

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

magazine

FALL 2019

GAME CHANGERS

Six faculty members' innovative approaches to challenges could have major impacts on health issues, disaster relief, and disruptions in the supply chain.

A PARTNERSHIP MADE FOR SUCCESS

HEOP and New York Tech: A longstanding partnership that helps students follow their dreams.

SWINGING FOR THE FENCES

NEW YORK TECH
BASEBALL CAPPED THE
2018-2019 SEASON
WITH NEW RECORDS
AND A SPOT IN
THE COLLEGE
WORLD SERIES.



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DEAR FRIENDS,

In the first week of September, we welcomed—and welcomed back—our exceptional students to New York Institute of Technology's campuses to kick off the new academic year. Our goal for them is the same as it has been here since 1955: to provide an outstanding education that propels our graduates to achieve personal and professional success.



ALEXANDER BERG

The same week, we hosted the *Times Higher Education* (*THE*) and *The Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) editors at NYIT Auditorium on Broadway to examine that very topic at the 2019 *THE* U.S. Student Success Forum on September 5. Focusing on student success, particularly in the STEM fields, some of the brightest minds in leadership conversed on myriad topics: How do we measure student success? How do we ensure that we are providing access and tools for success

to minority and disadvantaged students? How do we develop pedagogy and practices for Gen Z students, who learn and are influenced in very different ways than their predecessors? (See story on page 2.)

The outcomes of these discussions—and the much-improved rankings we received from *U.S. News & World Report* and in the *Wall Street Journal*/*THE* U.S. college rankings announced at our campus on September 4—reinforced that we are on the right track. We've looked carefully at how to improve the student experience, and we know it isn't by adding lazy river swimming pools to our campuses. It's about investing in what we offer them—providing the technology and tools in our classrooms and labs to do, make, and innovate (like integrating Wolfram Language into courses, see story on page 10). It's about sharing new ways of looking at the world, showing them how to use computational thinking across disciplines or approach a challenge with a critically creative growth mindset.

And while rankings and our exciting news that we have been accepted as a member of the elite Association of Independent Technological Universities (AITU) demonstrate our accomplishments, we recognize that it is the successes of our alumni that tell the real story. I've enjoyed hearing about them at the alumni events we've held across the country in recent months, at homecoming here on campus, and in the alumni notes you've shared with us. Thank you for telling your story and helping us build our legacy.

Hank Foley, Ph.D.

President, New York Institute of Technology

LET'S BE FRIENDS

Like what you see? Share your updates and feedback at nyit.edu/alumni_notes and connect at [@NYITalumni](https://twitter.com/NYITalumni), nyit.edu/linkedin, and facebook.com/nyit.alumni.



2 Campus Buzz

New York Tech Partners With WSJ and THE on Student Success: New York Tech hosts the annual *Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* student success forum.

Meet Our Newest Leaders: Barbara J. Holahan, M.B.A., CPA; Tiffani L. Blake, M.S., Ed.M.; and Joseph Posillico, Ed.D., CPA

New York Tech Awarded \$3 Million in NSF Grants: Four STEM-related projects won funding that will directly benefit students pursuing STEM studies.

How Lizards and Snakes Got Their Skull Shapes: It had something to do with their eating habits, says Assistant Professor Akinobu Watanabe, Ph.D.

The Skyscraper's the Limit: A group of architecture students step away from the drafting table and into the museum to create an exhibit on urban housing density.

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The women's basketball team took their A game to Spain, where they participated in three exhibition matches.

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Features



ADAM RUBIN

Swinging for the Fences

By Anthony McCarron

The New York Tech baseball team began the 2018–2019 season as underdogs. They hadn't had a winning season since 2006. Then something incredible happened.



DAVIDE BONAZZI

16 Game Changers

By Renée Gearhart Levy

Meet six faculty members who might just change the way we look at autism spectrum disorder, disruptions in supply chains, HIV diagnosis, post-disaster response, and Alzheimer's disease.



JÖRG MEYER

20 A Partnership Made for Success

By Diane DiPiero

Since 1970, the Higher Education Opportunity Program at New York Institute of Technology has not only given disadvantaged students the chance to attend college, but opened the door to successful careers.



ANDRE KOPINSKI
New York Tech Provost Junius Gonzales, left, and Nariman Farvardin, president of Stevens Institute of Technology.

New York Tech Partners With *WSJ* and *THE* on Student Success

On September 4 and 5, leaders and representatives from top U.S. universities convened at the New York City campus for the announcement of the 2020 *Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education (WSJ/THE)* Annual College Rankings, master classes, and the annual *THE* U.S. Student Success Forum. New York Institute of Technology served as partner institution for the two-day event, joining prestigious institutions like UC Berkeley and NYU as recent hosts of *THE*'s annual gathering.

MOVING ON UP

THE Editor John Gill and *WSJ* Editor in Chief Matt Murray announced the *WSJ/THE* college rankings, established five years ago to emphasize how well colleges prepare students for life after graduation. Rankings are based on 15 factors across four main categories. “We felt colleges and, more importantly, students deserve better than the rankings that dominated the sector for so long,” said Gill. He added that the rankings are “helping students understand the strengths of prospective col-

leges to reflect their real concerns and indeed the concerns of their parents, incentivizing schools and colleges to deliver transformational education.”

New York Tech's overall ranking soared 130 points, placing it in the top third of universities in the national rankings. In comparing the 2020 scores to previous years, New York Tech, now ranked No. 266 among 801 universities, performed significantly better in terms of resources (faculty per student and finance per student) and outcomes (graduation rate and salary). In addition, it maintained its high ranking in the environment category, underscoring its ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion.

“This incredible upward shift is worth celebrating,” noted New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D., “especially since we moved up much faster than anyone thought we could. The hard work and professionalism of our faculty and staff are clearly paying dividends.”

In a panel immediately following the launch, *WSJ* editors and reporters discussed recent developments in the college admissions process as well as the increasing anxieties surrounding costs and return on investment, the Varsity Blues scandal, parents' roles, and other trends.

STRATEGIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

The next day, the 2019 *THE* U.S. Student Success Forum focused on “Enabling Student Success.” Influential leaders discussed myriad ways institutions can foster resilience in students grappling with the demands of college life and strategies to ensure that undergraduates thrive during their studies and beyond.

Chair: Nada Marie Anid, vice-president of strategic communications and external affairs, NYIT

Speakers: Vickie Cook, executive director, Center for Online Learning, Research and Service, University of Illinois Springfield
Kate Eichhorn, associate professor of cultures and media, The New School
Bernie Savarese, Assistant vice-president of student success, New York University



From left: Nada Anid, Vickie Cook, Kate Eichhorn, and Bernie Savarese discuss new approaches for Gen Z.

President Foley led the first panel, “Institutional Strategies for Success,” focusing on best practice of research universities in improving student outcomes, including support for incoming freshmen, solutions for eliminating the achievement gap, and preparing students for a rapidly changing labor market.

Panelist Kristin Wobbe, Ph.D., associate dean of undergraduate studies and co-director of the Center for Project-Based Learning at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, noted that statistics like completion rates, grades, and starting salaries “might not be the complete measure of success” and that less tangible things, like broadening one’s perspectives, are other ways a college education can contribute to student success. Tod Laursen, Ph.D., senior vice chancellor and provost of the State University of New York, described SUNY’s PRODiG project, a faculty diversity initiative spanning the next 10 years. “It will have a significant impact on student success,” he said.

Other trends discussed included nontraditional, high-impact approaches and “personalized” education and concierge-type services. Alexander Cartwright, Ph.D., University of Missouri chancellor, noted that students tend to succeed when they are part of a smaller community within a larger community. He predicted that more combined degrees (incorporating humanities and sciences) might propel future student success.

The second panel, “Advancing Equity in Undergraduate STEM Outcomes,” addressed how universities can better support minority and socially disadvantaged students. Junius Gonzales, M.D., M.B.A., provost and vice president for academic affairs at New York Tech, led the expert discussion, which included Nariman Farvardin, Ph.D., president, Stevens Institute of Technology; Ariana González Stokas, Ph.D., vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Barnard College; and Raynard Kington, M.D., M.B.A., Ph.D., president of Grinnell College. The group

agreed with Kington’s observation that while the statistics are clear and that the issue of equity is frequently talked about at traditional scientific/STEM institutions, “this has still not become a priority.”

Nada Marie Anid, Ph.D., New York Tech vice president for strategic communications and external affairs, moderated a panel entitled “What About Generation Z?” Vickie Cook, Ph.D., executive director of the Center for Online Learning, Research and Service at the University of Illinois Springfield; Kate Eichhorn, Ph.D., associate professor of culture and media, The New School; and Bernie Savarese, assistant vice president of student success at New York University, discussed how educators can adapt their approaches for these technology-savvy undergraduates.

The panel began by dispelling some myths about Gen Z. “They are not narcissistic,” said Cook. “They are saying, ‘Engage me, don’t just teach me,’ but they also love their causes and making a difference.” The panel agreed that Gen Z does not know how to fail “well”—and that higher education can help students realize failure is part of the road to success. Savarese noted the importance of Gen Z parents: “We need to make them a partner in their students’ education,” he said.

>> bit.ly/WSJ_THE



Times Higher Education Editor John Gill

ANDRE KOPINSKI



PHILLIP RETUTA

DOER

M.B.A. Student Adds Flavor to Bloomberg BBQ

Finance M.B.A. student Nataliya Naumova grabbed a career-boosting opportunity recently by presenting original research during a Bloomberg Quant (BBQ) seminar “lightning talk” at Bloomberg’s New York City headquarters.

At a prior BBQ event, Naumova asked the Quantitative Research head at Bloomberg LP how she might participate; to her surprise and delight, he invited her to present.

“I could not let this opportunity go!” said Naumova. With guidance from Professors Steven Shapiro, Ph.D., and Peter Harris, she researched the potential impact of new Financial Accounting Standards Board rules by analyzing data she downloaded at the Bloomberg Terminal in the School of Management’s Voya Financial Technology Center.

Shapiro explained, “Her sample demonstrates that higher degrees of financial leverage become visible under the new rules.”

Naumova, who will graduate in December, was overwhelmed by compliments from the standing-room-only crowd. “I had many people asking if I was a professor,” she said. “That made me feel proud of the research and of being a part of New York Tech.”

>> bit.ly/MBASStudentAtBloomberg

Meet Our New Leaders



WILLIAM MOTZING

**Barbara J. Holahan,
M.B.A., CPA**
Vice President for Financial
Affairs, Chief Financial Officer,
and Treasurer

Prior to her role as interim vice president for financial affairs, chief financial officer, and treasurer, Barbara J. Holahan served as controller at New York Institute of Technology. She will continue to oversee institutional financial

planning and risk management functions that include budget, bursar, catering and dining services, controller's office, environmental health and safety, insurance, purchasing, and treasury operations.

Holahan joined the university in 2014. Among her many accomplishments are a redesign of the institution's long-term debt that resulted in a 40 percent reduction in interest costs as well as the realignment of the student health insurance plan, which reduced fees while expanding student health coverage.

She holds an M.B.A. from Molloy College and a B.S. in accounting from the University of Richmond. Holahan has dedicated her career to the higher education and nonprofit sectors, with leadership positions at prestigious institutions such as Columbia University, the Metropolitan Opera, and KPMG.

>> bit.ly/BarbaraHolahan



DAVID SHAW

**Tiffani L. Blake,
M.S., Ed.M.**
Dean of Students

As a key member of the Office of Academic Affairs leadership team, Tiffani L. Blake is responsible for championing New York Institute of Technology's goal to be a more student-centered institution that fosters culture change, promotes inclusion and diversity, stimulates innovation

and entrepreneurship, and cultivates personal and professional student growth and development. Additionally, she works closely with faculty, department chairs, deans, and student affairs staff to enhance the student experience through shared programs, services, resources, and initiatives.

Prior to her appointment as dean of students, Blake worked at her alma mater, the College of New Rochelle, as the special assistant to the president for mission and board relations. She worked to inspire the community to embrace the college's heritage and mission of education and service, and served as liaison between the president and the board of trustees.

Blake holds a master's degree in industrial/organizational psychology from Baruch College and a master's degree in higher and post-secondary education from Teachers College at Columbia University. She currently is pursuing a doctoral degree in organizational leadership at Northeastern University.

>> bit.ly/TiffaniBlake



WILLIAM MOTZING

**Joseph Posillico,
Ed.D., CPA**
Vice President for
Enrollment Management

With nearly 30 years of higher-education experience in strategic enrollment management, student financial services, and recruitment and retention, Joseph Posillico is well-positioned for his role as vice president for enrollment

management. Since 2016, he has served as senior vice president for Caldwell University, where he oversaw admissions, financial aid, marketing, communications, registrar, athletics, and facilities operations. He also served as acting president from June to July 2016, and vice president for enrollment management from February 2005 to December 2015. During his time there, Caldwell experienced significant increases in undergraduate enrollment and first-year retention.

Posillico says he was drawn to New York Institute of Technology's mission and the vision that President Foley has for the university. He was also impressed with the academic programs and the quality of offerings.

Before entering higher education, Posillico served as a senior accountant at Deloitte and Touche, where he supported a range of clients from not-for-profit to SEC-registered and Fortune 500 companies.

He holds a bachelor's degree from St. John's University, a master's degree from Adelphi University, and an Ed.D. from Northeastern University.

>> bit.ly/JosephPosillico

New York Tech Grads Are Going Places

More than 2,700 students graduated in 2019. These doers, makers, and innovators are reinventing the future in industry and academia. As for the industries they're entering, the New York Tech revolution has just begun. Take a look at how our graduates are breaking ground in their dream careers.

94%

OF NEW YORK TECH GRADUATES ENTERING THE JOB MARKET ARE EMPLOYED WITHIN A YEAR OF GRADUATION

OVER TIME, NEW YORK TECH GRADUATES HAVE LANDED JOBS WITH:

**APPLE • AT&T • CITI
GENERAL MOTORS • IBM
JP MORGAN CHASE
MORGAN STANLEY • MICROSOFT
NORTHWELL HEALTH**



High Mobility

New York Institute of Technology is ranked No. 7 by the Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 2018 for the highest student mobility rates among four-year private, nonprofit institutions. Thirty-seven percent of students who come from families with household incomes in the bottom 20 percent jumped to the top 20 percent of earners.



40%

PLAN TO PURSUE GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

89%

AGREE THAT THEIR MAJOR COURSEWORK AT NEW YORK TECH RELATES TO THEIR CURRENT FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT



44%

OF THE CLASS OF 2018 IS EARNING MORE THAN \$60,001



Location, Location, Location

TOP AREAS WHERE ALUMNI LIVE / WORK

GREATER NEW YORK (New York City, Long Island, Northern New Jersey, Western Connecticut)

CALIFORNIA (Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay area) • **TEXAS** (Houston, Dallas)

PENNSYLVANIA (Philadelphia) • **MASSACHUSETTS** (Boston area) • **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES** (Abu Dhabi)

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA (Vancouver area) • **CHINA** (Nanjing)



MARTIN SECK

\$3 Million in NSF Grants to Support STEM Efforts

New York Institute of Technology faculty won nearly \$3 million in grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for four different STEM-related research projects. Each grant either involves New York Tech students as part of the research team or will directly benefit students pursuing STEM studies.

A \$1.2 million Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program grant will prepare high school math and science teachers to work in high-need school districts. NYIT College of Arts and Sciences faculty will work with four public high schools on Long Island and the New York Hall of Science to implement an innovative teacher training program. The NSF's Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program funds efforts to fill the nation's need for inspiring STEM educators. The scholarships provide tuition



and academic support and open the field of K-12 teaching to talented STEM graduates and professionals from all economic circumstances. The first group of teacher-scholars began their training this summer. After earning New York State's initial teaching certification in biology, chemistry, math, or physics, Noyce Scholars from New York Tech will secure permanent jobs in cooperating schools, where they will receive ongoing mentoring. [-> bit.ly/RobertNoyceScholarship](https://bit.ly/RobertNoyceScholarship)

A grant for \$747,000 is helping to establish a research coordination network to study various aspects of the food, energy, and water (FEW) nexus for sustainable and resilient urban development. Ziqian (Cecilia) Dong, Ph.D., associate professor in NYIT College of Engineering and Computing Sciences, is leading the student-supported project with researchers in NYIT School of Architecture and Design and other

New York Tech faculty won a \$747,000 grant to study aspects of the food, energy, and water nexus for sustainable and urban development.



prestigious universities and organizations to conduct an in-depth study of New York City and Phoenix, Ariz. According to Dong, New York City is a natural subject for study because it collects and shares valuable data, and its agencies have long engaged with experts to drive decision-making. Phoenix's FEW challenges present an enlightening climatic contrast to New York.

>> bit.ly/FEWGrant

NYIT College of Engineering and Computing Sciences faculty have received a \$600,000 grant to support students from low-income backgrounds to study and graduate from two tech-intensive majors. Informally known as FASTRAC (Financial and Academic Support to Retain and Advance Completion), the program will help fill the national need for well-educated scientists, mathematicians, engineers, and technicians. Huanying (Helen) Gu, Ph.D., will direct the project to recruit, support, and retain 16 (four per year) academically talented, low-income New York City students who will major in computer science or electrical and computer engineering at New York Tech. Low-income students are significantly less likely than average to have completed high school prerequisites for a computer science or engineering degree. FASTRAC aims for an 80 percent five-year graduation rate.

>> bit.ly/FASTRAC

Assistant Professors of Electrical and Computer Engineering Reza Khalaj Amineh, Ph.D., and Maryam Ravan, Ph.D., won more than \$350,000 to develop novel imaging techniques that will enhance testing of nonmetallic cylinders such as composite oil and gas pipelines. This funding promises to help train New York Tech students—some of whom are on this research team—in an emerging tech field for jobs in the oil and gas business, as well as in other infrastructure-dependent industries.

>> bit.ly/ImagingTechniques

NYITCOM Welcomes Students in Long Island and Arkansas

NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine's (NYITCOM) newest medical students received their white coats during a week of celebration in both Long Island and Jonesboro.

On August 9, 120 students of the NYITCOM-Arkansas Class of 2023 received their white coats at the White Coat Ceremony at the Fowler Center on the Arkansas State University campus.

The NYITCOM Long Island community continued the momentum on August 14 at the Crest Hollow Country Club, where 295 new medical students received their white coats.

>> bit.ly/WhiteCoatCeremony2019



STEVEN GAINES

What You May Not Know About Long Island's Drinking Water

There are more than 250 known contaminated groundwater sites (Superfund sites) on Long Island—leaving its residents with a bad taste in their mouths. “To clean up or remediate these sites takes considerable research, planning, and technical engineering along with great expense and years of effort,” explains Associate Professor of Environmental Technology and Sustainability Sarah Meyland, M.S., J.D.

The disposal of chemical waste from local industries over the decades has polluted our water beyond repair, according to Meyland. Making matters more complicated is that Long Islanders live above their water supply, and any actions that occur on land can potentially pollute the groundwater below. “The real challenge is whether we can successfully keep the drinking water supply from getting any worse or more damaged than it already is,” she says.



GETTY IMAGES

New York State is providing millions of dollars to install new treatment technology for drinking water and also for sewage treatment. “But, we will always be reacting to problems after the fact unless Long Island and state regulators develop policies and practices that prevent future pollution,” she says. From a drinking water protection and management standpoint, Long Island lags behind most of the country in actively and effectively managing its groundwater.

>> bit.ly/LIDrinkingWater



COURTESY OF NYIT SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

A Humanitarian Odyssey

From July 12 to 22, 12 students in NYIT School of Health Professions traveled to Greece on a medical outreach program to work with refugees from countries including Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa. The students, accompanied by Laura Stulbaum, senior specialist, and Assistant Professors of Nursing Jessica Varghese and Mercy Joseph, visited a Kurdish camp in Lavrio to offer basic medical services, including workshops for first aid, family planning, and art therapy. “The majority of the refugees fled their

country to escape war, ISIS, and the Taliban,” explained Stulbaum.

The trip was organized in partnership with Love Without Borders, Be Bolder Strategic Communications, Cribs International, and the STEAMM Initiative: For Refugees in Need, founded by Stulbaum.

“When Professor Stulbaum introduced this trip, I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of,” said occupational therapy student Sayyada Dweji.

>> bit.ly/StudentsInGreece

How Lizards and Snakes Got Their Skull Shapes

You are what you eat. Or so the saying goes. When it comes to squamate reptiles (namely lizards and snakes), what they ate as well as where they lived may have had an impact on how their skulls evolved. Factors like diet and habitat have driven squamate reptile skull shapes to differ across myriad species as they evolve. These factors also had an impact on how the different bones that make up the whole skull evolved.

Akinobu Watanabe, Ph.D., assistant professor of anatomy at NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine, led a team of collaborators interested in discovering how diverse skull shapes in lizards and snakes evolved. Watanabe spearheaded the project while he was a research associate at the Natural History Museum in London. This study, across living and long-extinct lizards and snakes, was the result of a team effort, including collaborators and museum specimens from around the world. The work, which published in



Different parts of lizards' (top) and snakes' skulls underwent intense evolution. The areas in warmer colors evolved rapidly over 150 years of their evolutionary history.

COURTESY OF AKI WATANABE

the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, is part of a larger project looking into the evolutionary dynamics of skull shape across all tetrapods, a very large group that includes amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

>> bit.ly/SkullShapes



AMI SANYAL PHOTOGRAPHY

NYIT-Vancouver Sets Record

The Class of 2019 is the largest graduating class in NYIT-Vancouver's history. A total of 358 graduates—more than double the number of the year prior—earned an M.B.A. with a specialty in management or finance; an M.S. in energy management; or an M.S. in internet, network, and computer security. Students in Vancouver represent more than 20 nations, and many international graduates find work there, staying in Canada for the short or long term.

Valedictorian **Brijal Patel (M.S. '19)** described in his speech how he learned “when you replace ‘fail’ with ‘learn’ in your personal dictionary, the experience becomes less daunting, and you focus on growth rather than defeat.”

>> bit.ly/VancouverSetsRecord

MAKERS

The Skyscraper's the Limit



Students Eddy Voltaire, left, and Anthony Rosas install one of the displays.

COURTESY OF MATTHIAS ALTWICKER

When Associate Professor of Architecture Matthias Altwicker and former Professor of Social Sciences Nicholas Bloom, Ph.D., were asked to curate *Housing Density: From Tenements to Towers*, an exhibit at the Skyscraper Museum in New York City, they saw this as the perfect opportunity for students in the Student-Led Architecture Build (sLAB) program to get involved.

The exhibit focuses on housing density in urban landscapes. It explores the difference between built density (how much ground is covered by structures) and population density (which looks at the number of people in a given area).

“There is a big notion that

New Yorkers don’t understand what density is . . . and [that they] misunderstand [the difference between] density and overcrowding,” said student Jhancarlos Carvajal. “Being part of an exhibit that helps clarify the distinction is very helpful for New Yorkers but also



MICHAEL YOUNG

One of the models on display at *Housing Density: From Tenements to Towers*.

insightful for us as students to know how we want to shape our city [in the future].”

The models were of selected neighborhoods, buildings, and apartment units throughout New York. “The goal was to create a consistent feeling,” said Altwicker. “The district models intend to show the relationship between buildings and open space. The building models show how the abstract massing seen in the district model is developed with windows, balconies, etc.,” he explained.

“It was a learning experience to take work from studio and apply it in a way that the common person would understand,” said student Aimee Flanagan.

Housing Density: From Tenements to Towers runs through November. Learn more about the exhibition at skyscraper.org/EXHIBITIONS/future.html.

>> bit.ly/StudentExhibit

HEALERS

NYITCOM's Delta Care-a-van Hits the Road

On September 4, NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine-Arkansas (NYITCOM-Arkansas) unveiled its highly anticipated Delta Care-a-van, a mobile medical unit that provides free health screenings to patients in the Mississippi Delta region.

Last spring, NYITCOM-Arkansas received a U.S. Department of Agriculture Delta Healthcare Service Grant for \$828,748 to fund health education screenings.

Since March 2019, NYITCOM-Arkansas—along with Delta Care-a-van partners University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), St. Bernards Medical Center, and the Arkansas State (A-State) University College of Nursing and Health Professions—conducted nine free health screenings in seven communities

designated in the grant: Harrisburg, Leachville, Lepanto, Manila, Piggott, Marked Tree, and Walnut Ridge.

The Care-a-van is equipped with two examination rooms, an intake area, and telemedicine capabilities. Patients can be screened for hypertension, glucose, and anxiety and depression. Each screening also provides hands-on training for aspiring medical professionals, namely NYITCOM-Arkansas medical students, resident physicians from UAMS and St. Bernards Medical Center, and A-State nursing and social work students who conduct the screenings. Patients also receive referrals to regional physicians for follow-up care and information about community health resources.

>> bit.ly/DeltaCareAVan



JAMES LUTZ

INNOVATORS

Faculty Member Spends Summer Learning a New Language



COURTESY OF ROGER YU

Roger Yu, left, with Stephen Wolfram, founder and chief executive officer of Wolfram Research.

Professor of Physics Roger Yu, Ph.D., took advantage of some off-campus time to attend a summer program to master Wolfram Language. The language allows programmers to work on a higher level by leveraging built-in computational intelligence that relies on algorithms and real-world knowledge.

No stranger to Wolfram Language, Yu worked with the program when it was developed in the 1980s and has picked it up again with encouragement from New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D. The university recently acquired a program license, and Yu is leading a working group of faculty and staff that provides tutorials, best practices, and other useful tips.

Yu sees great potential for Wolfram Language at New York Tech. “This is way



beyond mathematics. You can use the language in art and humanities.”

For example, students pursuing any major can study the sound of an arbitrary space or object. The study may include spectrum analysis; reverberation; sound speed, delay, and echo; noise analysis; the shape of the space; and vibration and wave propagation.

“All studies have one thing in common: to educate our students who are future doers, makers, and inventors to have a habit of computational thinking,” Yu said.

>> bit.ly/WolframLanguage_RogerYu

DOERS

Five Faculty Honored for Research, Technology, and Global Engagement Approaches

Five New York Institute of Technology faculty members dedicated to the engagement of their students in curricular and cocurricular activities were honored at the university’s 2019 faculty and staff convocation on August 29. Presidential Engagement Awards in several categories were presented by New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D., and Provost Junius Gonzales, M.D., M.B.A.

THIS YEAR’S RECIPIENTS INCLUDE:

- Student Engagement by Faculty or Professional Staff in Global Education: Giovanni Santamaria, associate professor of architecture, School of Architecture and Design
- Student Engagement by Faculty or Professional Staff: Robert Gallagher, M.B.A., D.C., clinical associate professor of occupational therapy, School of Health Professions



ANDRE KOPINSKI

Pictured from left: Navin Pokala, Robert Gallagher, Peter Douris, Provost Junius Gonzales, President Hank Foley, Giovanni Santamaria, and Marcella Del Signore.

- Student Engagement in Research and Scholarship: Peter Douris, Ed.D., D.P.T., professor of physical therapy, School of Health Professions
- Integration of Technology for Enhancement of Student Learning: Marcella Del Signore, M.Arch., associate

professor of architecture, School of Architecture and Design

- Integration of Technology for Enhancement of Student Learning: Navin Pokala, Ph.D., assistant professor of biological and chemical sciences, College of Arts and Sciences

>> bit.ly/FacultyAwards19

ScoreBoard



Members of the women's basketball team pose in front of La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona.

Slam Dunk: Summer in Spain

The New York Institute of Technology women's basketball team had just a few hours to rest before heading to the first of three exhibition games in Spain.

From August 8 through 15, the Bears played against two sports clubs from Madrid—Distrito Olímpico and Olímpico 64—and one from Barcelona, Lima Horta.

The team got off to a challenging start. After landing in Madrid in the morning, they headed to their first game in the afternoon on August 8, where they fell to Distrito Olímpico 70-64. The reigning East Coast Conference champions gave it their all and overcame a 13-point halftime deficit to take the lead but ultimately were defeated.

After a good night's rest and a chance to get over their jet lag, the women defeated

Olímpico 64, 71-56. The Bears showed their skills during the August 9 match, with Meg Knollmeyer scoring a team-high 18 points and contributing nine rebounds and Ketsia Athias scoring 16 points and eight rebounds. Carol Arfinengo scored 12 points and Shalie Frierson had 11 points.

"They played hard. They battled through it," said Head Coach Kenneth Parham. "They got a little better from the first game."

The Bears' final game was on August 14 when they defeated Lima Horta 61-42. Athias scored a team-high 17 points.

"We played really well together, and I feel like we came out stronger than we ever have," said guard/forward Emily Novick. "I'm really excited to see how this season is going to turn out because we looked really good."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ADAM RUBIN

Carol Arfinengo scored 12 points against Olímpico 64.

The exhibition opener marked the debuts of freshman Janae Queen Carter and transfer student Arfinengo, who hails from Madrid. It was a homecoming for the guard/forward who had the opportunity to visit her parents and introduce them to her coach and teammates.

"It was very exciting to see them again," said Arfinengo who comes to New York Institute of Technology from Monmouth University. "I'm so glad they got to meet my coaches and my new team."

Her parents, Paloma del Carpio and Gerard Arfinengo, hosted the group at their home for traditional local cuisine. "Every year. I want you every year here!" said del Carpio.

In between games, the student-athletes visited historic sites in Madrid including international soccer juggernaut Real Madrid's stadium, Museo Nacional del Prado, and the Royal Palace of Madrid, as well as trips to FC Barcelona's stadium, La Sagrada Familia, and the famed La Rambla in Barcelona.

The Bears' formal season will begin with road exhibition games on October 31 at Fordham University and at St. Peter's University on November 2.

Cheer on the Bears at the regular season opener on November 9 against Adelphi University.

SWINGING FOR THE FENCES

BY ANTHONY McCARRON

They were nobody's idea of a contender, regardless of the fact that they had just hired a former major leaguer to run the program or that the university had a legacy of baseball tradition. Heck, their first fall batting practice was a disaster, with everyone trying to impress the new coach with Home Run Derby swings. Instead, they made Frank Catalanotto wonder what he'd gotten himself into.

But with an experienced coaching staff—48 combined years in professional baseball—and a roster of players willing to buy in, something wonderful happened at New York Tech last season. The team won a university-record 37 games and went all the way to the Division II College World Series for the first time in program history.

Now they want to go back and win the whole thing.

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A TWEET

The team's Cinderella story started in June 2018 with Catalanotto's hiring, a process that began with a Twitter message from a former sportswriter who had briefly covered his sparkling 14-year career.

"I was hanging with my family," said Catalanotto. "I have four daughters. I was flipping houses and giving private hitting lessons. I had done some coaching in the WBC (World Baseball Classic) with Team Italy."

THE NEW YORK TECH BASEBALL TEAM BEGAN THE 2018–2019 SEASON AS UNDERDOGS. THEY HADN'T HAD A WINNING SEASON SINCE 2006. THEN SOMETHING INCREDIBLE HAPPENED.

"We thought Frank was a bit beyond attainable, given his major league pedigree and how much money he had made in his career," said Adam Rubin, assistant director of strategic communications in athletics and former sportswriter for the *New York Daily News* and ESPN. "But we figured we'd send him a DM. No harm in asking. We didn't hear anything back for a few days, so we were pretty pessimistic. Turns out, he's not overly active on Twitter. He just hadn't seen it."

Catalanotto was on vacation with his family when the message was sent. "I said, 'When I get back, we can talk. But it's not really a passion of mine to coach.'"

But the more the 45-year-old Smithtown, N.Y., native thought about it, the more he liked the idea. He talked it over with longtime friend **James Goelz (B.S. '98)**, a Tech alumnus who had played Triple-A ball. They both attended Smithtown High School East and trained together while playing professionally.

"I told him, it's going to consume your mind," said Goelz. "But you're going to love it. And he did."

First, though, Catalanotto went through the interview process, meeting with Director of Athletics Dan Vélez and a group of players.

"Everybody we spoke to said the same thing: You're going to have to convince him, but you can't go wrong if

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM RUBIN



Matt Malone, primary catcher for the Bears, at bat during a game against Adelphi.



you do,” said Vélez. “We had lunch, a very nice conversation about what was important to him, the theme of family, integrity, and doing things the right way. As he met more people on this side, they said, ‘There’s something special about him.’”

First baseman **Jake Lebel (B.S. '19)** had his doubts. “My first thought was, no way a former big leaguer is thinking about coming to coach us,” he said. “We asked him everything—how he’d run practice, change the culture. ‘Could you drive the van?’ That was a big question. He came in and said, ‘Yeah, I’ve seen your record. I know it hasn’t been great. But I’m going to come in and turn this around.’ Look what he did in the first year.”

“It was a weird situation,” added shortstop Ben McNeill. “He has way more experience than us, so why should we be asking him questions? But I’d like to thank the athletics director for letting us. Once we talked to Frank, he believed in us. We all just knew he was the right guy.”

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Catalanotto took the job. He added Goelz to his staff and hired Goelz’s recommendation for pitching coach, **Christopher Rojas (B.S. '98)**, another Tech alumnus. **Raymond Giannelli (B.S. '96)**, who starred at Tech and played 18 games in the major leagues, came on as the bench coach, rounding out a staff that included Frank Battaglia and Angelo Coscia.

The teaching started immediately. The first time the man who had amassed 1,113 hits and a .291 average for the Tigers, Rangers, Blue Jays, Brewers, and Mets watched his club taking batting practice in the fall, he was thrown off base.

“To a man, each guy was trying to jack balls out of the ballpark,” said Catalanotto. “At the end, I called everyone over: ‘Guys, you see that? That will never, ever happen again.’ We explained how to take a professional BP [batting practice], working your hands, hitting the ball where it’s pitched, going the other way.”

EJ Cumbo, a redshirt freshman outfielder who finished fifth in the nation among Division II baseball players with a .437 average, was one of those guys. “I was trying to impress him,” he said. “Everyone was just trying to crush it over the fence. It was bad. As the season went on, we went with their approach.”

“EVERYBODY WE SPOKE TO SAID THE SAME THING: YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE TO CONVINCHE HIM, BUT YOU CAN’T GO WRONG IF YOU DO.”

– DAN VÉLEZ, DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

The administration approved funds so the team could use an indoor facility to practice during the winter, and Catalanotto and coaches poured on the instruction. They allowed the players to hear a variety of voices, too. One day, former New York Mets star David Wright visited and spoke to the baseball and softball teams.

“That was really cool,” said McNeill. “He told us if you believe in yourselves, the team, the goals, you can be successful.”

“They seemed genuinely excited to talk some baseball and softball, and I loved all the questions,” said Wright. “Even after we spoke as a group, a bunch of them approached me afterward with different questions.”

SURPRISE SEASON

No one at Tech really knew what to expect in 2019. From 1982 to 2011, legendary coach Bob Hirschfield had guided Tech, but the team hadn’t had a winning season since 2006. After winning only five games in 2017, they dropped down to Division II in 2018 and barely improved, going 13-25-1.

“I was hoping we’d be above .500 or better,” said Catalanotto. “I was hoping we could get into the playoffs for the East Coast Conference. As the season kept going, our mindset changed.”

The first glimpse came during the season-opening trip to Myrtle Beach when the Bears went 4-0. Moises Robles and Dean Fazah combined on a no-hitter against powerful Franklin Pierce. The offense scored 43 runs.

“We faced Le Moyne and Franklin Pierce in back-to-back night games, 30-win teams,” said Goelz. “We beat them both. I think everybody then was automatically, ‘We’re going to be good.’”

As with most teams, rituals formed. One involved the 2001 rock song, “Bodies” by Drowning Pool, which had been one of Catalanotto’s walk-up songs as a player.



“We’d play that on the bus after we won,” said Lebel. “The whole bus would erupt. We’d be banging on the cabinets and the seats, making a bunch of noise. That was a blast, people dancing around everywhere. The first time we did it, Coach turned around, ‘What the heck was that?’ All the coaches loved it: ‘Play the song, play the song.’”

A SOLID TEAM

The team formed close bonds quickly, and a group chat became a favorite spot for laughs. Catalanotto got kudos for some goofy photos he posted, including one of him in his pool with the Super Regional trophy.

“I don’t know of any other coach who would send us a picture of himself with the trophy that said, ‘Happy Memorial Day. I know I’m going to have one,’” said McNeill.

The Bears were 8-4 when they reached East Coast Conference play and then went 21-7 in the conference. New York Tech hosted the ECC tournament, but the Bears were eliminated by Bridgeport, a team they had beaten three out of four times during the season. The big question loomed: Had they done enough to get a bid to the NCAA Division II Regionals?

On Sunday, May 12, the team gathered in the Bears Den on the Long Island campus to watch the selection show live on NCAA.com. The players snacked on pizza, wings, and cookies. And hoped.

“When we saw our name, everyone started jumping around,” said McNeill. “Our season wasn’t over. We really loved playing together. To be told we’d have more was really exciting.”

In their first NCAA Tournament since 1983, the Bears roared through the Regionals and Super Regionals with five consecutive victories over powerful programs, earning the university’s first-ever berth in the College World Series.

“I’m watching us get that last out, and it’s like slo-mo,” recalled Rojas. “You can feel everyone’s pulse in the dugout. It was intense.”

In Cary, N.C., the site of the Division II College World Series, banners trumpeting the school delighted the players. Lebel and McNeill raised the Tech flag on one of the eight flagpoles there, one for each team.

“The first thing you see is a map and each one of our schools, where it is, with our logo,” said Cumbo. “We were the only one from

the Northeast and realized that wow, this is going to be insane. The hotel had balloons with our colors. The room key card had ‘2019 NCAA Division II Baseball Championship’ on it. I’ve kept mine in my wallet ever since. That’s the coolest thing. That thing is going nowhere, until I get the next one.”

Added Rojas, “I’ve worn my DII Baseball Championship hat pretty much every day since.”

Tech, seeded eighth, was knocked out in two games. In their opener, they lost to Colorado Mesa, the No. 1 seed and eventual runner-up to the University of Tampa. In the second game, they fell to No. 4 Ashland.

A NEW BEGINNING

There are things they achieved that go beyond just a World Series berth: Experience. Pride. The right to dream even bigger. Some lessons, too. And new responsibilities.

“Work hard, it’ll show,” said McNeill.

“Now they’re going to have a bull’s-eye on their backs. They have to be ready to answer that bell,” said Hirschfield, whose No. 19 was retired during a pregame ceremony last season.

“There’s a lot of power in remembering where you come from and how you can go back if you don’t do the right things,” said Vélez. “That’s our next challenge now, to make sure that doesn’t creep in. We got a taste, but we were 0-2. Let’s go and win some games. We don’t want to be a flash in the pan.”

“Our target is a little narrower now,” said Rojas. “We want to be national champion. It’s going to require more teaching, bringing in the right student-athletes going forward, good character fits, academic fits. We have to capitalize on the good buzz around us. We have to close the deal on it.”

“I’m going to remember this the rest of my life,” said Cumbo. “This will always be one of the greatest accomplishments I’ve ever been part of.” ■

From left: Shortstop Ben McNeill turns a double play against the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy; Head Coach Frank Catalanotto speaks with catcher Matt Malone in the home dugout at Angelo Lorenzo Memorial Baseball Field; former Met David Wright addresses the baseball team during a surprise visit to practice in January; All-American EJ Cumbo returns to the dugout with enthusiasm after delivering a game-tying homer in the NCAA Regional opener in May.



GAME CHANGERS

By Renée Gearhart Levy

Illustrations by Davide Bonazzi

EVERY YEAR, New York Institute of Technology funds faculty and student research that tackles society's greatest challenges in areas where the university has developed world-renowned expertise. The outcomes of these projects have the potential to impact health-care detection and delivery, urban infrastructure, and manufacturing processes.

Meet six faculty members who might just change the way we look at autism spectrum disorder, disruptions in the supply chain, HIV diagnosis, post-disaster response, and Alzheimer's disease.

MACHINE LEARNING TO ASSESS ASD THERAPY

According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects 1 in 59 people under the age of 21 in the United States. And despite its prevalence, progress in identifying pathophysiological and etiological mechanisms has been limited.

A combination of research and novel interdisciplinary approaches has put New York Institute of Technology at the cutting edge of treating young people with ASD. New research conducted by Alexander Lopez, J.D., associate professor and chair of occupational therapy, and Maryam Ravan, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, is using machine learning to assess the impact of physical and cognitive therapy on brain connectivity in children with ASD by using electroencephalograph (EEG) data.

“ASD is a disruption in the neural pathway of core processing of information,” says Lopez. “Patients can be hyper or hyposensitive to sensory feedback, so they have difficulty processing information.”

Although ASD is typically a lifelong disorder, treatments and services have been shown to improve symptoms and the ability to function. In 2013, Lopez created Inclusive Sports

and Fitness (ISF), a Nassau County, N.Y.-based nonprofit that helps children with developmental and intellectual disorders advance their sensorimotor, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities through a targeted exercise program.

“We do repetitive activities that teach participants how to move their bodies more effectively,” says Lopez. “That creates new neural pathways that can be transferred to other things.”

Ravan, an expert in signal processing, has used EEG to measure brain activity to assess the functional connectivity among different brain regions. Now, she is studying the impaired interactions between brain regions of individuals with ASD to try to evaluate the benefits of the ISF program. She can also use the data supplied by Lopez to develop a machine-learning approach to further improve that understanding.

Machine learning uses two phases: feature extraction and classification. During feature extraction, the algorithm will extract the discriminating features between two groups. In the classification phase, the algorithm will classify the features into two groups based on the extracted features. In this case, Ravan is using a machine-learning approach to ana-



lyze EEG data of children with ASD before and after six weeks of physical and cognitive activities, comparing this with data from a control group of children without ASD.

“The goal is to quantify the dominating direction of information flow in the brain,” she says. “This will help us understand the mechanism of treatment and provide clues about the functionality of physical and cognitive therapy in improving ASD.”

BEST PRACTICES FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

From Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico to the proliferation of devastating California wildfires, natural disasters are becoming increasingly commonplace. It is imperative that innovative methodologies of post-disaster work that can better suit the needs of communities and work from the ground up continue to be developed.

An interdisciplinary group of faculty and staff at New York Institute of Technology are working to develop a new relief model, using lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, and Maria. The research team, known as R-Cubed (Relief x Reconstruction x Resiliency), includes Farzana Gandhi, M.Arch., AIA, LEED AP, associate professor of architecture; Amy Bravo, M.A., senior director of international and experiential education; **Robert Cody (B.Arch. '84)**, associate professor of architecture; Jim Martinez, Ph.D., associate professor of interdisci-

plinary studies; librarian Diana Moronta; and Nicholas Bloom, Ph.D., professor of urban policy and planning at Hunter College.

“Each of us has been involved in post-disaster response in our own field,” says Gandhi, who has extensive experience in sustainable and resilient design at various scales from community spaces, and housing to urban design and infrastructure planning. “But I have often felt like the scope of what I can holistically offer, keeping just within my own disciplinary expertise, falls short in these situations.”

Propelled by the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, Gandhi organized R-Cubed as a “disaster-relief collective,” securing a university-sponsored Institutional Support of Research and Creativity (ISRC) grant to fund their efforts.

The grant has allowed the group to work together to study post-hurricane regions (New Orleans, New York City/New Jersey, and

Puerto Rico), evaluate efforts to rebuild and develop resiliency against future storms, and evaluate methodologies and processes that have made the greatest impact.

The group traveled to New Orleans in July 2019, a trip that was cut short due to Hurricane Barry. “Ironically, we lived a bit of what New Orleans faces,” Gandhi says. “It was unexpected but enlightening. We experienced an improved water pump infrastructure that drained knee-deep water back into the lake within the day, but also some continued broken infrastructures, especially in terms of communication. Many people didn’t know where to go or what to do.”

Case study research will result in a publication that analyzes best practices and, later, a symposium comprising local experts and collaborators from each site. Ultimately, the group hopes to trademark a unique R-Cubed methodology as a “tool kit” for use in disaster situations.

“Our goal is to be recognized as a hub for interdisciplinary disaster relief expertise in the tri-state area,” says Gandhi. “Because we represent multiple disciplines within a single organization, our approach and solutions are unique and much more comprehensive than what conventionally occurs where competing interests may be involved.”



REDUCING SUPPLY CHAIN RISK AND CARBON FOOTPRINT

For any manufacturing company, strategic decisions regarding its supply chain can have significant impacts on its ability to manufacture and deliver products. While perhaps not a life-and-death situation, supply chains form the lifeline of many modern companies.

A supply chain—the network of individuals, organizations, and processes involved in the creation and sale of a product—includes

the delivery of raw materials from the supplier to manufacturer to distributor to eventual delivery to the end user.

In the past decade, companies have focused on cost minimization by reducing their supply base, says Purushottam Meena, Ph.D., associate professor of operations management. “If any disruption occurs across the supply chain network, the goods won’t get to the customer on the promised date of delivery.”

“Disruption” (when one party isn’t able to deliver a product or service to the next party on schedule) can be caused by anything from a hurricane to a transportation strike to an event such as 9/11. Meena, who has conducted extensive research on supply chain disruption, says the most common issue is the inability of the supplier to deliver on time. “Companies need to determine the optimal number of suppliers of a product they need to minimize their disruption risk while maintaining cost,” he says.

Meanwhile, due to government regulation and societal pressure, companies are increasingly focused on carbon emissions involved in the production of their products. “A com-

pany may have suppliers across the world supplying raw materials at a cheaper rate. However, depending on the mode of transportation, this cost savings may come with higher carbon emissions,” he says.

Ultimately, Meena says, the manufacturer’s goal is to determine how many suppliers and distribution centers are needed in its supply chain network, while minimizing cost and carbon emissions.

To establish the optimal configuration, Meena, along with his research collaborators, developed a mathematical model that uses data mining techniques and artificial intelligence algorithms to solve multiple objectives, taking into consideration factors such as transportation and energy costs, emission levels, and potential disruption events in various countries. With funding from the university, he was able to validate the accuracy of the model, conducting a study evaluating the balance between supply chain risk and carbon emissions of an auto manufacturer.

“We demonstrated the validity of the model, which could be used by any manufacturing company,” says Meena.



LOW-COST, SIMPLE HIV DIAGNOSIS

Despite advances in treatment, HIV remains one of the world's most serious health challenges. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 5,000 people are infected with HIV each day, with the vast majority in low-income, resource-poor countries where laboratory infrastructure for conventional testing is in short supply.

Azhar Ilyas, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, is working to develop a device using highly sensitive, refrigeration-free microchip technology to detect HIV in health-care settings. "The goal is a low-cost porous silicon (PSi)-based microchip device that can efficiently detect ultralow concentrations of HIV-related proteins from a finger-prick blood sample," Ilyas says.

At present, diagnosis relies on use of an expensive flow cytometer, which requires

a trained technician. And, because reagents used during flow cytometry must be stored at low temperatures, reliable electricity and refrigeration are necessary.

"The fundamental challenge in reducing the prevalence of HIV is having easy access to testing," says Ilyas, whose research combines biomedical engineering, nanoscience, and nanotechnology. In 2016, he established the university's Bio-Nanotechnology and Biomaterials Laboratory, which focuses in part on research related to point-of-care disease diagnostics. "Because most diseases originate at molecular or cellular levels, nanotechnology can provide tools to investigate the presence of potentially fatal diseases at a very small scale," says Ilyas, who has also developed point-of-care devices for cancer detection.

This project was prompted by the WHO's declaration for the urgent need for a hand-



held, point-of-care, reliable, and low-cost HIV detection device in resource-scarce regions. Ilyas's device would use a porous silicon biochip to optically detect very small concentrations of HIV proteins in the blood.

"Early detection of HIV improves outcomes for patients and reduces the risk of transmission," he says. "If successful, this research will help advance global efforts to manage HIV and may lead to point-of-care diagnostic devices for other diseases."

EXPLORING NEW PATHWAYS TO COMBAT ALZHEIMER'S

Alzheimer's disease—an incurable, progressive, neurodegenerative disease—is also the most common form of senile dementia. While limited treatment options are now available to target Alzheimer's symptoms, there is little that can be done to modify the progression of the disease.

Jole Fiorito, Ph.D., assistant professor of biological and chemical sciences who specializes in medicinal chemistry, hopes to change that. Her current work explores biological pathways not targeted by current Alzheimer's medications.

In previous research with Ottavio Arancio, M.D., Ph.D., at Columbia University, Fiorito helped develop molecules to improve the nitric oxide

signaling pathway that is found to be impaired in Alzheimer's patients. "There's a cascade of proteins and enzymes working one after the other that in the end lead to an improvement of learning and memory."

Specifically, when the molecule cGMP is increased, so is learning and memory. Fiorito is targeting the enzyme that degrades cGMP in patients with Alzheimer's disease using a novel PDE5 inhibitor she's designing in her lab.

PDE5 inhibitors cause basal dilation and are commonly used in drugs for erectile dysfunction and pulmonary hypertension. "Developing molecules that interact with a well-known target for other diseases is advantageous because it's been shown to be safe," she says.

Fiorito is now exploring the PDE5 inhibitor in combination with another enzyme shown to improve learning and memory, histone acetyltransferase (HAT). "To my knowledge, these two targets have never been explored before in a combination treatment," she says. "My idea is to develop molecules that can act on two different targets that impact the disease at the same time in order to have a greater effect than each on their own."

Fiorito hopes findings from her proof-of-concept studies will attract external funding and ultimately lead to the goal of developing an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease. "I'm at the very beginning," she says. "I have a long way to go." ■





A PARTNERSHIP





When considering college, **Chaimae Benali (B.S. '16)** knew she wanted to study architecture, but not just anywhere. "I wanted to go to the best architectural program in the city, and I wanted to go to a private university," she says. Her high school guidance counselor told her about the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), which provides financial and academic support services to New York residents who are facing challenges following their dreams to attend college.

"I'll never forget the day he said, 'Once you're HEOP, you'll always be HEOP.' It sounded like I was joining this amazing group for life." That prediction turned out to be true.

The HEOP program, which allowed Benali to enroll at New York Institute of Technology, served as much more than a financial and academic resource. "At that time, my life was hard," she recalls. "My brother was in the Army, and my mother was battling breast cancer. HEOP gave me an opportunity to go to a college I could never have afforded." The program's counselors helped her manage the nuances of college life while supporting her personal and professional goals. "During my mother's passing, I decided to pursue a career in health care [instead of architecture]. My HEOP counselors assisted me in the transition and pushed me even harder. HEOP honestly saved my life."

That sentiment is reiterated by Benali's fellow HEOP alumni. Counselors and mentors, many of them former HEOP students, understand what people in the program are experiencing, including the mixture of excitement and apprehension that comes with attending an elite institution of higher education. Many HEOP recipients are the first in their families to go to college. Still others may be lacking necessary skills or financial resources. HEOP starts working with students before and during college, with the ultimate goal of graduation and employment.

For **Cody Souffrant (B.S. '15)**, HEOP counselors intervened quickly when they saw him struggling academically during his fresh-

MADE FOR SUCCESS

By Diane DiPiero

Students participate in a variety of team-building exercises, including one where they share fun facts about themselves based on the number of candies they pick out of a bowl.

SINCE 1970, the Higher Education Opportunity Program at New York Institute of Technology has not only given disadvantaged students the chance to attend college, but has also opened the door to successful careers.

Photographs by Jörg Meyer

man year. “My counselors sat me down and said, ‘It’s great that you’re involved socially, but you’re on academic probation,’” he recalls. Although he initially considered studying medicine, Souffrant’s HEOP counselors helped him search for something he was passionate about. “I realized I really wanted to pursue social work,” he says. With the help of HEOP, he shifted course, got his grades up, and graduated with a B.S. in behavioral science with a concentration in sociology/social work.

Today, Souffrant is a HEOP counselor at Fordham University. He enjoys giving students there the same level of attention he received while an undergrad. What’s more, he was able to obtain his Master of Social Work at Fordham as he helped HEOP students there. “None of this would have been possible if it weren’t for New York Institute of Technology’s HEOP,” he says.

HEOP AT NEW YORK TECH

HEOP has had a tradition of success at the New York City campus since it started there in 1970. “It’s the only program of its kind at New York Institute of Technology,” says Phillip Menzies, director of the university’s HEOP. “Each year, we review over 500 applications, and we try to accept about 20 students. We look for students with signs of



HEOP Director Phillip Menzies

academic promise. Our agenda is to take them and equip them with the tools and skills they need to thrive.”

Upon acceptance, students begin their academic career in a mandatory five-week summer program that is part of the HEOP curriculum. It eases students into the academic, social, and cultural aspects of life on campus, with four days of college-level writing and math classes each week and a fifth day focused on cultural enrichment. “For instance, we’ve done team building in Central Park and community service projects,” Menzies says. “We want to get them immersed in the community.”

The summer program also gives students advice on study skills and activities to help them manage their academics once the fall semester starts. “We also have a group activity where we look at what to do in particular situations,” Menzies says. “We do this via role-playing. Their peers are sort of like a judge and jury.” While these activities aim to prepare them for four years of college, they also serve as relationship-building events. “The HEOP students go through this process together, and they form bonds,” Menzies says. “They come back to campus in the fall and reconnect. They know their way around campus and the city.

“Then in the fall, we offer one-on-one counseling every week,” Menzies says. “Students are assigned to a HEOP counselor for four or five years” who checks in regularly on their academics as well as their social and emotional well-being.

One of the biggest roles of the HEOP staff is to cast safety nets when necessary. Being able to rely on counselors during a family crisis gave **Bryan Diaz (B.S. ’18)** the security he needed to stay in school. “In the middle of my college career, my mother had lost her job, and that was a weight we all had to carry,” he says. “With the help of my HEOP counselors, I made sure my financial documents were up-to-date so that the aid I had been receiving remained intact.”

AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

Counselors within HEOP go the extra mile to ensure students achieve their goals. “Everyone on the HEOP team puts their heart into it,” Souffrant says. “They change lives every day just by being their authentic selves. They knew my dreams and my goals. They made sure I graduated and had a path.”

A Multifaceted Program in New York State

The New York State legislature established HEOP in 1969 at independent colleges and universities. In 2006, the program was named in honor of former New York Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve for his efforts to increase access to higher education across the state. What makes HEOP unique is its multifaceted approach to getting students into college and helping them thrive in school and beyond. In addition to financial aid, HEOP offers academic, financial, and career counseling; one-on-one and small-group tutoring; and remedial and developmental resources.

To qualify for HEOP, a student must be a resident of New York for at least one year prior to entry in an undergraduate program, be educationally disadvantaged (meaning a student who wouldn’t otherwise be accepted into a school of higher education), have the potential and motivation for successful completion of college, and be economically disadvantaged. For example, a student may have scored very low on the SAT or ACT but has a strong desire to attend college. Once admitted, maintaining a certain GPA is vital to remain in the program.

While getting a degree is always part of the goal, Menzies notes that looking beyond graduation is key. “You don’t have to go to college to get a job, but you do need to go to college to have a career,” he says. “For a lot of the students in HEOP, it’s about helping their families, but you can’t do that if you’re making peanuts.

“We have students who have studied engineering, architecture, reflexology. Some work in higher education. Through their experiences here, they have a sense of how to network, who to talk to. That’s crucial to make themselves marketable in the real world.”

Getting involved inspires HEOP students to be leaders after they graduate. “I got involved in student activities on campus which led to co-founding a student organization called SWAG, Students Working to Achieve Greatness,” Benali says. “I was able to make a difference in students’ lives. A special project that SWAG and HEOP teamed up on was Breast Cancer Pink Day in memory of my mother and everyone battling breast cancer. During a time of grief, HEOP helped me stay strong and push forward.”

As an administrative clinical manager of two Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Centers in New York City, she uses the leadership skills and positive experiences from her time at New York Tech. “Each day, I am fortunate enough to serve my patients and the community,” she says.

PAYING IT FORWARD

One of the most remarkable aspects of HEOP is its commitment to assist others in the program. “As a former HEOP student myself, I know there was always someone reaching back to help,” Menzies says. “We pay it forward. That’s our motto. It’s important that we’re carrying on that legacy.”

Jairo Abreu (D.P.T. ’08), a HEOP alumnus who earned a Bachelor of Science and a Doctor in Physical Therapy, enjoys connecting with current HEOP students. “I found out about HEOP when I was in high school. I got good grades, but I came from a low-income family,” he says. “My HEOP advisors held me accountable. They helped me find my passion. I have gone back many times to show students where someone who was once in their position is now.”

Zikomo Barr (B.S. ’15) also returns to campus whenever possible. He has built his entire postcollege career around leadership, facilitat-

Incoming freshmen get to know each other during a group storytelling exercise.



ing development workshops, presenting at business conferences, and serving as a master of ceremonies for large-scale events. His dedication has earned him the Alpha Phi Beta Brother of the Year award and recognition from the National Society of Leadership and Success. During annual panel discussions at New York Tech, Barr shares his professional experiences and links them to the guidance offered by HEOP.

Networking remains a key component of the HEOP experience. Through the bonds he created at HEOP, Souffrant became aware of the counselor position at Fordham. “I am thankful for people getting me to that next step,” he says.

“You don’t have to go to college to get a job, but you do need to go to college to have a career.”

–Phillip Menzies, Director of HEOP

In his role there, Souffrant draws upon his experiences as a former HEOP student. “The students often ask me, ‘Were you HEOP?’ When I tell them I successfully went through the program, it brings joy to their eyes,” he says. “They see if I could do it, they can do it, too.”

Souffrant relishes the opportunity to follow the HEOP tradition of paying it forward. When Hunter College was looking for a chemistry tutor, Souffrant recommended a HEOP student at Fordham who was about to begin his Ph.D. “He was able to create lesson plans and get a lot of experience before he went back to school,” Souffrant says. “Who knew this guy would graduate at the top of his class and go on to study for his Ph.D.? It’s really powerful when you’re able to help other people.

“It’s like no other department on campus,” Souffrant says of HEOP. “You get the chance to prep students for college, for life.”

A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

The students who are part of HEOP also add to the diversity of the New York City campus, Menzies says. “This university strives to be inclusive, and HEOP adds to the whole concept. Each student has a different story, and that determines what they bring to the table and what they contribute on campus.”

The chance to attend college in New York City melds with the opportunity to add a different perspective to the experience, and that is one of the most enduring legacies of HEOP. “They are not isolated students,” Menzies says. “They are New York Tech students first and foremost, but they bring their unique backgrounds. Together, they learn and grow as a community.”

Souffrant knows how much HEOP makes a difference in the lives of participants and the people around them. “Who would think that a kid like me from Long Island, bordering on Queens, would find the courage to move to the heart of the city and go to college?” he wonders. “New York Institute of Technology and HEOP were the greatest things to ever happen to me.” ■

LaGuardia Airport's New Terminal B in New York City



MAKER

HOK AND WSP

Peter Ruggiero (B. Arch. '82)

Peter Ruggiero knew from an early age that he wanted to do something with buildings when he grew up. As a child in Brooklyn, he watched the construction of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. “I originally thought I wanted to be a bridge engineer, a structural engineer, but then I started focusing on architecture and design,” he says.

While Ruggiero was in high school and college, he worked at construction sites over the weekends as well as the summers. “I started as a coffee boy when I was 14 for an excavation contractor, and then I took other jobs,” he recalls. “In the summers, they hired me as a summer intern working in their yard. Before I knew it, it involved moving big machines and trucks around. Eventually, I was an apprentice operating engineer.”

After receiving his bachelor’s degree in architecture from New York Institute of Technology,

Ruggiero went on to graduate school at Harvard University Graduate School of Design. As a partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s New York and Chicago offices, he spent 26 years designing commercial, transportation, and medical facilities throughout the United States as well as in the United Kingdom, Russia, Dubai, and China. His award-winning designs include New York’s 7 World Trade Center. Ruggiero joined HOK in 2011, where he is now senior vice president and design principal at its Chicago studio and a member of the firm’s board of directors and global design board. Recent projects include the new Terminal B and master plan for New York’s LaGuardia Airport and the Chicago O’Hare International Airport Terminal 5 expansion.

For Ruggiero, one of the biggest challenges in designing transportation hubs is how to instill a sense of civic monumentality in these buildings.



“The great train stations of the day, like the original Penn Station [torn down in 1963] and Grand Central Station, conveyed great civic grandeur. They were the handshake with the city, the front porch, for visitors coming to and going from New

York City,” he says. Ruggiero likens many of the airports built in the 1970s as processing centers designed to take the visitor as quickly as possible from the automobile to the aircraft. “With the desire for functionality, they did not anticipate change,” he says. “With airport security, which was first introduced in the 1970s, and deregulation, the grandeur was eliminated and the civic pride was lost. Suddenly, going to the airport was no longer an event—it was a bus station.”

Ruggiero and his design team seem to have successfully recreated the grandeur and civic pride of the past with LaGuardia’s new Central Terminal Building at Terminal B. At the opening of the first 11 gates on December 1, 2018, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo heralded “another significant milestone in the transformation of LaGuardia Airport into a modern, global gateway that is worthy of the state of New York.”

DOER

Juuhi Ahuja (M.B.A. '92)

On September 26, alumna Juuhi Ahuja returned to her alma mater to participate in New York Institute of Technology Women’s Technology Council’s second conference: Tech Force of the Future: Women and Minorities.

“I have three passions: children’s safety, specifically trafficking; women’s empowerment; and the right to an education. The Women’s Technology Council addresses two of those passions,” says Ahuja. “That’s why I wanted to be a part of this event.”

Ahuja takes her passions seriously. Her enthusiasm for female empowerment and education began as a young girl growing up in India in a household with a strong educational philosophy. “My father would say, ‘Do anything you want but make sure you get a master’s degree. A bachelor’s degree isn’t enough,’” she recalls.

She moved to the United States in 1987 and began working for an insurance broker in New York City. “I was talking to a couple of friends, and they spoke very highly about New York Institute of Technology and its business programs.” Soon after, she applied and was accepted into the M.B.A. program.

“I could not have asked for anything better,” says Ahuja, who credits New York Tech for putting her on the path to a successful career.

During her time at the insurance broker’s office, she realized that working for someone else wasn’t

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going to be enough, and in 1997, she launched her own business—Wise Men Consultants, a leading technology solutions provider for companies around the world. “The M.B.A. from New York Institute of Technology gave me the confidence to start my own business and work for myself,” says Ahuja.

Since its launch, the Houston, Texas-based company has earned industry recognition from regional and national organizations, ranking among the “50 Fastest Growing Women-Owned Businesses” and the “Fast 100 List” in the *Houston Business Journal* and becoming a finalist in Ernst & Young’s “Entrepreneur of the Year” competition.

She says she couldn’t have achieved this success without the foundation her New York Tech

education gave her. Ahuja fondly looks back on her classes, especially those with Professor of Marketing Abram Poczter, Ph.D. “His parallels and his method of teaching were unique and fascinating. They made us laugh and learn at the same time,” she says. “I learned a lot about marketing from him, which helped me when I launched my own company.”

Now, she is there to lend a helping hand to new students and those who may be interested in a similar path. “Don’t lose hope when you start your company,” she says. “Only a few companies are successful from the get-go. Keep your focus on customers’ feedback. There is no company without customers or employees.”

INNOVATOR

Victor Oluwajuwon Badejo (M.S. '17)



TANO ABOTE PHOTOGRAPHY

After Victor Oluwajuwon Badejo completed his undergraduate studies in Lagos, Nigeria, in computer engineering, he knew he wanted to head overseas for his graduate degree. Badejo was interested in living in Canada, and NYIT-Vancouver appealed to him for several reasons. At the time he was applying, NYIT-Vancouver was the only school on the West Coast that offered a master’s in cybersecurity. Another selling point was the school’s location in downtown Vancouver, making it great for enjoying urban life as well as attending cybersecurity events in the heart of the city. “I was able to meet like-minded professionals in the field that I wanted to work in,” says Badejo, who expanded his networking through the Vancouver chapter of the ISACA, a nonprofit, global association for information technology (IT) and information systems professionals.

At NYIT-Vancouver, Badejo not only took advantage of what the city had to offer, but he immersed himself in student life as well. He was a student assistant for the IT administration, and a communications assistant for the Graduate Student Association (GSA), where he served as a liaison between students and New York Institute of Technology faculty and staff to improve the lives of students on campus. One initiative that he is particularly proud of while working with the

GSA is advocating for the school to provide an extended health plan for students.

Badejo’s classwork in graduate school and his extracurricular activities helped him understand North American culture and improve his communication skills, which led to a job right after graduation with Best Buy in Vancouver as a cybersecurity analyst. Badejo recently joined PwC, a network of firms that deliver assurance, tax, and consulting services to public, private, and government clients, as senior associate of cyber risk.

One reason Badejo got into computers and security is Nigeria’s reputation: “A lot of people perceive Nigerians in a bad light regarding cybersecurity and fraud. I want to change that perspective and break out of such stereotypes. I want to make a difference,” he says.

Badejo’s life in Vancouver is full, although he misses his Nigerian friends and their shared experiences. Last month, for the first time since Badejo arrived in Vancouver, he went back to Nigeria for several weeks.

For now, Badejo wants to stay in Vancouver. “I want to learn as much as I can and, in the long term, give back to society,” he says. “I didn’t know anyone when I came from Nigeria. I would like to give back to the immigrant community and to young professionals at the school.”

Erika Lorig-Wolf (B.S. '04, D.O. '07)

Erika Lorig-Wolf was three years old when she told her mother she wanted to be a pediatrician. Later, while majoring in microbiology and immunology at the University of Rochester, she heard about the B.S./D.O. program at NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine. Lorig-Wolf sat down with *New York Institute of Technology Magazine* to talk about her career and what she loves about being a doctor.

Why did you choose NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM)?

I came into the B.S./D.O. program in the middle of college. I was an undergrad at the University of Rochester majoring in microbiology and immunology. I had a friend who was at NYITCOM, and he told me about the program.

How did NYITCOM shape your life and your career?

I learned what it truly means to be a doctor in every sense of the word. The osteopathic philosophy taught me to care for every patient's mind, body, and spirit. I see things differently thanks to my osteopathic training. I am so proud to be a D.O. and an alumna of NYITCOM.

Can you talk about your most rewarding moments?

When I have a hunch about what might be wrong with a patient and a specialist confirms my diagnosis. For example, one patient, who was 13, had to urinate every time she ate. She saw several specialists—a gastroenterologist, a neurologist, and a urologist. I was pretty sure she had an autonomic nervous system disorder, which meant she had a dysfunction of the nerves that regulate non-voluntary body functions. I sent her to the Mayo Clinic for a diagnosis. She tested positive, and she is now being treated for her condition.

Also, I was nominated to Castle Connolly Top Doctors in New York five times and won the top pediatrician award last spring. And I recently received the Macaroni Kid Gold Daisy Award for best local pediatrician.



DENISE DEPAOLA

What are some of the hardest things you've faced?

During my residency, an infant with Down syndrome came into the hospital with influenza. I sat by his bedside for 30 hours straight. He ultimately got better and went home. When I went into a private practice in general pediatrics, the family followed me. They have three children, and he's the youngest. They are still my patients.

What do you love about your job?

I love being a part of my patients' lives. Through thick and thin, I am there for each family. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of each child.

What is your advice for current D.O. students?

You have to love what you do. If you don't, it's not worth the effort. It's a calling. Do what makes you happy—let your heart lead.



UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

Class of 1970

Happy Golden Anniversary, Class of 1970! Join us on the Long Island campus during Commencement Weekend (May 15 - 17, 2020) for a series of events and activities. Reconnect with classmates and reminisce about your time at Tech.



Visit alumni.nyit.edu/events/1970 for more information.

1960s

George Marks (B.S. '65) recently started a business called Affordable Drone Photography, which does photography for real estate agents in San Diego.

Joel Klein (B.F.A. '66) worked for the Internal Revenue Service for 27 years. He edited the *SSA/*

IRS Reporter, a newsletter for employers. He also produced television programs and webinars for external and internal training. He also worked as an electronic filing coordinator in Las Vegas and Denver. He is recently retired and plays the drums in local concert bands in the Denver metropolitan area.

Fifty years after the moon landing, **Ralph N. Caropreso (B.S. '69)** reflects on his role with the project: "After graduation, I was assigned to the lunar module as a special projects engineer. The very same command module and ascent stage system, which safely took Neil Armstrong and his team to the moon and back. I am extremely proud to have been a part of this historical event and a graduate of NYIT." He is currently retired and enjoys traveling and visiting friends but most of all enjoys spending time with his family.

session program, which allowed him to work as a police officer during the day and attend classes at night. "This was a great idea. It helped hundreds of police officers to finish their college educations," he says. His degree helped him rise through the ranks across four decades. He retired in 2008, after having spent 38 years in the Nassau County Police Department. Today he enjoys retirement with his wife, their two children, and six grandchildren.

1970s

Robert Mielenhausen (B.F.A. '73) is an artist whose work combines photography and painting. This spring, he had his work displayed in Alex Ferrone Gallery's Spring Into Collecting exhibit, along with 14 other artists.

Wayne Baci (B.S. '77) fondly remembers New York Tech's split



NOTES TAKEN

We welcome all kinds of news for Alumni Notes. Submit your latest accomplishments—and remember to attach the pics!

nyit.edu/alumni_notes
or magazine@nyit.edu

Alumni CONNECTIONS

Duke R. Khadan-Sawh (B.S. '77) enrolled at New York Tech's satellite branch at Fort Monmouth in Eatontown, N.J., while he was stationed there in the 1970s. He went on to earn an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree, and served many years in the U.S. Army. Today, he is retired and spending time with his wife, Sumatee; his daughter, Tishana; and his son, Rishi.

Gary Sostack (B.F.A. '77) was a guest on the *Logistics of Logistics* podcast. He spoke about managing logistics for Saudi Aramco. bit.ly/GarySostack

Wayne A. Benjamin, RA, AIA (B.S.A.T. '79) received the 2019 Diversity Leader Award from the New York Tristate chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors.

1980s

After a long and successful career, **Donald Winterhalter (B.F.A. '80)** has retired. As a communication arts student, he knew little about computers. The computer classes he enrolled in opened new doors for him. "The path I took would not have been possible without the education I received," he says. Winterhalter worked in research and development for Wang Laboratories and later went on to run Aptitude Corporation, a software company. He plans to spend his retirement with his family.

Peter Lee (M.A. '80) remembers his time at New York Institute of Technology as "being fun as well as enriching." New York Tech helped Lee land his first job in the audio-visual industry.

Dorian Archetto (B.S. '81) is currently working for the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and hopes to become a patent examiner. He calls his journey to this point in his career arduous, at times gratifying, and constantly changing. He fondly

looks back at his time working as a lab assistant. He says, "I thank everyone at New York Institute of Technology for enabling me to take on challenges in the engineering workforce."

Kenneth Steier (D.O. '83) has had a long and successful career as a doctor and educator. He is currently the executive dean of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, which has campuses in New York City and Middletown, N.Y. Steier is the founding dean of the Middletown campus. He has three sons, all of whom are recent college graduates. He and his wife, Kristen, recently welcomed a new baby girl.

Brian Lindgren (B.S. '83) says his time at *The Campus Slate*, the student newspaper, had a strong influence on his career as a technical writer and editor. He has lived part-time in Charleston, S.C., for 27 years and spends the rest of the year in western North Carolina.

Neal Blauzvern (D.O. '83) has been appointed medical director of the Center for Specialty Surgery in Austin, Texas, as well as for Elite Care Physicians (also in Austin).

After a decade with Société Générale, most recently as managing director and head of corporate real estate services for the Americas, **Phil Bottega (B.S.A.T. '84)** was hired as assistant vice president of SL Green to work on the One Vanderbilt development.

Wayne R. Biondi (B.F.A. '84) recently retired after 32 years of government service, including many years working for U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Biondi currently keeps busy as a contractor, conducting background checks for the Department of Homeland Security; he and his wife have three grown daughters.

Thomas Fowler IV (B.Arch. '84) was elevated to the American

Dear Alumni,

I hope you are enjoying this edition of *New York Institute of Technology Magazine* and catching up on all the New York Tech news. We continue to have alumni do great things all around the world. And we love hearing about what you are doing. Keep sharing your successes, milestones, and unique experiences with us.

One way to do so is to join our Online Alumni Community at nyit.edu/alumni. Register your profile, update your information, and submit alumni notes that will be displayed year-round on the website. Don't forget to include a photo so that we can highlight you on our social media channels.

Your Online New York Tech Alumni Community provides an opportunity to reconnect with classmates, register for events, and keep up-to-date with everything Tech.

We have many upcoming events. Make sure we have your current email address to receive our monthly updates. In the 2019–2020 academic year, we'll be traveling up and down the Eastern seaboard and to California, Texas, Florida, Seattle, Vancouver, and more. Check out all our events at alumni.nyit.edu/events.

We hope to see you soon!

Go Bears!



Sabrina Polidoro
Director, Alumni Relations



ANDREA KOPINSKI

Institute of Architects College of Fellows for his significant contributions to the architecture profession.

Laura Steward (B.S. '85) has had a busy career. Her book *What Would a Wise Woman Do? Questions to Ask Along the Way* became a best-seller and won a Nautilus Book Award. Steward also produces *It's All About the Questions*, a radio show and

podcast, and welcomes alumni and professors on her show. bit.ly/LauraSteward

Selva Ozelli (B.S. '85) recently published an article on digital tax matters in *The Rift*, a French publication. In her article, she debates Bénédicte Peyrol, a member of the French National Assembly. bit.ly/SelvaOzelli

UPCOMING EVENTS



Explore our calendar to find upcoming conferences, career fairs, volunteer opportunities, reunions, and more.

Southern New Jersey Alumni Reception: November 7

Philadelphia Alumni Reception: November 8

Westchester Alumni Reception: November 15

Winter's Eve: December 2

Regional alumni receptions throughout Florida, Texas, and California: Coming in Spring 2020

To learn more and register for events, visit alumni.nyit.edu/events.

Frank Bruno (M.S. '85) is chief executive officer of Via Mobility Services in Boulder, Colo. Before this role, he served as city manager for Boulder and vice chancellor for the University of Colorado, Boulder. "Having the benefit of a New York Institute of Technology graduate education made all the difference," he says.

Wade Faerber (D.O. '86) is the 2019 recipient of the Morton J. Morris D.O., J.D. Award for Osteopathic Orthopedic Education from the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics.

After serving 28 years as a director of medical education/designated institutional official at HCA Healthcare and regional clinical dean and professor at Nova Southeastern and Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, **Bradley S. Feuer (D.O. '86)** retired. Representing HCA, he

worked with the Department of Homeland Security as a participant expert in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and received the Frist Humanitarian Award in 2002. In retirement, Feuer will continue to focus on his volunteer work as chief surgeon and medical director for the Florida Highway Patrol and consult in GME and health-care law.

Tom Baio (B. Arch. '87) is running for a seat on the Mendham Township (N.J.) Committee. Founder and principal architect of Thomas Baio Architect PC since 1991, Baio has designed or been involved with nearly 3,000 structures throughout neighboring towns over the last 27 years. "I feel strongly that Mendham can be better, and I will utilize my creative and professional skill sets to help make that happen while I serve on the Mendham Township Committee," Baio said. He has lived in Mendham Township since 2008.

Steven Verderosa (B.S. '87) has worked for the New York Giants personnel department for 32 years. He is currently writing a book about his time with the Giants. While a student at New York Tech, Verderosa played on the first varsity football team.

Brian Reichert (B.S.A.T. '88) is happy to share that his son, Nicholas, is following in his footsteps and has enrolled in NYIT School of Architecture and Design.

Dennis Dowling (D.O. '89) is the director of osteopathic manipulative medicine services at Nassau University Medical Center. He spoke at the Australian Osteopathic Association about facilitated positional release, a technique that was developed by Stanley Schiowitz, D.O., former dean of NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dowling was also chair of the New York State Osteopathic Medical Society delegation to the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates in Chicago and presented at the opening of the

NYITCOM Stanley Schiowitz, D.O., FAAO OMM Laboratory.

Bill Leonelli (B.S. '89) was appointed chief financial officer for Long Island Cares: The Harry Chapin Food Bank, which is based in Hauppauge, N.Y.

1990s

Conrod Walsh (B.T. '92) is a project staffing manager for an information technology company in South Florida and played soccer while attending Tech from 1987 through 1991. Now, his son Milan is playing soccer for New York Tech as a member of the Class of 2023. "My dad always wanted me to follow in his footsteps. So I just decided, why not? It's a great school, great campus, a great soccer team," he said.

Christopher Marici (B.S. '93) was appointed captain with American Airlines. He works on an Airbus A321, piloting both transcontinental and Latin American flights.



PETER FOL / ISLAND PHOTO

Alumni Tee Up

On a rainy day in August, 28 New York Institute of Technology alumni met at the Woodside Club in Syosset, N.Y., for a round of golf. Now in its 14th year, the Annual Golf Outing raises funds to support the university's 12 NCAA Division II intercollegiate teams and campuswide recreation programs such as the East Coast Conference champions CyBears. Also in attendance, former New York Tech volleyball coach **Gail Wasmus (M.P.S. '80)**, former New York Jet Marty Lyons, and recent New York Tech Hall of Fame inductees **Mike Clifford (B.S. '81)** and **Matt Sullivan (B.S. '10)**.



For up-to-date scores and news about the Bears, visit nyitbears.com.

Carol Silva Announces Her Retirement

This summer, **Carol Silva (B.F.A.)** announced her retirement from her long-held position as a News 12 anchor. Silva was presented with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters at New York Institute of Technology's 57th Commencement Ceremony in 2018 and offered this advice to the graduates: "Look for the good in yourself, say the good out loud, and say the good out loud to the people around you."

CRAIG WALLACE DALE



Carol Silva with New York Tech Board of Trustee member Daniel Ferrara (D.O. '86) at the 2019 Commencement Ceremony.

Long Island City Journal profiled **Gina Vaccaro (B.F.A. '93)** about her Pilates journey. Years ago, after the birth of her first son, Gina felt intimidated by the gym and found Pilates to be more comfortable. She recently opened Zend Avesta Pilates, a studio with two locations.

Jeff Pavell (D.O. '94) is a partner with the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Center in Englewood, N.J., a medical and surgical practice treating patients with musculoskeletal and spine issues. He is also chief of rehabilitation at Englewood Medical Center and is on the teaching staff at Columbia School of Medicine and Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine.

Takeko Takeshige (D.O. '96) joined private practice medical group HSMF Women's Care, Skin, and Laser Center in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

Former member of the New York Tech baseball team **Paul Marino (B.F.A. '97)** is the new head of advisor partnerships at Facet Wealth. Most recently he served as director

of national sales and head of RIA and Bank Trust at Russell Investments. Prior to his time at Russell, Marino served as senior vice president, head of sales, RIA and Bank Trust at Amundi Pioneer Investment Management, where he more than doubled sales for his team and led the launch of the insurance-linked securities product.

Otto Sabando (D.O. '98) was promoted to designated institutional official/director of Medical Education at St. Joseph's Health Care System and St. Joseph's University Hospital in Paterson, N.J.

2000s

Jessica Schmettan (M.S. '02) was appointed superintendent of schools by the Port Jefferson School District Board of Education, in Port Jefferson, N.Y.

Cassidy Watt (B.A. '02) created an art piece for N.M. Chef & Shaker Challenge's silent auction. The money raised at the auction was donated to the Helen David Relief

Fund (HDRF), an organization that provides support for bartenders facing breast cancer.

DK Bartley (M.A. '03) was named managing director and head of diversity and inclusion (D&I) at Moody's Corporation. He will lead the company's global and D&I programs. Bartley will work with Moody's business leaders and human resources team to identify diversity and inclusion opportunities and ensure they are part of the company's programs and initiatives. Before joining Moody's, Bartley served as senior vice president and head of diversity and inclusion at Dentsu Aegis, a media and digital marketing company.

Gerard Owenburg (M.S. '03) completed his first year as principal of John F. Kennedy High School in Bellmore, N.Y. The school is recognized by the New York State Education Department for its high student achievement and growth. Kennedy H.S. is also listed as one of *U.S. News & World Report's* Best High Schools in New York State.

Preetpal Grewal (D.O. '04) is a board-certified OB-GYN in Wyoming, one of the most rural states in the United States. "A lot of hospitals are closing down due to insufficient clinical staff. Hopefully, more of the new graduates from NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine will practice in such areas," she says.

Navin Arora (D.O. '04) was on active duty with the U.S. Army for 12 years. Currently, he is a dermatologist at Cosmetique Dermatology, Laser and Plastic Surgery in Greenvale, N.Y.

Fairfield Bain (M.B.A. '05) was promoted to associate director of equine life cycle management at Merck Animal Health. In his new role, he will be responsible for new product development, management of market support studies, and technical service consultations with the equine sales team.

Ian Laliberte (M.B.A. '05) co-wrote a series of three articles in *PM World Journal* on how project management offices need to digitalize themselves

to support their organization's digital transformation. He is vice president of Delivery Transformation at TD Bank.

bit.ly/IanLaliberte

Radiation oncologist **Suchit Patel, M.D., Ph.D. (B.S. '05)**, joined Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Louisiana. He is practicing at the Mary Bird Perkins—Our Lady of Lake Cancer Center in Baton Rouge and the center's Hammond and Covington locations.

Lawrence Cresswell III (D.O. '06) was appointed director of investigations for the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners. He is the first African American to hold this title in the 164-year history of the state's medical board. He earned a juris

doctorate from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.

Abraham Fridman (D.O. '06) is a general and bariatric surgeon with Fairfield County Bariatrics & Surgical Specialists, P.C. in Norwalk, Conn., and bariatric director at Griffin Hospital in Derby, Conn. He also holds privileges at Norwalk Hospital and St. Vincent's Medical Center. He is the first surgeon in Connecticut to perform the Orbera® Gastric Balloon nonsurgical weight loss procedure.

Eduardo Rubio (M.B.A. '06) has been appointed CEO for Smurfit Kappa North America (SKNA). Smurfit Kappa is a world leader in paper-based packaging. Rubio is based in Dallas and reports to

Marriages

Irene Wong (D.O. '09) married Frankie Chow
Yasin Butt (B.S. '11) married Rabeah Noor

Births

Kenneth Steier (D.O. '83) and his wife Kristen welcomed Hazel Mae
Rick Bonacorsi (M.S. '12) and his wife welcomed their son Nathan Sawyer in April

Passings

John L. Keenan (B.S. '77), the former NYPD chief of detectives who oversaw the Son of Sam manhunt that led to the arrest of David Berkowitz in August 1977.
Richard Dormer (B.S. '76, M.B.A. '81)
Thomas E. Roksvold Jr. (M.S. '01)
Arthur Oldakowski (student)



KELLY GLOVER

Alumni Gather for a VIP Event

On April 12, 2019, alumni, families, staff, and friends attended the New York Institute of Technology Vocational Independence Program (VIP) Annual Gala at the Crescent Beach Club in Bayville, N.Y. The event raised more than \$30,000 to support the program and its operations. VIP, which opened its doors in 1987, is a residential, college-based postsecondary transition program for young adults with learning differences and autism spectrum diagnoses.



Learn more at nyit.edu/vip

the CEO for Smurfit Kappa The Americas. Rubio's experience in the industry, his deep market understanding, and his innovative commercial perspective will continue delivering growth for customers and stakeholders, SKNA shared in an announcement.

Emrah Ercan Cakir (M.B.A. '07) was named one of *Worcester Business Journal's* "40 Under 40 2019." He is the director of information management and analytics at Fallon Health where he is responsible for storing, protecting, and analyzing data for the insurer.
bit.ly/EmrahErcanCakir

Alex Paul (B.S. '07) moved to the United States from Saint Lucia at the age of 19. He began as a construction worker and is now a software developer. He presented his current project—an education app to help students with learning disabilities and other special needs learn math—at the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference. His story was profiled in *People* magazine.
bit.ly/Alex-Paul

Anita Nielsen (M.B.A. '07) published *Beat the Bots*, a book to

help salespeople thrive in a career increasingly overtaken by bots.
bit.ly/AnitaNielsen

Andrea Massop Ramos (M.S. '09), a clinical nutritionist and personal chef, launched Healthy Friendz Nutrition, a personal chef service, to help people eat healthier and feel better.

Diego Rios (M.A. '09, M.B.A. '16) joined Aetna, a CVS Health Company, in March 2019. As a senior creative strategist, he is responsible for creating and implementing compelling, persuasive communications to drive marketing campaigns focused on improving health outcomes for 40 million-plus Aetna members.

2010s

Kaushik S. Manthani (B.S. '07, D.O. '10) works as a program director for Transitional Year Residency at Peconic Bay Medical Center, which is a division of Northwell Health. He is also the chair of the Department of Family Medicine at PBMC and received the 2018 Outstanding Teacher Award given annually by Northwell Health.

Erica Ayisi (B.F.A. '03, MA '10) travelled to Cambodia on a Pulitzer Center Crisis Grant to cover how the human hair extensions trade industry exploits Cambodian women who sell their hair for survival. Her story published online with NBC News. bit.ly/EricaAyisi

Ariel Nassim (D.O. '12) was the team physician for Team U.S.A. at the 2019 Pan American Games, which took place July 26 through August 11.

Crystal Eksi (B.Arch. '14) is one of Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center's 40 Under 40 who are working to change the food system. She is listed among policymakers, teachers, community organizers, and farmers. She was selected for her work with urban agriculture, which she first became passionate about while studying at New York Institute of Technology.

John P. Santamaria (B.F.A. '13; M.A. '14) is a teacher at Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy in Floral Park, N.Y. He teaches technology to students from preschool through eighth grade. He also assists the school administration with communications, marketing, and social media.

Zikomo Barr (B.S. '15) appeared in *914 INC.* magazine's 2019 "20 Under 30 Biz Pros Shaking Up Westchester." bit.ly/ZikomoBarr

DeVonne Jackson (M.A. '15) is now a talent travel coordinator at Starz, a leading global media and entertainment company that produces and distributes premium streaming content across subscription television platforms.

Brooke Danielsson (B.S. '16) is working on her Ph.D. in biomedical engineering at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is a recipient of the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

Award, which will fund her studies for three years.

Bishara Abdul-Hamid (M.S. '15) is pursuing his Doctor of Education, specializing in higher education and adult learning. He is also the owner of Hexagon-STEM in Atlanta, Ga., a company dedicated to educating at the intersection of art and technology.

George J. Giosi (B.F.A. '14, M.A. '16) will release his first documentary, *Still Defending*, this fall. The movie is about Drew Beckie, a professional soccer player who was diagnosed with myocarditis, a rare heart disease, at the height of his career. The film focuses on Beckie's career, his recovery, and the impact of myocarditis on his body and life.

Stephanie Miller (B.F.A. '16) recently joined Hulu in Santa Monica, Calif., as a project producer. Hulu is the leading premium streaming service offering live and on-demand TV and movies. Previously, Miller was a copy operations specialist with NBC News.

Ana Robakidze (B.S. '16) was a featured speaker at the GDG DevFest Tbilisi 2019, Google's annual developer festival. Robakidze, who was the student speaker at New York Tech's 55th Commencement ceremony, is a lead engineer and technical project manager at Clientela, a software company in New York.

Ashley Ali (M.S. '17) is director of operations at CMC Workforce, an organization that helps non-traditional and economically disadvantaged individuals to enter and advance in the construction industry. "I always knew that I wanted a career in helping people," says Ali. "It was through New York Institute of Technology's school counseling program that I fully learned how



SABRINA POLIDORO

Summer Meet and Greet

"The word on the street is, if you want an engineer who on the first day can start solving problems, New York Tech graduates are who you want," said Babak Beheshti, Ph.D., dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences, at a Meet the Dean gathering on July 18, 2019. During the reception, Beheshti shared his vision for the college and spoke on ways alumni can get involved and connect with students.

to understand people, develop curriculums/programs, and be a problem solver."

Caroline Bjorkman (D.O. '18) co-authored an article in *Psychology Today* on ways parents can cope with the anxiety over sending their children to school in the era of mass shootings. bit.ly/CarolineBjorkman

Foram Chauhan (M.S. '18) says that studying at NYIT-Vancouver was the best decision she made. "The years I spent there were the most amazing years of my life. I made friends and met great professors," she says. "The information, network, and computer security program gave me a starting point to pursue a career in cybersecurity. Thank you, NYIT-Vancouver."

While still a student at New York Institute of Technology, **Anthony Sciaratta (M.A. '18)** self-published *Finding Forever*, a novel that has recently been picked up by Post Hill

Press for major-market publication. He also signed a contract for a second novel and a book of poetry. bit.ly/AnthonySciaratta

Garima Singh (M.S. '19) has this advice for current students: "Enjoy your college life because it will never come back. Don't think too much about choosing friends. Participate in all the college activities as much you can, it will help to explore your abilities and strength. Never lose your hope and confidence to achieve any goal. Be confident and be happy. Life never gives a second chance. So give your best shot for your first chance."

Charles Daniel Kennelly (B.S. '19) is a field operations manager for Verizon in New York, N.Y. He is most excited about playing a pivotal role in the implementation of 5G in New York City.

Jay Desai (M.S. '19) is moving to Seattle to work as a machine learning engineer for Amazon.

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