DAVID CIPOLETTA ’14, M.S. ’19, IS A BORN ENGINEER—A TECHIE WHO GETS THINGS DONE. WITH HIS STARTUP, PISON, HE’S DESIGNING REVOLUTIONARY GESTURE-CONTROL AND BRAIN WAVE-CONTROL TECH TO HELP THE U.S. MILITARY, PEOPLE WITH ALS, AND EVERYDAY DEVICE USERS.
OUROBOROS OF THE SELF

Kevin Gilmore ’99 is an instructor in URI’s Department of Art and Art History. He calls this self-portrait “a glimpse into my process—a collage, a stage, a cycle.” Gilmore says, “The seated figure next to the books (including my URI undergrad art history book) is the thinker; the listener, critic. The middle figure is the visual artist and professor—the studio stool is commonly used to teach positive/negative space. The crouched figure is the sound maker, the performer.”

“My role as a teacher,” Gilmore says, “is to help each student discover their own creative voice and find ways to link it to real-world situations.” At URI, his classes are filled with students from various disciplines, which, he says, “challenges me to learn about each student and change my approach to help each one find their artistic voice.”

Gilmore, who embraces the label of interdisciplinary artist, works in a variety of media, including paint, pencil, camera, and sound. Doing so, he says, allows him to change his medium to best suit his message. While painting has long been his primary medium, he says a paintbrush can also inspire him to tap on the canvas or drop the brush on the floor to explore the brush’s resonant sound, and listen to the colors on the canvas.

“Seeing a brush for just a brush makes me a painter,” Gilmore says. “Finding 100 other ways to use it makes me an artist.”

—Barbara Caron

“My role as a teacher is to help each student discover their own creative voice and find ways to link it to real-world situations.”

—Kevin Gilmore ’99
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello, URI Alumni!

My wife, Mary, and I are energized and enthusiastic as we begin the 2021–22 academic year, our first at URI. We’ve been getting to know the remarkable extended URI community, attending college retreats, music performances, sports events, and the Honors Colloquium; welcoming students and families; and meeting our government partners and our phenomenal faculty, staff, and alumni.

These occasions have led to rich conversations about developing a renewed, shared vision for URI and strengthening our contributions as the state’s flagship university. In the coming months, I look forward to advancing these conversations and to developing a university plan for URI’s future that will build on our distinct assets, reaffirm our commitment to accessible, affordable, and innovative education; rigorous and consequential research; social justice; and a diverse and inclusive community of learners. Among our areas of focus will be enhancing academic excellence by recruiting and supporting our faculty, exploring opportunities to add more graduate and Ph.D. program offerings, and expanding our strategic partnerships locally and globally.

Having been born right here in the Ocean State, I appreciate the distinct and substantial opportunities our location affords us to study such complex and pressing issues as climate change and environmental sustainability. I envision stronger collaborations with universities, institutes, companies, and NGOs along the Eastern Seaboard to examine how we might preserve and protect the region’s natural resources while also nurturing the state’s potential as a hub for a thriving blue—and green—economy.

Supporting student success and cultivating a safe, vibrant, and inclusive community is fundamental to our mission. This has taken on new meaning in the midst of a pandemic. I met many first-year students on move-in weekend and witnessed firsthand their excitement and optimism about a return to in-person instruction. This is a resilient and fearless generation of students, and I look forward to enhancing their experience at URI with new opportunities for experiential learning, such as the creation of lab spaces on campus that allow budding entrepreneurs to test their ideas. Some students have already taken me up on my invitation to join me on my morning runs, and we’ve had productive exchanges about how the University’s administration, faculty, and staff can support transformational initiatives that enable our students to execute their big ideas.

Finally, I have been so impressed with the level of interest and involvement Rhody alumni exhibit for their alma mater, and I think you’ll find many points of pride in this issue of the magazine. In “The Night Charlie Lee Made History,” we profile Rhody basketball player Charlie Lee, the first Black player to participate in a college basketball game in the state of Georgia. In our cover story, “Mind Over Matter,” you’ll read about how David Cipoletta ’14, M.S. ’19, and his company, Pison, are creating devices that enable people to control robots and computers using brain waves. Meet some of URI’s Graduate School of Library and Information Studies alumni, who are using their positions—and voices—to create informed communities and to advocate for social justice in “Librarians. Out Loud.”

We have much to celebrate and more to do. I am honored and inspired to begin this journey with you.

Marc B. Parlange
President, University of Rhode Island

“Hello, URI Alumni!”

“I envision stronger collaborations with universities, institutes, companies, and NGOs along the Eastern Seaboard to examine how we might preserve and protect the region’s natural resources while also nurturing the state’s potential as a hub for a thriving blue—and green—economy.”

—Marc B. Parlange

SEPTEMBER SCENES

Above left, Marc and Mary Parlange rolled up their sleeves on move-in day, greeting students and families, unloading cars, and carrying boxes. Above right, President Parlange met with URI Professor of Engineering Arun Shukla, U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Lorin Selby, and U.S. Sen. Jack Reed (R.I.) in Professor Shukla’s Dynamic Photomechanics Laboratory in Kirk Applied Engineering Lab. Below, a group of students joined President Parlange for a morning run on the Kingston Campus.

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS
Feedback
We welcome and encourage letters to the editor.

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

Gratitude for ROTC Training
Well written article (“Leaders in Training,” summer 2021). I was a 1965 Distinguished Military Graduate and chose infantry in Hawaii with the 25th Division. I attribute my survival of the Republic of Vietnam to my ROTC training at URI. Proud to have served with volunteer Hawaiian soldiers led by heroic noncommissioned officers. And we were young.

—Capt. Peter C. Ewing ’65

Staying Connected
URI Magazine is my favorite piece of mail to receive. The images and stories are captivating, and I love how connected I still feel hundreds of miles and several years after graduating. Can’t wait for the next edition!

—Gina Sloan’13

Making a Difference for Students
Reading “The Justice League of Education” (summer 2021) brought back great memories and shows how academic and personal advising, student organization participation, and caring faculty all make a difference in the lives of our students. Excellent article.

—Tom Deacon, longtime URI vice president of student affairs (retired, 2016)

Toxic Critical Race Theory
Equity? Social justice “Justice League of Education” (summer 2021) More duplicitous code words for the divisive Marxist Critical Race Theory that is tearing this country apart. Indeed, academia, business, government, big-tech, and the media are bending over backwards to pander to the corrosive, nonempowering tech, and the media are bending over backwards to pander to the corrosive, nonempowering agenda of victimology. These reeducation efforts are beginning to rival those of Communist China.

—Kendall Sveglini, M.L.S. ’75

You, Rhody readers, are on your toes! Ut! Not so much, it seems. The photo by Rich Epstein ’91 (summer 2021), which we titled, “Galilee Glow,” was from the vantage point of Galilee, but actually shows the sunset over the village of Jerusalem, which is across the breachway from Galilee. Our apologies—especially to Rich Epstein—and thanks to our readers for clarifying this.

I have been thoroughly enjoying all the articles in the summer 2021 issue of URI Magazine! However, I would like to make a correction. The photo on pages 54–55 is actually a picture of Jerusalem, in South Kingstown (not Galilee, and not Narragansett, as the caption said). Only the rocks in the lower left corner are actually in Galilee.

—Judy Everett ’72

The caption is misleading. Although the picture was taken from the vantage point of Galilee, the actual view shown is of the village of Jerusalem, on the opposite side of the breachway.

—Walter T. Burrows III ’76

From the Editor
If you’ve read The Midnight Library by Matt Haig, or if you’re intrigued by the idea of the multiverse and parallel universes, you may have pondered the question of whether there’s a parallel you, living on a slightly different trajectory in a parallel universe. I’ve pondered that idea endlessly. And in one of my lives, I’m sure that I’m a librarian.

Librarians, said novelist Anthony Doerr in a recent CIR Sunday Morning interview, are “the caretakers of human knowledge.” That’s why Doerr, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of All the Light We Cannot See, dedicated his new book, Cloud Cuckoo Land, to librarians.

In our feature story about URI’s alumni librarians (page 26), assistant professor of library and information science Mary Moen, M.L.I.S. ’03, Ph.D. ’15, says, “Librarians are unsung heroes. The stereotype that persists is that we’re just the keepers of the books. We’re so much more.”

Doerr would agree. Librarians are keepers, shapers, and caretakers of human knowledge, culture, history, and social consciousness. They are also truth-seekers and fact-seekers. Contrast librarians with another kicker and curator of the culture—social media—which gives users content they will click on, with truth being, at best, a secondary concern, and the importance of librarians shows up in stark relief.

I hope you are inspired by our URI librarians, as well as by student Tyrone Thomas (page 11) whose podcast aims to resurrect the lost arts of listening and civil conversation, and Tim Rosaforte ’77 (page 40), who forged an outrageously successful golf journalism career by leading with integrity and a passion for truth.

In this issue, you’ll meet many other equally admirable and inspiring members of the URI community.

We have a lot to be proud of.

—Barbara Caron, Editor-in-Chief

Feedback Guidelines
University of Rhode Island Magazine welcomes letters to the editor addressing topics covered in the magazine. We do not publish letters containing obscenities, potentially libelous statements, personal attacks, or known false statements. All letters must be signed. Letters may be edited for style, grammar, typographical errors, content, and length. The submission of a letter to the editor does not guarantee its publication. Views expressed by readers in the Feedback section are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or policies of the University of Rhode Island or University of Rhode Island Magazine. Please send letters via email to urimag@uri.edu.

Editorial Board
T.J. Auxclair graduated from URI in 2002. He has covered professional golf since then, traveling to more than 70 major championship, spending 13 years at Turner Sports as a writer for PGA.com. Currently, he is Director of Content for The Caddie Network.


Bob Herzog retired in 2018 after a 46-year career as a sports journalist. He was an award-winning sportswriter and sports editor at Newsway from 1976 until his retirement. He has been teaching sports writing at URI since 2019.

Marybeth Reilly McGroten is a URI content strategist and frequent contributor to URI Magazine. An award-winning writer, she has profiled Dr. Anthony Fauci; poet laureate Billy Collins; Peabody Award-winner Christiane Amstrong ’83, Hon. ’95, and Vad Vuthiers ’91, Hon. ’77; Pulitzer Prize-winner Thomas Faragarh ’73, Hon. ’17; and Tony Award-winner Androe Burnap ’13.

Diane M. Sterrett has been writing in nearly every medium for more than 35 years. Her passion is learning and writing about the ocean, the environment, health care, and education. Based in Newport, RI, when not writing, she can be found sailing Narragansett Bay and beyond.
The 1950s-era murals that hung in the Memorial Union depicted a University of Rhode Island that, though accurate to the times during which it was painted and to what enrollment at URI looked like more than six decades ago, looked very different than it does today. Painted by the late Dr. Arthur Sherman ’50—a combat medic in World War II who came to URI on the GI Bill and later served as a coach and taught at URI—the murals depict commencement, marching band, class reunion, and day at the beach scenes featuring mostly white male students. After some questions about the lack of diversity represented, the murals were covered and protected while the issue was looked at more closely. After months of discussion, meetings, and widely sought—looked at more closely. After some questions about mostly white male students.

The original murals will be preserved and will be displayed, as part of a broader building renovation project. New to the display will be some contextual language about Sherman’s service to the country, the University, and the community, as well as the intent of the murals and the era in which they were created. And, taking advantage of what the committee identified as a unique opportunity to support reflection on today’s diverse URI community, a new installation will be commissioned expressing contemporary campus life. The new mural will be done as part of the major Memorial Union renovation slated to begin in 2022.

Typical offshore wind turbines, like those constructed off Block Island, Rhode Island, have fixed foundations built into the seafloor. Because of that, they are not economical to build in water more than 200 feet deep. A new system of floating turbines is now in development that would allow for electricity generation in deeper water farther offshore where winds are more favorable and where conflict with other ocean users would be reduced.

To optimize the operation of floating offshore wind turbines, a team of URI and Rhode Island engineers—along with colleagues at the University of Maine—has been awarded a $3.245 million grant by the Department of Energy to model and test a system for controlling the motion of the floating structures. According to Stephan Grilli, the URI professor of ocean engineering who leads the project, the irregularities of ocean waves and other marine factors are major challenges to the development of commercial-scale floating wind turbines. Their operation can lead to unpredictable forces on the structure, leading to fatigue and reduced operational life. Optimizing control of the turbines requires a method of anticipating the movement of the floating structures, and that requires real-time information about approaching waves. “No one is using that information yet, they just use the past movement of the float,” Grilli said. “We’ve worked for 10 years on sensing ocean waves using a remote sensing method, so we can acquire a lot of information on the position of approaching waves almost instantaneously.”

For assistant professor Douglas Reed ’04, philosophy goes beyond reading Platonic Symposium or discussing Socratic virtue in a classroom. Instead, Reed sees philosophy as something that can be, and often is, done every day. And that’s how he teaches it. “I think we, as humans, are always looking for doing philosophy,” he says. “Philosophy comes down to asking human questions, explaining our own answers to those questions, and listening to and scrutinizing other people’s answers to those same questions.”

For Reed, philosophy is about being curious and questioning long-held—or even short-held—beliefs and asking the questions. Why?

Reed teaches a variety of courses, one of which, Philosophy 110G: Love and Sex (PHL110G), aims to make the field relevant to students by linking it to two very relevant human experiences. “It’s not always clear to students how philosophy relates to their lives. You hear all these great names, these great thinkers, and you might think, ‘Why should I care about that?’” Reed says. “A lot of times, students will be able to see the connections to their own experiences, and this class draws on their own personal experiences, which is really cool.”

Olivia Belitsos ’23, a double major in psychology and criminology and criminal justice with a minor in gender and women’s studies, took PHL110G with Reed as a first-year student and wound up taking on philosophy as a third major because she enjoyed the way Reed taught it. “It was really engaging,” Belitsos says. “Coming into college, topics like love and sex are a part of everybody’s lives, so it was really relevant. It’s an unique material and the way he approached it was thoughtful and captivating.”

Typically, Reed encourages students to pose questions like, “Does love at first sight exist?” and “What (if anything) is wrong with the way I do it?” and then grapple with either side of the argument. “The answers to these questions are not straightforward, uncontrollable,” he says. “These kinds of questions are part of our everyday lives, and I hope that philosophy can help us think about them, and other questions in a more conscious way.”

Belitsos says Reed is succeeding in this goal. “Instead of just teaching us about philosophy, he helps us engage in it,” she says. “I would 100 percent encourage students to take a class with Professor Reed, because he is a phenomenal teacher, and he takes philosophy from being an unapproachable topic to something that everyone can do.”

Grace Kelly
A Bigger, Bolder Vision for URI’s Future

In October, the University announced that it would raise the goal of Big Ideas. Bold Plans, The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island from $250 million to $300 million. The enthusiasm and generosity demonstrated by the URI community—alumni, families, friends, corporations, and foundations—have driven the campaign over $218 million, just over a year after its public launch. This momentum, combined with the vision of President Marc B. Parlin, will allow the campaign to do more for the University’s strategic growth in the years ahead.

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This year, Professor Brenton DeBoef was named dean of the URI Graduate School. DeBoef has earned numerous honors, including an early career award from the National Science Foundation, the Pfizer Green Chemistry Award, and research and teaching excellence awards from the URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE).

DeBoef is working to attract top applicants across all disciplines, and to position them for success at URI and beyond—students like Nick DaSilva ’14, Ph.D. ’19, who credits the University’s fertile research environment as a key factor for his and his partners’ decision to launch their new drug development company, Alcinous Pharmaceuticals. In the area of the humanities, A. H. Jerris Avant is pursuing his Ph.D. in English to better understand familial grief, its impact on the poetry he writes, and how such deep emotions can connect people. URIFAE is working closely with DeBoef and University leadership to take URI’s graduate programs to the next level through fellowships that will help brilliant emerging scholars bring their biggest ideas to life. •

—Austin Farrell

I t started last year, in 2020, such a crazy year for so many of us. COVID, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. I had my own thoughts about what I was seeing on the news and social media. And for the first time in as long as I can remember, I saw people actually reaching out; even across social media I heard people having the difficult conversations and listening—really listening—to each other.

It lasted for a while, but then went away. I wanted that back. I wanted to talk about the difficult conversations again, and for people to listen to different opinions once more. That was how the Good Faith Idea Exchange was born. Good Faith Idea Exchange is a podcast I launched to create an environment where people with differing views on politics, justice, race, or most any other timely topic could express their viewpoints and exchange ideas without the rudeness or judgment often seen on cable news or heard on the radio.

I’ve noticed that the past 20 years of cable news networks and 12 years of social media dominance have fostered a culture of rudeness and ignorance—a culture of people "debating" by interrupting each other, talking over one another, not communicating to arrive at a better understanding, but to "win" the debate at all costs. The Good Faith Idea Exchange isn’t about winning, but rather about thinking.

In episode one of the podcast, I had a talk with an old friend from the military. He and I don’t see things the same politically. Yet we had a thoughtful, mature conversation where we each made our points while listening to the other without name-calling, yelling, or dismissing other perspectives. I also interview people who are making a positive impact in our communities, such as Tory Kern ’15, M.S. ’17, the manager of a youth street outreach team at House of Hope, an agency devoted to fighting homelessness—whom I interviewed in episode two.

In episode seven, I spoke with Rich Norris ’99, whose family escaped civil war in Liberia. A URI graduate, he is currently an assistant principal of the 360 High School in Providence where he advocates for young people and has many initiatives for young people and has many initiatives to help at-risk youths succeed. We had an honest talk about the education system and community involvement in these uncertain times. I never would have imagined this podcast would gain such popularity so quickly. It has only inspired me to keep going and do more.

Above all else, the Good Faith Idea Exchange delivers a message of fellowship, of communion, with an audience from all walks of life. No matter what listeners’ backgrounds may be, no matter the shape of their paradigms, they gain content and information that forces them to take a step back and examine the validity of their beliefs. It is important for people to understand that any issue can be discussed, and perspectives shared in a comfortable, safe environment.

What began as a simple idea has taken on a life of its own. If you have an idea that you think can make some kind of real impact in this world, I hope this will inspire you to pursue it, as I did. Don’t just brush it off and move on. You never know where it may take you. •

Tyronne Thomas ’22

Resurrecting the Art of Respectful Conversation

These days, there are plenty of topics that can lead to angry disagreement. Can respectful conversation and real listening change the tone of contemporary discourse? The Good Faith Idea Exchange podcast says, “Absolutely.”

By Tyronne Thomas ’22

In episode two, I spoke with Ahmaud Arbery. The episode, I also interview people who are making a positive impact in our communities, such as Tory Kern ’15, M.S. ’17, the manager of a youth street outreach team at House of Hope, an agency devoted to fighting homelessness—whom I interviewed in episode two.

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Tyronne Thomas ’22 is studying writing/ rhetoric and education. He is a military veteran who is working on a post-apocalyptic thriller titled, Forged From Fire. Find Good Faith Idea Exchange at goodfaithideaexchange.com or on podcast platforms.

This story was originally published in the URI Feinstein College publication, Educators & Innovators, fall 2021 issue.
Pushing the Boundaries of Inclusion

Doctoral student Meg Jones was awarded a Fulbright grant to study LGBTQ+ inclusive practices in teacher education programs in Finland. She hopes to put what she learns there to work at URI when she returns, to push inclusivity beyond the basic notion of acceptance.

When Meg Jones learned that Danielle Dennis, her major professor at the University of South Florida, was headed to Rhode Island to become director of URI’s School of Education, she knew she had to go, too.

Now a URI doctoral student in education, Jones received a prestigious Fulbright grant to conduct research at the University of Helsinki in Finland on global approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion in teacher preparation programs.

A focus on social justice

“Finland is idealized as having one of the best education systems in the world,” says Jones. “Yet when surveyed, queer youths in Finland are facing similar rates of discrimination, mental health issues, and suicide ideation as queer youths in the United States.”

“The University of Helsinki has a master’s level teacher education program that is focused on social justice and changing education. I will be looking at what is happening in this program to help push the boundaries of what we think of as inclusion,” says Jones. “It’s such a unique teacher education program—and a unique educational and political system. There’s a lot to be learned there.”

Jones notes the importance of moving beyond acceptance. “These are integrated lives and cultures and experiences that should be normalized and represented. Not just because you might have queer students in your classroom—but for all students.”

In Helsinki, Jones will collect research and work on her dissertation, but she also hopes to collaborate with her colleagues there to publish internationally. Ultimately, her hope is to return to URI and replicate the study.

A unique educational path

A nontraditional, first-generation college student, Jones initially dropped out of high school before obtaining her GED certificate. After a couple of false starts, she obtained her bachelor’s degree from the College of Central Florida and her master's degree at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Dennis encouraged Jones to apply for the Fulbright. “I met Meg when she was a student in the University of South Florida Master of Arts in Reading Education program. Her ideas, and the way she conveyed them through her writing, stood out to me, so I encouraged her to consider a Ph.D. program. The path she took into higher education provides her with a unique perspective on education, and I believe the Fulbright will propel her work as an advocate for LGBTQ+ youths,” says Dennis.

“I dropped out of high school, I dropped out of community college—not because of lack of academic ability. It was just life. It has been a bumpy road, but now I’m sitting here somehow as a doctoral student, I’ve received a Fulbright award,” says Jones. “I’m certainly not a traditional applicant by Fulbright standards.”

Giving back to URI

Jones feels strongly that what she learns in Finland can be put into action at URI.

“We are known for our Gender and Sexuality Center and for inclusiveness,” she says. “I have felt very supported by the faculty; everybody seems interested in my work. Being a student here, doing this research, and also choosing to be out about my own sexuality and relationships—being unapologetic about it—has put my research on people’s radar, and it’s been embraced. Yet there is always more work to do and more to learn.”

Now, says Jones, “I fully intend to come back to URI and say, ‘OK, here’s what I know’—to give back. I want URI to become a leader in the conversation. And I want other schools in the states to come visit us because this is where it’s happening.”

—Dawn Bergantino ’94

PHOTO: NORA LEWIS; BLACKBOARD ARTISTS: KATIE RIEDY AND TAYLOR OLIVEIRA
Forever chemicals. In fact, for children in homes or schools with old PFAS.

Our research suggests that popular constitutionalists evaluate the court and interpret its actions quite differently than do legal constitutionalists. For one group, a dissent is a troubling sign of politicization. For the other, it is a promising signal of representation.

The creator of CholeraMap, a mobile app that warns people in developing countries about contaminated water sources, on the potential expanded use of similar apps:

"Our study shows that indoor air, including dust, is another source of exposure to potentially harmful forever chemicals. In fact, for children in homes or schools with old PFAS-treated carpets, inhalation may be even more important than dust as an exposure pathway."

—Rainer Lohmann, URI professor of oceanography

"Machines dramatically reduce the diversity of insect life, microbial life, and flora and fauna. That is farming and the agro-ecosystem and the entire cultivation process being shaped to meet the needs of the machine."

—Patrick Baur, URI assistant professor of food innovation and policy

"Maybe the life I was leading seemed inevitable, and never-changing, maybe I don't want that. (It's a kind of spontaneous realization by millions of people that they could do better.)"

—Isaac Ginis, URI professor of political science

Rhode Island National Guard tuition waiver and URI one-year M.B.A. merit scholarship.

"If you're really passionate about something, you make it work," Bonneau asserts. "I've been able to accomplish a decent amount at URI. And I haven't had to sacrifice things like my grades to pursue nonprofit work. URI made it possible to combine my interests and to contribute to the common good."

—Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

On his recently published study that detected PFRAs chemicals in the air of kindergarten classrooms, university offices and laboratories, and at home:

"Our study shows that indoor air, including dust, is another source of exposure to potentially harmful forever chemicals. In fact, for children in homes or schools with old PFAS-treated carpets, inhalation may be even more important than dust as an exposure pathway."

—Ale Shaqat Akanda, URI professor of engineering

The co-author of a recent survey about how the public views the legitimacy of Supreme Court decisions on how dissent impacts trust:

"Our research suggests that popular constitutionalists evaluate the court and interpret its actions quite differently than do legal constitutionalists. For one group, a dissent is a troubling sign of politicization. For the other, it is a promising signal of representation."

—Christopher M. Parker, URI assistant professor of political science

On the potential demise of the five-year-old, perhaps never-to-more intense hurricanes:

"Hurricanes draw energy from the ocean, and if the ocean temperature is higher, then hurricanes become more intense. We're also seeing that hurricanes are intensifying more rapidly, going from a Category 1 to a Category 3 or 4 within a day or two."

—Marc B. Parlange, president, University of Rhode Island

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"Our study shows that indoor air, including dust, is another source of exposure to potentially harmful forever chemicals. In fact, for children in homes or schools with old PFAS-treated carpets, inhalation may be even more important than dust as an exposure pathway."

—Rainer Lohmann, URI professor of oceanography

"Machines dramatically reduce the diversity of insect life, microbial life, and flora and fauna. That is farming and the agro-ecosystem and the entire cultivation process being shaped to meet the needs of the machine."

—Patrick Baur, URI assistant professor of food innovation and policy

"Maybe the life I was leading seemed inevitable, and never-changing, maybe I don't want that. (It's a kind of spontaneous realization by millions of people that they could do better.)"

—Isaac Ginis, URI professor of political science

Rhode Island National Guard tuition waiver and URI one-year M.B.A. merit scholarship.

"If you're really passionate about something, you make it work," Bonneau asserts. "I've been able to accomplish a decent amount at URI. And I haven't had to sacrifice things like my grades to pursue nonprofit work. URI made it possible to combine my interests and to contribute to the common good."

—Marybeth Reilly-McGreen
Mind
Over
Mat
ter

WITH HIS COMPANY, PISON,
DAVID CIPOLETTA '14, M.S. '19,
IS CREATING DEVICES
THAT ALLOW PEOPLE TO
CONTROL COMPUTERS
AND ROBOTS WITH THEIR
BRAIN WAVES.

By Michael Blanding

David Cipoletta ‘14, M.S. ’19, sits in a conference room in a downtown Boston office with walls of exposed brick. Around his wrist is a black plastic device that looks like nothing so much as a Casio calculator watch from the 1980s. A grid of shiny electrodes on its underside, he explains, captures tiny electrical pulses on his wrist, responding to movements of his hand. “Every time you lift your finger, you can see the electrical activity changes,” he says, pointing to red, orange, and green horizontal lines that jump up and down on his Android screen as he lifts his index finger up and down.

“Now, let’s say I want to use a camera app to take a picture,” he says, opening the app on the phone. “I can just swipe up.” He lifts his finger up and down again, and the phone snaps a picture, as if by magic—but that’s only the beginning of what he’s able to do. With more gestures, he can switch to video or turn the flash on or off. “So then, how do I apply the same set of gestures to another function?” he continues, switching to a music app. “I can play, pause, raise the volume, and switch to the next song without touching the screen.” Cipoletta says, moving his finger in various configurations as the app obediently responds to his gestures like a musician playing to a conductor’s baton.

The device is the flagship product of Cipoletta’s company, Pison, a startup that could one day revolutionize how we interact with the world around us—allowing us to control our environment with simple hand gestures. While controlling a camera and music player with a flick of the finger may seem like a cool trick, the company has more serious ambitions. Cipoletta founded it five years ago with Massachusetts Institute of Technology grad Dexter Ang to develop technology that might give independence to people with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), otherwise known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that gradually leads to loss of control over the body’s muscular system.
A person with ALS could essentially just think of moving their finger, and the electrical pulses in their wrist could translate that intention into action, turning the page of an e-book or opening a webpage without any need for them to actually move their body. As the company has developed the technology, it has found other applications, including new tools for soldiers on the battlefield, for whom it could mean the difference between life and death.

Cipoletta began tinkering with electronics at a young age. He moved to the United States from China at age 12, along with his mother, who holds a doctorate in electrical engineering and got a job designing software for a video camera company. Growing up in Gloucester, Rhode Island, Cipoletta was encouraged by his mother and stepfather (who also worked in technology) to explore his interests. Rather than explicitly teaching him, his parents challenged him to find answers to questions himself. “They always said, you are capable to do many things on your own.” And they were right. By searching for answers on his own, he had learned how things work from beginning to end, “he says of his experience.

Cipoletta began at URI with two majors, electrical engineering and computer science. But due to a computer glitch, he discovered, to his delight, that he was able to pick up a third major—computer engineering, as well. “My advisor was supposed to block me, but I was never blocked,” he says with a mischievous grin. Cipoletta took summer classes to fulfill the requirements for all three majors—giving him a unique understanding of entire systems, from analog electrical signals to software applications. “I was interested in understanding how to make things work from beginning to end,” he says. For his capstone project at URI, he created a fully automated system for a company conducting DNA sequencing, enabling technicians to check whether the sequencing had been completed correctly by measuring electrical properties in the resulting fluid and running it through a computer algorithm.

After earning his undergraduate degree, Cipoletta took a job with Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Charles River Analytics (CRA), designing underwater unmanned vehicles. “It was one of the hardest jobs I ever had,” he says of the work, which involved piloting underwater robots from boats in Narragansett Bay and San Francisco Bay. “You’ve got a robot you cannot see or talk to, you just have to hope your algorithm works,” he says. At the same time, he pursued a master’s degree in electrical and electronics engineering at URI, taking five years to complete the degree. “It really helped me figure out how to solve complex problems,” he says, “which helped me directly in my work.”

“I’ve ever worked with. He was so motivated and knowledgeable that I didn’t need to ‘advise’ him much—I sort of stayed out of the way and let him make progress.”

It was a class taught by Professor Kurtul Mankodiya on wearable technologies that first led Cipoletta to explore devices that could help people with ALS. Initially, he was focused on creating eyeglasses that could help someone control a robotic arm using eye-tracking technology. Having difficulties with the project, however, he showed it to a colleague at CRA, who happened to be in a fraternity with Dexter Ang, an MIT mechanical engineer who was also exploring technology for ALS. “You’ve got a robot you cannot see or talk to, you just have to hope your algorithm works,” he says. At the same time, he pursued a master’s degree in electrical and electronics engineering at URI, taking five years to complete the degree. “It really helped me figure out how to solve complex problems,” he says, “which helped me directly in my work.”

Ten years earlier, Ang’s mother had been diagnosed with the disease, and Ang quit his job in finance to return to MIT to explore assistive technologies. Among other things, he wanted to create a way for his mother to independently turn a page in an e-book. “There are a lot of problems a person with ALS might have that we could fix,” Ang says. “How does she call me when she wakes up and needs to get dressed? How does she open a book or click on a website? The digital world should not be limited by a person’s physical capabilities.”

Though his mother died in 2015, Ang continued to pursue the idea to help others. He honed in on the idea of using electrical pulses in the skin to help people with ALS perform tasks, essentially allowing them to control objects through brain signals. When Cipoletta’s colleague mentioned his work to Ang at a fraternity reunion in early 2016, Ang called him right away to tell him about his idea. Two weeks later, Ang visited Cipoletta at his apartment, where Cipoletta had already built a working prototype for the idea, complete with electrical tape holding wires against the skin. “A lot of people in the world say they are going to do something, but do they actually do it?” Ang says. “But he had done it. So, I under- stood right away that he both loves tech, and follows through on his word.”

The two joined forces to create Pison (named after Ang’s mother’s cat, with Ang as chief executive officer and Cipoletta as chief technology officer. Along with a few other engineers, they first pitched the idea to the ALS Association, which gave the company $100,000 out of money raised from its famous Ice Bucket Challenge. Cipoletta and Ang
has that relentless desire to push boundaries,” says Giuseppe Stuto, an early angel investor who met the duo in 2018, and later joined the company as chief operating officer. “David is pragmatic; he focuses on what is possible and what isn’t, asking, ‘How are we actually going to do it and get it done?’”

In the conference room at Pison, Cipoletta turns over the device on his wrist to reveal a grid of 16 small metal electrodes, which sit against the device wearer’s wrist. As they move their fingers, pulses of electrical energy travel through their nerves as their muscles move. The device measures the difference in electrical potential between electrodes for each gesture. It then uses a machine learning algorithm to identify the unique electrical pattern for each movement to convert it into a specific action performed by a computer app or a robot.

The device works for people with ALS because their brains still send electrical signals through their nerves, even though the muscles don’t respond, allowing the device to intercept them and hack them for its own purposes. “The muscle is almost like the output to a speaker, but it’s the wire that is sending these signals,” says Cipoletta. “We’re just trying to decode the signals, the device must filter out electromagnetic interference in buildings to isolate the relatively weaker signals from the body. In the case of ALS, it’s even more difficult since the pulses are so much weaker compared to a person without ALS.”

“Our origins are in ALS, so the quality of what goes into designing the device is better than if we had designed it for able-bodied individuals,” says Tanya Wang, 13, who met Cipoletta while working as a technician in the biomedical engineering lab at URI. “I would suggest that makes it better for all other applications as well.”

Wang took courses with Cipoletta while he was studying for his master’s degree. “I really enjoy designing the circuit,” she says. “It’s like a puzzle to see how intricately I can fit things in.”

“In my mind, it was this crazy joke, ‘How do we actually make this actually work?’” says Stuto, who recently left Pison to launch his own firm. “‘A-start-up doesn’t have that luxury. It needs to be focused on real users.’ By creating a product today for the military, Pison hopes to gain valuable experience in designing a working product before any competitors. “The DOD space is a good environment for us to build up some cash and develop our technology before we go out to compete more broadly.”

Recently, Ang stepped down as CEO to become chief innovation officer, interfacing with external partners to drum up new business opportunities. While Cipoletta has taken over as interim CEO, he’s hoping that within the next five to 10 years, the company will achieve its original dream of creating devices to help people with disabilities such as ALS, at the same time it starts to tackle products for the consumer market.

Whether creating devices to help a person with a disability become more independent, a soldier survive in a war zone, or an average person change the television channel, Cipoletta is motivated by the idea that he can create devices that people can use in the immediate future to make their lives better. “Many engineers spend all their time on research and development for the consumer market,” says Stuto. “For me, the gratification comes from helping people, and knowing that people find a need for what I make.”

David Cipoletta, co-founder and CEO of Pison, demonstrates Pison’s wrist device, using it to control a robot with wrist gestures.

Left, Pison staffers at work in the company’s Boston, Mass., offices.
The Night Charlie Lee Made History

In December 1961, the URI men’s basketball team played at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Ga. The team’s leading scorer, Charlie Lee, didn’t know it at the time, but he was making history as the first Black player to participate in a college game in the state of Georgia.

By Bob Herzog

Nearly 60 years later, pioneer Rhody basketball player Charlie Lee remembers the mystery as much as the history.

Lee became the first Black player to participate in a college basketball game in the state of Georgia when he and his University of Rhode Island teammates faced tiny Oglethorpe University in Atlanta before an overflow crowd on Dec. 29, 1961.

Oglethorpe, with an enrollment of only 350, surprisingly defeated the bigger school from up north, 64-47, with Black fans—also attending a college basketball game in Georgia for the first time—among those in the crowd that gave Lee a standing ovation as the Rams walked off the court.

Lee, the team’s leading scorer in his junior season but playing that night on a sprained ankle, was held to only 7 points. He appreciated the crowd’s gesture but only much later was he able to appreciate his role and the significance of the moment. Why? Because, according to Lee, he didn’t know he had just made history.

“I never knew that it was the first time that ever occurred in Georgia. It never entered my mind. No one told me,” Lee, 81, says in a telephone interview from his home in Raleigh, N.C. “For some reason the athletic director and the coach never mentioned to me that when we played Oglethorpe in Atlanta, this was going to be a historic event.”

Perhaps the University felt the need to protect Lee and his teammates because of the racial conditions that existed in the South in those days and did not want to put undue pressure on the young student-athletes. The reasons for the silence were never made public. But even though Lee said he didn’t know he would be breaking a color barrier in the game, he and the other Rams knew of the segregation that existed then. The point was made strongly the night before the game when a friend of some URI players who lived in Atlanta spoke to the team in the Oglethorpe dormitory where they were staying.
That's how I found out, " Lee says. "So I intercollegiate sporting event was inte-

magazine said it was the first time an

month later from

Lee says he did not learn

performance that I wanted, and we lost

whatsoever. But I didn't have the kind of

says, "There were no incidents before,

are buses coming in, you better let us

the lobby until the game starts. If there

were warming up, 'Y ou're going to be in

and there's going to be a problem, " Roth-

see buses coming in, it's the Ku Klux Klan

someone watches the parking lot. If you

happened. We just got looks. "

Danny, " remembers Rothstein. "Y ou

blue eyes, milky white skin. That was

other four players followed. "Blond hair,

sat down among the Black riders. The

there were no empty seats in the front,

" Of course, I feel a sense of pride, but

there is a little bit of frustration and

anger," Lee admits. "I was upset that they

told me before or after. Why didn't they

say anything to me? You know some-

thing? Nobody made a big deal about that

back then."

But the impact and memories linger.

"When I told my grandson about it, he
got kind of wide-eyed," Lee says. "He was
eccentric when he heard my story, and he
went right out and shared it with his
friends. He's 6 feet, 6 inches tall and played
ball at Fayetteville State. He coached
a little AAU basketball and he told some
of his coaching friends. That made me
feel good, gave me a sense of pride."

The events of that winter

also gave Lee and his teammates some
firsthand, eye-opening experiences about
race relations in the South in the early
1960s. A week after their game in Atlanta,
the Rams flew to Miami for a game against the University of Miami, where
Lee recalls spending much of his time
soaking his sprained ankle in a whirlpool.
They stayed at the Lombardy Inn Hotel in
Miami Beach, and were given most of
the week off to enjoy themselves. "It turns
out that even in Miami, they had racial
restrictions back then, " Lee says. "That
wasn't even part of my experience, but
I was still seven years old."

That became quite evident the first
night in Florida. "A bunch of us go out to
eat, including Charlie," Rothstein recalls.
"We go walking down the street and
 everybody's looking at us. Well, we're a
basketball team. Everybody's 6-foot-3 or
everybody's looking at us. Well, we're a
basketball team, but the truth was,
Nobody's even aware of your existence at
that time. It was different times. Everybody's
looking at Charlie. But we don't know
that. We were very naive. We had no
understanding. We found that out after
the fact. But nothing bad happened."

Lee says he was unsure that his saga
had been told by Rothstein during a post-
game segment called "Speak the Truth"
last season on a Miami Heat TV broad-
cast. "With all that went on in the nation
with the racial strife, they asked each of
the broadcasters for a story that concerns
racism," Rothstein says. "That segment on
Charlie bases is part of a package show,
and it eventually got to YouTube."

When Lee reflects on those events
from 60 years ago, he is touched by the solidarity shown by his teammates on the streets
of Atlanta and Miami and by Rothstein's
aring and sharing of those moments
for the first time, "I remember thinking
that that incident is how upset my
teammates were," Lee says. "Of course it
makes me feel good that they had my back."

Lee, choked up, adds, "Probably the
most emotional thing for me is the fact
that a former teammate [Rothstein] who
had a lot of success in the NBA remem-
bered me."

In fact, Rothstein's revelation started
a serendipitous chain reaction. Lee and his
family got to watch the segment on You-

tube and back in the afterglow of a slice
of history that Lee himself could not enjoy
the first time around. And Roth-
stein got to reconnect with a teammate
he had lost touch with years ago and did not
even know was still alive. The two shared
long, emotional telephone conversations
this summer.

"I didn't live in Charlie's skin, so
how could I really know how he felt?"

Rothstein asks. "We never gave it a real
thought about race. It was basketball.
You got up and played. There weren't that
many Black players then, certainly not
like today, but it's not like I never played
against Black players ... I don't know if
proud is the right word, but I was always
pleased to think that we were able to
enjoy the first time around. And Roth-
stein got to reconnect with a teammate he
did not even know was still alive. The two
shared conversations like today, but it's not
like I never played against Black players ...
Rothstein says.

For some time, it may be hard to
believe that was the case as recently as
1961. In fact, the first URI player to board
the bus, Danny Nelson, '64, says he had
never played with any White player before.
"Of course, I feel a sense of pride, but
there is a little bit of frustration and
anger," Lee admits. "I was upset that they
told me before or after. Why didn't they
say anything to me? You know some-
thing? Nobody made a big deal about that
back then."

Lee says Lee, "told the story of the all-Black
team from Texas that made history, and
wrote, 'What about Charlie Lee?' That
when it came to the forefront for me."

With a chuckle, Lee repeats, 'What
about Charlie Lee? When you're young and
taive, it doesn't dawn on you. But as the
years pass by, it does. You don't realize the
magnitude of what just happened, and the
historical perspective associated with it.'

But the media once again helped to
shine a light on Lee's accomplishments
some years later when The Providence
journal published an article about race
and college basketball, highlighting the
unfairness of what Lee, an integrator of Texas
URIs, had to go through.

Lee says Lee, "told the story of the all-Black
from the Northeast, it was no big deal
playing an integrated basketball game.
We did it all the time."

Lee did not see the Sports Illustrated
item in the weekly magazine's Jan. 8, 1962,
edition that read, "Before a packed house
in Atlanta, Charlie Lee of Rhode Island
made history. The Negro Ram star com-
peted in the first non-segregated col-
gate athletic contest in Georgia, possibly
opening the way for the acceptance of
Negro players on southern teams."

Lee added, in a telephone conversation
in February of 1962, "I always knew there
were no empty seats in the front, candy
calmedly walked to the back of the bus
and sat down among the Black riders. The
other four players followed. "Blond hair,
sat down among the Black riders. The
there were no empty seats in the front,
candy
calmedly walked to the back of the bus
and sat down among the Black riders. The
other four players followed. "Blond hair,

university of rhode island magazine
The stereotype of the stern woman who haunted the library—the one with the bun, the frown, and the finger pressed to her lips—bears little resemblance to today’s librarians. This generation of librarians is leading some of the most important conversations of our times. And they want to get you talking.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

Ashley Selima, M.L.I.S. '12, M.P.A. '13; Ed Garcia, '03, M.L.I.S. '08; Lisa Villa, M.L.I.S. '05; Colin McCullough, M.L.I.S. '16; GSLIS assistant professor Melissa Villa-Nicholas; and Stephanie Mills '03, '09, M.L.I.S. '07. This group gathered in front of the Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons on URI’s Kingston Campus.
West from I-95 North will get you to the West Warwick Public Library by way of Sunset Drive, link tattoo parlor, AF’s Restaurant, Valley Fuel, and Renault-Gallaghy Funeral Home.

Incorporated in 1913, West Warwick, R.I., is the youngest town in the state, but it has a worn appearance that hints of hardship. The Riverpoint Congregational Church advertises a rummage sale. There are no chic boutiques or trendy coffee shops. Jerry’s Supermarket proclaims itself the “King of Meats,” but it’s the old Royal Mill Complex, with its crenelated clock tower overlooking the Pawtuxet River, that ranks first for most imperious structure.

This town doesn’t likely benefit much from the $1.7 billion haul the Ocean State School has taken in from selling off their parents at libraries, bookstores, and schools with a view to destigmatizing their profession. “We’re exploring how to bring activism and scholarship into librarianship, we want to go further with social justice curriculum and mission,” Karno says. “What we are trying to do is fundamentally support the field of information professionals, information curators, and libraries all over the country as our alumni come from and go into all kinds of fields.”

Read on to learn how GSLIS graduates are preserving history, leading community conversations, enriching the lives of children and the elderly, elevating historically underrepresented voices, supporting academic scholarship and lifelong learning, and helping people find what they need in an atmosphere that makes them feel welcome. And heard.

Mary Moen, M.L.I.S. ’03, Ph.D. ’15, assistant professor in URI’s Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, in front of Taft Hall on the Kingston Campus, where the program is housed.

Reference Desk: Cutbacks in school libraries may be yielding unintended consequences. According to a study by Stanford University, more than 80% of middle schoolers cannot tell the difference between sponsored content and a real news article.

—American Library Association

STEPHANIE MILLS

“I’m a beg-borrow-and-steal librarian. I’m always running the book fair and doing things to increase our budget when times are tough. The library is for everyone, and that means having a broad range of titles.”

Rhode Islands: 2020 School Librarian of the Year, Stephanie Mills ’03, ’09, M.L.I.S. ’07, looks at the honor as something of a vindication. “It verifies and solidifies for me the important role of school libraries,” she says. “The library is the heart of the school, it’s the hub, the place that brings together a community of readers.”

Interest in reading wanes in middle school when children’s parents stop reading to them, Mills, school librarian at Park View Middle School in Cranston, R.I., notes. Her response has been to focus on information literacy and literature appreciation. School curriculums now include lessons on how to discern between fact and propaganda. Mills wants to encourage students’ desire to read by providing “choice and voice for students so that they’ll continue enjoying reading because they’ve found a good story. Not everything we do or teach has to be tied to a grade,” Mills says.

When COVID-19 caused schools in Rhode Island to close, Mills created pop-up libraries outside, rolling book carts around her school’s parking lot so students could check out books. “And I had a delivery service where I was running from room to room delivering what they’d requested through Google forms. So, we used modern technology to do a simple thing. Get books in the hands of the kids,” Mills says.

An unfortunate consequence of COVID-19, locally and nationally, has been the loss of library materials. Hundreds of library books are missing from Park View’s collection, in part because students haven’t been back to school in 18 months. Mills is replacing titles with grant money and with help from the school’s parent-teacher group. It’s not a one-for-one replacement of titles, though, Mills notes. Her purchasing decisions address broader concerns. “We have a diverse population, so I’m looking for books that represent diverse voices and are written by authors who are members of the marginalized populations they’re writing about,” Mills says.

Mills has an evangelist’s zeal for her profession. “I am as enthusiastic today about doing this job as I was when I started,” she says. “The measure of how great the profession is.”

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS

“Liberarians are unsung heroes. The stereotype that persists is that we’re just the keepers of the books. We’re so much more.”

—Mary Moen

Good Read: The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett. Mills says, “It’s about Black twins growing up in a segregated area in the South. In their town, over time, the African Americans have become lighter. It’s something the people there are proud of. One of the twins decides to leave and pretend to be a white woman because the opportunities are so plentiful for her. But she has to shut out her family.”
"It was loud. I can have a pretty loud voice, but it was loud. I don't even think they could hear me. So, I climbed up on the table. I don't think I was thinking of my day helping people search for jobs. Public libraries can be a safety net for people who may not have the skills or the access to information or technology," Garcia says.

A recipient of the GLIS's 2018 Alumni of the Year award, Garcia has been active in the American Library Association (ALA). In 2018, he was the first URI grad to graduate as an ALA Emerging Leader.

These days, Garcia, director of the Cranston (R.I.) Public Library, and his team are focused on equity issues regard- ing everything from the purchase of e-books to naming conventions around collections. "We are building inclusive collections that reflect our community, which includes examining how materials are cataloged in our collections. The Dewey Decimal System, a Western, male-centric system, does not reflect the diversity of our communities. We started by changing the subject heading 'illegal alien' to 'undocumented immigrants.' We had GSLIS intern Tessa Mediano work with our cataloging librarian, Christine Hall '03, M.L.I.S., to look at the sub- ject headings and call numbers of our Native American collections. We created subject headings for all local tribes, rather than grouping them all under the heading of 'North American Indians.'"

Libraries also provide potentially life-altering services, Garcia says. The Cranston Public Library has served patrons from more than 35 countries, conducted classes in English as a second language, citizenship, and computers; served free lunches to children during school vaca- tion; and hosted diversity, equity, and inclusion training.

"We've had discussions on how to relate to people, which helped me in my career," Garcia says. The year he graduated, 2008, the GSLIS program, convinced him to go around telling everybody to shut up?‘ he says. "And I didn't even notice that it got that loud again."

A decade out of college, Ed Garcia '03, M.L.I.S. '08, wanted a change. A history of the GSLIS program, convinced him to change his major to library science. "As a woman looking back 100 years at the presidential election—I see there's a reality to their work means I get to vote in my pres- idential election—I see there's a reality to history that we can only learn from these handwritten documents, which show the true complexity of people and, sometimes, the dark side of history. That moment solidified for me the importance of what we do as archivists: We preserve history that doesn't always want to be seen, but needs to be seen."

Other aspects of the job bring joy, though. Selima says. "Being a small part in helping people become more civically engaged is a really rewarding thing."

"Every day in the archives is a unique experience. Any job is going to have its moments when you've had one too many meetings for the day, but how many people can duck into a vault and look at the Bill of Rights?"

Sifting through public records might seem dull work, but those documents can bring history to life, says Rhode Island state archivist and public records administra- tor Ashley Selima, M.L.I.S. '12, M.P.A. '13. In 2020, before COVID-19 derailed traveling exhibitions, Selima was putting together a traveling exhibition celebrating the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote. In her research, she found a record, circa 1919, from the president of the National Suffrage Association. "She wrote to a Southern congressman that if he wanted to keep his white majority, he should let white women vote in order to keep segre- gation in the South—that it benefited him to give women more rights, but only women."

"As a woman looking back 100 years at these women I've always seen as heroes—women in history. I've always been fascinated by Tudor History. I heard about this book on the podcast, You're Wrong About."

"The books that really got me reading were the Harry Potter books. My friends and I would pretend we were in Harry Potter, and the stories would magically come to life."

"We serve everybody, every single person that comes into our library, no matter their background or values. And that is the beautiful thing about a library: We're inclusive."

"Helping people become more civically engaged is rewarding."

---Ashley Selima

---Larry Spongberg

---David Kelsey

---Ed Garcia

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"We serve everybody, every single person that comes into our library, no matter their background or values. And that is the beautiful thing about a library: We're inclusive."

David Kelsey, M.L.I.S. '12, outreach ser- vices librarian at St. Charles (Ill.) Public Library and 2021 president of the Associa- tion of Bookmobile and Outreach Services,
The idea of open access is to reduce the barriers to authors sharing their work because they want to keep their field moving forward and to spread their knowledge.”

—Larry Spangler

In 2013, with neither blueprint nor formal guidance, Lisa Villa, M.L.I.S. ’95, digital scholarship librarian at College of the Holy Cross’ Dinand Library (Worcester, Mass.), was tasked with building the works—in effect, a repository of significant works. Villa has undertaken the creation of a digital archive, an open-access institutional repository while also creating a historical record and capacious enough to contain the collections, reports, research, and creative outputs of scholars. In her role as digital teaching tool for the school’s next generation, Villa says; the archive is a valuable resource and is accessible and responsive to all inquiries. The archive would be flexible and capacious enough to contain the college’s output of scholarly articles and publications, reports, research, and creative works: an effect, a repository of significant contributions to the institution’s overall intellectual capital.

Now nearing 5,000 items, the Cross-Works repository holds, among other things, the student literary journal, The Purple Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail, by Ben Montgomery. Villa says, “I couldn’t put it down. I had never heard of Gatewood, and now I want everyone to know about her—especially since the Appalachian Trail runs through New England.”

“Libraries are engines of social justice.”

Becoming a librarian was a career change for Colin McCullough, M.L.I.S. ’16, director of the West Warwick (R.I.) Public Library, who previously worked for a humanitar-ian organization. He thought he’d become an academic librarian and worked at the Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons while he was a student at URI’s GLIS program. But working in the Knight Memorial Library in South Providence, one of the poorest communities in Rhode Island’s capital city, changed his mind. “I loved the part the library played in the community, so when the West Warwick job came up, there were similarities that attracted me,” he says.

“We’re functioning as a community center almost as much as a library.” McCullough muses. Awareness of this influences the staff’s purchasing and pro-gramming decisions. In West Warwick, for instance, a menstrual health program where free products are distributed might well benefit the community more than a reading by a best-selling novelist. “How do you make those programming deci-sions? Is it underpinned by social justice in some way?” McCullough asks, answer-ing with certainty; “Yes.” He continues, “My personal feeling is that libraries are engines of social justice. Anyone can walk through our doors.” McCullough recalls an anecdote from early in his career. A middle-aged woman came into the library. English wasn’t her first language, and she needed a résumé to apply for a factory job. They spent an hour writing the résumé and cover letter and uploading it to the company website. “I thought, ‘Well, something’s been accom-plished here. 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Think You Know What ‘College-Aged’ Means? Think Again.

Finding ways to include older adults in the Rhody community of teachers and learners has earned URI a national honor and enriched the lives of students, faculty, and community members.

By Diane M. Sterrett

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 3 in 10 Americans will be over the age of 55 by 2030, representing an enormous opportunity to innovate and problem-solve. From training caregivers to dispelling ageism myths and offering lifelong education, URI is responding to the educational, social, and health needs of older adults with a comprehensive range of programs and partnerships.

In 2018, URI was honored to be designated an Age-Friendly University (AFU) by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education, one of 48 in the United States. AFUs endorse such principles as encouraging participation of older adults in the university’s core activities, promoting intergenerational learning, and ensuring the university’s research agenda includes the needs of an aging society.

“The idea of an Age-Friendly University is that it fosters multiple ways of viewing the experience of growing older,” says Phil Clark, professor of human development and family science in the College of Health Sciences and director of the Program in Gerontology, who spearheaded URI’s bid to earn the AFU designation. “There is a structured ageism in the way we approach education, a one-and-done approach. As an AFU, we have an opportunity to rethink that model and use the University as a mechanism to enrich our community. Older people have a lot to contribute, but they are often overlooked.”

URI’s AFU initiative aims to find more ways to engage more older learners in URI classes, as well as to address ageism and increase student interest in working with older adults.

“Being an AFU gives us a framework and embedded philosophy to develop many aging and older adult-related teaching, research, and service efforts, making it a cohesive whole rather than a series of random offerings,” says Skye Leedahl, associate professor of human development and family science, who leads many age-inclusive, intergenerational activities.

“From a diversity and inclusion perspective, the university structure is an ideal place to include those of all ages and is a primary driver of why I am passionate about seeing the AFU concept evolve at URI!”

Clark emphasizes that being an AFU is not about creating separate communities of young and old, but about creating awareness that people have varying educational needs throughout their lives, and ensuring the university meets and supports those needs in an affordable way.

There’s also an economic benefit to thinking creatively about involving older adults in higher education, Leedahl points out. An Oxford Economics and AARP study estimated that the economic activity driven by Americans 50 and older pumped $7.6 trillion into the economy in 2015.

As an AFU, URI has many initiatives, including those we highlight here, that address the aging population from several angles—educational, social, psychological, and medical.

“Older people have a lot to contribute, but they are often overlooked.”

—Phil Clark, Professor of Human Development and Family Science and Director of URI’s Program in Gerontology

Left, undergraduate and OLLI students in a joint health and aging policy class taught by Associate Professor Skye Leedahl engage in an intergenerational discussion of the book, Being Mortal, by Atul Gawande, in the Memorial Union on the Kingston Campus.
One of RIGEC’s partners is the Care Transformation Collaborative of Rhode Island (CTC-RI), a nonprofit working with clinical practices, health plans, and key stakeholders to transform primary care. “They are really the go-to people for any needs in geriatric education,” says Christine A. Campbell, CTC-RI’s senior program director. “We look to them any time we’re creating a program or testing innovation around what works for older adults and caregivers or looking for content experts for our annual conference.”

For the collaborative’s recent quality improvement initiative around telehealth, RIGEC helped Campbell connect with the Cyber-Seniors program and found training resources for community health workers. For another program on advanced care plans, RIGEC helped Campbell find legal and end-of-life care experts. “RIGEC has provided education for our nurse care managers, including programs on the dangers of polypharmacy, assessing for falls, and creative approaches around cognitive problems. They’re very collaborative, have terrific resources, and can pull together a stakeholder group to problem-solve and strengthen team-based care,” Campbell adds.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) is a learning community for adults aged 50-plus. The programs recognize the importance of lifelong learning and social engagement as we age: The oldest member is 98, the average is 72.

“OLLI is an happy, safe environment for people who want to continue learning, exploring, and meeting people,” explains Beth Lecoute, OLLI’s director. “Instructors tell me they may be facilitating the subject matter, but it’s really an open give-and-take conversation because of the references and life experience people bring. From that, new friendships are developed, people form connections, and the magic just kind of happens.”

As a member-driven organization, classes follow participants’ interests. This summer, classes were offered in current events, history and government, humanities, and STEM. In addition to academic topics, OLLI offers special interest groups such as walking, gardening, yoga, golf, and mahjong. An OLLI class helped Liz Gilheeney discover a drawing talent she didn’t know she had. “It was like there was a seed inside me and OLLI watered it and it grew. If not for the OLLI lessons and support, I would not have known I had this talent and be able to share it,” she says. “I get so much enjoyment out of it—when you’re older and retired, your world becomes a little smaller, and trying to carve out meaning for this part of your life is daunting at times.”

She began drawing Corvettes, the first a 1953 model she’d seen at a rally she and her husband attended. Requests for drawings poured in, and she has now drawn nearly every model year, giving them away as gifts.

Similarly, Jet Vertz retired to Rhode Island after a career in aviation and wondered what the next chapter of life would bring. He joined OLLI and began taking courses. “OLLI gave me a structure and focus for my retirement,” he says. “I realized that it’s more than just playing another round of golf, walking the same beach for the hundredth time, or taking another cruise. I met other retirees who were going through a similar period of the retirement phase and searching for meaningful things to do beyond babysitting their grandkids. Later, I developed a course on generating a ‘purpose-driven bucket list’ and now teach the subject at OLLI.”

In addition to enhancing members’ lives, OLLI also benefits the University through intergenerational programming, such as an aging policy class and intergenerational classes that connect undergraduate students with OLLI members. Members are also often tapped by physical therapy, pharmacy, kinesiology, and engineering students for research.

Engaging Generations: Cyber-Seniors

In Cyber-Seniors, undergraduates bridge the technology and generational gap by mentoring older adults in how to use smartphones, tablets, and laptops, mostly through one-on-one appointments. Since 2016, the program has provided assistance to more than 1,000 older adults with about 230 student participants, continuing through the pandemic via phone and Zoom.

“We offer many opportunities for older adults to get help, no matter what their level of digital literacy is,” says Leedahl, who, along with pharmacy professor Erica Estus ’96, Pharm.D. ’00, leads this program and related research efforts. With a new grant from the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, Cyber-Seniors recently started an iPad initiative to get iPads and internet hot spots to older adults in lower-income communities who have never had access to technology. So far, they have reached about 120 adults and are hoping to reach 200 by the end of 2021.

Cyber-Seniors student mentor Thomas Hoong ‘23, a double major in Spanish and supply chain management, works with about 30 Spanish-speaking clients. “I have seen the program bring a lot of joy to older adults because now they have access to communication through technology. They connect to the world a lot better, build relationships through social media, and bond with family over videos. I teach them the basics, but also whatever they are interested in: practicing their English, listening to music, or learning recipes.”

In addition to a sense of satisfaction, the program gives Hoong a chance to practice his Spanish, develop skills in leadership, problem-solving, and communication, and learn about the process of aging. “It’s been an eye-opening experience to hear their stories,” says Hoong. “They are so grateful and happy to have the opportunity despite all their struggles.”

One of his favorite moments occurred during a two- and-a-half-hour Zoom session with 14 clients. “It was great to see them all talking and laughing with each other. By the end of the meeting, they were sharing addresses and phone numbers so they could meet up in person and hang out.”
In the future, when I work toward righting these inequalities [in health outcomes], I will know to keep older adults in mind.”

—Meghan Henesty, ’21, Disrupt Aging Classroom participant

Disrupt Aging Classroom

URI is an active participant in AARP’s Disrupt Aging Classroom, an interactive curriculum built into existing courses. It challenges students to examine their perceptions about aging and to think about how the aging population is relevant to their personal lives and future careers. Students become more age-inclusive by broadening their understanding of and interactions with older adults and are encouraged to take a gerontology class or an internship that includes older adults.

OLLI instructor Jet Vertz also trained as a Disrupt Aging facilitator and responds to faculty requests to present the Disrupt Aging curricular to students.

“Today’s retirees are living longer and more productively, disrupting the stereotype of an AARP member,” he says. “Disrupt Aging fits perfectly with my idea of purpose-driven retirement. We have an opportunity to give back to the world by making it a better place for our grandchildren.”

As facilitators dive into the expectations and realities of aging, ageism, and the personal stakes of students, many of whom will become caregivers, responses have been enthusiastic. “I was shocked to learn just how little training medical professionals such as nurses, social workers, physical therapists, and medical students receive on aging and older adults,” says Meghan Henesty, ’21, who majored in biology and political science. “My study and future career are focused on inequality in health outcomes, and I had never thought of older adults as a demographic facing inequality. But if the professionals treating them don’t have the proper training and experience, there will be inequality in outcomes. In the future, when I work toward righting these inequalities, I will know to keep older adults in mind.”

Finishing What You Started

One of the AFU principles is to address the full range of educational needs of older adults. URI’s Disrupt Aging Program provides extraordinary support for older adults who left school earlier in life and now wish to complete their degrees. The oldest student is 83, the average adult student is 38, over 880 have enrolled, and 577 diplomas have been awarded.

“We all want someone to believe in us and that’s what this program represents,” says Nancy Rabidoux, ’88, degree completion coordinator at Finish What You Started. “If they have the courage to make that first phone call, we will make sure they land in the right place.”

Rabidoux’s team works with prospective students to help them transfer credits from other colleges or use their URI credits in the smartest way possible, direct them to financial aid and academic assistance, and find programs that work with their schedules. People call for many reasons—whether they left school early, need the degree to get a promotion, or want to finish their degree before their children do.

Susan DeCocco Kosiba ’19 left URI in the 1970s for a job opportunity, just a few credits shy of a degree in economics. She went back and completed a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree in 2019 at age 65 and along the way discovered a love of history. She was inspired to stay and earn a second bachelor’s degree in history in 2021, then applied to the accelerated master’s degree program.

“When my husband passed, I looked at my bucket list and saw, ‘Finish your degree.’ Kosiba says, “Walking into that first class, I was shaking. But Nancy and so many amazing people helped me, and everyone was very welcoming. It was probably one of the biggest accomplishments in my life.”

Alumni Programming

Several alumni programs support older learners and further establish URI as an Age-Friendly University. With more than 135,000 alumni living around the world, engagement potential is huge.

One of those programs is Faculty Office Hour, in which faculty host webinars on their areas of expertise, followed by lively Q-and-A sessions. “The response has been tremendous. The last one had over 600 alumni from all over accessing the online livestream,” says Karen LaPointe, ’77, M.A. ’84, director of strategic initiatives, alumni engagement.

Two more online webinar series appeal to various age groups with a wide range of topics. In the Women’s Leadership Series, successful alumni share their stories, career paths, and knowledge while providing inspiration. Coaches’ Corner features athletic coaches talking about what’s new in their particular sports. All are available on the URI Alumni YouTube channel.

Another program, URI CareerConnect, offers an online mentoring platform for alumni and students of all ages. “You can join to give career advice and be a mentor or join to get advice and be mentored. You never know where someone is in their career journey—two years out of school, mid-career looking to start a new business, or recently retired looking for an encore career. We’ve been delighted at the response, most of our retired alumni joined as advisors and it’s really heartening to see,” says LaPointe.

Looking Ahead:

A Retirement Community?

A URI committee has been studying the possibility of a university-based retirement community. Such communities have been successful at other universities and have become something of a national trend. The University of Missouri, for example, established a retirement community, and, because of the research being done there, their school of nursing’s research funding increased 1,500 percent, making it the most well-funded school of nursing in the country. “URI representatives visited successful communities, documented the need, talked with developers and senior living experts, and created a proposal to promote healthy aging in place in an active, supportive environment. Envisioned as a walkable condo community, it could include four levels of care plus an interdisciplinary health clinic, pool or exercise facility, in-home services, smart home technology, entertainment, and space for OLLI classes to meet.”

“We want to encompass all aspects of the person—social, physical, and educational—to stimulate their minds, really be a holistic place,” says URI nursing professor Patricia Burbank ’74, who led the committee. “Being affiliated with the University means residents could take classes, use some of URI’s facilities, and have close relationships with students and faculty for research and service opportunities.”

The project has the potential to impact the lives of older adults positively, as well as provide a research and training opportunity for URI nursing, pharmacy, and health sciences students and faculty, and the committee continues to move the proposal forward.

What’s Next?

Based in a small state with a high percentage of older adults—in Rhode Island, more than 31 percent of residents are age 55 and older, compared with 28 percent nationally—and the beginnings of an age-friendly health-care system, URI is uniquely situated to become a leader in the AFU movement.

“We have an unprecedented opportunity to offer easier access to programs, not only to educate students about older adults and send them off into the workplace with the skills and abilities that others can contribute, there are so many social issues that can be solved.”

“Aging and health is a growing area of expertise and interest at URI,” Leedahl says. “Our faculty, staff, and students are increasingly involved in important research, teaching, and outreach initiatives in this area. “We are committed to the idea of intergenerational solidarity,” Leedahl adds. “We’re stronger together, and if people can learn each other’s values and truly embody and understand what others can contribute, there are so many social issues that can be solved.”

“We are committed to the idea of intergenerational solidarity. We’re stronger together.”

Elyse Leedahl, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Science and Program Manager of Cyber-Seniors

PHOTOS: COURTESY SUSAN DECECCO KOSIBA
If there were a Mount Rushmore of modern-day golf journalists, Tim Rosaforte ’77 would be on it. A giant in the world of golf journalism, Rosaforte earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and played on the University of Rhode Island football team.

Jaime Diaz, an award-winning golf writer and friend of Rosaforte, notes that there are parallels between Rosaforte’s football-playing days and his writing. He describes a phone call with Dave Campo, former Dallas Cowboys head coach and assistant football coach at University of Bridgeport (Conn.), where Rosaforte was a player in his first year of college, before he transferred to URI. “I called Dave Campo when I was writing a story about Tim in 2014, when he won the PGA of America Lifetime Achievement Award in Journalism,” says Diaz, a longtime writer at Sports Illustrated, Golf Digest, and Golf World before moving to Golf Channel. “Campo hadn’t seen Tim since his football days but had instant memories of him. Campo described him as, ‘a good player who studied film, took angles, understood limitations, and played hard. He was one of those rare athletes who got almost all of it out of himself.’ I think Tim did that in his journalism career, too. Tim read that and said to me, ‘I will always keep that. That’s me. I took that football formula and that’s my life.’”

A legendary golf insider whose extensive contact list includes the likes of Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods, as well as past U.S. presidents and countless Fortune 500 CEOs, Rosaforte began his remarkable career at the Tampa Times in 1977. He had stops at the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel, The Palm Beach Post, and Sports Illustrated before moving to Golf Channel. “Campo hadn’t seen Tim since his football days but had instant memories of him,” says Campo. “Tim was a good player who studied film, took angles, understood limitations, and played hard. He was one of those rare athletes who got almost all of it out of himself.”

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PRO’S PRO’S

When golf journalist Tim Rosaforte ’77 became just the 12th person ever to be awarded honorary PGA of America membership, no one was surprised. Rosaforte retired from a brilliant and influential career in 2019, when he was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s. Rosaforte’s legacy includes a URI scholarship to help students studying neuroscience, the result of a team effort by his friends and colleagues, who will tell you that his real legacy is kindness, integrity, and trustworthiness.

By T.J. Auclair ’02

Rosaforte at the Golf Writers Association of America awards dinner prior to the start of the 2015 Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga.

PHOTOS: ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY PGA OF AMERICA

Rosaforte presented the Male Player of the Year award to Tiger Woods at the Golf Writer’s Association of America awards dinner in Savannah, Ga., in 2007.

Rosaforte had two cell phones working at the same time. Arnold on line one, Tiger on line two.”

—Jim Nantz, CBS Sports lead announcer for golf, the NFL, and the NCAA Final Four

Jim Nantz, CBS Sports lead announcer for golf, the NFL, and the NCAA Final Four, describes Rosaforte as one of the most connected and trusted members of the golf media, someone who is on top of everything happening at the highest level of the sport. “He had two cell phones working at the same time,” Nantz says. “Arnold on line one, Tiger on line two.”
Rosaforte with George W. Bush, 43rd president of the United States, at the opening ceremony of the 2021 Walker Cup at Seminole Golf Club in Juno Beach, Fla. Bush’s father, the late George H.W. Bush, 41st president of the United States, is one of the other 11 honorary PGA members.

“To see Tim struggle with Alzheimer’s has been sad and shocking at the same time,” Nantz continues. “His mind was razor sharp for so long and then, all of a sudden, he was lost. Sadly, due to my father’s own battle with this insidious disease, I know the heartache it has caused for all who love Tim. Gene-”

Rosaforte has always had the ability to make his compelling stories to life.

“If you wish to contribute to the Tim Rosaforte endowed scholarship to assist students who want to write about golf full time, visit urifae.org/rosafortescholarship. For information, contact Eric Schenwald at 401.874.9017 or eschenwald@uri.edu.

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Russell J. Hahn writes, “My wife and I retired to Vero Beach, Florida from R.I. in 1994. I started a new career at 62, taking 24 courses in art over eight years. I began selling my large flower watercolors in 2003 to individuals, interior decorators, and corporate interests, including

gest ever feature. It was the first known comprehensive article published on the art form since 1896.”

Claude Trottier writes, “Lois Martin Blankenship (Mimi) is currently a 104-years-young incident of the Elden Scarlott Shell senior care facility in Wakefield, R.I. The Biking Sigs/Road Scholars ofSigma Chi, URI have been bike-riding and meeting for lunch for over 15 years and have been nurturing Mimi since she turned 100. The Sigs started this labor of love through their daughter Judy Martin, who was a Sigma Chi house mother for a number of years and is an honorary member of our Housing Corporation Board of Directors in her retirement. A delegation of the Sigs recently sang the ‘Sweetheart of Sigma Chi’ song to Mimi in honor of her 104th birthday.”

Charlie Lee, see page 22

Ron Rothstein, see page 24

David Jacobs writes, “After 40 years at Metro-North Railroad and 24 years in the Navy Reserve, I finally retired. Raptor Bloom, published in April 2020, and continues the Matt ‘Ace’ Black series of action-packed, suspense-filled thrillers. His author website is thomasmbsleebauthor.com. He is currently working on the final novel in the series while residing in Florida.”


Claude English retired as director of athletics at Park University in Parkville, Mo. English joined Park University in 1992, serving as the men’s basketball head coach through the end of the 2004-05 season. In January 1996, English added the title of athletics director, a role he held for more than 25 years until retiring in 2021. While at URI, he was a two-time All-Yankee Conference first team (1968–69 and 1969–70) and served as a team captain those two years. He averaged 12.3 points and 8.2 rebounds per game over those two seasons. In addition, he was a one-year letter-winner in track in 1969.

Malissa Jacob writes, “I recently published a novel called Shooting from the Heart. It is similar to Eat, Pray, Love. It is available on Amazon.com. A good deal of the book takes place in Newport, R.I.”

SIGMA CHI SERENADE FOR MIMI’S 104TH

Pictured are: (seated) Mimi’s daughter-in-law Eleanor Martin and Mimi, and (standing) Denny Denelle ’63, Claude Trottier ’60, Father Richard Cipolla ’63, Dick Kalunian ’59, and Jim Quinn ’64.

Charles Mulcahy-Ernt is a professor of educational administration and leadership at the University of Connecticut. She provides leadership and mentorship to the SIgs/Road Scholars of Sigma Chi, URI and has served as chair of the National Educational Development Program (NEDP) assessor. In his nomination letter to CAACE, Dr. Man-giafico, principal of the East Hartford Adult Education Program wrote, “Kathryn Ladd has spent her entire teaching career going above and beyond for her students. From working with expelled students, to those with disabilities, to attending the naturalization ceremonies of her students: she always finds a way to help students succeed.”

Ladd is a former Clark Lane Middle School science teacher, Waterford High School health teacher and lead instructor for Waterford’s On-TIME District Expansion Program, and assistant to the superintendent/principal in Sterling, Conn. She lives in Lebanon, Conn. with her husband Michael. Her favorite pastime is spending time with her family, including her parents Dr. John (URI ’48) and Mary Stellaiano and her grandchildren. Ladd was previously published with incorrect degrees and graduation years listed. Our apologies for the error.

Mark B. Morse, Esq. was elected president of the Rhode Island Bar Association with a term running from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. He graduated from URI and the New England School of Law, where he served as research editor of the New England Law Review. Morse lectures on a variety of legal issues and served as editor-in-chief of the Rhode Island Bar Journal. He is active on a number of committees and subcommittees. He is a fellow of the Rhode Island Bar Foundation and is past president of the RI Association for Justice and presently serves on its Board of Governors. Morse is also active in the American Association for Justice and serves as chair of the State Delegates, as a member of its Executive Committee. In 2011, Morse was awarded the Dorothy Lohnman Public Service Award for his work with Defenders of Animals. He is married with three children.

Deb Nelson Bonkeles ’81, M.S. Ed. of Avon Island, Fla. just published her third book, Women on Top: What’s Keeping You From Executive Leadership? to transform the way women pursue their careers. After publishing her first award-winning book in 2019, The WOW Factor Workplace: How to Create a Best Place to Work Culture, which changed our expectations for achieving joy and fulfillment from our jobs, she went on to publish a second award-winning book in 2020, Heartfelt Leadership: How to Capture the Top Spot and Keep on Soaring, which changed our expecta-
tions of those who lead. Each book brings to life what you really need to know to become one of the best and most beloved leaders you can be. Deb holds a B.S. and an M.B.A.
from URI's College of Business. She spent nearly 30 years climbing the leadership ladder in Fortune 500 technology firms.

1981

Raymond Williams has been named to the Legal Intelligenc-er's 2021 list of Distinguished Leaders. Williams was recog-nized for his dedication to pro-moting diversity, a commit-ment that extends to both internal initiatives and high-profile legal mandates as well as his "thrive pro bono practice that focuses on disparity-related issues and underserved communities." Williams is national diversity and inclusion partner at DLA Piper, a global law firm with lawyers located in more than 40 countries.

1988


1992

Meredith Mendelson of Newton, Mass. was named a Commonwealth Heroine in 2021 by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. Mendelson is the executive director of the Needham-based organization Ellie Fund, which provides non-medical services like groceries, meal delivery, transportation, childcare, integrative therapies, and light housekeeping to patients in treatment for breast cancer. Mendelson was hon-ored for her work to expand the outreach of a remarkable organization that ensures those who struggle with breast cancer have the resources and support they need.

1995

Lisa Villa, M.L.I.S.'95, see page 32

Lisa Villa

Jean Canosa Albano, M.L.I.S.'96, is the assistant director for public services at the Spring-field (Mass.) City Library. She writes, "I was so sorry to hear that one of my favorite, most influential professors, Cheryl McCarthy, passed away in May of 2021. I recall her library administration course methods and readings frequently, they continue to influence me. One of the joys of being involved in the New England Library Associa-tion was our not-infrequent meetups at annual confer-ences, where I was thrilled to see her receive that organiza-tion's prestigious Emerson Greenway Award, given for distinguished service in librari-anship, in 2016. It was also in attendance when another influential professor, Fay Zip-kowitz, was so honored in 2019.) We alumns of URI's gradu-ate school of library services are fortunate to have learned from many outstanding educa-tors. I would love to hear from other library school grads to exchange memories or to talk about librarianship. I am always recruiting and love to get applications from fellow grads! Connect with me on LinkedIn. Outside of the library world, I am currently serving as president of the board of direc-tors of Art for the Soul Gallery, a true gem here in the City of Springfield."

1996

1999

Kevin Gilmore, see page 1

2000

David Penney was named information technology man-ager for Wood River Health Services in Hope Valley, R.I.

2001

Stephanie Mills '03, M.L.I.S. '07, see page 29

Mary Moen, M.L.I.S. '03, Ph.D. '15, see page 28

2004

Douglass Reed, see page 9

2006

Robert "Bobby" Britto-Oliveira '06, M.S. '11, see page 51

2008

Sara Montiero, see page 51

2009

Elise Petraca '99, M.L.I.S. '12, M.A. '13 has been accepted into the first cohort of the New England Library Association Emerging Leaders program.

2011

Ashley Gingervall O'Shea, M.B.A. '11, was named a Providence Business News top 40 professionals under the age of 40 in R.I. in 2021.

2012

David Kelsey, M.L.I.S. '12, see page 31

Ashley Selima, M.L.I.S. '12, M.P.A. '13, see page 32

Allysa Taft, B.A. '12, B.S. '12, M.L.I.S. '13, M.A. '17 has been accepted into the first cohort of the New England Library Association Emerging Leaders program.

2013

Tanya Wang, see page 20

2014

David Cipollotta '14, M.S. '19, see page 16

2016

Colin McCullough, M.L.I.S. '16, see page 33

2019

Tayla Cardillo, M.L.I.S. '19 has been accepted into the first cohort of the New England Library Association Emerging Leaders program.

2020

Karen Petrik, see back cover

Allie Reilly, see back cover

Patrick Henry Warren was appointed associate director of global regulatory affairs at NOVAVAX, where he will lead COVID-19 vaccine develop-ment in Switzerland, UAE, Japan, and Singapore markets. He is a graduate student at Harvard University, where he is studying biotechnology with a focus in immunology and infectious diseases.

2021

Thomas Bonneau, see page 15

Jonah Callandret has become affiliated with The Bulfinch Group, a financial services and investment management firm headquartered in Needham, Mass.

Meghan Henney, see page 38

1987
ENGAGEMENTS AND WEDDINGS

Shannon Oliver ’19 and Adam Capwell ’19 were married on October 9, 2021, at the Meadowbrook Inn in Charlestown, R.I. They currently reside in Smithfield, R.I.

Kevin Christofaro ’10 and Jacqueline Coutu ’11 were married on May 1, 2021.

Stephanie Russell ’14 and David Hansen ’14 were married on April 17, 2021, at Harbor Lights in Warwick, R.I. Stephanie writes, “We absolutely loved our 4 years [at URI], cheerleading and football team. We still get to a lot of games. We had a big URI attendance. Go Rhody!”

= YOUR STORIES =

The Copeland Effect

In June, beloved men’s track and field coach John Copeland announced his retirement after 39 years at URI. Under Copeland, the team secured 25 A-10 titles. But more important to Copeland was his impact on the students he coached.

It is difficult to measure the effect one person can have on another. It is nearly impossible to measure the effect that coach John Copeland had at URI over the last four decades. In addition to the championships—there were many—his legacy at URI is reflected in the thousands of student-athletes he coached.

“Cope” was tough in every manner of the word. But he was committed to taking time with the members of his team outside of practice. I can hardly remember a time when his office door was closed. Many of my teammates can talk for hours about what they learned from Cope just sitting in that office and listening to stories about track and life.

After a rough freshman year, I asked him if he would allow me to transfer. Per NCAA regulations, I was required to get his approval or forfeit a year of eligibility. While he was under no obligation to do so, he said, “Of course,” and promptly picked up the phone, called the coach at the school I wanted to transfer to, and gave me the release. Luckily, I was not accepted to that school and remained in Kingston, where I completed my undergraduate and graduate degrees. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I eventually found my stride at URI and a few years later I was mulling my plans for after I graduated. Naturally, I was considering coaching and asked Cope why he was still coaching all these years later. He told me that coaching at the collegiate level gave him the opportunity to shape boys into men, men who were ready to tackle the world.

Now 31, and coaching, I understand what he meant. He drilled into our heads lessons like the five Ps: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance. He demanded we give maximum effort in the classroom and on the track. He was never the “rah-rah” kind of coach, but he expected his teams to support one another at practice and on meet days with passion. The five years that I spent under his tutelage in Kingston helped shape me into who I am today. On behalf of the men’s track and field alumni, I want to thank him for everything he did for us while at URI.

—Steve McKenna II ’13, M.A. ’15

Author’s note: This story could be from any of the thousands of athletes Copeland coached. Cope meant a lot to me. More importantly, he meant a lot to all the Men’s Track & Field alumni from the last 39 years.

To read more about coach Copeland’s retirement and his time at URI, go to bit.ly/30Kjm5y.

“He drilled into our heads lessons like the five Ps: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.”

= CHAPTER AND CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS =

AATCC STUDENT CHAPTER

Calling all alumni who have been members of the AATCC (American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists) Student Chapter at URI! It is our chapter’s 50th anniversary! We want to hear about your experiences in the AATCC student chapter. Please help contribute to a history of the chapter on our forthcoming website by emailing memories and photos to aatcc.uri@gmail.com.
The Torchbearers

The Alumni of Color Network celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2022. Michelle Fontes ’96, M.A. ’11, the group’s organizer, reflects on how one of URI’s strongest alumni groups got started and what lies ahead.

By Marybeth Reilly-McGreen

In 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Fair Minimum Wage Act into law, Nancy Pelosi was the first woman to be elected speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and Forest Whitaker became the third Black actor in history to win an Academy Award for best male actor. Together, the three events signaled a change: Historically underrepresented groups, minimum wage earners, women, and people of color were coming into power, occupying spaces and roles previously denied them.

The year 2007 is significant for URI, too, as it marks the inception of the Alumni of Color Network (ACN), a group that provides personal and professional development, mentoring and networking, advocacy, and community-building opportunities for its members. Michelle Fontes ’96, M.A. ’11, assistant dean of diversity, retention, and student success initiatives for the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, recalls the critical contributions of some of the early leaders of the group she piloted, including Earl Smith ’90; Gerald Williams ’92, M.A. ’00; Charles ‘Chuck’ Watson ’93, M.A. ’21; Karoline Oliveira ’94, M.S. ’03; Abu Bake ’73, M.S. ’84, M.B.A. ’88; Ana Barraza ’95, M.S. ’94; and Tommy Garrick ’90.

“That group brainstormed how we might establish a committee,” Fontes says, “and that’s how the Alumni of Color Network was established.”

In 2007, Fontes was working in URI’s Alumni Relations Office. “I recognized, as a woman of color, that there was no representation of folks of color, and I knew a lot of alumni,” Fontes says. “It made me question why we weren’t involved. No judgment or blame, I just think if you don’t have an eye on these things, if you are not a person in that role in the alumni office planning events, you don’t see what’s missing.”

From left, ACN co-chairs Sara Monteiro ’08 and Bobby Britto-Oliveira ’06, M.S. ’11; Michelle Fontes ’96, M.A. ’11; and Gina Miranda ’20
Sharing the wisdom of experience

Britto-Oliveira now co-chairs the ACN, which has added networking get-togethers at Alumni and Family Weekend to its event offerings, as well as an event for recent graduates. His face registers a bit of surprise—or maybe wonder—that a promise to put some students in some seats led to a leadership role in the organization. “I’ve definitely benefited from the mentorship and guidance that our seasoned alumni have provided over the years,” Britto-Oliveira says, noting that the ACN is a natural complement to the work being done by the University’s Talent Development office, an admission program that serves in-state students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, as well as the Multicultural Student Services Center, which provides meeting space and resources to students. “My hope is that ACN is a resource for all students of color once they graduate,” he says. “We try to get students involved right away. We’re trying to let them know that we’re here and that we’ve experienced what they’re experiencing.”

Britto-Oliveira also hopes exposure to successful alumni and hearing about their student years will show how what was natural to one student could be handed down. “One of the questions often put to the panelists is to recount their challenges and successes from generational differences,” Britto-Oliveira says. “And so I do this work for the advancement of color. It’s about passing on to the next group through what they did. And our goal as more volunteers is to make it easier for incoming students, for the classes that come after.”

Monteiro estimates she devotes 12 or more hours a week to the ACN. She is particularly dedicated to its philanthropic work. In 2020, the group was instrumental in raising $25,000 for the RhodeNow! Students First Fund, which provides immediate financial assistance for students in need, says Amy Simionini, associate director for alumni engagement. Spurred by that success, ACN has established an endowment, the Alumni of Color Network Student Scholars Fund, which will generate scholarships for students of color. “This lets students know that ACN is here for all students of color once they graduate,” Britto-Oliveira says. “And our goal as more volunteers is to make it easier for incoming students, for the classes that come after.”

Monteiro’s co-chair Sara Monteiro ’08 also approaches ACN volunteer work with an awareness of legacy. Her uncle, the late Antonio DaMoura ’92, was one of the 1992 student activists and founder of the Cape Verdean Students Association. “For me, it’s always a carrying of the torch,” she says. “URI is a multigenerational school for my family. My mother went there, and I have two lovely boys who clearly see URI as an option someday.”

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Ellie Lemaire

Longtime University of Rhode Island Athletics administrator Eleanor “Ellie” Lemaire passed away on Sunday, July 3, at the age of 92.

The first senior woman administrator in URI Athletics history, Lemaire’s legendary career included the lives of female athletes on a local and national scale. She spent more than 40 years working in women’s athletics. At the dawn of Title IX in 1976, she came to URI as the University’s senior associate director of athletics, a position she held until 1992. Lemaire is largely responsible for the creation of all women’s athletics at the University of Rhode Island.

“With her focus on education and her leadership skill, Ellie Lemaire demonstrated the impact that a senior administration can have on the overall development of women in athletics,” said URI President Scott L. Rudin, Ph.D. “Ellie was driven by her passion for fighting for equity in sports, and her impact is still felt today. She was a valued friend who will be missed but never forgotten.”

inducted into the URI Athletics Hall of Fame in 1994—one of nine Hall of Fame inductions in her lifetime—Lemaire was a teacher, coach, official, and administrator throughout her career. She volunteered on numerous state and national committees, serving as a champion in the fight for support of women’s athletics.

Read more about Lemaire in the 2016 Quadangle’s story, “The Grueling Politics of Women and Sports,” at uri.edu/quadangles/
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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, 2022

= CAPTION THIS =

Contest

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PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL
This photo (summer 2021) inspired lots of captions. Many could be organized into the following categories:
• The Three Stooges
• "Shave and a haircut, two bits"
• The "snip-snip here, snip-snip there and a couple of tra-la-las" grooming scene from the Wizard of Oz

In fact, this photo (dated Dec. 20, 1954) shows Edward Rawdon, URI barber and honorary alumnus, getting his hair clipped by URI’s fifth president, Carl Woodward (center, behind Rawdon) and two other men. The February 1955 Alumni Bulletin says that Rawdon received the “Presidential Special” hair clipping in celebration of his retirement “after 50 years of clipping academic heads, among them five Rhody presidents.” The Bulletin goes on to say that Rawdon “made himself a place at the heart of campus that cannot be filled.”

URI students are driven to pursue their dreams and realize their potential. Your gift to RhodyNow can have an immediate impact on their long-term future.

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#RhodyNOW
Silver Medal for Ram-Led U.S. A. Rowers

University of Rhode Island rowing coach Shelagh Donohoe, along with coxswain Karen Petrik ’19 (foreground) and Allie Reilly ’19 (behind her), led the U.S. PR3 mixed four with coxswain to the silver medal on Aug. 29, 2021, at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo. They covered the 2,000-meter course in 7 minutes, 20.13 seconds, about 11 seconds behind Great Britain in first. France took the bronze with a time of 7:27:04. It was Reilly’s third silver in the event in international competition and Petrik’s second.

Read the story by Tony LaRoche ’94 at uri.edu/rhodyrowers