography, health, pharmacy, computer science, and business as well as companies and corporations around the state, region, and the world,” URI President David M. Dooley says. “This new facility will stimulate collaborative, multidisciplinary learning and research. It will lead to discoveries that we cannot even imagine today,” Dooley adds.

The new building was funded by two Rhode Island voter-approved bond issues, as well as private gift commitments from corporations including Toray Plastics (America), Inc.; FM Global; Taco; Hexagon; and Shimadzu; and from individual donors, including a $10 million gift from College of Engineering alumnus Michael D. Fascitelli ’78, Hon. ’08, and his wife, Elizabeth Fascitelli.
Learning Through Hands-On Research and Fieldwork

"The glass of the building is both a metaphor and a physical manifestation of transparency and collaboration."  
—Dean Raymond M. Wright

"Working in robotics is like the Wild West in terms of the opportunities it presents," says engineering student Robin Hall. "It's always innovating, always changing, and there is always something new to work on." Hall sits in the Intelligent Control and Robotics Lab surrounded by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), robots, spare wires, and computers.

Situated on the fourth floor of the new engineering building, the robotics lab opens up to an expanse of glass that encloses the exterior hallway. From inside, you can look out over the northern edge of the Kingston Campus to the woodlands beyond. Hawks soar above the distant treetops, in effortless flight, while research teams inside devise robotic systems capable of agile, aerial movement.

This year, Hall has an independent research grant to develop a wall-traversing drone. "My idea employs a four-propeller UAV surrounded by an external cage that can rotate independently from the internal body of the robot. The cage will protect the vehicle and maintain stability," Working with existing drone and cage designs, Hall's innovation is to fix two axes and add a motor to the third axis to control the movement. "The quadcopter will behave like a wheel, rolling laterally against a wall surface."

He'll work with Paolo Stegagno, assistant professor of electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering, as his grant adviser. "As he designs and tests his UAV, Robin will gain advanced knowledge of control systems," says Stegagno.

More research involvement—such as Hall's—at the undergraduate level is important to the college; it means high-quality senior projects, better internships, and more opportunities for students at all levels to learn from one another. Senior capstone projects are team-oriented and industry-driven, focusing on real-world challenges companies bring in for senior-year students to work on over the course of the academic year.

In the new building, capstone projects will be a significant and highly visible part of the activity. More importantly, points out Wright, students from different research themes will be working in the same space.

"You'll have civil engineering and mechanical and biomedical capstone projects happening side by side." Making the capstone projects highly visible is meant not only to benefit students, but to attract industry. The projects are already an important point of entry for industry partners, having reliably translated to employment for graduates as well as research and economic partnerships with the University.

College of Engineering alumnus W. Lewis Collier, M.S. ’86, Ph.D. ’14, rapid engineering and prototype systems engineering manager for the MIL Corporation, and former technical director at Navmar Applied Sciences Corporation, supervised URI engineering students doing capstone projects at SRI International. He says URI's capstone program "offers a valuable opportunity for students to apply and hone their engineering skills and learn about real-world problems and how engineers operate in the field." Adds Collier, the program "is also important to the University's mission to provide educated workers for Rhode Island businesses.

Design With Purpose

Great design is achieved through a balance of opposites. This 190,000-square-foot, five-story engineering building is a tour de force of design.

During the day, light streams through-out the enormous expanses of open space, constantly shifting in color, shadow, and intensity as it passes through surfaces of varying opacity. This effect is balanced by the density and stability of the building's metal truss support system—which eliminates the need for interior support columns and allows for uninterrupted, open interiors—and sleek concrete floors.

The trusses, which span more than 150 feet of open space inside and are visible from the exterior of the building, are like those used for bridges, giving the building a bridge-like appearance, which emphasizes its physical sitting between the older, humanities-focused buildings in the center of the Kingston Campus and the newer, science and technology-focused buildings on the north edge of campus.

In the building's design, the Ballinger team combined the majority of the teaching environments on the first floors, so that students will be exposed to the interdisciplinary nature of the building.

"The quad level is a remarkable place," says Wright. "We want our students to recognize that it's their home. There are no faculty offices or research offices on that floor. It's all about showcasing the hands-on aspects of engineering and building a creative atmosphere for students."

Great architecture must also balance the experience of the individual with a collective purpose. Fascitelli credits Wright's vision of bringing the college's departments together as the driving force behind the building design. "Science as a whole has become so much more interactive, and the world is changing at such a rapid pace," says Fascitelli. "You really need that cooperation between disciplines." Says Wright, "The glass of the building is both a metaphor and a physical manifestation of transparency and collaboration."

"There's nothing like this building in our portfolio. It's unique to URI and I'm really proud of that," says Stehman, adding that the center is "one of the most provocative and technologically advanced engineering buildings in the country."

Hall is inspired by the new engineering space. "Being able to work in this space is an amazing upgrade," he says. "It's like a temple. It feels like you have the opportunity to do anything here."

More at uri.edu/magazine

Meet engineering student Vanessa Kamara ’21.

Photo Gallery: The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering
Music with a Message

VOICES 21C is a choir with a cause. Raising their voices to bring important ideas and messages to life through music, the choir members, including four URI alumni, are transforming themselves and their audiences through the power of song.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

If you turned 6 around the turn of the century, your birthday wish list might have included a Razor Scooter, Tamagotchi, Furby, Pokémon, or maybe a Barbie princess. Ashley Frezza ’16 asked for a queen. The Queen of Soul. “I really wanted an Aretha Franklin CD,” Frezza says. “I loved the soulfulness that she brought to everything. Everyone has a different genre that speaks to their soul.”

What the 6-year-old Frezza couldn’t have known was that Franklin was a diva with an agenda. She was, in effect, speaking to the souls of her fans about heavy issues, weaving calls for social justice into lyrics. Beyond the feminist anthem “Respect,” songs like “A Change is Gonna Come,” “People Get Ready,” “Think,” and “Young, Gifted, and Black” underscored issues of civil rights, freedom, empowerment, and equity.

Now nearly 20 years later, Frezza is following Franklin’s lead, singing to advance social justice with VOICES 21C, a Massachusetts-based chamber choir, which, for the past four years, has been engaging in activism through music, selecting a different social justice theme to explore each year. In August, the choir represented the United States at the Choralies music festival in Vaison-la-Romaine, France, performing in front of an audience of more than 6,000. Its 2019 program, “Half the Sky: Voices, Struggles, Resilience and the Power of the Feminine Spirit,” features musical compositions written mostly by female-identifying composers that incorporate text by women poets and activists.

“Music has been a form of activism all over the world,” Frezza says. “It is a tool of expression and a universal language. Even if you are unable to understand the text being sung, you can hear it in the music and voices—the joy or anguish that is being portrayed.”

People have been raising their voices in protest for a long, long time. In fact, songs and political movements often go hand in hand. Abolitionists, suffragettes, unionists, human and civil rights advocates, war protestors, gay rights proponents, environmentalists, pacifists—even vegetarians—have turned to song to advance their causes.

Frezza, an alto, is one of four URI alumni in the 22-member choir, singing alongside Michael Genese ’16, a founding member; Mallory Leonard ’18, and Nicolette Mingels ’16, also a founding member. Frezza, who works for URI as an event assistant, joined VOICES 21C earlier this year. “I got involved through my friends and former classmates, two of whom are founding members of the group. I saw their first concert in 2016 and really enjoyed how different the choir was,” Frezza says. “It’s a group of strong, creative individuals.”
VOICES 21C performances are immersive experiences. Song is accompanied by movement, improvisation, storytelling, and text. A performance comprises eight to 10 songs. Genese, a tenor, says music inspired by the words of impassioned activists can have a profound effect on both performer and audience.

“Each text source used in a piece of choral music has a different context, emotion, connotation, and inspiration,” Genese says. “When you set a poem to music, you’re adding new factors such as harmony, tonality, and emotional breadth, which is honestly the thing people connect to the most. Music is a phenomenal gateway into the vulnerable,” Genese continues.

“And all of these varying factors in music can be used to color messages of activism in ways you don’t see in more traditional forms of rallying and social change.”

“Half the Sky’s” set list is organized into two parts. The first group of songs is inspired by Elvira Arellano, a Mexican-born activist who fights for undocumented immigrants. She is the founder of La Familia Latina Unida, an advocacy group for the undocumented, and the co-chair of Centro Sin Fronteras, a nonprofit serving the same group. Composer Nicholas Clines’ “She Took His Hands” recounts a 2007 statement Arellano made when she was arrested and separated from her young son: “They can’t hurt us. God is protecting us. You just have to have faith, and I will be fine and with you soon.”

The second set’s compositions take their inspiration from poet Audre Lorde, a self-described black, lesbian, mother, warrior poet, and 1960s-era civil rights activist, who, near the end of her life, took the name Gamba Adisa (translation: she who makes her meaning clear) in an African naming ceremony. Her poetry reflects the fear, rage, anguish, and resolve that are elicited by racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. In the Joan Szymko composition “She Who Makes Her Meaning Clear,” VOICES 21C gives voice to the Lorde quote: “When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

“We put so much into it physically and emotionally,” Frezza says. “It’s a little bit draining, but also exciting to tell these stories. We’re bringing life to the work of amazing activists and poets, and I’m becoming a better person for being exposed to them. I’m just so grateful.”

“VOICES 21C has traveled to Israel, Palestine, Mexico, and now France. That group is attracting international attention certainly reflects the talent of its members, but it could also have something to do with their process. Themes are discussed, input is valued, collaboration is essential, and innovation is prized.”

“With only four years under our belts, I think we’re slowly making visible how the untraditional can be the most rewarding,” Genese says. “Our work isn’t based on any particular group or school of thought. We are simply going forward with the ideas we have, and while, of course, not every idea is a great idea, discussing them at length and altering them renders us more informed about our choices. There is this complete surrender of tradition and convention, and the ground we are breaking is completely new—to every one of us.”

Soprano Leonard agrees. “I had not given much thought to music being utilized as a form of activism. I had thought of music as a therapeutic instrument,” Leonard says. “Now, I believe that music is a powerful tool to open up people’s minds to social justice issues happening worldwide. I feel like it is way more personal and poignant to sing and act out songs about social justice issues than to just have conversations about them.”

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BUILDING A HIVE OF INDUSTRY

Evan P. Schneider, M.A. ’07, is the editor of The Best of Boneshaker: A Bicycling Almanac; author of the novel, A Simple Machine, Like the Lever; and co-creator of Hive of Industry, a blog he maintains with his wife, Judith Edwards. Hive of Industry chronicles the pair’s efforts to live frugally and sustainably. Here, Schneider shares the ideas and values that inform the lifestyle they’ve chosen, along with a selection of photos depicting their urban homestead, the food they produce there, and the Pacific Northwest landscape that inspires them.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen
WHAT WE DO IT
We are committed to subtly encouraging and exploring a slower, more intentional, earth-based lifestyle. There are a multitude of benefits for local and global communities when people are more directly involved in their own subsistence.

"There is a steep learning curve in growing food, and in living frugally."

HOMESTEADING IN THE MODERN WORLD
We wanted to find a piece of property outside of Portland, Oregon, where we could dive headlong into our dream of having a mini-farm and producing our own food. We found a house on a moderately sized lot within the city—in the Montavilla neighborhood of southeast Portland—and promptly dug up almost every inch of lawn for garden space. Now that we’ve been through a few years of prolific urban gardening, we’re grateful we eased into self-supporting on a smaller scale. There is a steep learning curve in growing food, and in living frugally, and it’s often overwhelming—at least for beginners like us.

"Our most consistent source of inspiration is being outside."

FRUGALITY FOR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE
It was driven by necessity. Being real about our finances and giving ourselves permission to live with less, pay off our debt, and rethink a money-driven existence felt incredibly freeing. What we keep returning to is the joy we experience by doing things ourselves and living with less.

INSPIRATION
Helen and Scott Nearing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry, Dolly Freed—and others like them who have worked diligently over the last century or two to remind humankind how we might live in tandem with the planet, more like our ancestors did, rather than perpetuating the belief that the Earth is ours to do with as we please. Our most consistent source of inspiration is being outside—hiking, camping, and backpacking—as well as ambling through the countryside and seeing farms and open landscapes.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED
It sounds precious, but even the process of planting a seed and watching it sprout—then seeing it thrive or struggle—teaches you so much about the Earth’s patterns, pressures, and complexities. We’re pleased that, on the whole, people have reacted very positively to our experiment. We hope that our work will speak for itself and draw people in and make them wonder if they’re capable of doing something similar (hint—they are!). It’s encouraging to see people look at their lives a little differently after seeing what we’re up to.

“We wanted to hear from others and be part of a useful and inspiring discussion.”

THE VALUE OF MY URI EDUCATION
At URI, I worked very closely with Department of English faculty, including J. Jennifer Jones, Marty Rojas, and Carolyn Betensky, each of whom in their own way helped shape the person, the writer, and the professional I am today. I am grateful for their insights, instruction, and encouragement. In addition, Stephen Barber’s passion for theory and his ability to take tightly tangled philosophical texts and give them life made him one of the highlights of my time at URI.

WHAT MAY COME
We started our blog and Instagram account in June of 2014. More than just sharing information and photographs, we wanted to hear from others and be part of a useful and inspiring discussion—and social media allows us to achieve that in ways traditional print media doesn’t. We don’t know how the story ends yet—we’re still very much in the midst of trying things out and laying the groundwork for how to move forward. One of the most intriguing aspects of storytelling via blogs and social media, we think, is that they are stories being told in real time by real people living them. In The Good Life, Helen and Scott Nearing’s aim was “to present a technical, economic, sociological, and psychological report on what we tried to do, how we did it, and how well or ill we succeeded in achieving our purposes.” That, for us, was a noble experiment, and one that we wanted to try in a different century with different challenges. The Nearings gave it more than 50 years. So get back to us in 45...
1941 Margaret “Johnny” Thackery Stone celebrated her centen- nial birthday on September 18, 2019. She was the first female member of the URI sailing team and a real-life Rosie the Riveter, joining the wartime workforce during World War II at Naval Air Station Quonset Point in North Kingstown, where she inspected warplane engines. Her husband was the late Leslie Stone ’40, M.S. ’49, who was a URI physics profes- sor. Johnny’s birthday celebration was hosted by her grand- daughter, Sarah Gaines, a coastal research associate at the Coastal Resources Center, and was attended by her daughter, Jennifer Stone Gaines ’69, and in-law, Arthur Gaines, Ph.D. ’75, as well as many other family members and friends. Johnny is the ninth generation of her family to live in South County. She lived in Wakefield her whole life, until age 91, when she moved in with her daughter in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where she still resides.

1956 Ettie Rae Blazar writes, “I recently visited roommates from Eleanor Roosevelt Hall: Ruth Kanarsack Rutkach and Sandra (Cookie) Salzman Sadlow, who currently reside in Delray and Boynton Beach, Florida, near Jog Road. We laughed together at old antics and classes we took and friends we made together and trips to our marriages in NYC. (Ettie Rae married in Providence, R.I.) While waiting in line at dinner- time (in Florida), we met a man who overheard our conversa- tion and was wearing a shirt that alerted us to his connection to the East Coast, and lo and behold he graduated from URI (after us). We laughed and I think she squealed louder than my roommates so we entertained the rest of the waiting dinner line. What a small world! It was good to be together with room- mates, away from school as we talked and jokingly joked about olden days. Giving out a big hello to all the friends we lost touch with and wishing them good health first and good cheer.”

1958 Barbara DeCesare “Since retiring as CEO of American Red Cross, R.I., I have become interested in photography. I am currently a juried member of Wickford Art Association and member of Center for the Arts, Warwick. From September through October 2019, I had a show of my works at the Bunny Fain Gallery, Temple Habonim.”

Let your classmates know what you’re up to. Reunions, gatherings, career or academic updates, weddings and birth announcements, retirements, exhibition openings, travel, or your favorite URI memories. Submit notes and photos: email: urimag@uri.edu, online: alumni.uri.edu.

1962 Paul Rideout, who now calls himself Palul, graduated with a B.S. in zoology/chemistry, then worked as a chemist at the University of Hawaii Marine Lab and later at Dr. Thorn’s Endocrinology Lab in Boston. Years later, he cruised the Hawaiian waters as a research scientist for the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. He has also logged over 35 years as a clinical lab scientist. Palul simultaneously became a well-known ceramic artist in Northern California. Retired from lab work, he teaches ceramics at Shasta College in Redding, California. Over the past year he has been restoring a 6.5-foot terracotta warrior, a replica of Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huang Di’s terracotta army (206 B.C.). Palul is the author of several books, including an autobiography, VisionQuest. A Saga of the 1960s, chronicling a decade of adventures after graduating from URI. He says, “I’m fortu- nate to be quite right-brain, left-brain balanced. Science and art blended together perfectly for me in ceramics.” Especially well-known among his works are the two pyramids by the Sundial Bridge in Redding. Visit Palul’s gallery in East Greenwich, R.I. He was elected commander of the Rhode Island Bar Association. Mark lectures on a variety of legal issues, including ERISA litigation, evi- dence, subrogation liens, expert testimony, civil trial practice, the Rhode Island Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rhode Island domestic law. Mark served as editor-in-chief of the Rhode Island Bar Journal, and is a member of the Animal Law Library Committee, the Family Court Bench Bar Committee, and the Superior Court Bench Bar Committee. In 2011, Mark was awarded the Dorothy Lehmann Public Service Award for his work with Defenders of Animals. Mark is married with three children, and resides in Johnston.
Debra Boelkes ’81 published her first book, *The WOW Factor: Workplace: How to Create a ‘Best Place to Work’ Culture*.

Horvat was elected president and CEO of Centreville Bank, R.I., has been elected chairman of corporate America, the military, technology companies, including AT&T, IBM, and Arrow Electronics. Her first book, *The WOW Factor: Workplace: How to Create a ‘Best Place to Work’ Culture* is chock full of candid interviews, proven career tips, and invaluable lessons learned by Deb and a cadre of successful executives from across corporate America, the military, and beyond.

1981
Debra Boelkes of Amelia Island, Florida, founded Business World Rising in 2009 following a leadership career in Fortune 100 technology companies, including AT&T, IBM, and Arrow Electronics. Her first book, *The WOW Factor: Workplace: How to Create a ‘Best Place to Work’ Culture* is chock full of candid interviews, proven career tips, and invaluable lessons learned by Deb and a cadre of successful executives from across corporate America, the military, and beyond.

1982
Harold Horvat of Cranston, R.I., has been elected chairman and CEO of Centreville Bank. Horvat was elected president and COO of Centreville Bank in 2018, having held positions of increasing responsibility since joining the bank in 2014. Horvat has over 30 years of experience in the banking industry, starting his career at Old Stone Bank and serving in leadership positions at a number of community banks including as executive vice president and COO at Mansfield Bank, headquartered in Mansfield, Mass. Horvat serves as treasurer of the board of directors for FRIENDS WAY, the only family bereavement organization of 33 years to the staff and residents of East Lyme.

1984
Maureen Chlebek, P.E., PTOE, was promoted to vice president and regional manager of New England at McMahon Associates Inc., a transportation engineering and planning firm. In her role on the executive committee, Maureen will help guide the vision and future goals of the firm, while maintaining her active project management duties and daily leadership of the firm’s New England region.

1986
Charles A. Flynn was promoted on June 27, 2019, to the rank of lieutenant general. Lt. Gen. Flynn is currently serving in Washington, D.C., at the headquarters, Department of the Army Staff, as the deputy chief of staff, G-3/5/7 (Operations, Planning, and Training). Lt. Gen. Flynn is a member of the URI ROTC Alumni Hall of Fame.

1990
Bahman Behzadi has joined the Orlando, Fla., professional services firm Dewberry as a senior project manager in the transportation design group. Prior to joining the firm, Bahman, a URI electrical engineering major, spent 30 years specializing in design and management of projects related to transportation, commercial, industrial, and institutional development, renewable energy, and wastewater.

1992
Francine Jackson, M.A. ’92 of Lincoln, R.I., was awarded a Distinguished Service Award at a recent joint meeting of the Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society and the Southeast Planetarium Association in Columbia, S.C., for outstanding, long-term service and dedication to the planetarium field, demonstrating leadership, inspiration, vision, commitment to excellence, and a passion for the planetarium community. With a bachelor’s degree in astronomy from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and a master’s in adult education from URI, Jackson, a NASA Solar System Ambassador, has been associated with planetariums from Rhode Island to Virginia since the 1970s, including the New York Hayden Planetarium (now the Rose Center), where she taught astronomy classes for over 20 years. She also was cited for her decades in college, university, and museum education. Jackson is a prolific writer, with a weekly email note from Brown University’s Ladd Observatory, where she is a staff astronomer, and a monthly column for the amateur astronomy journal, *The SkyScrapper*, and has written articles for other publications. She is also a professional proofreader and a volunteer at INSIGHT, the Rhode Island Association for the Blind, and is on the board of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.

Daniel Schweizer has finished building a fifth house for impoverished families in the Dominican Republic. The foundation (zapato) has been laid for the sixth house.

1995
Michael Dunlap "In October 2018, I was able to meet up and race with one of my URI professors, Richard C. Rhodes III, at Chattajack 2018 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Chattajack is a 31-mile paddle race down the Tennessee River. Rick was in a tandem canoe, and I was on a stand-up paddleboard (SUP). 2018 was a monumental year for Rick as this was his fifth Chattajack, which is commemorated with a custom silver belt buckle. Rick has finished on the prone board and canoe in past years. This was my first Chattajack (and first race ever) on an SUP. I was amped up for the race already, but when I got to see my favorite professor, the bar was raised that much higher. We actually passed them on the way down to Tennessee, which was amazing in itself. We both finished the race and celebrated our accomplishment and our friendship into the night. We’re both signed up to do it again this year. Go Rhody!!!"
who own or operate small business manufacturing companies for profit that have been in operation for a minimum of three years and have received SBA assistance.

1999

Heather (Bates) Fenix has been a senior aquarist of ARCC operations at the Monterey Bay Aquarium offsite Animal Research and Care Center in Monterey, California, since 2013. She oversees the daily operations of the aquatic animals in holding and quarantine. Last October, aquarist Christy Varga ‘12 joined the Monterey Bay Aquarium staff. Heathert says, “Christy and I didn’t know each other and had never met until we were on a collection trip together, and she had on a URI sweatshirt and I had on a URI T-shirt...we started chatting and found out we both went to URI and played rugby there, too! Even though we graduated 13 years apart, we each found our way across the country to work at the same facility in the same job field!”

2004

Jacqueline Herman, M.A., ‘04, of Hamilton, Mass., received the 2019 Varisty Club Award from Worcester Academy. Jacqueline is a leading advocate of the New England fishing industry, having started at URI’s Marine Affairs Department. After college, Jacqueline worked as a graduate assistant in the Marine Affairs Department at URI and earned a Master of Arts degree in Marine Affairs from URI in 2004. “The hook had been set” and a career in marine life and best practices for the commercial fishing industry had begun.

2007

Evan P. Schneider, M.A., ‘07, page 40

2008

Tom Berek ‘08, M.S., ‘09, page 55

2009

John Cuoco, page 55

Matt Gallagher, page 55

2011

Elisha Hall ‘11, M.B.A., ‘17, of Wakefield, R.I., was recognized for becoming a licensed CPA at the Rhode Island Society of CPAs annual meeting and recognition reception on April 23, 2019. Elisha is a senior accountant for Piccerelli Gilstin & Co. LLP and provides auditing and accounting services to non-profit organizations and for-profit companies alike. Elisha also participates with the firm’s college recruiting program.

2013

Ryan Thompson of Cranston, R.I., was a finalist in the International TEFI Akemy’s Teach Abroad Film Festival on April 4, 2019. His film “Mountain Man Awake” made it through to the final 12 in the competition. Thompson has been teaching middle school English in Jinhua, South Korea, since December 2015.

2016

Ashley Frezza, page 37

Derek Gardella of East Waltham, Mass., has joined the Bullfinch Group as a financial representative. The Bullfinch Group is a wealth management firm headquartered in Needham, Mass. Derek is finishing his M.B.A. from Ashland University and is planning a February 2020 wedding.

Michael Genese, page 37

Angela Gonzalez, now known as AGONZA, painted a mural on the Providence National Bank facade as part of the Avenue Concept’s revolving mural project. The program was launched in 2016 in partnership with Paulina Properties, which owns the building. Every year, the organization has commissioned an artist to paint a new work at the site, which remains on display for one year. AGONZA’s work “Dear Urban Female” is based on feminism, socialism, and issues with urban communities, and is a tribute to the strong, urban female in a state with 32,000 more women than men. AGONZA has displayed work at shows in New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, and won 2017 and 2018 People’s Choice Awards at the Salem Mural Slam.

Nicolette Mingels, page 37

2017

Lauren Buchholz, back cover

Nicole Potvin, page 14

2018

Malory Leonard, page 37

2019

Gyasi Alexander, page 52

Adriana Mendieta is a doctoral candidate in organic chemistry at Columbia University in New York City, where she is pursuing her passion for the discipline of neural chemistry.

COMMENCEMENT A-TEAM

Michelle Currell, M.A. ‘00, and Shana Greene ‘95, M.S. ‘97, were two of the six inaugural graduates of the North American Association of Commencement Officers (NAACO) Certificate Program in Academic Ceremonies. They were honored at a ceremony in Reno, Nevada, in February 2019. The certification program consists of two years of study concentrating on the symbols, meaning, and traditions of academic ceremonies. Currell is the chief of staff in URI’s Office of the President and Greene is URI’s director of University Events. Currell, who oversees URI’s annual Commencement ceremonies, has been part of the URI Commencement team since 2006, and Greene, who chairs URI’s Commencement Committee, has been part of the team since 2015.

FAMILY PRIDE

Jon Bengston ‘94 (left) and Charles Russell Bengston ’66 (right) sponsored URI’s 133rd Commencement to celebrate the graduation of his daughter/granddaughter, Emma Bengston ’19.

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AS A KID GROWING UP ON MILITARY bases all over the United States, Gyasi Alexander ’19 connected to his Trinidadian identity through the water. “The most Caribbean thing about me has always been my love of the ocean, and from a young age my family cultivated that in me with movies and books, and by telling me that one day I could go back to ‘Trinidad and see it all for myself,’” says Alexander, who immigrated to the states when he was 2 years old.

That passion led him to URI’s College of the Environment and Life Sciences (CELS). He graduated with a B.S. in environmental science and policy, and went on to pursue a master’s degree in environmental science. The Gates Scholar isn’t sure what his next academic step will be, but he knows he’s committed to creating a sense of belonging for underrepresented students in STEM.

Another Calling

A student-run organization that helps underrepresented CELS students succeed academically, professionally, and socially, and worked with journalism and film media professor Kendall Moore to produce the documentary film Can We Talk, featuring students of color discussing their sense of belonging in STEM fields. “A lot of STEM students are very introverted, and you really have to draw out their confidence,” says Fontes. “But there are select students that are outgoing and able to open themselves up. Gyasi was one of those few. He connected with students and was open about his struggles, so he could help them with theirs.”

In that spirit, Alexander is currently finishing production on a podcast, The Hidden Curriculum, featuring interviews with dozens of first-generation college students. He started the project as a fellow in Dewsbury’s lab. “What he’s doing is a bit unique,” Dewsbury says. “He’s not just interviewing people. He’s transcribing the interviews and then connecting parts of the podcast to research on social belonging, stereotyping, and things like that.”

After spending the summer in the Pacific Ocean, doing research on endangered coral reefs as an intern in the Gates Lab, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology at the University of Hawaii, Alexander returned home to Maryland, where he’s now working as an aquarium maintenance technician and contemplating his next steps academically. He may steer his career toward science communication or continue studying marine biology in a graduate program. Either way, he’ll be thinking about fostering diversity—both in the ocean and on land. “Diversity is the best thing about life in all its forms,” Alexander says. “It’s how we create new ideas, and how life keeps going and getting better.”

Awards & Recognition

For All 2019

All-Around Outstanding Achievement at URI’s 2019 Black Scholar Awards.

BLUE MINDS

Marine biologist Gyasi Alexander feels at home on the ocean. At URI, he learned to feel at home in the STEM disciplines. The Gates Scholar isn’t sure what his next academic step will be, but he knows he’s committed to creating a sense of belonging for underrepresented students in STEM.

For All 2019

All-Around Outstanding Achievement at URI’s 2019 Black Scholar Awards.
**Looking Back**

**Remembering Mrs. Lambrecht**

In the 1960s on college campuses, house mothers still functioned as stand-in parents, enforcing rules and curfews, keeping the peace, and looking out for their students’ well-being. A group of Browning Hall RAs share their memories of one very special house mother whose dedication inspired a lifelong fellowship, which they honor to this day with regular gatherings to remember “Mrs. L.”

“Mrs. Lambrecht was—to nervous, insecure college freshmen like me—like chicken soup to a cold: an unexplainable comfort.”

— David Cordeiro ’67

**Deborah Whipple Lambrecht**

Lambrecht was a house mother whose dedication inspired a lifelong fellowship, which they honor to this day with regular gatherings to remember “Mrs. L.”

Deborah Whipple Lambrecht

**The Experience of a Lifetime**

John Cuoco ’08 wrote to tell us about former URI cross-country teammate, Nate Ruchames ’10, who thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail. What’s more, John said, many of Nate’s former teammates and classmates showed up to hike sections of the trail with him—their Rhode bond still strong. Nate graciously agreed to share the story of his hike.

**ON MARCH 10, 2019, I started a northbound thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, which stretches 2,192 miles through 14 states, from Springer Mountain, Georgia, to Mount Katahdin in Maine’s Baxter State Park. Thru-hikers typically take four to six months to complete the trail. Only 18% of the 6,000 people who start the thru-hike each year end up finishing. Fortunately, I was able to take a six-month leave from my job as a Newport schools social worker—and keep the health insurance. It was the perfect opportunity for a thru-hike.**

I wanted a minimalist experience away from life’s everyday routines to push me out of my comfort zone. I carried no more than 30 pounds on my back—which included food, tent, sleeping bag, water filter, small cook stove, and a few items of clothing. Calories, hydration, sleep, and going to the bathroom were my only concerns. Much of the time, I had no idea what day or time it was—I just walked. It was a primal and simple way of living. I hiked 10–20 miles per day, depending on terrain and weather. Every three to seven days, I hitchhiked into local towns to resupply food, do laundry, and enjoy a local brewery.

I have so many incredible memories of the experience: Max Patch in North Carolina, wild ponies in Virginia’s Grayson Highlands, sunrise and sunset atop McAfee Knob (also Virginia), relentless rock piles in Pennsylvania, and the 4,000-foot peaks of New Hampshire and Maine are a few of my favorites. I particularly enjoyed when the trail cut through the rolling hills and farms, with cows sitting right next to you. Overall, the best thing about the hike was being in a constant state of forward motion. It brought a pure sense of freedom to the experience. There were some low points, too, like hiking through freezing cold rain and in scorching temperatures.

Many URI friends came to visit me on trail—some hiked with me for a day, others a few nights. Big shout-out to URI friends Mike Vieira ’10, Matt Gallagher ’08, John Cuoco ’08, Adam Karwiel ’09, Kimly May, Derek Peterson, Kim Wilkey ’09, and Tom Barek ’08, M.S. ’09. It was an incredible feeling summiting Katahdin on Sept. 19. Sharing that moment and sense of accomplishment with friends I met on trail is something I will cherish forever. It was the experience of a lifetime.

If you are considering thru-hiking or section-hiking part of the trail, don’t wait. Get out there and do it.

— Nate Ruchames ’10

**YOUR STORIES**

Trail Magic

Along the trail, hikers stumble upon random acts of kindness called “trail magic.” For example, someone might show up at a road crossing cooking burgers and handing out soda, beer, and snacks. This was happening the entire way up the trail—it’s something hikers greatly appreciate!

**TRAIL NAME**

Thru-Hikers are often given trail names by fellow hikers mini-a Derby. There’s always a quirky little story behind the names. My story is, last year, I was hiking the Long Trail in Vermont. I always carry a foam roller on my pack to help with sore muscles after a day of hiking. One day, hiking down a slippery section of wet rocks, I stumbled. My foam roller ended up underneath me, and instead of scraping my back, I essentially bounced off the rocks and landed on my feet. My buddy laughed. “It’s like you’re at a roller derby!” And my trail name was born.
This photo—Freshman Freak Day, 1956—elicited all kinds of silly and creative entries. A few themes emerged: mostly fire drills, fashion faux pas, and sorority pledging. There were also two entries, apparently from observant geeky types—referencing UX, or user experience. We didn’t even notice that book cover partially tucked under the towel! Did you?

Definitive history about Freak Day was hard to find. The 1947 Grist described that year’s Freak Day as “the biggest the campus has ever seen,” with over 200 “first year coeds ... costumed in everything from a football suit to a barrel.” What we know is that Freak Day lasted for many years and involved first-year women students dressing as outrageously as possible.

These days, URI’s Greek organizations sponsor Freek Day, giving first-year students a chance to learn about fraternities and sororities. Is there a connection between Freek Day and Freak Day? Please write in and share your stories if you can help fill in the missing history!

In the meantime, thanks for the captions, and please keep sending them! •

= CAPTION THIS =

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 January 15, 2020

A season of thanks and of giving

Thank you for your support and involvement with the University of Rhode Island.

Your gifts
• Provided critical scholarships for talented and dedicated students
• Enhanced programs and facilities for academics and athletics
• Ensured flexible resources for student success and faculty excellence

Your involvement
• Provided encouragement, guidance, and enriching experiences for students
• Broadened the reach and awareness of URI’s excellence
• Developed vital professional connections for URI and its students

During this season, consider making a gift by December 31, 2019 to maintain our momentum now and into the new year.

In so many ways, you make the difference at URI!
Frozen in Time

LAUREN BUCHHOLZ ’17

Lauren studied Mandarin Chinese at Beijing Union University as part of URI’s Chinese Flagship Program. She’d seen pictures of the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival in her first-year Chinese textbook and was excited to see it in real life. When this photo was taken, it was -9 degrees Fahrenheit; her camera and phone both succumbed to the cold, so she borrowed a friend’s phone, which also gave out, and then another, which she kept warm under her coat until it was time to snap the photo. She loves this shot for many reasons, but mostly because it’s a reminder of her time in China. Buchholz says, “Studying in China completely changed my world view, and gave me some of the biggest challenges and joys of my life.”

Lauren Buchholz ’17 at the 2017 Harbin Ice and Snow Festival in Heilongjiang Province, China.