

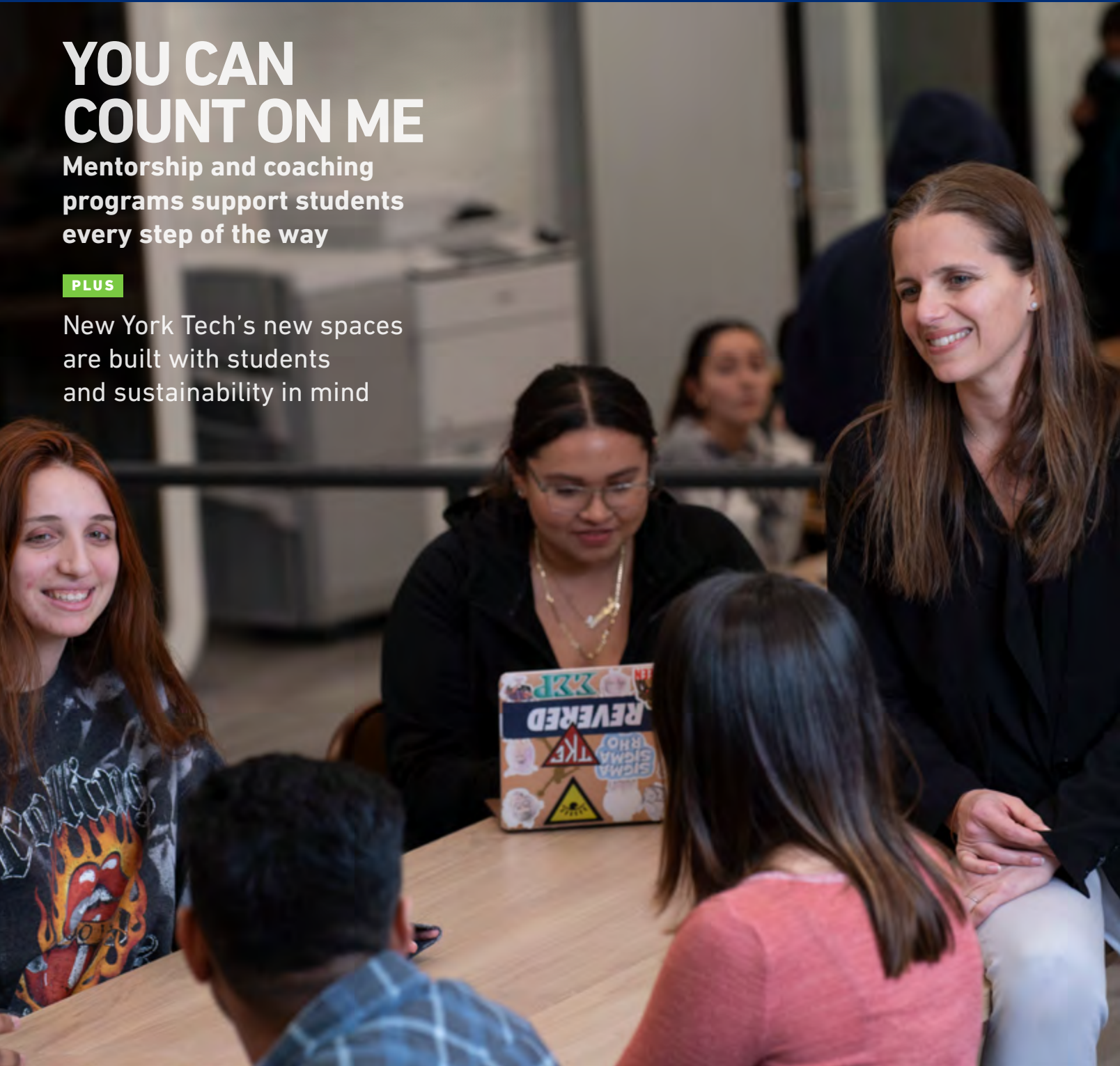
# NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## YOU CAN COUNT ON ME

Mentorship and coaching  
programs support students  
every step of the way

**PLUS**

New York Tech's new spaces  
are built with students  
and sustainability in mind





Dear Friends,

While we are fortunate to have enjoyed a busy spring semester on campus that felt much more normal than last year and the one before, we also watched with shock and dismay at the atrocities occurring in Ukraine. We at New York Tech send our thoughts and prayers to those who are impacted by the conflict and hope for better days ahead for all.

Speaking of the future, and how we are reinventing it at New York Tech, several years ago, we set about developing a three-year action plan to yield short-term, actionable steps to take during uncertain times and put us on solid footing for the longer term. Today, having learned valuable lessons from the pandemic and gathering lots of input from students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni, our institutional strategic action plan has developed into a robust roadmap that now warrants implementation over the next five years.

Our planning process has resulted in an actionable plan with four priority areas for the university: optimize student success, drive innovation and discovery with diverse talent, sharpen institutional identity, and fortify institutional viability. Each of these areas incorporates three themes: strengthening equity consciousness, improving operational efficiency and resource effectiveness, and accelerating digital transformation. Additionally, transformative and environmentally sustainable updates in the physical space of New York Tech campuses will be critical for enhancing the student experience at many levels. If you haven't had a chance to take a look at our strategic plan's executive summary, I encourage you to [review it](#) and feel free to provide feedback as we move toward implementing the plan.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our digital magazine, where you'll find many examples of how we've been able to lay the groundwork for our strategic priorities and optimize our students' experiences—including new academic support programs, campus upgrades, curricular enhancements, and more.

Be well and please stay in touch.

Hank Foley, Ph.D.  
President, New York Institute of Technology

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## LET'S BE FRIENDS

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

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# CONTENTS

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## FEATURES

16

◀ **You Can Count on Me** Mentorship and coaching programs at New York Tech help students feel supported every step of the way. **BY KATHRIN HAVRILLA**

---

20

**Into the Future: New Spaces With Students and Sustainability in Mind** New York Tech's holistic campus sustainability plan has led to impactful environments for learning and research. **BY RENÉE GEARHART LEVY**

---

26

**10 Years Later: Hurricane Sandy** We look back at the important role alumni played, and continue to play, during the storm's aftermath and examine how the event has reshaped approaches to teaching architecture and design. **BY DIANE DIPIERO**

4

## CAMPUS BUZZ

### Space for Innovation

Student employees in the Entrepreneurship and Technology Innovation Center (ETIC) are building unique prototypes based on existing NASA patents and creating professional marketing materials to help commercialize the technology.

### Revealing the True Sequence of an RNA

Associate Professor Shenglong Zhang, Ph.D., is leading a team of researchers to determine how RNA mutations affect conditions including cancer and diabetes.

### A FABulous Opening

The new IDC Foundation Digital Fabrication and Robotic Matter Design Labs (Fab Lab) will promote innovation and facilitate entrepreneurial initiatives for architecture students and faculty on both New York campuses.

### Treating Diabetic Heart Failure

A College of Osteopathic Medicine research team led by Satoru Kobayashi, Ph.D., has secured a three-year grant from the National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to support innovative research that may deliver life-saving treatments for diabetic heart failure.

### A Place for Reflection, Meditation, and Prayer

The New York Tech community celebrated the official opening of the interfaith spaces on the Long Island and New York City campuses.

### Right on Track: New Co-op Experience

The College of Engineering and Computing Sciences is launching the university's first cooperative education track for undergraduate students studying computer science and information technology.

### A Warm New York Tech Welcome

Francesca Fiore, Ed.D., and Ian K. White, Ed.D., join the university as interim associate provost and registrar, respectively.

32

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

**Meet:** Meet Ramon Ray (B.S. '07), Virginia Gambale (B.S. '84), Theresa Sanders (M.S. '03), and Tom Lanzilotta (M.S. '10).



36

## ALUMNI NOTES

**Connections and Notes:** Catch up with classmates.

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**Cover photo by** Christopher Appoldt

# CAMPUS BUZZ

Stay up to date on the latest New York Tech news. Check out our alumni and student profiles, research updates, campus happenings, and more. [👉](#)



LEFT TO RIGHT: Robert Doxey, Hibah Agha, Robert Maksimowicz, and Lincoln Dover

## Space for Innovation

**A**s part of a new agreement between NASA and New York Tech, student employees in the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences' Entrepreneurship and Technology Innovation Center (ETIC) are building unique technology prototypes based on existing NASA patents and creating professional marketing materials that NASA can use in efforts to commercialize the technology. An interdisciplinary team of five computer science, mechanical engineering, and electrical and computer engineering students is working on a robotic therapy vest for patients with neurological impairments and a high-tech device, known as a C-gauge, to measure cord tension. Two digital arts students will develop videos to help present the products to investors.

“The purpose of this agreement is to provide an operational structure and framework for NASA to move various unrealized and undeveloped intellectual property further toward commercialization through prototyping and production services available at New York Tech’s Entrepreneurship and Technology Innovation Center,” said Samantha Kilgore, a technology liaison in the Strategic Partnerships Office of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center.


“The sky is the limit in terms of potential opportunities for New York Tech students through this relationship,” said ETIC Director Michael Nizich, Ph.D.

Undergraduates on the NASA team are [Robert Maksimowicz](#), an electrical and computer engineering major, entrepreneur, and

self-described electronics hobbyist; [Hibah Agha](#), a computer science major, who is serving as a Python and Java developer for the project; [Benjamin Fuoco](#), also a computer science major, who is focusing on electronic component configuration with Python; and [Lincoln Dover](#), a mechanical engineering student skilled at robotics, who will be the mechanical designer for the vest prototype and hopes to one day work in renewables like solar power. [Robert Doxey \(B.S. '21, M.S. '22\)](#), a computer science graduate and entrepreneur, has already founded a company through the ETIC that develops apps for other ETIC start-ups. His key focus on the NASA project will be to develop a website to manage or control various aspects of the prototypes as well as to display data reporting each project's progress.

"Many of us worked in the ETIC last summer on various product prototypes on behalf of regional start-ups, which was a great exercise to be sure we were up to the task of working on the NASA team," said Maksimowicz, who is also serving as student project manager and electrical design engineer for the NASA team.

[Nic Luna](#) and [Ying Shi Zhang](#), digital arts students in the School of Architecture and Design, will help develop instructional videos promoting and demonstrating the prototypes to support commercialization efforts once the prototypes are built.

"It is entirely possible that, as we are building the prototypes to specification, we'll create some new technology or component in the process. This kind of unique New York Tech innovation could end up benefiting businesses in the region and providing additional capability to outside companies," said Babak D. Beheshti, Ph.D., dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences. "It's very exciting." 

## Future Physicians Meet Their Matches

On March 18, students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine's (NYITCOM) Class of 2022 discovered what their futures hold after medical school.


During this annual event, known as Match Day, medical students from the Long Island (NYITCOM-Long Island) and Jonesboro (NYITCOM-Arkansas) campuses join future physicians across the country in learning of their "matches," or where they will spend the next several years completing their medical residencies.

Matches are determined by a computerized algorithm and kept top secret from both the future doctors and the matching hospitals until they are opened. Earlier this year, several students also participated in the military match, committing to complete their residencies by serving in a branch of the armed forces.

The event was the first in-person Match Day celebration for NYITCOM-Arkansas, with its first class of physicians graduating in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many graduates from NYITCOM-Arkansas' Class of 2022 will play a vital role in alleviating the physician shortage in the Mississippi Delta region, which is one of the most medically underserved areas of the country. More than half of this year's class who participated in the match received positions that will keep them in Arkansas, a state contiguous to Arkansas, or another Delta region state. That includes 21 students who were placed in Arkansas residency programs and another 14 who will stay within 100 miles of the state's border in places such as Memphis, Tenn.; Tulsa, Okla.; Southaven, Miss.; and Joplin, Mo.

For some future physicians, like [Mahmoud Elhagagy](#), a student in the Émigré Physicians Program (EPP) at NYITCOM-Long Island, medicine runs in the family. Elhagagy was inspired to follow in his father's footsteps, a hard-working and passionate urologist who practiced in the family's home country of Egypt. Elhagagy will complete a residency in urology at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine after graduation. The timing of this news was also especially meaningful for him, as he recently lost his father to COVID-19.

"This is just as much his success as it is mine, and I wish more than anything that he could live this moment with me," said Elhagagy. 





LEFT TO RIGHT: Roger Smith (B.Arch. '78), Theresa M. Genovese (B.Arch. '89), and Steven Alessio (B.S.A.T. '80)


## You Gotta Have FRIENDS

The 13th Annual Alumni and FRIENDS Reception reached new heights in October 2021 as it welcomed more than 250 attendees and raised nearly \$250,000 for the School of Architecture and Design, setting a record for the event.

Each year, the FRIENDS event supports the mission of promoting a working relationship between the architecture, construction, and interior design professions and the School of Architecture and Design while providing support for special projects, lectures, scholarships, and initiatives that benefit the architecture and interior design programs.

The 2021 event was held in a hybrid model, with guests being given the option to attend in person or watch a telecast. More than 150 supporters joined the live event at NYIT de Seversky Mansion on the Long Island campus, and nearly 100 people attended virtually.

The annual event also honors School of Architecture and Design alumni who have made significant contributions to the field. Alumni Spotlight honorees included **Steven Alessio (B.S.A.T. '80)** and **Theresa M. Genovese AIA, NCARB, LEED AP (B.Arch. '89)**. They were joined by the 2020 Alumni Spotlight honoree, **Roger Smith, AIA, LEED AP (B. Arch. '78)**.

"When I graduated in 1980, like many young students, I didn't know where my career would take me....I only knew I loved architecture and loved to build," Alessio said. "Tonight, my message to the students here is to work hard and follow your dreams. The world is a blank canvas. Use your imagination to shape the skyline, the world, and the future. Push the boundaries of what is possible. Create, design, and build a better, cleaner, and greener world for everyone to live in." 

## Honoring Our Alumni

On April 27, 2022, the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences gathered at NYIT de Seversky Mansion for its inaugural Ingenium Awards reception. The event honored **Barbara A. Porter (B.S. '00)**, chief operating officer at FragranceNet.com, with the Hall of Fame award, and **Nicholas Cariello (B.S. '18, M.S. '19)**, cybersecurity engineer/software developer at IBM, with the Rising Star award. Zebra Technologies Corporation and its Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer Tom Bianculli rounded out the award recipients with the Industry Partner of the Year and a special recognition, respectively. The event benefits the college's mission to offer a broad range of academic programs; support student-centered, stimulating, and research environments; and foster connections and partnerships with employers, alumni, and the community at large. 

▼ LEFT TO RIGHT: Tom Bianculli of Zebra Technologies, Dean Babak D. Beheshti, Barbara A. Porter (B.S. '00), and Nicholas Cariello (B.S. '18, M.S. '19)

FRIENDS: STEVE FENN; INGENIUM: LORENZO BEVILAGUA





LEFT TO RIGHT: Awardees Jason Golbin (D.O. '00), Lawrence Cresswell (D.O. '06), Daniel Ferrara (D.O. '86), Dean Nicole Wadsworth, D.O., and Alexander Nello (D.O.'18). Not pictured: Samantha Gottlieb (D.O. '20)

## Celebrating Our D.O.s

**O**n May 2, the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) hosted its first-ever Alumni Awards Dinner. The inaugural event celebrated several of the medical school's illustrious graduates as well as NYITCOM faculty and staff for their service and dedication to students. The celebration, which took place at NYIT de Seversky Mansion, featured a special guest appearance from the world-renowned celebrity chef Lidia Matticchio Bastianich, who also helped create the evening's sit-down dinner menu with Director of Dining Services **Robert Rizzuto (B.P.S. '04)**. [👉](#)

## Revealing the True Sequence of an RNA

With a National Institutes of Health research grant, Associate Professor of Life Sciences Shenglong Zhang, Ph.D., is leading a team of researchers to determine how RNA mutations affect conditions including cancer and diabetes.

Zhang is the key principal investigator in a consortium of labs forming a new Center of Excellence in Genomic Science (CEGS) in the National Human Genome Research Institute, one of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

The new CEGS, funded with an initial grant of \$12 million through 2026, is called the Center for Genomic Information Encoded by RNA Nucleotide Modifications. The common aim of all researchers funded by the center is to develop methods to grasp modifications in RNA and to determine how these mutations affect gene expression.

Zhang's lab will have a budget of more than \$700,000 for the center's first year,

with an overall funding of more than \$2 million over the next five years. The other consortium leaders are at Weill Cornell Medicine; Duke University; the University of California, San Francisco; and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Zhang's specific mission is to create a direct and general sequencing method to identify and locate any nucleotide modification to a cell's RNA (not just for one or a few specific RNA modification types). This will help scientists who seek to understand the effects of different RNA modifications on conditions such as cancer and diabetes.

Scientists have long known that RNA molecules can have distinct chemical modifications. Recently they've been able to identify a few of these and begin to understand their role in the cell. However, the vast majority of the 170+ known modifications remain mysterious, according to Zhang. This is because of

the lack of a general method to directly sequence RNA nucleotides (the building blocks, modified or not, of an RNA molecule with single-nucleotide precision).

"This new research center is a big step forward for this field, allowing us to reveal the true sequence of an RNA—including every nucleotide building block, canonical and modified—and to decipher the genomic information encoded by RNA nucleotide modifications," said Zhang. [👉](#)



# New York Tech Is Tops on LI for ROI Among Low-Income Students


In a report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW), New York Institute of Technology ranked among the top 2 percent of U.S. colleges for return on investment (ROI) for low-income students.

New York Tech, one of the most affordable private universities in the state, tied with University of San Diego to rank No. 72 among 3,410 U.S. institutions, including public and private, non- and for-profit institutions offering primarily certificate, associate, or bachelor's degrees.

Among private nonprofit bachelor's degree institutions with at least the median share of Pell Grant recipients, New York Tech ranked No. 3 for highest ROIs for low-income students. It also had the strongest ROI showing among all Long Island colleges and ranked No. 9 among 216 New York state colleges included in the report.

New York Tech outranked most New

York State public and private colleges in the report. The only other colleges that ranked above New York Tech (No. 72) were Cornell (No. 10), Columbia (No. 13), Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (No. 17), Yeshiva (No. 22), University of Rochester (No. 36), Union (No. 38), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (No. 49), and SUNY Maritime (No. 54).

The Georgetown CEW's 2022 "Colleges Where Low-Income Students Get the Highest ROI" report utilized U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard data from December 2020 to compute a net present value (NPV) for each college included in the survey. The NPV for each college was calculated using the net price of the college's cost and the average (mean) earnings of its students from low-income families (students with a family income of \$30,000 or less) at six and 10 years after attendance. 



BOB HANDELMAN





## A FABulous Opening


On October 27, 2021, the School of Architecture and Design celebrated the grand opening of the IDC Foundation Digital Fabrication and Robotic Matter Design Labs (Fab Lab) on the Long Island campus. On hand for the ribbon cutting were New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D.; Maria Perbellini, M.Arch., dean of the School of Architecture and Design; [Domenick Chieco \(B.S.A.T. '89\)](#), chair of the FRIENDS of the School of Architecture and Design executive committee; Raymond R. Savino, president of the IDC Foundation; [Frank Fortino \(B.S.A.T. '87\)](#); board member of the IDC Foundation, as

well as students, faculty, and staff.

"I'm so proud of the Fab Lab and the strides the school has made since the time I attended here," said Chieco. "It is great to see the school moving forward. These are exactly the types of things we had in mind when we first founded the FRIENDS 13 years ago."

This state-of-the-art facility will promote innovation and facilitate entrepreneurial initiatives for students and faculty on both New York campuses. Students from the New York City campus can digitally share their work for reproduction with the team at the Fab Lab. The

final components of a physical model or the assembled piece will then be delivered to them on campus in New York City. Students and faculty will benefit from the Fab Lab as it will aid in strengthening industry connections, research, and grant opportunities.

"It is so important that when you have a dream and when you are creating transformative learning experiences to have people with you who understand where you want to go and what you want to accomplish. We are so fortunate to have those people in President Foley and the IDC Foundation," Perbellini said. 

# Treating Diabetic Heart Failure

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 34 million Americans have diabetes, a condition that doubles their risk for heart disease. One form of heart disease, diabetic heart failure, occurs when excess blood sugar damages cardiovascular tissue, including the heart's muscles.

However, it is unclear how diabetic heart failure develops, given that the heart's cells, like all cells in the body, contain built-in defense systems.

A research team from the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM), led by biomedical sciences instructor Satoru Kobayashi, Ph.D., has secured a three-year \$428,400 grant from the National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung,

and Blood Institute to support innovative research that may deliver lifesaving treatments for diabetic heart failure.

Kobayashi theorizes that diabetic heart failure develops when excess blood sugar lowers the acidity of lysosomes (structures that repair damage and remove waste) within heart muscle cells, rendering the cells defenseless. The researchers have also developed a fluorescent microscopy imaging technique that will stain lysosomes long enough to trace how they are impaired, as well as how their defensive properties can be restored.

"Lysosomes are very acidic, which allows them to digest and remove harmful cell waste, but excess blood sugar may lower their acidity, impairing



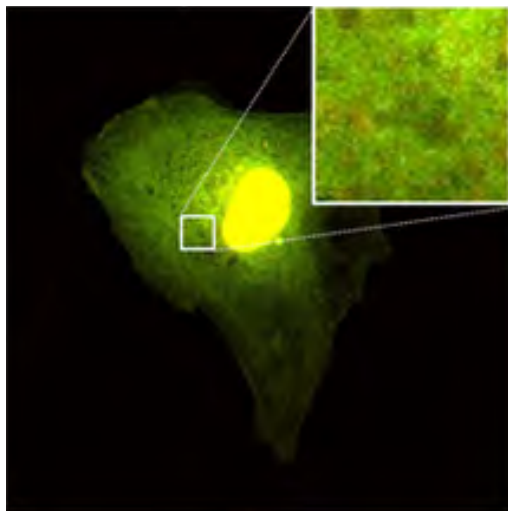
the cell's defense system. Even worse, the injured lysosomes leak acids and undigested wastes, which accelerate cellular damage.

This may explain why the diabetic heart cannot heal itself," says Kobayashi, who has dedicated his career to researching new treatments for heart disease.

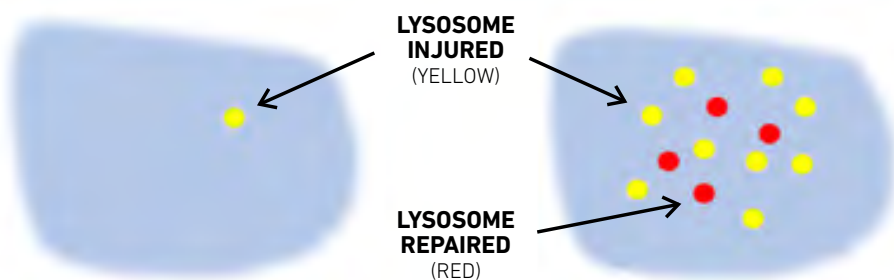
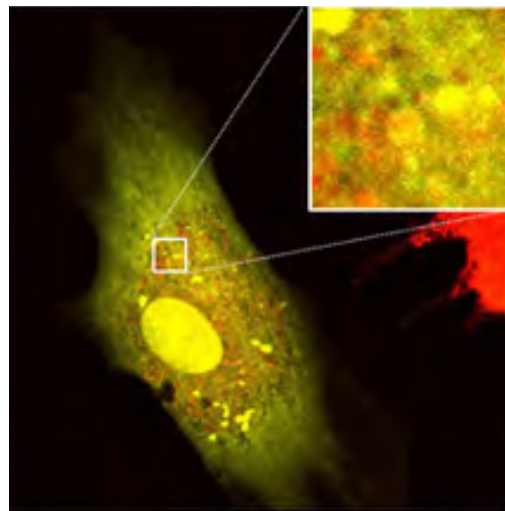
Using their innovative imaging technique, the researchers will analyze how changes in lysosome acidity impact heart function in mice with developing diabetes.

Other NYITCOM researchers involved include Professor and Chair of Biomedical Sciences Anthony (Martin) Gerdes, Ph.D.; Senior Research Associate Yuan Huang, Ph.D.; and Associate Professor Youhua Zhang, Ph.D.

HEALTHY HEART CELL



HEART CELL WITH HIGH SUGAR



## Revitalizing Students' Digital Experience

New York Tech students were feeling the love this year with the launch of the new Student Service HUB (your Home for University Business) on February 14—Valentine's Day.


"Our strategic plans this year and in the future focus on significant upgrades to the student experience through reinvigorated facilities, enhanced programming, academic support services, and technology advancements. The HUB is a major step in our efforts to revitalize our students' digital experience here at New York Tech," says President Hank Foley, Ph.D.

The HUB initiative, led by the Offices of Information Technology Services and Enrollment Services, involved retiring the university's NYITConnect interface and introducing an improved, streamlined digital experience for students to conduct day-to-day tasks such as viewing class schedules,



checking grades, registering for classes, confirming financial aid, and paying bills. Sleekly designed tiles with intuitive icons replace difficult-to-use menus and lists, while the HUB's new functionality and navigation improve students' user experiences.


The university partnered with Sierra-Cedar, an Oracle consulting partner, to implement this best-in-class, tech-forward digital interface.

"This one-stop shop delivers a high-quality mobile experience for our students, and we've also been able to improve workflows via technology enhancements and the reengineering of some business processes," says Joseph Posillico, Ed.D., vice president for enrollment management. "Important input and feedback from students every step of the way during the HUB's development helped ensure we are meeting their needs for a seamless, frictionless experience." 

## A First for D.P.T. Students

On February 17, 2022, New York Tech's Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) Class of 2024 gathered for the first-ever White Coat Ceremony. The awarding of a white coat is a symbolic gesture, welcoming students into the profession as they begin their clinical rotations.

"This is such a meaningful rite of passage for our students. It allows them to recognize the importance of the work they will do and the profession they represent," said **Cheryl Hall, PT, DHSc (M.B.A. '01)**, associate professor and chair of the program.

In her address, Hall also thanked the alumni who made monetary donations toward the purchase of the lab coats for incoming students as part of the university's annual Big Give online campaign in 2021. 

JAMES DEVIN BAUTISTA





## Students 'Geek Out' at Hackathon

New York Tech-Vancouver cybersecurity graduate students Farshad Zare Dastenaeei, Elina Kuznetsova, and Hanmei Yang participated in the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security (Cyber Centre) GeekPeek virtual hackathon.

For five days, they competed against nine other teams from universities across Canada. The students worked in teams and directly with



Farshad Zare Dastenaeei



Elina Kuznetsova



Hanmei Yang

Cyber Centre professionals on problems related to machine learning applied to cybersecurity, network traffic analysis, cyber threat hunting, malware reversing, or programming.

Each course in New York Tech's cybersecurity program gave the students the skills they needed to compete. "Projects in computer forensics, OS security, network security, plus our background skills in some security fields give us a broad range of knowledge," said Zare Dastenaeei. "Our professors taught us a variety of practical tools and techniques so we can detect advanced malware and its components by conducting effective analysis and forensics."

At the end of the hackathon, each of the 10 teams presented their projects and results to a panel of judges. In addition, the New York Tech student team was one of six selected to present elevator pitches about their project during the closing ceremony. [🔗](#)

## Putting an End to Healthcare Bias

LGBTQ+ Americans face greater risks from COVID-19 than other people.

But the outsized impact of COVID-19 on the LGBTQ+ community has nothing to do with the virus itself but with long-standing health inequities, writes Nicole Wadsworth, D.O., dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM), in a Reuters op-ed.

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to suffer from a number of underlying conditions, including asthma, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer that can lead to serious cases of the virus. This predisposition is also likely the result of discrimination, which often prevents LGBTQ+ patients from accessing necessary screenings and treatment.

Even the perception of bias can affect health outcomes. In the most recent U.S. Transgender Survey, nearly one-quarter of respondents admitted they had avoided needed healthcare in the previous year because of their concerns about mistreatment.

"It is unacceptable that bias in healthcare continues to this day—but there are ways to end it. To root it out, we need to change how healthcare providers are trained," writes Wadsworth. "To rectify these inequities, medical schools, hospitals, and other training institutions need to better educate current and future professionals about LGBTQ+ needs."

She contends that hospitals and healthcare facilities can start by implementing workplace training on diversity, equity, and inclusion. But training programs for current staffers are not enough. Educators must change the way they teach future doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers—starting now.

"To delay this work any longer would be hazardous to the health of millions of Americans." [🔗](#)

# A Place for Reflection, Meditation, and Prayer

At separate ribbon-cutting ceremonies on March 10, 2022, the New York Tech community celebrated the official opening of the interfaith spaces on the Long Island and New York City campuses.

President Hank Foley, Ph.D., and Assistant Provost for Student Engagement and Development Tiffani Blake, M.Ed., welcomed attendees at the ribbon-cutting ceremony in New York City. And on Long Island, Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, and Interim Provost Jerry Balentine, D.O., and Dean of Students Felipe Henao, Ed.D., led the ceremony.

The interfaith spaces were created for reflection, meditation, and prayer to



ensure all New York Tech community members feel invited and welcome. The rooms on each campus feature soft lighting and larger spaces that offer a location for daily prayer or simply a quiet space to sit in between classes.

"I am honored to be part of this journey of creating a safe space where

students can have a quiet time of reflection during their busy and stressful days," said Anoushka Guha, president of the Student Government Association on the Long Island campus. "I encourage all students to take the time they need to meditate, pray, or sit in silence." [↗](#)

## Right on Track: New Co-op Experience

The College of Engineering and Computing Sciences is launching the university's first cooperative education (co-op) track for students in two undergraduate programs: computer science and information technology. Peter Goldsmith, M.B.A., an industry veteran and founder of the Long Island Software & Technology Network (LISTnet), a nonprofit organization that builds a strong ecosystem for software and technology, has joined New York Tech and will lead this effort as co-op coordinator and adjunct assistant professor.



Goldsmith is working to secure participation from employers to provide a learning environment where the student is assigned projects that provide a variety of experiences and a progression of skill development and responsibilities. He has secured commitments from several regional tech companies to participate in the first cohort, which begins this summer and will be capped at 15 students. Students participating in the co-op will work for at least 24 weeks through the fall 2022 semester. New York Tech's Office of Career Success and Experiential Education is working with Goldsmith to secure other employers in and around New York City.

"In keeping with New York Tech's mission to provide career-oriented professional education and access to opportunity for all qualified students, our co-op offering provides another way to enable students to prepare for the job market while pursuing their undergraduate degrees," said Babak D. Beheshti, Ph.D., dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences. Over time, the college expects to extend co-op offerings to students in all of its undergraduate programs. [↗](#)



## A Warm New York Tech Welcome

[Ian K. White, Ed.D.](#)

Registrar

Ian K. White, Ed.D., a higher education administrator with two decades of experience, joined New York Tech as registrar. He works closely with the Office of Academic Affairs and is responsible for all registrar-related duties, including academic policies and calendars, degree requirements, the curriculum, reporting, records, institutional research, compliance, and strategic planning implementation.

White joins New York Tech from Caldwell University in Caldwell, N.J., where he most recently was the assistant vice president for academic initiatives and infrastructure, responsible for the registrar's office, the Center for Advising, Records and Enrollment Services (C.A.R.E.S.), career planning and development, and internal and external strategic initiatives. During his nine years at Caldwell, he also served as registrar and C.A.R.E.S. director and as director of institutional research.

“New York Tech is at the leading edge of technology, both pedagogically and in terms of the student experience. I am excited to help New York Tech keep pace with the changes happening in student services and the student enrollment life cycle,” said White. “Together with a top-tier leadership team, I hope to create an environment where students have a holistic, well-rounded student experience that will allow them to grow personally, succeed academically, and expand socially.”

[Francesca Fiore, Ed.D.](#)

Interim Associate Provost

Francesca Fiore, Ed.D., has joined New York Tech's Academic Affairs team as interim associate provost. In this role, she will collaborate with New York Tech's academic units to facilitate the development of innovative degree, certificate, and credential programs with high workforce demand potential.

“New York Tech is a leader in providing career-oriented education, and its commitment to ‘learning by doing’ is even more critical during these times. I am excited about joining a leadership team that prioritizes student access to the kinds of new and innovative programs that will prepare them for future success,” she said.

Fiore joins New York Tech from The New School, where she was vice dean of strategy and administration for the Schools of Public Engagement. There, her responsibilities included leading the design and implementation of curricular development and the assessment of student learning outcomes and experiences.

Fiore received a Doctor of Education in Higher Education Management from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Administration in Financial Management and Public Finance from New York University, as well as a Master of Arts in Economics and a Bachelor of Arts from Hunter College.

# Congratulations Class of 2022!

This year, the university presented Alvy Ray Smith, Ph.D., a pioneer in computer animation who continues to lead the field, with an honorary Doctor of Science (Sc.D.). Smith is an original member of the Computer Graphics Lab founded at New York Tech in the 1970s and a precursor to Pixar.

[Tricia Creft \(B.S. '22\)](#) sang the national anthem and [Bakhtawar Shahbaz \(B.S. '22\)](#) delivered the commencement address.

Following the main commencement event, students were recognized individually at ceremonies for their respective schools and colleges; due to the pandemic, the Classes of 2020 and 2021 were also invited to participate. The College of Osteopathic Medicine held its hooding ceremony later that day.

As the university celebrated its newest graduates, it also recognized members of the Class of 1972, who are celebrating the golden anniversary of their commencement. The Classes of 1970 and 1971 were also part of the festivities on May 21 and 22. [👉](#)



FROM LEFT: New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D.; Alvy Ray Smith; and Peter J. Romano (B.Arch. '76), chair of the Board of Trustees



NYITOM-Long Island Hooding ceremony



GRADUATES SELFIE: MICHAEL LEBRECHT II; LORENZO BEVILAQUA

YOU

COUNT

CAN







ON

ME

**Mentorship and coaching programs at New York Tech help students feel supported every step of the way**

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By Kathrin Havrilla

Photograph by Christopher Appoldt

**NEARLY 90 PERCENT OF COLLEGE GRADUATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAD A MENTOR, RECEIVING CAREER ADVICE FROM AN ON-CAMPUS RESOURCE. WHILE FACULTY MENTORS OFTEN MAKE UP A LARGE PORTION OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS, IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT—FOR EXAMPLE, FIRST-GENERATION AND UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY STUDENTS ALSO HIGHLY VALUE MENTORS WHO THEY IDENTIFY AS FRIENDS, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND STAFF.**

To fully support its diverse and distinctive community, New York Tech has developed several mentorship and coaching programs offered at different times and on a variety of platforms to help meet students where they are, offering support and increasing student engagement—both markers that align with lifelong success.

## **Hit the Ground Running**

New York Tech has developed three complementary programs on its New York campuses that target undergraduate students to help ensure they feel connected to the school and start—or get back—on the right path.

Launched last year, the [First-Year GUIDE Program](#) was created to offer students starting college during the pandemic an opportunity to engage with their school and make new friends. Incoming first-years are linked with [Peer Success Guides](#) (PSG)—upperclassmen

who are trained to interact with their own small group of students, offering them guidance, fielding newcomer questions, and organizing social events.

“The experience of COVID amplified our understanding that students need to feel connected to thrive,” says **Monika Rohde (M.A. ’05)**, senior associate dean of undergraduate student success and advising. “Adding a PSG to their support team gives them the chance to connect with a peer who they may feel more relaxed with and who is trained to answer those small (but important) questions.”

In creating the First-Year GUIDE Program, New York Tech wanted to offer a support system that would be complementary to those already in place.

“When designing the program, our research indicated that more first-year college students do not return due to nonacademic reasons, and that peer-level support is a proven approach to enhance students’ campus connectedness and social belonging,” says Tadiyos Gebre, director of academic enrichment. “Especially when considering the reality of remote learning and our commuter campus status, our team felt that it was essential to add this new pillar of support.”

The first semester of the First-Year GUIDE Program was a success, with more than 40 percent of the 700 matched mentees actively engaging with their PSG.

For students who are struggling academically, New York Tech offers two dedicated programs that provide personalized support to those who need help maintaining their institutional scholarships.

First is the [iAchieve](#) program, which is intended for second-semester freshmen whose grades have dropped below a certain level, while the [Achieving Collegiate Excellence](#) (ACE) program gives sophomores and juniors who did not meet their scholarship GPA renewal criteria the opportunity to keep their award as long as they participate in the program.

In both programs, students complete success modules developed by the academic success and enrichment team to help them build and finesse skills such as time management and metacognitive study techniques. But most impactful is the relationship with their assigned faculty

or staff academic coach, who they connect with regularly throughout the semester.

“In addition to the emphasis on early support and academic assistance, academic coaches will spend the time getting to know the students and their challenges, which allows us to understand each individual student’s unique situation and offer tailored solutions,” says Rohde.

According to ongoing data analytics conducted by Research, Assessment, and Decision Support (RADS) to improve these efforts every year, both programs are doing a world of good. ACE, for example, is helping to reduce or eliminate retention gaps in certain demographic populations, as well as improving New York Tech’s four-year graduation rate—a figure that had been at a standstill for several years.

“I lost my scholarship in fall 2019 because of family problems, and my grades went way down,” says Yukta Dharmendrabhai Patel, who completed ACE in spring 2020. “ACE helped me so much with COVID stress and learning how to study better. Everyone motivated me a lot, and meeting other students who were in the same boat helped me know it was going to be okay.”

Patel’s grades jumped up a full GPA point in one semester, and she got her scholarship back. She graduates this spring with her bachelor’s degree in health sciences, after which she hopes to attend graduate school to become a physician’s assistant.

## **Paying It Forward**

New York Tech is also in the process of launching a [university-wide mentorship program](#) that allows alumni to mentor students from their second year through graduate school.

“When we look at New York Tech’s strategic plan and our goals, high on the list are student support and retention, as well as being a student-centered institute of learning,” says Sabrina Polidoro, director of alumni relations. “We have first-year coaching through the Advising and Enrichment Center programs like ACE and iAchieve; academic assistance through the Writing Center, Math Resource Center, and more; and now we’ll have alumni mentorship as a third prong of support.”

Through this guided mentorship program, alumni will volunteer to connect



## Helping Medical Students Thrive

Over the past few years, the College of Osteopathic Medicine on the Jonesboro campus of Arkansas State University (NYITCOM-Arkansas) has cultivated a series of mentoring programs and activities to help early-stage medical students adapt to their surroundings—both academically and socially.

Before first-year medical students arrive on campus, they are paired with a faculty mentor, as well as given the option to connect with a second-year student mentor in a newer program run by the Student Government Association (SGA).

“The Peer 2 Peer program was created to help ease the transition of coming into medical school,” says Madi Galas, a student doctor and second vice president of the SGA, who is also running the program this year. “It’s a big change and a unique experience, and this is an important way to connect new students with their school and their peers.”

Incoming first-years are paired with a second-year mentor based on similar life experiences, such as where they’re from, what they like to do in their spare time, and whether they’re married or have children.

While the program is optional for all, around 85 percent of this year’s incoming first-years and 76 percent of second-years are participating in Peer 2 Peer—demonstrating second-years’ support of the program’s success.

NYITCOM-Arkansas has also rolled out a new house system this year, in which students are sorted into small groups or teams of about 10 to 12 students and three to four faculty, staff, and administrators who form a sort of on-campus family.

“We were hearing from the students, ‘Wow, it would be helpful to have someone who looks like me or has the same life experiences as me help me through my first few years,’” says Kristin Cohen, assistant dean for student administration. “We decided that giving students access to a group of people could help create that diversity.”

“It’s a great opportunity for students to find commonalities on campus and find their place in a small, welcoming setting,” says Cohen. “Our hope is that these relationships persist at least until students begin their clinical work during their third and fourth years, and hopefully beyond.”



with a mentee over the course of a semester or a year. New York Tech will provide talking points and goals to help give pairs direction, but the specifics of when and how the mentoring relationship takes shape is up to them.

“Ultimately, we’re asking alumni to volunteer a total of one day of their time—24 hours—to their mentee and their career development,” says Polidoro. “One day of your life can make a world of difference for our students as they discover career opportunities, grow personally and professionally, and build their network.”

Alumni will begin by submitting an online interest form to express the type of mentorship they’re interested in—such as résumé reviews, job shadowing, informational interviews, or general guidance—as well as what areas that appeal to them personally and professionally to facilitate matching.

“We don’t want the pairings to be completely linear, such as electrical engineering students always get paired with someone who majored in electrical engineering,” says Polidoro. “Academic interest will be a heavily weighted criterion, but we’ll also consider other experiences, like being a first-generation or international student or how someone identifies their race or gender. We want to make sure each relationship is a comfortable and compatible one.”

This kind of holistic mentoring program is mutually beneficial for all involved. Students get to have real-world interactions in the industries they’re considering, learning how to build relationships and seek out opportunities. Alumni can support their alma mater and the next generation of New York Tech graduates by sharing their time and their talent, while also growing their network and honing their leadership skills.

“We’re hopeful that this will be the start of lifelong relationships that grow beyond the college years,” says Polidoro. “Mentees can then pay it forward when they’re alumni, and the cycle will continue.”

➤ The pilot alumni mentorship program is set to launch this fall with 50 mentor/mentee pairs for the first year. While the logistics are still being coordinated, the goal is to use a third-party online platform through a partnership with Graduway to allow alumni around the world to participate.

## It Takes a Village

This holistic idea of student support is an institution-wide viewpoint that requires the hard work of many across campus.

“More than ever, we’re seeing the importance of a personalized approach to student success, and that’s our goal,” says Rohde. “We’re truly grateful that the institution as a whole supports this methodology, and we’re excited to see our students thrive because of it.”



INTO THE FUTURE:

NEW SPACES WITH S

& SU

The Biomedical Research and Innovation Center (BRIC) will support medical and interdisciplinary microscopy research.



STUDENTS

STAINABILITY IN MIND

BY RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

## FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS,

sustainability in campus practices is a mandate, not a luxury. As stewards in confronting the challenges of climate change, students expect their universities to take the lead.

New York Tech's three-year sustainability action plan includes efforts ranging from renewable energy and water stewardship to preservation of natural spaces and sustainable planning for new campus facilities.

That institutional value is front and center in two new landmark facilities planned for New York Tech's Long Island campus, both showcasing emerging technologies while providing innovative spaces for learning and research.

### **THE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTER**

Breaking ground this fall, the Biomedical Research and Innovation Center (BRIC) is a 20,000-square-foot building that will support medical and interdisciplinary microscopy research. Thanks to a \$1.05 million grant from Empire State Development, the new building, the first on the Long Island campus since 1998, will feature state-of-the-art research facilities, including research labs and workstations accommodating approximately 50 researchers and a minimum investment of \$250,000 in sophisticated microscopes. It is expected to open in 2024.

"This cutting-edge facility with its advanced technology and imaging will provide students with educational opportunities they wouldn't have had otherwise and provide opportunities for cutting-edge research with faculty and outside researchers," says Nicole Wadsworth, D.O., dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM). "Outside researchers may find our equipment useful for their research, and we are hoping to expand interaction and collaboration with the greater scientific community."

"We are very excited about the portfolio of equipment and resources that our faculty researchers will have access to internally, as opposed to going to outside institutions to use their facilities," adds Babak D. Beheshti, Ph.D., dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences. "The BRIC will provide the physical resources to study anything at microscopic levels, whether it is cells, microscopic sensors, or contaminants. I suspect students and faculty in all three levels of our bioengineering program will be very deeply involved in its use."

The building itself will be a showcase for sustainable building practices, aspiring to LEED Gold standards, says Suzanne Musho,



AIA, NCARB, New York Tech vice president for real estate development and sustainable capital planning and chief architect. The university is working with Studio Gang, an architecture firm known for innovative sustainable conservation, as well as sustainability consultant Atelier Ten on the project.

The BRIC will be constructed on the footprint of the current 500 Building and will reuse existing structural elements, including the concrete slab and steel beams. It will be equipped with the campus' first geothermal heating and cooling system and will make use of gray water from the treated effluent from the water treatment plant, which will also be completed in 2024.

The building will incorporate daylighting strategies to reduce the need for artificial light and integrate materials such as flooring made from high-recycled content. The modern design features floor-to-ceiling windows and will be situated to take advantage of natural light. More than 3,000 square feet of light-filled study and social space is dedicated

to students. "The building is designed to be a part of the beauty of the campus and reflect our renewed responsibility as stewards of ecology and the environment," says Musho.

## WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Later this year, New York Tech will also break ground on a facility that includes a new water treatment plant and lab facilities for studying water resources and sustainable practices.

"This combined water treatment plant and bioengineering lab furthers our commitment to expanding educational opportunities for our students and broadens the positive ecological and environmental impact they can have on the community and the world," says Musho. "This project will educate and help prepare students for a world in which resources are increasingly scarce and help the world respond to these challenges."

New York Tech received a \$2 million grant from New York State's Higher Education Capital Expenditure program and will

BOB HANDELMAN



## SALTEN HALL STUDY LOUNGE



The new ETIC location

## EXPANDING OUR REACH


On March 31, the New York Tech community celebrated the opening of the new [Entrepreneurship and Technology Innovation Center \(ETIC\)](#) on the New York City campus.

The ETIC on the Long Island campus has served as New York Tech's hub for cultivating new businesses, products, and fresh ideas in technology, engineering, and applied sciences since 2015. The New York City campus location, on the sixth floor of the Edward Guiliano Global Center at 1855 Broadway, will now build on this.

"The ETIC accelerates the regional economy and ensures greater competitiveness for Long Island, New York City, and the broader metropolitan region. It supports the region's economic development by focusing on three critical areas: IT and cybersecurity, bioengineering and medical devices, and energy and green technologies," said Babak D. Beheshti, Ph.D., dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences.

### Tools at the New York City campus ETIC location include:

- Three MakerBot 3-D printers
- Voltera PCB printer that prints circuit boards
- Full complement of wood- and metal-working tools
- Commercial grade soldering stations
- 70-inch flat-panel television to facilitate communications via Zoom

"This isn't just about opening an ETIC location today. It's about us growing as an institution, becoming a real innovator, and I need to thank everybody here," said ETIC Director Michael Nizich, Ph.D. 

invest an additional \$6.5 million in the multiyear project.

New York Tech's existing water treatment facility, which the new one will replace, was built in 1963 and updated in 1996 and treats the majority of the campus' sanitary water. Its original capacity was designed to hold 300,000 gallons daily. Currently, the capacity is much less. The new facility will incorporate the treated effluent water for gray use, irrigation, and other purposes, representing a huge step forward in water conservation.

"An understanding of water reuse and stormwater retention is a huge component to our future and our own resilience," says Musho. The project supports an overall goal to improve water stewardship, which includes studying the potential use of a geothermal well system to improve energy resilience and protecting the campus' undeveloped spaces to help manage stormwater.

But water conservation is only one aspect of the project. "Our sustainability action plan includes a focus on the student experience," says Musho. "Any new project or major renovation not only looks through the lens of sustainability, but how students are exposed and enriched by those spaces."

The proposed new Bioengineering Research and Training Lab, to be located within the water treatment facility, provides academic lab space for new educational programs, scholarly research, and community collaboration.

"New York Tech has a long history of faculty expertise related to water quality," says Beheshti. "Fang Li, Ph.D., associate professor of mechanical engineering, for example, has developed a sensor to detect toxins in drinking water, and her students have been working on extensions of that project. Dr. Li and her students will be integrally involved in testing the water and contamination levels at the water treatment plant, so essentially, it's going to be a living lab.

"These facilities are going to provide faculty and students access to a more robust resource to teach, learn, and conduct research."



ETIC in New York City





## PURPOSEFUL REPURPOSING

**D** New construction isn't the only place where sustainable building practices are evident. Across the Long Island campus, programmatic expansion has been made possible through thoughtful conservation and renovation of existing buildings repurposed for new uses.

Nowhere is that more evident than the Wisser building, which previously housed the library and is the new home to the School of Health Professions (previously housed in the 500 Building, the new location for the BRIC). The move to Wisser more than doubled the physical space from approximately 20,000 square feet to roughly 45,000 square feet.

Due to the pandemic and flooding caused by Hurricane Ida in September 2021, construction has occurred in phases. "Using all of our sustainability guidelines, we've converted major large spaces into individual classrooms and labs specifically designed for the School of Health Professions," says Musho.

The Wisser building also includes a nursing simulation lab that allows for twice the number of students than its previous location and has enhanced audiovisual technology throughout.

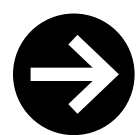
Simply having more room allows for expanded interdisciplinary interaction, says Gordon Schmidt, Ph.D., dean of the School of Health Professions. "In the older building, our facilities were adequate but cramped. By nature, our health professions students want to be on campus, not working independently behind a computer screen. We now not only have better space for our current students but room to grow our programs as well."

Salten Hall, which formerly housed two large lecture halls, has been repurposed to create additional study and social spaces, a café, and a new home for the library. Musho says the facility acknowledges the key role a library plays in the research arena and builds a more active relationship between students and librarians. "You enter into the welcome center, where you can meet directly with a library research assistant who can assist you," she explains. "There will also be a traditional book lounge space with reference and research books and large study spaces. Understanding that students want study and social space on campus, we have created more study space for students."

In addition to buildings, Musho says sustainability efforts also encompass New York Tech's outdoor spaces. "The pandemic provided an important reminder to the importance of nature and maintaining our woodlands and other natural resources," she says.

To enhance outdoor space for the campus community, the university took advantage of the need to update an exterior wall of the Hannah and Charles Serota Academic Center in the medical school quad on the Long Island campus. This important measure includes a new stormwater retention system in the plaza, an outdoor commons area with an amphitheater, and surrounding landscaping that includes plants that have restorative properties and are better for natural drainage alongside the enhanced healing pond.

"The pond has already become a gorgeous wetland environment and will continue to mature through the years," she says. "The beautification of these spaces was a direct response to an urgent need, but these longer-term initiatives also fulfill our sustainability goals and look toward creating an unparalleled student experience."



**10 YEARS LATER:**



# HURRICANE SANDY

BY DIANE DIPIERO



A decade after Hurricane Sandy left a wake of destruction in the Northeast, many people affected by the storm still find it difficult to reflect on how it impacted their lives. “Our office was destroyed...and we worked together to physically move into a local surgeon’s office so we could provide care and prescriptions and see patients, as well as serve as a resident clinical site,” recalls **Bernadette Riley (D.O. ’05)**, associate professor and director of the Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome/Hypermobility Treatment Center in the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM). When Sandy hit in October 2012, she was the medical director of Long Beach Group Practice, adjacent to Long Beach Hospital. The hospital—like the surrounding community—sustained significant damage, and it ultimately closed in 2014.

▶ LEFT TO RIGHT:  
Associate Professor  
Bernadette Riley  
(D.O. ’05), a raised home  
in Lindenhurst, Long  
Beach Island during  
restoration, and Joseph  
Forcina (B.S. ’87)



Even in the midst of the tragedy, the human spirit soared. Countless experts and volunteers lent a hand in helping victims and restoring property. “I remember hearing stories of volunteers coming to help distribute food and water to people who were still in their apartment buildings because they couldn’t leave due to illness or disability,” says **Paula Ryo (D.O. ’03)**, associate professor and director of simulation learning at NYITCOM. At the time, she was an attending physician at Long Beach Hospital’s family practice outpatient clinic and assistant director of the Department of Medical Education. “I remember all the linemen that came from all over the United States—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and other faraway places—to help restore electricity to the region.”

In the days and weeks that followed, much would be done to repair infrastructure and buildings devastated by the storm. Many alumni and faculty from New York Tech assisted in the process, and many continue to use the experiences of Hurricane Sandy to influence new ways to deal with climate-related disasters, as well as to ensure that attention is paid to vulnerable communities.

### CALL IN THE ENGINEERS

When natural and man-made disasters strike, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is prepared to help, using a two-pronged approach to focus on immediate response and short- and long-term repairs. Following Sandy, immediate response actions included removing debris and securing electrical generators, according to **Joseph Forcina (B.S. ’87)**, chief of the Civil Works Integration Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, North Atlantic Division. The longer-term



repairs can continue for years or decades, as they do with Sandy. “We’re always learning,” he says.

For instance, why did one community suffer significant damage when a neighboring area did not? “Areas with only a beach berm but without a dune had greater damages,” Forcina says. “We suspected that all along, but it affected our work.” Armed with this knowledge and to prevent future damage, the Corps set about to “try to mimic what nature does,” Forcina says, by creating buffers to minimize risk during severe storms.

Other discoveries during recovery cast light on the effects that coastal storms can have on socioeconomically or geographically disadvantaged areas. In Rockaway Beach, for example, the Corps was focused on ocean-side damage, but it became clear that the area’s back bay was also affected. These realizations, Forcina says, stressed the need for greater attention on more vulnerable areas and underserved populations that typically don’t receive the same attention as other communities, like waterfront areas that often feature higher-priced real estate. On top of that, many lower-income areas are at the same or higher risk for heavy damage because of the rising sea level.

The long-term response for the Corps is about 90 percent complete, according to Forcina. Models addressing various degrees of sea-level change help determine how to avoid heavy destruction in the wake of another Sandy-level storm. “We are focused on a more environmentally friendly and system-wide approach,” he says.

“Ten years out, we’re still a learning organization,” he adds. “Congress directed the Corps to do a coastal study from Maine to Virginia to see where we had vulnerabilities and to

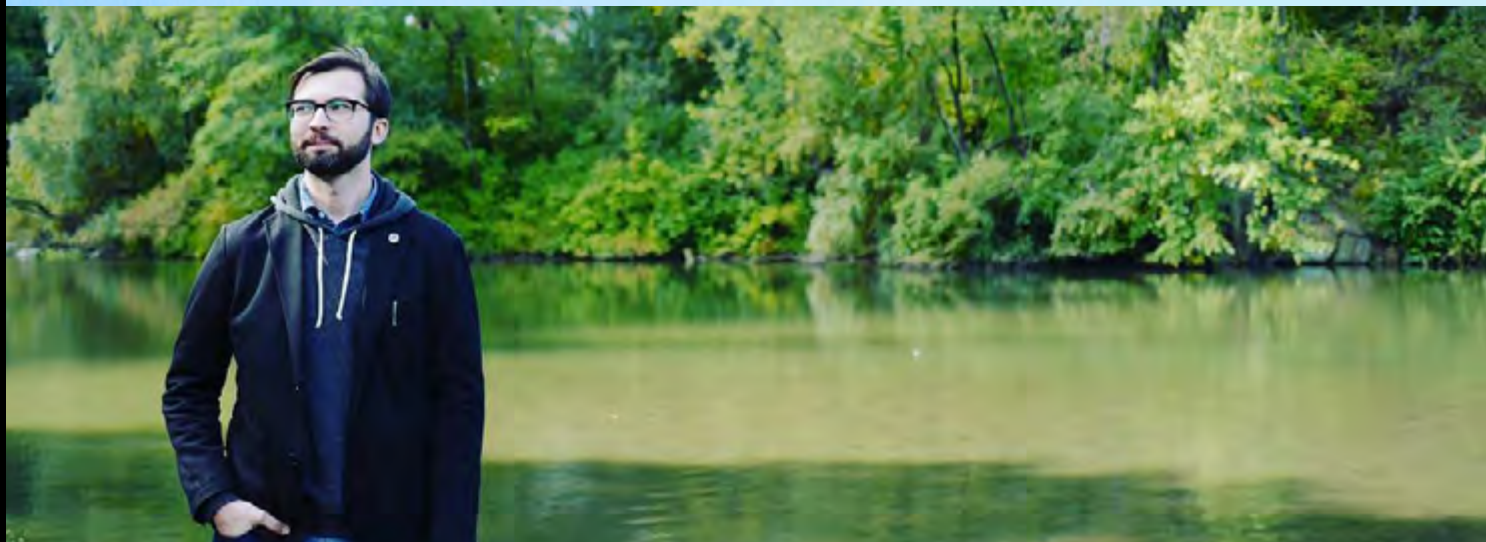
provide tool sets to local and state entities for emergency preparedness plans. That study was completed in 2015, and the analysis is being used by other federal, state, and local agencies in their continuing efforts to minimize coastal storm risks.”

## REAL-WORLD LESSONS

New York Tech students learned a lot about the effects of natural and manmade disasters during Sandy, especially those who were directly impacted by the storm. **Daniel Horn, AIA (B.Arch. ’13)**, was developing his thesis project in architecture when Sandy wreaked havoc on New York and other parts of the East Coast. Horn’s family home in Lindenhurst, N.Y., was partially flooded. “We had to relocate for about a month,” he recalls. “Others in the area were much worse off, and I knew that the rebuilding process was going to be long and arduous.”

Farzana Gandhi, AIA, LEED AP, associate professor of architecture, was teaching Horn’s capstone class, and she encouraged him to restructure his thesis based on his personal experiences. “This was the motivation behind the actions I began to take after living through Sandy,” says Horn, now an architect with ESKW/Architects in New York City. “As a student body in the architecture department, both the Long Island and New York City campuses came together to collaborate and learn from the effects of Sandy by touring some of the damaged areas on Long Island.”

The students formed a group called Operation Resilient Long Island (ORLI). “We wanted to bring designers from around the world to focus on the problem of homes that



needed to be elevated above the ground to be resilient to future storms,” Horn says. “We started a global design ideas competition called 3C: Comprehensive Coastal Communities and gained around 300 entries from about 20 countries.”

As a professional architect, Horn has sought more direct ways to advance the interplay between climate resilience, architecture, and sustainable environmental systems. In 2016, he and Leonel Lima Ponce, RA, acting academic director of sustainable environmental system at Pratt Institute, founded Operation Resilient Living and Innovation Plus LLC (ORLI+). The goal was to form a multidisciplinary group that could help communities devise strategies to build long-term resilience. “We have worked on and hosted several workshops over the years, including sessions outlining what environmental risks and hazards come from climate change,” Horn says.

He admits that prior to Hurricane Sandy, sustainability and resilience were not high on his radar. “Living through Sandy totally opened my eyes,” he says.

## SOUND THE ALARM

Horn wasn’t the only one whose eyes were opened. “Hurricane Sandy was a wake-up call,” Gandhi says. “We all knew it could happen with our aging infrastructure. Sandy spurred the design community into action in multiple ways immediately over the days following the event and now with robust resiliency plans over the last years.”

The storm also affected how disciplines such as architecture and design are taught so that environmental, geographical, and social elements are better addressed. “The cornerstone of my own research and practice has

been how to address resiliency for vulnerable communities, whether social or environmental,” Gandhi notes. “These are important topics to consider in the classroom because they will be part of any emergent architecture career path.”

At New York Tech, Gandhi has worked with colleagues and students on projects that feature interdisciplinary approaches to climate-related disasters. New York Tech’s [R-Cubed: Relief x Reconstruction x Resiliency](#) gives Gandhi and her collaborators opportunities to partner with non-governmental organizations, individuals, and organizations to develop long- and short-term plans of action to anticipate and respond to natural and man-made disasters.

Last spring, Gandhi partnered with New York Tech faculty **Robert Cody, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP (B.Arch. '94)**, associate professor of architecture, and Jim Martinez, Ph.D., associate professor of interdisciplinary studies, to co-organize a [symposium and workshop](#) focusing on case studies of New Orleans after Katrina, New York City after Sandy, and Puerto Rico after Maria in three sectors of recovery: preparation/pre-response, during/active response, and afterward/long-term response. She also worked with New York Tech students to develop maps that can be visualized side by side in the event of a disaster. “There is always a cascading set of disaster effects. For example, if you lose power during a storm, you often also lose water because the treatment plants need electricity,” Gandhi explains. “Using a series of maps, we can look at these results comprehensively, and we can see how various pieces of infrastructure relate to each other.”

In collaboration with Cody, Gandhi has also worked with fourth-year design students to address topics of flooding and

“The cornerstone of my own research and practice has been how to address resiliency for vulnerable communities, whether social or economic. These are important topics to consider in the classroom, because they will be part of any emergent architecture career path.”

—Farzana Gandhi, AIA, LEED AP, associate professor of architecture



resiliency in the New York City communities of Jamaica Bay and Inwood. “The students draw proposals for solutions that mitigate flooding using absorptive landscapes and berms and design buildings that can withstand climate disasters. They interact with the community. Some of their ideas go on to become reality,” Gandhi says.

## CHANGE OF LESSON PLAN

In so many ways, Hurricane Sandy has enhanced the way professors look at disasters and the architects’ role in developing schemes for resiliency. “It changed the way we teach and how we practice,” Gandhi says. “Architects and designers have to have a seat at the table with policy makers, engineers, and climatologists. We have to think beyond the typical notions of design and work with local communities because they know their neighborhoods best.”

Horn agrees. “Cross-disciplinary design and collaboration among different stakeholders in a project are crucial to its long-term viability and resilience. As designers, it is our duty to listen to the latest science and to apply that data to how it might affect the built environment. This would include how to interpret predictions of future climate change.

“Not only is it imperative to have a multidisciplinary approach, but it is also our role as project leaders to bring those into the conversation who may not have equal representation and to bring their voice to the head of the table,” he says, noting that those who live and work near coastal waters aren’t always involved in the process of protecting their communities from flood damage. “Design with long-lasting and consistent community engagement through all phases is what makes a project truly resilient. The

vision comes straight from the voices of the people who will actually be using and living with your design.”

A decade later, the physical and psychological wounds of Sandy serve as a catalyst for making things better. Should another Sandy-type storm strike, there is increasing optimism that the effects can be mitigated through environmentally conscious programs benefiting all communities, no matter their location or socioeconomic status.

For Ryo, the interconnectedness between herself and the area around the former Long Beach Hospital continues to give her hope for the future. “We still go back and visit at least a few times a year, and we always drive by the location of the hospital and marvel at how much has changed and how part of the hospital is still there,” she says. “I see that people are still working on their homes, and I can often point out which home has been changed or raised or is remodeled, what business has changed or never reopened again. Long Beach will always feel like home, and I’m happy to see how well it has recovered and continues to recover.”

▼ R-Cubed



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

New York Tech graduates are going places. In every issue, we look at alumni who are making an impact on their professions, communities, and beyond. Read on to find out how your fellow Bears are doing, making, innovating, healing, and reinventing the future.

## Ramon Ray

(B.S. '07)

If there is a recurring theme in Ramon Ray's life and work, it would be the importance of having fun. "I like to have fun, and I love people," says Ray, who has an infectious joy in his voice and an inherent enthusiasm in the way he communicates. "Inspiration is a really important part of the process."

The New Jersey resident and father of two is the founder and CEO of SmartHustle.com, a media company that works with people to start and grow successful small businesses. Smart Hustle also helps large technology brands like Dell, Microsoft, and FedEx connect with small business owners through blogs, articles, and videos. "In everything we do, we want to be sure to have a dose (a big dose) of fun and excitement," Ray states on his website. "We like to laugh and don't take ourselves too seriously."

Despite his lighthearted outlook, Ray does take success very seriously, and this blend of fun and focus has paid off. To date, he has launched four businesses, two of which, Small Business Summit and SmallBizTechnology.com, he successfully sold. As busy as he is, he still has his eye on the future. "I hope to start another four or five businesses before I die!"

According to Ray, his time at New York Tech helped prepare him for his professional life in unexpected ways. "At New York Tech, I was part of student government, and that involvement helped me hone the skill of public speaking, practice being a professional, being an adult, and sharpen my sales skills," he says. As the business manager of the Student Government Association, he sold sponsorships

COURTESY OF RAMON RAY





for the student magazine. He was also a member of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and worked closely with the dean of the [then] School of Engineering and Computing Sciences, Heskia Heskiaoff. “I’m not even really an academic person, but going to school and learning was important for a lot of reasons. Getting that academic certification sets you apart, and my time at New York Tech challenged me and prepared me for life.”

Over the years, Ray has taken time to come back and speak to New York Tech students who are aspiring to start their own businesses, get involved with marketing, or are just looking for a bit of inspiration. “It’s our work as humans to help other humans and make the world a better place for those who come up after us,” he says. “I had people who helped me out on my journey, and so I want to do the same.”

## Virginia Gambale

(B.S. '84)

“I am a mission-driven person. It’s behind everything I do,” says Virginia Gambale. She credits her professional success to several factors but says having supportive parents was crucial. “My dad was an incredible inspiration. He would always say, ‘Virginia, I trust your judgment,’” she remembers. “And anytime I tried and failed he would say, ‘Failure is a part of the path to greatness.’”

Gambale started on that path studying music performance, a passion that took her to the Hartt Conservatory in Connecticut as a piano major. But she soon decided to change gears. “At heart, I am a people person, and sitting in a practice room for 10 hours a day became less joyful,” she remembers. “My brother was using computers in his work, and he said, ‘You’d be great at this because you are left-brained and right-brained.’”

In the early 1980s, the world of computer technology was an exciting, cutting-edge field, and New York Tech was the perfect fit for Gambale’s change of direction. “I had already been in school a while and was anxious



about starting from scratch, but New York Tech was so helpful,” she says. “They let me use my technical credits; let me take placement exams; and in the end, they helped me get my degree in about two years.”

From there, her career in technological management took off, eventually landing her in senior management positions at Merrill Lynch, Bankers Trust, Deutsche Bank, and Marsh & McLennan. “At one point, I and one other woman were the only female CIOs in any industry, and when I moved to Deutsche Bank Capital as an investor, I was the only female partner,” she recalls. In 2003, she found a way to combine all her expertise when she founded Azimuth Partners, a firm that assists other companies in the development of strategies for growth, innovation, and international expansion.

Gambale feels she reached the height of her career about a year ago when she became the chairwoman of a large public technology company called Nutanix. “Being a board director is the ultimate in leading companies strategically and operationally, and becoming chair of the board is still so rare for women; I think NASDAQ-listed female chairs are under 16 percent,” she says. “It’s a role that allows you to set the tone for high-quality governance and facilitate the selection of a very diverse slate of directors, including those on all levels of skill set, gender, race, and domain expertise.” She has also sat on the board of several music organizations, serving as chair for the Newport Music Festival. “I do not sit on a board unless I believe passionately in an organization.”



Sanders, now the president and chief executive officer, was already working at the Urban League of Long Island in 2001 when she decided to pursue a master's degree in instructional technology at New York Tech. "Working full-time and getting my degree was a struggle," she admits. "I had two children, two foster children—I was working, making dinner, checking homework, and then sitting down to do my own homework." Despite the struggle, Sanders found the time and dedication she put in to be incredibly valuable. "I don't think I realized at first how important this education was going to be to me as a community leader," she says. She was especially inspired by the classes she took with Professor Stan Silverman. "My time at New York Tech with Professor Silverman ended up shaping my current use of technology in so many different ways.

## Theresa Sanders

(M.S. '03)

"I have always enjoyed what I call 'the freedom of life' on Long Island," says Theresa Sanders. "As a kid, I could ride my bike and play outside. When I was starting my family, I bought a house down the street from my parents. There was always a shared sense of community." It was a pace and quality of life Sanders loved but never took for granted. "It reinforced for me that there was work to be done on a professional level to allow more people to enjoy this lifestyle."

This passion led Sanders to work for the Urban League of Long Island, an affiliate of the National Urban League, the nation's largest civil rights and urban advocacy group. "I love teaching people the economic value of diversity and inclusion. It brings forth the full value of the community," says Sanders. "You can talk about the moral and ethical value of being inclusive, but a lot of people won't care because they are protected by a level of comfort. The fact that the local economy loses millions of dollars a year because of inequality often makes an impact on people who might not otherwise take inclusion into consideration."

"We were already providing instruction at the Urban League through courses in life skills and banking, but the introduction of technological instruction helped us leverage the education resources, helping with after-school homework and college applications," she says. Sanders' background in technology instruction also served an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We had to switch all our services to remote, which meant shifting all of our constituents, workers, and parents to use and embrace technologies. In order to do that, you have to understand it and like it yourself."

## Tom Lanzilotta

(M.S. '10)

When he was in high school, a guidance counselor once told Tom Lanzilotta that he was "not college material." Rather than be discouraged, Lanzilotta let that memory fuel him to work hard and prove otherwise. He went on to receive three degrees, one of which was a master's at New York Tech. In 2021, Lanzilotta was named Energy Manager of the Year at the Association of Energy Engineers International

Awards virtual ceremony, which recognizes those who exemplify the very best in their fields.

**How did you become interested in energy management, and what was your experience studying at New York Tech?**

I've always enjoyed being in nature thanks to my grandparents taking me to wooded land we had in Pennsylvania when I was younger. As I got older, I realized how important it is to conserve our resources so future generations can have similar experiences. As I entered the workforce, it always impressed me to see processes that were well thought out and done efficiently. No matter where I was working, I gravitated toward projects that involved improving processes through better use of materials and improved efficiencies. When I owned my own home and started paying my own utility bills, I applied the same principles of resource conservation and process efficiencies. I started to challenge myself to make my home as energy efficient as possible and looking for areas where I could conserve and eliminate waste. I

enjoyed this so much that I switched my master's degree from applied mathematics to energy management at New York Tech.


**Can you talk about what you are doing now?**

I'm assistant director of energy management and sustainability for Stony Brook University. I'm responsible for all things relating to energy conservation and sustainability, such as tracking energy consumption, managing energy conservation projects, and implementing sustainability projects and outreach programs. I'm very grateful to have an amazing team at the university and to work with a lot of great people, agencies,

and construction managers. My team and I are currently working on updating master plans for energy conservation, renewable energy, and fleet electrification. We are also working on a few energy conservation projects for HVAC, lighting, and metering/data analytics.

**In what ways has your industry changed?**

The industry has changed quite a bit since I started, and I think the biggest changes are related to the Internet of Things (IoT). The systems that keep buildings comfortable and illuminated are getting smarter and more connected through IoT and enable enhanced analytics of data. There is also a big push to leverage renewable energy and shift to electrification of all systems.

Going forward, I think we will see many more connected buildings and systems, a big shift in fleet electrification with the ability for vehicles to use bidirectional charging to stabilize the grid, and a move to use excess renewable energy to create hydrogen using electrolysis. 





## Pandemic Start-ups

When COVID-19 struck in 2020, many businesses were forced to shut down. However, these two alumni saw opportunity and launched start-ups during the height of the pandemic. Find out what inspired them, the challenges they faced, and if they'd do it all over again.

Johanne Briere  
(B.P.S. '10)

[NYBeautySuites](#)

### **Tell us about your business.**

NYBeautySuites' mission is to provide up-and-coming "beautypreneurs" work space, tools, and resources they need to thrive. Our salon space in Brooklyn is available by the hour, day, and month. When mandatory business closures swept the nation at the height of the COVID-19 shutdown, the beauty industry was among the hardest hit. Beauty professionals were considered nonessential workers, causing an unexpected period of unemployment.

### **What inspired you to start a business during the pandemic?**

I saw firsthand how the lockdown affected individuals on a personal level. As storefront

rents and COVID-19 safety requirements increased, I witnessed family members and friends struggle to maintain the beauty and wellness businesses they had worked so hard to build. Beauty professionals needed assistance, and they needed it fast. NYBeautySuites became the solution.

### **What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them?**

The majority of beautypreneurs in our community are young women of color, who were denied loans to operate their businesses because they were considered nonessential during the pandemic. I overcame it by leveraging my networks, community, and resources in real estate to advocate for the wellness and beautypreneurs who were left in the cold or forgotten. Many grants and loans excluded start-ups and new businesses with specific needs.

### **What are the rewards of starting your own business, especially during a pandemic?**

The joy you feel, providing an opportunity for economic empowerment to those left out during the pandemic, is priceless. These strong, independent beautypreneurs allowed me to realize that the beauty and wellness industry is essential during hard times. If you look good, you feel good.

### **How did your New York Tech education prepare you to take on this venture?**

New York Tech prepares students and alumni by working with various cultures and people. They helped me revitalize my passion for helping others succeed.

### **Looking back, would you do it again?**

Absolutely.

**Kevin Long**  
(B.S. '17, M.B.A. '18)

### **[Teleful](#)**

### **Tell us about your business.**

We help new homeowners compare the packages and pricing for all the available

cable, Internet, and home security options in their area. We are a nationwide business with call centers located in Connecticut and Colorado.

### **What inspired you to start a business during the pandemic?**

I was working for a telecommunications company as a sales operations manager in the retail division that partners with companies like mine. The whole sales channel intrigued me. I never knew there were these types of businesses that partner with telecom companies and sell on their behalf. When the pandemic hit, the nation saw a huge increase in people needing the Internet. Whether it be to work from home, having classes at home, or just people being bored in the house making TikTok [videos], the demand was huge. I decided to take the leap to ensure that people knew there may be more than one option for home connectivity.

### **How did the pandemic affect your plans?**

Starting a company during a pandemic had its challenges, one of which was getting a team together to build my brand, a website, and a marketing strategy—all while never really getting to know them face-to-face.

### **What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them?**

Of course, starting a business is scary. Especially during a global pandemic, where it seemed as if everyday things were changing. I think the

biggest challenges are the ones that every entrepreneur faces. Will this work? Am I starting this business at the right time? Is there a need for what I'm selling? Do I have the right people helping me? What more can I do? I think I was able to overcome these challenges because I trusted in the work I had put in to ensure I put myself in a position to succeed. The support of family and friends was key.

### **What are the rewards of starting your own business, especially during a pandemic?**

I get this question a lot. It's a fair question. People think when you start a business, the rewards are endless: no boss, set your own hours, work from home, give yourself a break whenever you want, travel, financial freedom. The reality is that after that last corporate paycheck hits your bank account and you know you're dependent on yourself to make a living and keep your business moving forward, those rewards start to deteriorate. I'm constantly working day and night, and when I'm not working, I'm thinking about the next move I can make to improve my business.

### **Looking back, would you do it again?**

Absolutely, without a doubt in my mind.



## 1960s

**Roy Student (B.S. '64)** has joined the advisory board council for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is also on the The Mob Museum advisory board.

For more than 40 years, **Lawrence Wolf (B.F.A. '67)** has been the president of L. Wolf and Associates, an executive recruiting firm, specializing in the placement of accounting and finance professionals.

**Russell Gordon (B.F.A. '73)** retired after 40 years.

## 1970s

**John W. Milton (B.S. '70)** retired from teaching in 2016.

**Robert "Bob" Lamelle (B.S. '70)** is retired and living in Colorado.

**Howard Marcus (B.S. '73)** retired after 25 years working as a pilot for United Airlines. Still yearning to fly, Marcus is now working at XOJet, a private jet charter company,

flying high-end clients. He still flies small recreational aircraft from his local airport.

**Victoria Lindgren (B.S. '76)** is an author and paralegal at Freeman Mathis & Gary. She recently collaborated with author Frank J. DiMaio on the book *The Best Ships*.

**William Zeman (B.S. '77, M.B.A. '82)** lives in Durham, N.C., with his wife, Rosemary. He is a licensed professional engineer in 10 states and a LEED accredited professional and maintains his consulting engineering practice, specializing in building mechanical systems and sustainability.

**Herbert Mordkoff (B.S. '78)** worked in private industry with defense subcontractors on projects with the military and city and state venues such as water and wastewater treatment centers. He later went on to work as a labor specialist, working with special needs high school students. Mordkoff was responsible for placing the students in jobs with local businesses. He spent his last 10 years working in special education and retired at 74. Mordkoff went

to school under the GI Bill and received a B.S. in marketing from New York Tech. He also earned an M.B.A. in government contract law. Mordkoff and his wife, Marcia, recently celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary. He says, "Thank you New York Tech for giving me the education needed to succeed."

**Noreen Nackenson (B.S. '78, M.S. '83)**, has retired from Nassau Community College, where she served as a professor of marketing for 30 years and for 10 years as an adjunct professor. She is now a professor emerita. Nackenson and her husband now live in Fort Myers, Fla.

## 1980s

**Gerard R. Luckman (B.S. '81)** has been elected president of the Turnaround Management Association's Long Island Chapter. He is a partner at Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP and chair of the firm's Bankruptcy & Corporate Restructuring practice group.


## Big Give Gets Even Bigger in 2022

The results are in for New York Tech's fourth annual Big Give, held on March 30 through 31. And thanks to the generosity of alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends of the university, this year's donations brought in 927 gifts from 868 donors, totaling \$355,076—exceeding last year's total by nearly \$15,000.

This year—unlike last, when the pandemic forced the event to be 100 percent virtual—Big Give activities were held in person, including a kickoff reception for faculty and staff; a karaoke event with a live band for students in New York City; a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Entrepreneurship and Technology Innovation Center (ETIC) in New York City; and tabling events on campus with giveaways, including the fourth edition of a favorite thank-you gift: branded socks.

Alumnus and member of the New York Tech Board of Trustees **Daniel Ferrara (D.O. '86)** issued a \$25,000 challenge ahead of the Big Give: He would match the first 25 gifts of \$1,000 or more to the College of Osteopathic Medicine

(NYITCOM). The challenge was realized by NYITCOM, which raised \$112,442, more than any other New York Tech school or college during the two-day event. Other challenges and winners included:

- School with the most donors:  
**College of Engineering and Computing Sciences**
- School with the most faculty and staff donors:  
**School of Management**
- School with the most student donors:  
**NYITCOM-Arkansas** 

**NEW YORK TECH**  
**BIG GIVE** 

# Alumni Connections

**Diane Mesagno (B.Arch. '81)** was one of the artists featured for the month of January at the Main Street Vero Beach (Fla.) Gallery. Before starting her career in architecture, she studied sculpture in Austria. Since moving to Florida, she devotes her time and energy to fine art painting in acrylics. Her recent work depicts the Florida landscapes and seascapes painted plein air.

**Kathleen Gallagher (B.S. '82)** has retired from the New York State Catholic Conference (NYSCC) after nearly four decades. "No one in New York state, or across the country, has done more to advocate on behalf of all human life from conception until natural death than Kathy Gallagher," Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York and president of the NYSCC, said in a statement.

**Neal Blauzvern (D.O. '83)** is entering his 35th year of practice in intervention pain management. He is affiliated with the Capitol Pain Institute and is the medical director at the Center for Specialty Surgery of Austin in Texas.

**Tony Jones (B.F.A. '83)** was named regional communications manager for the American Red Cross of the National Capital and Greater Chesapeake Region. His territory includes southern Delaware, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.

After receiving his degree at New York Tech, **Aram Piligian Jr. (B.S.A.T. '83)** moved to Pennsylvania in 1989 and founded the Piligian Architectural Group. Piligian is now working at Bergmann: Architects Engineers Planners and serves on the Pennsylvania State Architects Licensure Board.

Since graduating from New York Tech, **Edward Urbanowski (B.F.A. '83)** has worked in advertising and public affairs, including at Time Warner Cable. He self-published several books, including *Man's First Friend* and *The Firefly Who Saved Christmas*.

**Fran Bernstein (B.F.A. '84)** is an interior designer. Throughout her career, she worked for Avis, designing their service and rental facilities, as well as NatWest Bank, designing their offices and branches. She started a design firm in her adopted home in the Pacific Northwest, having lived in New York, then

*Continued on next page →*



Dear Alumni and Friends,

I continuously talk about the focus that our office will be taking to further engage alumni through volunteer opportunities. Our largest and most exciting opportunity—a university-wide mentorship program—is officially underway!

For potential mentors, this is a great opportunity to give back, become a better leader, and refine your skills and networks. For mentees, it is a way for them to connect with alumni who have been there before, sat in the same classrooms, and learned from the same professors, and mentees are eager to enter the industries and learn from you.

We are launching a pilot program this fall and are looking for alumni to be part of this first cohort of mentors. If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to read more about the program in the feature titled "You Can Count on Me" on pages [18-19] in this issue. For alumni interested in being a mentor, we ask that you sign up using [this link](#) no later than August 1, 2022.

We are excited to see the mentorships and outcomes that evolve from this initiative. As always, I welcome your feedback and ideas. Do not hesitate to email me at [spolidor@nyit.edu](mailto:spolidor@nyit.edu).

Thank you for being a part of the New York Tech community, and have a wonderful summer!

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sabrina Polidoro".

Sabrina Polidoro  
Director, Alumni Relations

Florida. “I love what I do and am forever grateful for the opportunities offered to me while at New York Tech,” she says.

**Michael Cohen (M.S. ’84)** retired after 28 years as a custom builder of luxury homes in Austin, Texas. Prior to becoming a home builder, Cohen worked as a software developer for Computer Associates in Garden City, N.Y., and then for a decade at IBM in Kingston, N.Y.

**Joe Bonadonna (B.F.A. ’85)** joined iHeartMedia rock WZZO (95.1) in Allentown, Pa., as program director and afternoon drive personality. He was already working with the company’s National Programming Group on many of its classic rock brands, a role he remains in. Joe spent more than two decades at WMMR in Philadelphia, including 10 years as program director. From there, he joined Sandusky Broadcasting in Phoenix to program rock KDKB, classic rock KSLX, and oldies KAZG and also spent time at SiriusXM as senior director of Classic Rock before joining iHeart predecessor Clear Channel as program director of classic rock WBGG Miami, among other positions. He began his career at WLIR-FM on Long Island.

**Peter Hagemann (B.Arch. ’85)** has been a partner at Zachary Hagemann Architects for more than 25 years. He recently started a new solo practice and employs New York Institute of Technology students and graduates.

The National Academy of Construction (NAC) has elected **Denise M. Berger (B.Arch. ’86)**, chief strategy and innovation officer of the U.S. East and Latin America Region of AECOM, as a member of its class of 2021. In electing Berger, NAC cited her as a “recognized leader with expertise in architecture, design-build, strategic planning, and management and a leading advocate to empower and advance women in leadership roles.”

After serving as Suffolk County legislator for 12 years, **Tom Cilmi (B.S. ’86)** joined McBride Consulting and Business Development Group as a senior executive

consultant, where he is focusing on business development, crisis communication, and government relations in Nassau and Suffolk counties. As legislator, Cilmi focused his policy efforts on government efficiency, budget and regulatory transparency, drug and alcohol abuse, and a variety of other issues. He served as GOP minority leader for three years and was a founding board member of the Suffolk County Land bank, a not-for-profit organization formed to address tax-delinquent, brownfield properties.

**Bob Kuehn (B.F.A. ’86)**, president and general counsel at SiriusPoint America, was recently profiled in [vanguardlawmag.com](http://vanguardlawmag.com). “After spending 18 years as lead counsel for Sirius America Insurance Company, Kuehn helped negotiate an historic merger with fellow Bermudian company Third Point Reinsurance, creating SiriusPoint America,” it reported.

API Technologies Corp., a leading provider of high-performance radio frequency and microwave signal conditioning and electromagnetic spectrum management solutions, has named industry veteran **Rich Sorelle (B.S. ’86)** as chief executive officer (CEO). Sorelle brings more than 35 years of operations and management experience in the defense electronics industry. Previously, he served as CEO and chairman of the board of Abaco Systems, a commercial off-the-shelf supplier to the defense, industrial, and commercial markets. Prior to that, he spent nearly two decades with ITT Exelis, a diversified, top-tier global aerospace, defense, and information solutions company.

**Thomas Baio (B.Arch. ’87)** is the deputy mayor of Mendham Township, N.J. He holds licenses in five states and recently completed his 3,000th project. Baio is entering his 31st year in private practice.

Bloom Energy Corporation has announced the appointment of **Edward Vallejo (B.S. ’88)** as vice president of investor relations. In this role, Vallejo is focusing on articulating the company’s values, interests, and positions to the investment

community. Vallejo brings more than two decades of experience as a financial and operational executive to the role, including extensive work in finance, as well as launching and developing an investor relations department. Before joining Bloom Energy, he served as vice president of investor relations and environmental, social, and corporate governance reporting at American Water.

## 1990s

**Glenn Hasteadt (B.S. ’91)** has been named president of the North Carolina Local Government Information Technology Association. Hasteadt is also the chief information officer for Onslow County, N.C., and occasionally teaches leadership classes at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government.

**Paul Severino (M.S. ’91)** has been promoted to president of Intelligent Product Solutions (IPS), a subsidiary of Forward Industries and an award-winning product design and development firm. He was a co-founder of IPS in 2007 and formerly served as its chief operating officer. Before co-founding IPS, Severino worked at Symbol Technologies, holding several senior positions in engineering and operations. He also has several patents for handheld laser scanners.

**Edward Sierra (M.S. ’91)** is a U.S. Navy submarine service veteran and former nuclear reactor operator. He has developed a series of talks on the early pioneers of radioactivity: Marie Curie (“Madame Curie’s Life and Work”), Lise Meitner (“Lise Meitner: A Physics Love Story”), and Enrico Fermi (“Enrico Fermi: Voyage to a New World”).

**Kurt F. Eppel, CSW, CFP (B.P.S. ’92)**, joined SpotOn as a hospitality account executive. SpotOn offers intuitive software, point-of-sale, and creative payment solutions for restaurateurs and the hospitality industry.

Boca Helping Hands appointed **Steve King (M.B.A. ’93)** as director of development.



King was born and raised in Miami and moved to Boca Raton in 1986 to study business administration and marketing at Lynn University, continuing on to pursue an M.B.A. from New York Tech.

**Paul DePonte (D.O. '95)** retired after 20 years as the medical director for Florida Flight 1, the air medical transport team for Florida Hospital in Orlando, Fla.

**David Falls (B.S. '95)** retired from Microsoft after 33 years. Throughout his tenure, Falls served as software associate, release coordinator, program manager, engineering program manager, and global release lab service manager, among other roles.

**Nancy Hassel (B.F.A. '95)** is the president and founder of American Pet Professionals, a business networking, education, and multimedia organization for the pet industry, celebrating 13 years in business.

**Christy Lamagna (M.S. '97)** is founder and master strategist at Strategic Meetings & Events, which she started 22 years ago. She is also the author of *The Strategic Planning Guide for Event Professionals*.

**Idalee Agress Cathcart (B.A. '99)** published *Luscious Legacies Cookbook*, bringing life to food in honor of those who gave us life.

Long Islanders voted **Ian Storch (D.O. '99)** best gastroenterologist on Long Island for the second year in a row, and his classmate **Jonathan Weinstein (D.O. '99)** as the best cardiologist on Long Island for the third year running, according to [bestofli.com](https://bestofli.com).

## 2000s

For the last seven years, **Sharon Newborn (B.S. '00)**, has been working in Operations at the Bronx District Attorney's Office. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she worked from home for two and a half years, where she created a safe day care/tutoring space for her grandchildren. She has since returned to working in the office.



▲ Alumni get together for a dinner in Houston.

## On the Road Again

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Office of Development and Alumni Relations got back out on the road again this year to visit and have dinner with alumni across the country. The dinners were a great opportunity to catch up with alumni, provide an avenue for them to connect with one another, and to learn more about their experiences as students and what they've been up to since graduating. We look forward to visiting more alumni in the fall. Below are some highlights:

- On December 2, 2021, Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations Patrick Minson, Ed.D., was joined by New York Tech Board of Trustees member **Philip Fasano (B.S. '80)** and 13 alumni and friends for dinner and drinks at the Capital Grille in McLean, Va.
- On March 17, 2022, 11 alumni and friends joined Don Vogel, director of planned giving, for dinner on the water at 15th Street Fisheries in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
- On March 23 and 24, 2022, Sabrina Polidoro, director of alumni relations, and Carmen Marmo-Savinetti, senior major gift officer, hosted 18 alumni at two dinners in the Lone Star State—visiting Houston and Dallas, respectively.

Visit [nyit.edu/alumni/events](https://nyit.edu/alumni/events) to learn about upcoming events.

If you are interested in helping us plan a visit to your city, please email [alumni@nyit.edu](mailto:alumni@nyit.edu).

**Ayana Walker, PMP, MLCP (B.S. '00)**, is a certified project manager and a certified master life coach professional. "My mission is to help others find true joy and happiness by achieving the goals they have set for themselves," she says.

**Bill Sorice's (B.F.A. '00)** 2020 web series *Dyed in the Wool* has won 10 awards. Next up for Sorice is a supporting role in the independent film *Discontinued*.

**Robert Agnello (D.O. '01)** is an assistant professor of family medicine at the Campbell University School of

Osteopathic Medicine. Agnello will be assisting with teaching clinical skills, assisting in osteopathic manipulation labs, and providing family medicine and pain medicine care at the Campbell University Health Center. Agnello previously worked at Womack Army Medical Center in the Interdisciplinary Pain Management Clinic.

**Jeannette Jordan (M.P.S. '01)** has been included in *Marquis Who's Who*. During the early stages of her career, she gained expertise as managing editor of the *Ridgewood News* and assistant news editor at the *Record*, both New Jersey

Continued on next page →




▲ LEFT TO RIGHT: Ronald E. Daniels, Reginald Shell, Frank Krawiecki, Robert Kirchmeier, Thomas Kershaw, Helene Klein Kershaw, John Pecic, Mark Hehl, and Martin Feuer

## A Golden Reunion

As New York Tech's newest alumni celebrated at the university's 61st Commencement ceremony on May 22, a group of alumni from the classes of 1970–1972 rekindled memories and reconnected with classmates at their Golden Anniversary reunion on Saturday, May 21, and Sunday, May 22.

On Saturday, the alumni and their families took tours of New York Tech's two New York campuses. The group visited the Nada Marie Anid, Ph.D., Art Gallery and Student Lounge on the New York City campus, where they also enjoyed a luncheon. In the evening, they attended a dinner hosted by New York Tech President Hank Foley, Ph.D., and Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations Patrick Minson, Ed.D., on the Long Island campus, where they also met with College of Engineering and Computing Sciences Dean Babak D. Beheshti, Ph.D.

On Sunday, they regrouped for breakfast before joining the Class of 2022 in the processional. 

(CONTINUED)

newspapers. She subsequently moved to Florida and worked in journalism for three decades completing her career as the deputy managing editor of the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*. In January 2022, she became president of the resident senate of John Knox Village, a continuing care residential community in Pompano Beach, where she represents 900 village residents, handles issues in concert with the village administration, oversees 11 resident committees, and serves as a conduit to the community.

**Jermain Hollman (B.F.A. '02, M.A. '05)** is starring in the Amazon Prime Original movie *The Contrast*, based on the 1787 play by Royall Tyler.

**Owen McAnuff (B.Arch. '02)** is the project superintendent for the Napp-Grecco

Company, a pipeline and underground specialty contracting company. He also serves as a commissioner on the Zoning Board of Adjustment in Hoboken, N.J.

**Adam Wanaselja (B.Arch. '02)** and the team at [The Up Studio](#) won their first Archi Award for the project [Harbor Hideaway in Sag Harbor](#) in the Residential Architecture \$1–\$3 million category and a commendation award for Residential Interiors. The company was founded by and now employs many New York Tech alumni.

**Nicole Maguire (D.O. '03)** is the program director for emergency medicine residency at Rutgers Health/Community Medical Center, where she welcomed her first class of 12 residents in 2021. She has served as the osteopathic program director of emergency medicine at Newark Beth Israel Medical

Center from 2009 through 2019 and as the associate program director from 2015 through 2020. Maguire has also held the position of emergency medicine clerkship director at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center from 2007 to 2020. She continues to work clinically as an attending physician at Community Medical Center. She currently resides in New Jersey with her husband, daughter, and twin sons.

**Alan Wong (D.O. '03, M.B.A. '03)** has been named chief medical officer and senior vice president for medical affairs at Mount Sinai South Nassau, a hospital in Oceanside, N.Y. Previously, he was vice president for patient safety, chief quality officer, and chair of internal medicine at Mercy Hospital in Rockville Centre. Wong is board certified in internal medicine, pulmonary medicine, critical care, neurocritical care, and hospice and palliative care. He did his residency training and a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care at NYU Langone Hospital-Long Island in Mineola.

**Christian Perry (B.F.A. '04)** rehearsed and choreographed Vanessa Williams for her performance in *50 Years of Broadway at the Kennedy Center* in Washington, D.C., earlier this year.

**Sean Gallagher (M.B.A. '05)** has been named to the inaugural Credentialate Advisory Group, a strategic panel of thought leaders focused on bridging the gap between education and the world of work. He is executive director of Northeastern University's Center for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy and executive professor of educational policy. A globally recognized expert with more than 20 years of experience in higher education, he previously served as chief strategy officer for Northeastern and as a business leader at the research and consulting firm Eduventures. His book, *The Future of University Credentials*, was published in 2016 by Harvard Education Press.

**Suchit Patel (B.S. '05)** has joined the medical staff of Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in Houma, La., as a radiation oncologist. He earned a Ph.D.

in neuroscience from the Rockefeller University and an M.D. with Honors in Service from Weill Cornell Medical College. He completed his radiation oncology residency training at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, where he served as chief resident, was awarded the Mortimer J. Lacher Fellowship in radiation oncology, and completed his postdoctoral research.

**Abdelsalam Aldwikat (M.S. '06)**

has taken on the role of information technology (IT) vice president at Li-Cycle Holdings Corp., overseeing its global IT function. He brings nearly 20 years of experience specializing in the alignment of technology to corporate strategy, operations, business process improvement, and process automation and has a track record of leading strategic initiatives, implementation, and delivery of technology across a variety of industries. Before Li-Cycle, Aldwikat served as chief technology officer of Revive Superfoods where he built, implemented, and transformed the company's IT and technology strategy.

United Arab Emirates Minister of State for Foreign Trade **Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi (M.B.A.'06)** was among the government officials who delivered a keynote speech at the Oracle Cloud Abu Dhabi Region launch event in January.

**Orietta Estrada (B.A. '07)** is the co-founder of Amplify the Future, an organization committed to building opportunities for racial equity in conservation. She recently accepted a position as director of the RAY Diversity Fellowship Program. Estrada says she is excited to work together with a talented team centering on BIPOC liberation and creating a more just and equitable workforce across the environmental sector. She is also a member of the board of trustees at Manomet, an Environmental Leadership Fellow, and was named as an Environmental Champion by the Naturally Latinos Conference this year.

**Wilmer Cantos (B.Arch. '07)** is the founder of Cantos Inc., an architecture, construction, and engineering firm. His company was recently awarded a contract for more than \$500,000 to provide civil, structural, and electrical services for the Americans with Disabilities Act upgrade of eight MTA subway stations in New York City. This added four new jobs to the economy.

**Chander Mishra, M.D. (M.B.A. '07)**, is a physician with a specialization in cardiac anesthesiology. Mishra is the founder and senior managing partner of Accel Equity Group LLC and Blue Ocean Capital, a real estate investment firm specializing in multifamily investments. He speaks frequently, including at a virtual investing summit earlier this year sponsored by Realty411.

**Frances Brown (B.A. '08)** received an M.F.A. in creative writing from Lesley University, and her thesis became her first published book, the memoir *Maternal Threads*. Soul Mate Publishing contracted her first novel, *Phantom Traces*, written under the pseudonym Claire Gem. It is the first in a series of five books. Brown's work has achieved recognition, winning the New York Book Festival in 2016, followed by awards in the American Fiction Awards, the HOLT Medallion Awards, and the Reward of Novel Excellence.

**Jason Delia (M.B.A. '08)** was re-elected to a second term on the Metuchen (N.J.) Borough Council. Delia earned a bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University and is employed as a director of software engineering. "My experience in product design, and engineering leadership proved useful when the pandemic forced the borough to become more nimble and iterative to address the constantly changing landscape," he said.

**Robert Garland (B.S. '08)**, a creator of crowdsourcing

platform Fund the First, was named to the *Forbes* Next 1000, its list of "the upstart entrepreneurs redefining the American dream."

**Raquel Alvarenga (M.B.A. '09)** was promoted to partner at Haynes Boone. She is a member of the Labor and Employment practice group in Haynes Boone's Dallas office, representing corporate clients in labor and employment matters, including advice and counseling, litigation, and internal investigations. She received her juris doctor from Cornell Law School and a bachelor's degree from Harvard University.

**Simone Guest (D.O. '09)** is a family medicine practitioner with the Braverman-Panza Medical Group, a practice of St. Peter's Health Partners Medical Associates. She was among the physicians participating in a discussion with Albany (N.Y.) County about the national theme "Black Health and Wellness."

## 2010s

**Dana Arschin (M.A. '10)**, a reporter for Fox 5 News in New York, hosted a half-hour special segment about the Holocaust to coincide with International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 77th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

**Shekeila Campbell, M.D. (B.S. '14)** graduated from Ross University School of Medicine in November 2021. Born and

*Continued on next page →*

## 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](http://nyit.edu/alumni_notes) or  
[magazine@nyit.edu](mailto:magazine@nyit.edu)

(CONTINUED)

raised in the Bronx, N.Y., she is the first physician in her family. She strived to beat the odds and become a family medicine physician to provide quality care to underprivileged communities.

**Chris Caputo (B.S. '10)**, a commissioner of the city of Wilton Manors, Fla., has been named *South Florida Gay News'* local person of the year. "Chris has been spectacular

so far as a city commissioner because he tells you exactly what he thinks," said Al Ferguson, anchor of *Queer News Tonight*, a live LGBTQ program streamed evenings from Fort Lauderdale. "Measuring success is to be able to be authentic, tell us the truth and lead us to success. That is so hard for a politician to do and be loyal to themselves."



▲ Karine Jean-Pierre speaking at the White House press conference on May 5, 2022.

## Karine Jean-Pierre (B.S. '97) Named White House Press Secretary

President Joe Biden has named New York Tech alumna Karine Jean-Pierre (B.S. '97) his new [White House press secretary](#), replacing Jen Psaki, who stepped down from the role on May 13.

Jean-Pierre has served as White House [principal deputy press secretary](#) since President Biden took office. She is in familiar territory, having served in the Obama White House as regional political director for the White House Office of Political Affairs. She also worked on President Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns. "Karine not only brings the experience, talent and integrity needed for this difficult job, but she will continue to lead the way in communicating about the work of the Biden-Harris administration on behalf of the American people," said President Biden in a statement announcing the news. "Jill and I have known and respected Karine a long time, and she will be a strong voice speaking for me and this administration."

At a White House press briefing on May 5, Jean-Pierre talked about the significance of her appointment. She is the first Black woman and openly LGBTQ+ person to be appointed to this role. "This is a historic moment, and it's not lost on me. I understand how important it is for so many people out there, so many different communities, that I stand on their shoulders, and I have been throughout my career."

[Moviehole](#) featured an interview with actor and filmmaker **Jared Cohn (B.F.A. '10)** about his experience directing actor Bruce Willis in the film *Deadlock*.

After submitting her story "In my words" to the [Tech Tales: New York Institute of Technology Oral History Project](#), **Daisy Connor Robinson (M.B.A. '10)** was inspired to continue writing. She self-published *Destined and Beyond All Odds: A Human Sacrifice, in spite of it all, and Sweet Escape*.

**Ivan Cornejo (B.P.S. '08, M.B.A. '10)** is a healthcare administrator at New York University and an adjunct professor of business at FIT Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology. Cornejo is an expert in negotiation, finance, business administration, management, investment strategies, and healthcare. He is pursuing a master's in healthcare administration and a Doctor of Business Administration degree with an emphasis in management.

The [50 States Project](#) is a series of candid conversations with interior designers across the country about how they've built their businesses. Designer **Abigail Marcelo Horace (B.F.A. '10)** of Casa Marcelo shares how she launched her own business the week before pandemic lockdowns in 2020 and how a decade of experience at a mix of corporate and boutique firms set her up to learn the best (and worst) ways to work. Read the full interview in [Business of Home](#).

**David Parizh (M.S. '12, D.O. '12)** has joined Long Island Plastic Surgical Group. He specializes in a range of reconstructive procedures, including burn and complex wound management, as well as a variety of cosmetic surgery options. He completed his residency at New York University School of Medicine, where he was named chief resident. He gained additional residency and fellowship training in plastic and reconstructive surgery, facial aesthetic surgery, and burn care. He has extensive public health experience and has participated in philanthropic programs to provide reconstructive surgery to patients in need.

**Rachelle Porco (B.F.A. '12)** was featured in *Florida Weekly* in an interview where she teamed up with her interior design partner. “Now, having lived in the Sunshine State for more than seven years, she easily relates to anyone who moves from the north hoping to embrace the Florida lifestyle,” the article notes.

**Lucie Barbier-Dearnley (B.F.A. '13)**, a respected colorist, recently moved from Picture Shop New York to join the company’s growing London roster of talent. She brings extensive international experience to her role at Picture Shop London, part of the Streamland Media community. “Our client- and talent-focused approach generates an atmosphere that fosters the creative needs of filmmakers. Artistic colorists like Lucie, alongside the rest of our team, play a key role in making this environment possible,” said John Fleming, managing director of Picture Shop UK. Barbier-Dearnley’s credits cross all genres including feature, episodic, and documentaries. Her latest episodic credits include *Harlem* (Amazon), *Monsterland* (Hulu), and *High Score* (Netflix). Her recent feature credits include *This Is the Night, You Should Have Left*, and the documentary *Roadrunner: A Film About Anthony Bourdain*.

**John Santamaria (B.F.A. '13, M.A. '14)** is a high school computer media teacher at his alma mater St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School in West Islip, N.Y. He previously taught media and technology classes at the elementary and middle school levels.

**Yuqing Geng (M.S. '14)** is associate professor of business management and director of the Institute of Innovative Development at Shanghai Dianji University. His current research interest focuses on the growth of the tourism industry and predictions in China.

**Adrienne Koder (D.O. '15)**, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, has joined Arkansas Children’s Northwest. She completed an orthopedic surgery residency at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine followed by a pediatric orthopedic fellowship at Columbia University Medical Center/New York Presbyterian. She also has served as a team physician for high school football and professional rugby.

As project director of GI Stone, a Chicago-based commercial stone provider, **Sai Uppalapati (M.S. '16)** ensures the successful sourcing, fabrication, and installation of interior and exterior custom stone on high-profile commercial real estate projects in Chicago and Texas. He also leads the firm’s estimating, including all bidding activity.

**Monika Agrawal (M.B.A. '18)** is a project manager at BC Hydro, where she is responsible for the successful completion of the construction projects by leading cross-functional, multidisciplinary teams.

**Astasia Williams-Bertles, Esq. (B.S. '18)** graduated from the Charleston School of Law in 2021. She recently accepted a position as an assistant public defender

in Berkeley County, Ninth Circuit in Charleston, S.C.

## 2020s

**Peggy Peña (B.Arch. '20)** was one of several speakers in the roundtable conversation, *Education of the Architect: Radical vs. Incremental Change*. Motivated by the injustices prevalent in our society, she emphasized the significance of the social context in most of her undergraduate work, especially through the lens of diversity and inclusion. She works at Amie Gross Architects as an architectural intern and continues to advocate for equity and justice as the co-chair for both the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at American Institute of Architects New York and the Project Pipeline Committee at nycoba|National Organization of Minority Architects.

**Debjit Mukherjee (M.B.A. '21)** is a business intelligence developer at Deloitte, working for the Department of Health Services in Wisconsin.

Before graduating, **Aravind Kumar Perumanagari (M.S. '21)** worked as a Graduate Student Association secretary on the Vancouver campus for the 2020-2021 academic year. Perumanagari will be joining OnePoint as a cybersecurity analyst, working with the company’s client BNP Paribas in Montreal, Canada. OnePoint is a business management consulting company based in Montreal.

## MARRIAGES :

**Pingling (Jenny) Ng (M.S. '07)** to Dimitri Tchesnokov  
**Jatinder Saini (B.S. '17)** to Guneet Kaur (D.O. '21)

## BIRTHS

**Pingling (Jenny) Ng (M.S. '07)** and Dimitri Tchesnokov welcomed Kayla Tamara.  
**Massiel Mejia-O'Brien (B.S. '17)** welcomed Julian.  
**Rajpal Kaur (M.S. '20)** welcomed Rubaab Singh Gill.

## PASSINGS :

**Norman H. Light (B.S. '68)**  
**Steven Lee Osser (B.S. '68)**  
**Gary T. McCarthy (B.S. '71)**  
**Francis Snyder (B.S. '76)**  
**James Girvan (B.S. '77)**  
**Donald Winterhalter (B.F.A. '80)**  
**Lorraine D'Errico (B.S. '84)**  
**Lawrence (Larry) Cennamo (B.S. '85)**

# MayFest Is Back!

After two years of virtual gatherings, students, faculty, and staff on both New York campuses celebrated the end of the academic year during the weeklong event in May.

The long-standing university tradition featured carnival rides, games, contests, food, and more.

See more at [New York Tech News](#). 



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