

# UB Knightlines



## Back on Top

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How Kimberly Kunert  
got her mojo back

# President's Line



Neil Albert Salonen

It's been a busy time on campus, but a few weeks ago the University paused to remember longtime friend and Trustee Ernest C. Trefz, who passed away on February 25. Ernie's leadership was critical to UB, and many of our milestones are testament to his stewardship and generosity. Fittingly, the campus chose to honor him at the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, which Ernie and his wife Joan officially opened on September 9, 2014.

The school's emphasis on entrepreneurship reflects the arc of Ernie's extraordinary life. Ernie didn't have enough money to attend college himself, but he harnessed his ambition and the business skills he acquired helping his father deliver meat to family-owned shops in Bridgeport to open the state's first McDonald's restaurant. The rest is history: Ernie became one of the state's most important entrepreneurs and philanthropists, and his success inspired us all. His guidance on the Board of Trustees enabled UB to steer clear from the shoals of economic hardship in the 1990s to become a thriving center for academics and research today.

I'd like to pay tribute to Ernie's work by reaffirming our commitment to UB faculty and student success. That's why I'm particularly excited to present UB's proposed Campus Master Plan.

The Campus Master Plan is a true roadmap to our future. Increasingly, employers require adaptable, quick-to-learn workers; UB is responding by creating new centers for multidisciplinary research and scholarship—a central component to the Master Plan. At the same time, the plan seeks to expand access points to the campus, thus reflecting our growing role as a resource to and leader in the community.

Numerous studies have shown a direct correlation between student performance and their academic environment. Not only does the Master Plan include a vision for new learning spaces, it also seeks to expand and unify living and recreation areas. These improvements, which will foster community, are equally critical to accommodating growing enrollment, which now stands at a 30-year high.

This impressive milestone is due to several factors, but success clearly breeds more of the same. Students are enrolling in record numbers because of the University's superlative and expanded academic offerings. As you'll read, several of our online programs have again been named among the best by *U.S. News & World Report*. Six international Fulbright Scholars are now earning graduate degrees on campus. Undergraduates like Victor Cabrera are winning prestigious grants from the National Science Foundation to conduct research in the field of molecular genetics and cell biology. Others have been awarded scholarships from the State Department to study abroad. It's a busy, exciting time at UB. As we celebrate, I invite you to lend us your support as we continue to aim for the next achievement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Albert Salonen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Neil" being particularly prominent.

Neil Albert Salonen  
President

President  
Neil Albert Salonen

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*Knightlines* is published three times a year for University of Bridgeport alumni and friends by the Office of University Relations.

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## Editor's Note

Before she applied to UB, Lamia BenHalim dedicated herself to organizing human rights-awareness campaigns in Libya. Among them: a film festival sponsored by Amnesty International's Movies That Matter Foundation.

While it's more common for students to begin college with plans for the future, BenHalim belongs to a group of students who arrive on campus with previously established records of accomplishment. Because of her exemplary work, in fact, she was awarded a Fulbright Foreign Student Scholarship, part of the Fulbright Program, to study in the U.S.

Fulbright Scholarships are among the most prestigious academic awards in the world. Fifty-seven Fulbright alumni from 14 countries have won Nobel Prizes. Eighty-two have won Pulitzer Prizes. Thirty-seven have served as heads of state or government.

Now, here's the kicker: BenHalim isn't the only Fulbright Scholar currently enrolled at UB. There are five others.

As you'll read in this issue, these six Fulbright Scholars came to UB because they felt it was the best place for them to acquire the knowledge they needed to advance their already extraordinary work. Their faith in the University is testament to all that's being done to ensure that the University supports *all* of its students. To that end, you'll also read about the new Campus Master Plan. It's designed to meet several institutional goals, like providing workspaces for fertile multidisciplinary research, strengthening ties to the community, and enhancing student life. I invite you to take a look, weigh in, and stay involved as we work together to reach more milestones.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Geary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Leslie Geary  
Founding Editor

# Pipelines

## The Importance of Giving

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the stories from alumni in the latest *Knightlines*. I graduated with Andre Guilbert (“Why They Give,” Fall/Winter 2016). We see each other from time to time. I went to UB on a scholarship, so I am grateful that the University gave those to the high schools.

After graduation, I got a job with Pitney Bowes. They paid for your education. Since I already had an undergraduate degree, I said, “If I go for my master’s, will you pay for it?” They said yes! Pitney Bowes reminded me of the University of Bridgeport—always ready to help!

**Louise Clark Baker ’60**  
Newtown, CT

## Real-world Opportunity

Dear Editor,

I wanted to write and let you know how much I enjoyed the article in *Knightlines* about Professor Marsha Matto and her Interior Design students. (“Summer House,” Fall/Winter 2016). I had a similar idea to hire students to design a home many years ago, but did not have the opportunity to implement it because I was not a builder.

Having been left a piece of land in Greenwich (our family home and property), I have had it subdivided to be able to build five town houses. After reading the article, I contacted Professor Matto and was delighted to find out that she and her class would love to participate in the design and construction of the town homes.

I graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering, and was an executive for several of the top-ten defense contractors, e.g. United Technologies, Grumman, Northrup-Grumman, Loral, Lockheed Martin.

It gives me great pleasure to involve the school that gave me a great education.

**Peter M. Buccieri ’63**  
Potomac Falls, VA

## From the Board

Dear Editor,

I just received the Fall/Winter 2016 issue of *Knightlines*. Very impressive work, and very happy to see the feature on Richard Rubenstein (“Ignore Him at Your Peril”).

**Tom Walsh**  
**UB Board of Trustees**  
Tarrytown, NY

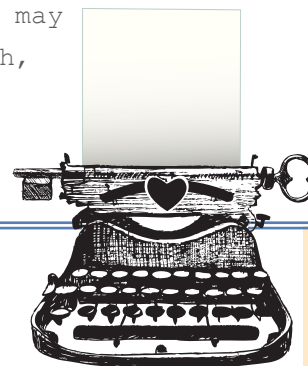
Dear Editor,

Another great *Knightlines*. The variety, content, and quality is always there.

**Mark Fries ’73**  
**UB Board of Trustees**  
Newtown, CT

## Have an opinion?

We’d love to hear from you! Please send Letters to the Editor to [knightlines@bridgeport.edu](mailto:knightlines@bridgeport.edu) or to Knightlines, Cortright Hall, University of Bridgeport, 219 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604. Please be sure to include your full name, contact information, and UB class year if applicable. Letters may be edited for length, clarity, style, or accuracy.





# John Harper

## UB athlete and journalism major grows up and writes. A lot!

By Dianne Wildman

Go into the NY *Daily News* site and look for sportswriter John Harper '77. You'll learn he has been the baseball columnist there since 1994 and has published more than 5000 articles. In his spare time, he's co-written five books, including a biography of Yankee pitching great Mel Stottlemyre.

Go into the studios of the Mets-owned SNY Network in midtown Manhattan and you'll learn John Harper also does TV, once a week, sharing banter and opinions with show host Jonas Schwartz and others on *Daily News Live*. Way too modest to talk up his star turns, Harper nonetheless looks the part, handsome and genial at a young 60.

So how did all this start?

"At UB!" he smiles. "Well, actually, I played baseball since back when my dad coached us in Little League, but UB recruited me out of Parsippany High School and gave me a scholarship. I played second base and some shortstop."

He did well enough to make All-New England his senior year, and after graduation in 1977, he went on to play for the Raybestos Cardinals, one

of the elite semipro fast-pitch softball teams of the day. It was a short stint that brought travel and appreciative fans, and he loves the memories.

"But I knew the Yankees weren't about to come looking to hire me. I used to wander around the UB campus wondering what else I could do with my life besides play sports. I decided I might be able to write about them, so I majored in journalism."

And write he did. Harper landed an internship, which stretched into a ten-year stay at the Morristown *Daily Record*, covering everything from high school games to Super Bowls. He regularly made his way to New York City to interview big-time pros and learned that "if I asked dumb questions or got the facts wrong, these guys would be in your face."

Sports reporting is actually pretty brutal. Not just because of the facts, scores, stats, and stories you have to get right, but try covering games in real time with 50,000 people in a stadium. And making deadline.

"You do learn to focus and write fast," says Harper. "Your writing comes under tremendous

John Harper (left) has made several guest appearances on NBC's Sunday night sports show, anchored by Bruce Beck (right).



“Your writing comes under tremendous scrutiny because people are so passionate about sports, especially the fans. You can’t fake it with New York fans.”

# Knows Baseball

scrutiny because people are so passionate about sports, especially the fans. You can’t fake it with New York fans.”

And then of course there’s the competition, all those other journalists in press boxes and locker rooms. There’s a natural camaraderie, but make no mistake: everybody is looking for his or her own scoops.

The best of these reporters become true specialists, and sometimes columnists, and that turned out to be Harper’s story. He managed so well that the *New York Post* came calling in 1988 and made him the Yankees columnist. Then five years later the *Daily News* stole him away, adding the Mets to his assignment.

Along the way he’s found time to pair up with pals like longtime Boston sportswriter Tony Massarotti and produce books, also on deadline. Their *A Tale of Two Cities: the 2004 Yankees-Red Sox Rivalry and the War for the Pennant* was written and published almost as soon as that baseball drama had ended.

Harper, who has racked up years of on-the-job travel, credits his wife Liz for the steadying

influence of a happy home life. They met in high school, and they’re still in Jersey where they raised two sons and Liz established herself as a successful realtor. Harper is delighted that as a family they’ve been able to share many adventures related to, no surprise, big sports events.

His favorite professional memory? That goes way back. Game 6 of the ’86 World Series, the Mets’ comeback in the 10th inning after two outs to beat the Red Sox. Harper recounted the story in 2013 to the *Connecticut Post*:

“It was nightmarish from a work standpoint, having to rewrite instantly to make deadline, but it was about as dramatic as it gets, and historic as well. I’ll never forget the noise of the crowd and the emotion of the players on both sides afterward.”

He may indeed never forget that one but there’s more to come. The very busy John Harper, shaped early on by the spirit of UB sports, is still adding to his very full memory bank. ■

**Alumnus Mostafa Hassan arrived at UB with a dream. Thanks to help from faculty at the Student Entrepreneur Center, he's launched it.**

# From Egypt to Connecticut

**By Debra Kirouac**

Three years ago, Mostafa Hassan moved from Egypt to Fairfield with specific goals in mind: namely, obtaining his Master of Arts in global development and peace from the University and laying the groundwork to launch his own business. He achieved both in May and June of 2016, respectively. So much success in such a short time may seem like an enormous feat, but when one looks at Hassan's background, it's not a surprise.

His interest in foreign study and travel began as a child, when he first learned to speak English. As he grew older he "worked in the tourism field and practiced [English] all the time." He also functioned as a tour guide in Egypt, eventually obtaining a bachelor's degree in Tourism and Hotel Management from Cairo's Helwan University. Fluent in Arabic and English, with a working knowledge of French and German, Hassan believes that "to be successful, you have to study at least two languages."

When he was ready to start Educational & Cultural Travel, a business that recruits international students to study at American universities, Hassan sought out the help of UB's Student Entrepreneur Center (SEC),

led by Director Elena Cahill. Faculty include entrepreneur-in-residence Mike Roer and IT mentor Dorian Yanez, and Hassan credits the three with helping him launch his business. "Without them I wouldn't be able to do what I do now."

At the SEC, Hassan received help with regulatory legal compliance issues in the U.S., as well as assistance developing his website,

[www.educultravel.com](http://www.educultravel.com), originally budgeted at \$100,000. "That wasn't viable," says Cahill, "But he was on to something . . . He came to us better prepared because he's owned his own [tourism] business in Egypt. The challenge

was getting him acclimated. He took advantage of everything we had to offer. He has an amazing work ethic—it is superior. His business acumen is equally superior."

Last spring, Cahill invited Hassan to present his business plan for Educational & Cultural Travel at an SEC open house attended by UB administrators, faculty, and students. After being approached by President Neil Salonen, Hassan knew he was on the right track. "The president said, 'I want you to do a business plan with UB,'" Hassan recalls, his eyes wide like a child's on



*(continued on page 8)*







**Before he enrolled at UB and started his own travel and study company, alumnus Mostafa Hassan '16 led tours in Egypt.**

Christmas morning. With SEC's help, Hassan officially launched Educational & Cultural Travel in June of 2016. In addition to working with UB, the Bridgeport-based business currently recruits international students for Sacred Heart, Fairfield University, and the University of New Haven. In total, 69 students have been tapped to study at these universities for the 2016-2017 academic year.

His work doesn't end once the students are enrolled. "We also provide logistical support, such as help with obtaining driver's licenses or state IDs, opening bank accounts and buying cars, or obtaining housing," Hassan says. "Some students are interested in living with American families so they can practice their English [and] families get the chance to be introduced to a different culture through their interactions with the students."



Culture is a critical component, too, and Educational & Cultural Travel offers clients tourist and sightseeing activities. Trips to New York City, for instance, include visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Hassan also speaks frequently at Bridgeport area libraries, where his standing-room-only lectures on Egyptian culture and ancient history are open to all.

Jeannette Smith, a part-time graduate student working for UB's International Center for Students and Scholars, met Hassan in 2015. When he invited her to join one of his tours to see the Egyptian Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, she accepted. "He walked us through the exhibit of ancient Egypt. The experience was very educational and exciting. He displayed a wealth of knowledge about the ancient artifacts, which included sections of a pyramid and the tomb paintings

within. He explained everything simply and captivated the tour group.”

Khaled Magar, an MBA candidate at the University of New Haven, was recruited by Hassan from Egypt in late 2016. He echoes Smith’s feelings. “Mostafa supported me in many ways: housing, getting a car, the steps I had to take at the DMV, making a paper at the university. Before I came here he supported me, giving me tips about what to take care of before I left Egypt, including insurance.” Magar continues: “He picked me up at the airport—JFK. I discovered later it was far away, so I appreciate it very much. I see him doing this for many others, which is kind of him.”

Upon arrival, Magar spent just two days in a hotel before obtaining an apartment with Hassan’s help. “At the University of New

Haven, graduate students cannot stay in a dorm; you have to find a rental. He helped me with apartment websites, to search, to get a realtor. It was easy.” He remembers how Hassan introduced him to two other students from Egypt, including one now enrolled as a master’s degree candidate here at UB. “He arranged a meeting for us at Dunkin’ Donuts. I now have a common friend at UB.”

Says Cahill: “Hassan provides students with cultural acclimation and education. Where can they join a community, or understand our holidays? Hassan teaches students how to integrate . . . . They don’t just come here to learn, but navigate life!” ■

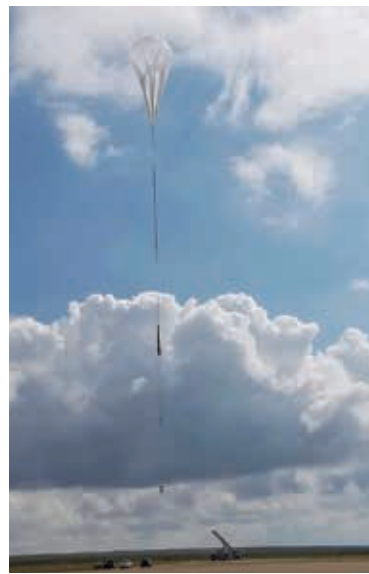


“Hassan teaches students how to integrate . . . . They don’t just come here to learn, but navigate life!”

**Mostafa Hassan at graduation with his wife in 2016. A month later, he officially launched Educational & Cultural Travel.**







A team of UB engineers, students, and faculty watched and tuned in via e-mail as their research lifted off from NASA's Scientific Balloon Facility in New Mexico in September. The new Campus Master Plan aims to support similar multidisciplinary projects in coming years. Bottom photo: NASA Louisiana Space Grant HASP site



“We passed with flying colors!” Mechanical Engineering Professor Jani Pallis reported to colleagues in an e-mail.

More than a few awaited the news. In all, 13 professors, students, and scientists from Shintaro Akatusu School of Design (SASD), various departments within the School of Engineering, and the Discovery Museum were collaborating on the project, and eight months of their hard work rested on the test flight.

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Since 2007, UB has completed \$86.5 million worth of construction projects, including the creation of new labs and classrooms. That’s helped to establish the University as a key contributor to research in areas like facial-recognition software, tissue replacement, and robotics.

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Summed up graduate student Xuan Zhang: “To accomplish a project like this, people need to consider problems in multiple fields.”

### Breaking boundaries

Such collaboration is quickly becoming the norm at UB. And as colleagues and students team up with other academic departments and outside institutions, the University is taking steps to support them. Since 2007, UB has completed \$86.5 million worth of construction projects, including the creation of new labs and the installation of technology. That’s helped to cement the University as a key contributor to research in areas like facial-recognition software, tissue replacement, and robotics. But all too often, labs are assigned for single purposes.

Students and faculty want more flexibility—and they’ll get it, thanks to UB’s plans to further evolve the campus. Recently, administrators unveiled the new Campus Master Plan (CMP), which will be voted on by the Board of Trustees in coming months. More than an architectural document, the CMP was created by Massachusetts-based Sasaki Associates as a road map that helps to fulfill the University’s institutional goals well into the 21st century.

One of its chief priorities: supporting multidisciplinary learning and R&D—



think business teaming up with design or nanotechnology partnering with medicine—within a new center of collaborative research. To be located mid-campus, the center is being designed to literally pull experts together. Rather than schlepping from, say, Charles Dana Hall to SASD, researchers, students, faculty—even partners from other institutions—will be able to work next to each other, making it easier to exchange ideas and acquire a multitude of skills that are increasingly valuable in the marketplace.

“In a nutshell, what we are doing at UB is educating people for jobs that don’t even exist yet,” says Senior Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research and Dean of the School of Engineering Tarek Sobh.

“As a simple example, for the autonomous car engineer jobs that Google and many car manufacturers are hiring for, potential employees



**The Master Plan will further link UB to the city while unifying the campus by expanding the Ped Mall.**

should be familiar with and educated in so many diverse disciplines, among them: mechanical engineering, computer science, mathematics, signal processing, computer vision, electrical engineering, geography, cyber- and information security, industrial design, transportation, and the area of analytics. That's an example of a multidisciplinary job for which there is no existing academic major. It requires people who are trained across so many disciplines," Sobh continues.

"From a Master Plan point of view, the whole concept of having an academic department all by itself, of fixed permanent places, is really becoming a thing of the past. We need people to be close together for collaboration, and we need working spaces that can be reconfigured easily as projects, multidisciplinary endeavors, and requirements evolve over time."

*(continued on page 14)*



**Expanded social areas and residential spaces address student expectations and create an environment that fosters social and academic success.**

### **Connectivity**

Research is just part of the future. When tasked with creating the new CMP, Sasaki Associates embraced a holistic approach that reflects UB's growing role within the City of Bridgeport.

Recent additions to campus, such as the small-business incubator housed in the former

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*“From a Master Plan point of view, the whole concept of having an academic department all by itself, of fixed permanent places, is really becoming a thing of the past.”*

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President's Offices on Myrtle Avenue, have drawn entrepreneurs and others in recent years. But UB's future has long been linked to the health of the surrounding community, and it's growing stronger. When UB opened Charles A. Dana Hall of Science—a \$1.4 million synthesis of glass and limestone—on a breezy Sunday in May, 1960, for instance, the event drew hordes. Families with children in tow, reporters, and public officials toured the school's new labs and studios, then

stuck around to attend the GE Science on Parade exhibit and the unveiling of a Science Wall of Honor inscribed on the building's edifice.

As one of the region's biggest employers and, more recently, as home to numerous resources for area entrepreneurs and businesses, UB has an ever-growing need to expand its connections to the community. In recognition of that, planners from Sasaki, the City of Bridgeport, and UB met on campus on February 15 to review plans for a new gateway that would bridge the city to the campus. The work is being funded by a \$54-million state grant and calls for the elevation and connection of University Avenue to the eastern side of campus. The route will then continue as an eco-friendly, tree-lined pedestrian walkway that extends to the Arnold Bernhard Center, unifying the campus as an integrated whole.

Not coincidentally, the project coincides with the proposed relocation of several University Health Sciences divisions, including the popular UBclinics on which the community depends, to a more prominent place at this new eastern campus entranceway. Other improvements could include amenities like outdoor holistic wellness centers.





## Student life redux

When Sasaki Associates invited Karissa Peckham to weigh in on the Campus Master Plan, she didn't hesitate. As associate vice president for enrollment, Peckham is reminded every day that student experience is directly impacted by a school's physical spaces.

"Talk to any of our admissions counselors and they'll tell you that the first question they get after 'What's the food like?' is 'Can I see a dorm room?'" says Peckham. "Students are looking for institutions with high-tech capabilities, campuses on the leading edge that can provide advanced education in their chosen major. They want social areas in their residential space, to be a part of a community, and to feel 'at home.'"

That's not unique at UB. One of the top five reasons students choose a particular college or university is the experience they have when visiting the campus, according to a report from *U.S. News & World Report*.

The CMP addresses student expectations with plans to expand Wheeler Recreation Center and to centralize and enhance more commodious residence and recreation facilities in the vicinity of Marina Dining Hall. Work has already begun. Earlier this year, for instance,

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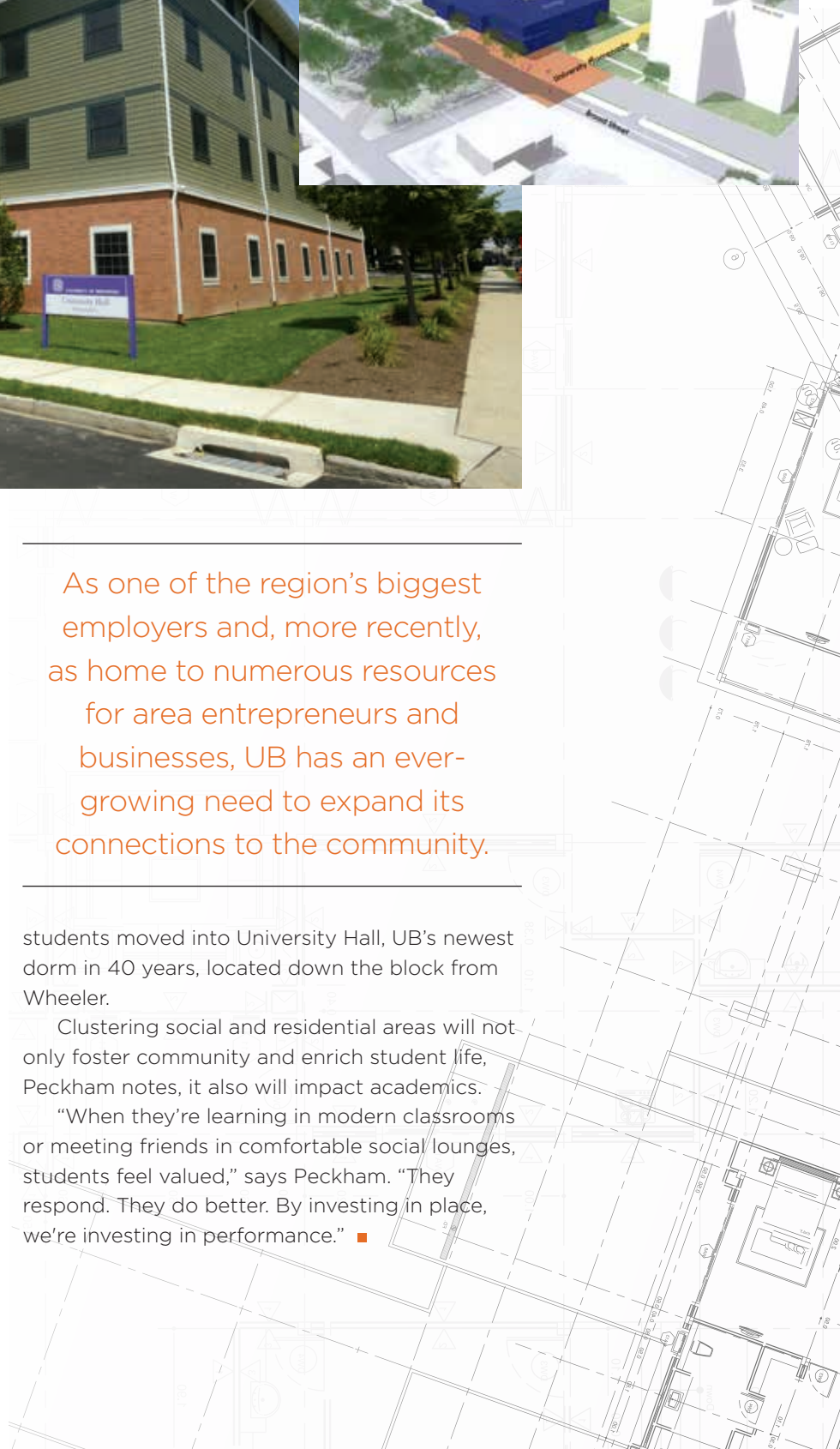
As one of the region's biggest employers and, more recently, as home to numerous resources for area entrepreneurs and businesses, UB has an ever-growing need to expand its connections to the community.

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students moved into University Hall, UB's newest dorm in 40 years, located down the block from Wheeler.

Clustering social and residential areas will not only foster community and enrich student life, Peckham notes, it also will impact academics.

"When they're learning in modern classrooms or meeting friends in comfortable social lounges, students feel valued," says Peckham. "They respond. They do better. By investing in place, we're investing in performance." ■



# Trefz School is reaccredited

## ACBSP reaffirms Ernest C. Trefz School of Business programs

By Leslie Geary

The Ernest C. Trefz School of Business has been reaccredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) Baccalaureate/Graduate Degree Board of Commissioners through 2027.

The University will receive its Certificate of Reaffirmation of Accreditation at the ACBSP Conference 2017 in Anaheim, California, on June 26.

First accredited by ACBSP in 1996, the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business is required to go through the reaffirmation process every ten years.

ACBSP Chief Accreditation Officer Dr. Steve Parscale called the reaffirmation of accreditation

“evidence that University of Bridgeport is committed to maintaining the highest-quality business education for its students for the next ten years, just as it has done since 1996.”

Trefz School Dean Lloyd Gibson said the reaccreditation “is confirmation of our ongoing efforts to provide superior educational programs and our focus on continuous improvement.” ■



# Fighting addiction

## New partnership with Optimus Health Care expands drug-free pain treatment for patients

By Leslie Geary

As policymakers and health professionals scramble to address the nation's opioid epidemic, the University's Division of Health Sciences (UBHS) is providing solutions by delivering addiction-free treatments to individuals at federally funded community health centers throughout Connecticut.

In its latest venture signed in January, UBHS will expand its community outreach by teaming up with Optimus Health Care of Bridgeport to provide chiropractic and acupuncture care at Optimus clinics in Stamford and Bridgeport.

Under the five-year agreement, doctors from the UB's College of Chiropractic teaching faculty, post-doctoral chiropractic residents, and supervised UB chiropractic students will serve patients, including those on expanded Medicaid who suffer from chronic and acute pain caused by neuro-musculoskeletal conditions.

The partnership with Optimus is modeled after a pilot program that UB launched in 2012 with Community Health Center, a similar federally qualified health provider in Middletown, Connecticut.

A study of the pilot program commissioned by the Weitzman Institute found that patient satisfaction after receiving chiropractic care provided by UB was 98.5 percent. Moreover, patients reported "significant improvement" in their ability to engage in daily activities without the use of prescription pain medication.

"It's been so successful that we're replicating the program with Optimus," said UB Vice President of Health Sciences Dr. David M. Brady.

"The federal government is trying to come up with a way to treat pain to curb opioid addiction because it's clearly evident that pain medicine can't be the only answer to chronic and acute pain," Dr. Brady added. "It's unfortunate that people who are covered under Medicaid—low-income and urban populations—didn't have the ability to access this kind of care. Now they do."

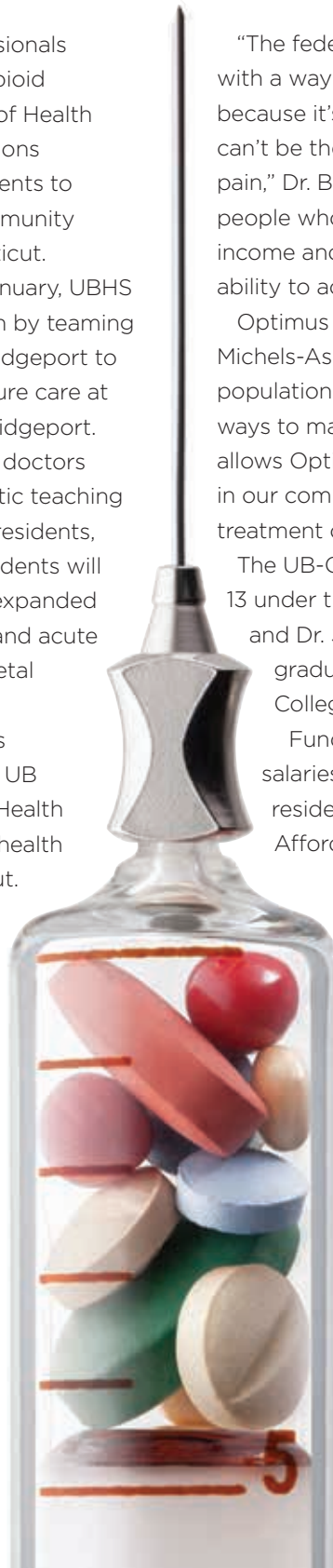
Optimus Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karin Michels-Ashwood said, "We believe the population we serve should have alternative ways to manage pain. Our partnership with UB allows Optimus to support resident training in our community while expanding pain-free treatment options for our patients."

The UB-Optimus program began on March 13 under the direction of Dr. Michels-Ashwood and Dr. James Lehman, director for the post-graduate resident training program at UB College of Chiropractic.

Funding for the program, including salaries for faculty and post-doctoral residents, is available through the Affordable Care Act.

"While patients clearly benefit from expanded treatment options, the partnership with Optimus also enhances clinical training experiences at the UB Health Sciences programs, starting with the College of Chiropractic," said Lehman.

"This is just the beginning, and we are negotiating with partners to provide similar services in New Jersey and elsewhere," he added. ■



## UB welcomes six Fulbright Scholars

**A bumper crop of top international scholars has come to UB**

By Leslie Geary

Six international students who have been awarded Fulbright Scholar grants to complete graduate studies in the United States have enrolled at the University after they asked to be placed at its main Bridgeport campus. They are expected to graduate from UB between 2017 and 2020.

The scholars—inspired and breathtakingly inspiring individuals who before coming to UB founded NGOs, ran international film festivals, worked as bank executives, and even found valuable uses for environmental waste—were awarded the prestigious grants under the Fulbright Foreign Student Program. It is part of the Fulbright Program, which since 1946 has provided grants to over 325,400 students, teachers, artists, scientists, and other professionals to study, conduct research, and teach internationally.

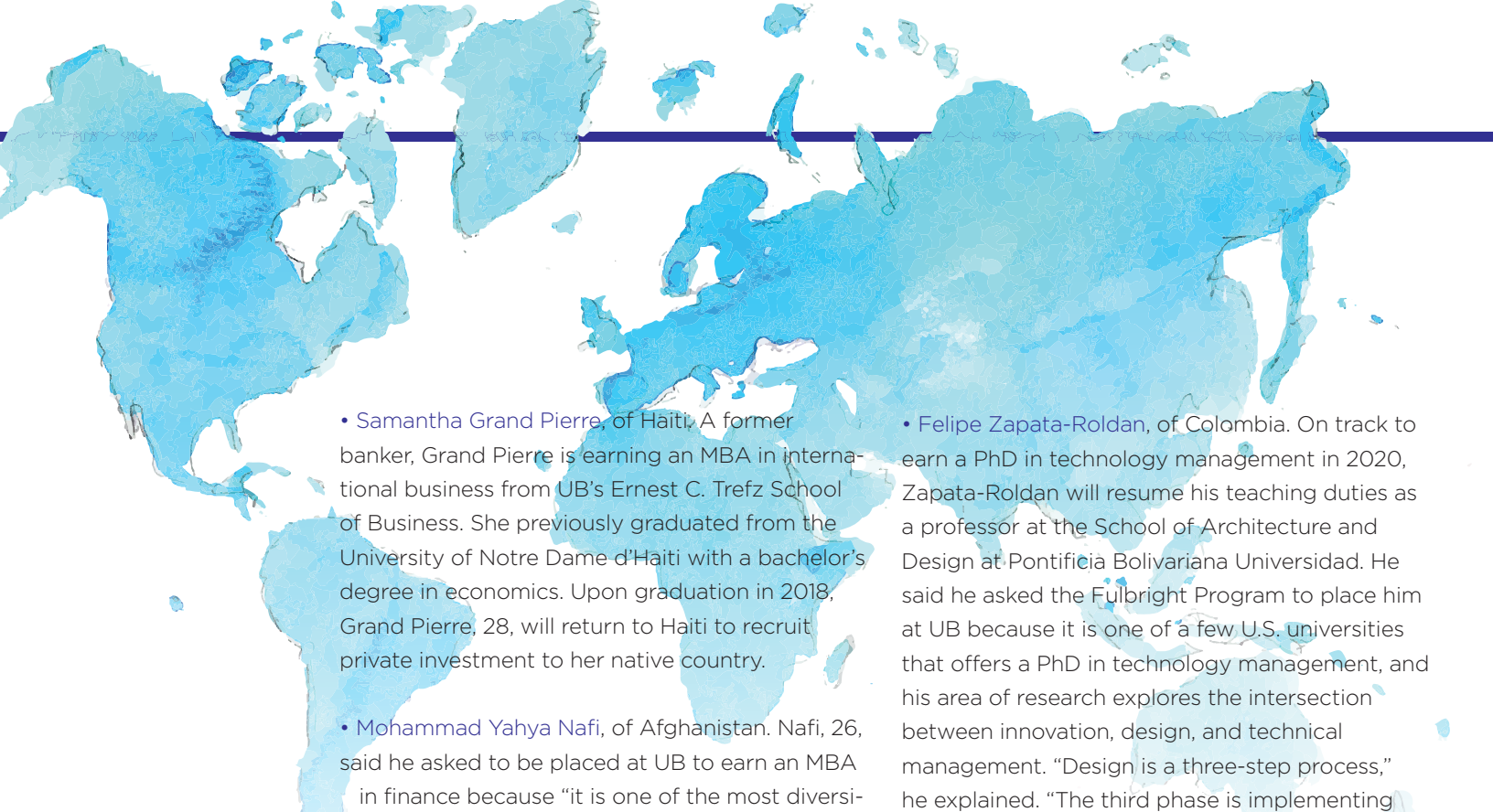
The program operates in more than 155 countries.

University President Neil Salonen welcomed the Fulbright Scholars, saying, “They represent some of the best and brightest talent around the world. We are proud to welcome them to the UB community, which has a long tradition of celebrating the expertise and talents that students bring to us from more than 40 U.S. states and 80 nations.”

### **The Fulbright Scholars at UB are:**

- Lamia BenHalim, of Libya. Before she came to UB in 2015, BenHalim co-founded and served as program coordinator for National Awareness Movement, a Tripoli-based NGO that organizes humanrights awareness campaigns. Among its most celebrated events: the four-day Tripoli Human Rights Film Festival sponsored by Amnesty International’s Movies That Matter Foundation. BenHalim is earning a Master of Science in technology management. She will graduate in May 2017 to resume work at National Awareness Movement as it works to help Libyan society.





- **Samantha Grand Pierre**, of Haiti. A former banker, Grand Pierre is earning an MBA in international business from UB's Ernest C. Trefz School of Business. She previously graduated from the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti with a bachelor's degree in economics. Upon graduation in 2018, Grand Pierre, 28, will return to Haiti to recruit private investment to her native country.

- **Mohammad Yahya Nafi**, of Afghanistan. Nafi, 26, said he asked to be placed at UB to earn an MBA in finance because "it is one of the most diversified universities. In one of my classes, there are students from 17 different countries." Upon graduation in 2018, he will return to Afghanistan, where he hopes to lecture at Kabul University and work within the Ministry of Finance to establish rural co-operative banking systems. "There is not a single bank in my village and there's a need for them," he said. Nafi holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Goa University.

- **Seifallah Mejri**, of Tunisia. Already a presence on campus, Mejri recently won the Best Venture Enterprise Award at the CT Business Plan Competition for Clean Phosphates, a start-up he's currently developing at UB's Student Entrepreneur Center. The company plans to extract kaolin, used in the production of pharmaceuticals and other products, from phosphate waste. Mejri is earning a Master of Science in technology management. He holds a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from the National Higher School of Engineers of Tunis.

- **Felipe Zapata-Roldan**, of Colombia. On track to earn a PhD in technology management in 2020, Zapata-Roldan will resume his teaching duties as a professor at the School of Architecture and Design at Pontificia Bolivariana Universidad. He said he asked the Fulbright Program to place him at UB because it is one of a few U.S. universities that offers a PhD in technology management, and his area of research explores the intersection between innovation, design, and technical management. "Design is a three-step process," he explained. "The third phase is implementing solutions; that requires a lot of technologies." Roldan, 34, earned a bachelor's in physics engineering and a master's in engineering management from National University of Colombia.

- **Doha Sabbagh**, of Lebanon. A former bank executive who holds bachelor's degrees in chemistry and finance, Sabbagh, 28, is earning a Master of Science in global development and peace at the College of Public and International Affairs (CPIA). Upon graduation, she hopes to work with the United Nations or another NGO in the field of economic development. She said she asked the Fulbright Program to place her at CPIA because she was impressed with "the international expertise of its faculty as well as the school's unorthodox and unique" approach to teaching economic development and politics. ■



# Online programs among the best

*U.S. News & World Report* gives UB top marks for distance-learning

By Leslie Geary

Three of the University's online degree programs have been named among the top in the nation, according to the *U.S. News & World Report's* "2017 Best Online Education Programs."

UB's graduate-level Computer Information Technology (CIT) as well as its online MBA and bachelor's programs distinguished themselves by their small class sizes, trained faculty, and robust support for distance-learning students.

"UB has long been committed to creating responsive, personalized online courses that equip students with the skills they need in the marketplace. To that end, we're proud of our

rankings from *U.S. News & World Report*," said Associate Provost Aaron Perkus.

*U.S. News* based the standings on factors in five general categories: student engagement, faculty credentials and training, peer reputation, admissions selectivity, and student financial, technical and vocational support.

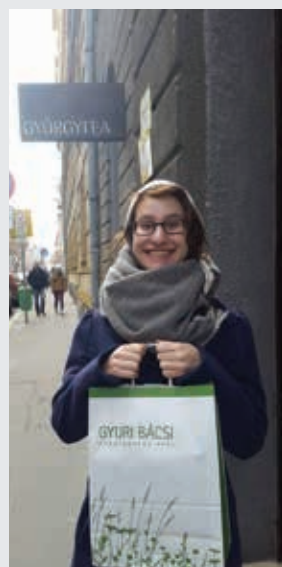
An established leader in e-learning, the University was the first to offer a graduate online degree in Connecticut. Today, its online curriculum includes more than 100 distance-learning courses. ■



# Further afield

UB student awarded U.S. State Department scholarship to study in Hungary

By Leslie Geary



**Boglarka Jordan at UB (top) and in Pecs, Hungary (bottom)**

Boglarka Jordan, a health sciences major who wants to learn more about international medical systems, has been awarded a U.S. Department of State grant to study in Hungary.

The U.S. State Department's Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship program provides funding for U.S. undergraduate students with demonstrated financial needs. Since 2001, more than 22,000 Gilman alumni have studied in 144 countries. The program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs.

The \$2000 Gilman Scholarship awarded to Jordan is helping to fund her spring 2017 semester at the University of Pecs in Pecs, Hungary. Gilman is among 100 UB students expected to participate in overseas programs this year, approximately the same number who studied or interned in 15 countries in six continents in 2016, said Brandon LaFavor, director of the Education Abroad Resource Center.



Jordan, a junior, applied to the University of Pecs because it is known for its excellent programs in the health sciences, global health, and medicine.

Meg Zayan, coordinator of undergraduate health sciences, said it was "critically beneficial" for students in the program to study abroad. Two, in fact, spent fall 2016 in Costa Rica and Korea.

"It is crucial for future health care professionals to understand that on a global basis, there must be a commitment to help nations meet the UN's health-related Sustainable Development Goals," said Zayan. "Studying overseas will expand Boglarka's understanding of this and give her a better exposure to this world."

Jordan agreed "it will be a good experience to move outside of my comfort zone and see what's out there. I'm hoping that when I come back [to UB], I can teach students about different customs and cultures of Hungary."

Jordan's desire to share her experiences reflects her involvement on campus. She currently serves as the public relations officer for the Student Government Association, the nutrition coordinator for the UB Wellness Club, and last year volunteered in food pantries during Alternative Spring Break. She also works as a UB student ambassador. ■

## Winning pitch

**After finding valuable uses for phosphate waste, one student-entrepreneur grabs the top prize at the CT Business Plan Competition**

By Leslie Geary

Seifallah Mejri, a Fulbright Scholar earning a graduate engineering degree at UB, has won the coveted Best Venture Enterprise Award at the 20th fall Connecticut Business Plan Competition for scholar-entrepreneurs.

Mejri's start-up, called Clean Phosphates, was awarded the \$1000 cash prize on December 9 among a field of 30 business proposals that were submitted by student-entrepreneurs from Yale, Quinnipiac, and other Connecticut universities.

Clean Phosphates captured the judges' attention by using a method being developed by Mejri to extract kaolin—which is used in the production of pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, porcelain, and other products—from phosphate waste.

"It's been a remarkable semester," said Mejri, 26. "I never expected to win."

He and a friend began developing Clean Phosphates back in 2011 as undergraduates who were concerned about the problems associated with phosphate mining in their country.

"The way they extract phosphates—they go to a mine, bomb it, and collect phosphates for fertilizers or chemicals or other industries. They take the biggest rocks and toss the rest. The waste, water being affected, the social problems, the way the workers are treated—it's a big social problem," Mejri explained. "My friend and I wanted to see what we could do with the waste."

Initially, they had "no idea" that phosphates contained large amounts of kaolin—a breakthrough discovery with huge market potential, Mejri added. Nonetheless, after initial work, Clean Phosphates was temporarily set aside. "We were just kids," Mejri said. "We decided to get more experience then work on the project."

Mejri, who is from Tunisia, said he rarely thought about Clean Phosphates when he arrived at UB this fall. Instead, he enrolled at the University as a Fulbright Scholar to earn a Bachelor of Science in technology management.

Nonetheless, his arrival at UB ushered in the perfect opportunity to resume work on Clean Phosphates, thanks to the Student Entrepreneur Center. The on-campus resource provided Mejri with free advising, legal and business counsel, and other resources to resume work on the start-up. ■







# Take the plunge!

UB's hardest dive on in to support World Wetlands Day on Feb. 2

By Leslie Geary

In support of World Wetlands Day on February 2, dedicated individuals around the world swam, dove, dipped, and splashed in the Aegean Sea, the Indian Ocean, and yes, even a very chilly Long Island Sound, thanks to a hardy group from the College of Naturopathic Medicine.

The annual global event seeks to raise awareness about the value of wetlands by inviting people to dive on in.

With Bridgeport temperatures averaging 38° Fahrenheit that day, there were, arguably, more temperate conditions in which to remind the public about the integral role of wetlands, but February 2 marks the date when the Convention on Wetlands was adopted in 1971.

So, with high hopes for a “fun” and “super cool” event, the College of Naturopathic team took the plunge at exactly high noon.

They were toweling off at 12:01 p.m.

“In naturopathic medicine, we talk about hydrotherapy, the application of water, both hot and cold. This is certainly an opportunity to demonstrate the application of *cold*,” said College of Naturopathic Dean Marcia Pregelbauer. ■



## Research winner

**Student Victor Cabrera is awarded a National Science Foundation grant to join top researchers in Chicago**

By Leslie Geary

Victor Cabrera, a 20-year-old biology major in his junior year at UB, has been selected by the University of Chicago's Department of Molecular Genetics to participate in its National Science Foundation-funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates program (NSF-REU) this summer.

The prestigious NSF-REU program supports undergraduate students in mathematics, science, or engineering and assigns them to host institutions to participate in ongoing research.

Cabrera was awarded a \$5250 NSF-REU grant.

The son of parents "who loved science," Cabrera said he grew up talking about the natural world with his mother and father in their sylvan Guilford,

Connecticut, community. "We were always in nature, talking about nature, and that shaped my interest," he said. Fascinated with how systems interact, Cabrera became enamored with biology, particularly multicellular organisms known as *eukaryotes*.

"Those are a domain of life that have very cool, very complex gene regulatory networks—that's what I'm interested in studying. My ultimate goal is to work in the field of synthetic biology. Using lab techniques, you can synthesize new functions of organisms," he said.

An honors student, Cabrera serves on the executive board of the UB Biology Club, works as a TA/lab assistant for six undergraduate chemistry and biology classes, is a student ambassador for the



Office of Admissions, and previously served as senator for the SGA (Student Government Association).

Dr. Kathleen Engelmann, Cabrera's adviser and a professor in the Department of Biology, and chemistry Professor Dr. Amanda Petrus, a former NSF-REU participant, wrote letters supporting his application.

"He really is an amazing student," said Engelmann. "One of the things about Victor that I think will make him a great researcher is his huge range of interests. He's fascinated by the molecular-level details of living things and by the broad pattern of evolution spanning millions of years. I'm very impressed by the way he incorporated both of these areas into his research interests." ■

## Medical mission

**Making a difference in Central America**

By Leslie Geary



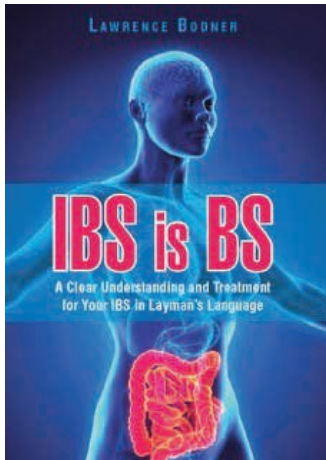
Physician Assistant Institute Adjunct Professor Dr. Monica Lockwood and School of Nursing Associate Dean Dr. Linda Wagner, along with 17 of their students and support staff, recently traveled to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, on a medical mission.

Host families welcomed the team and provided housing for everyone. UB nursing and PAI students volunteered at local health clinics, a shelter, and at a home for the elderly, where they conducted blood pressure and diabetes screenings. The UB team also ran health



workshops and delivered more than 20 suitcases brimming with donated medical supplies that they had purchased after hosting fundraisers.

"The group gained a broad understanding of health issues affecting a population outside of our country," said Lockwood. "It was an amazing and rewarding experience for everyone." ■

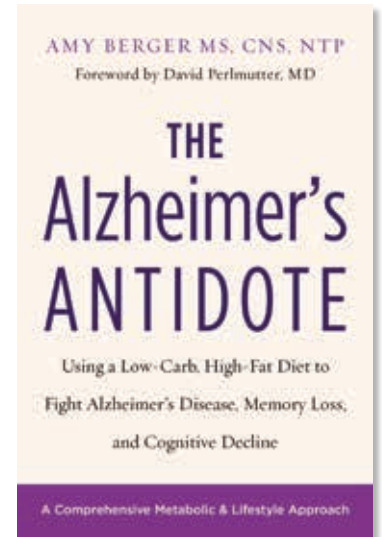
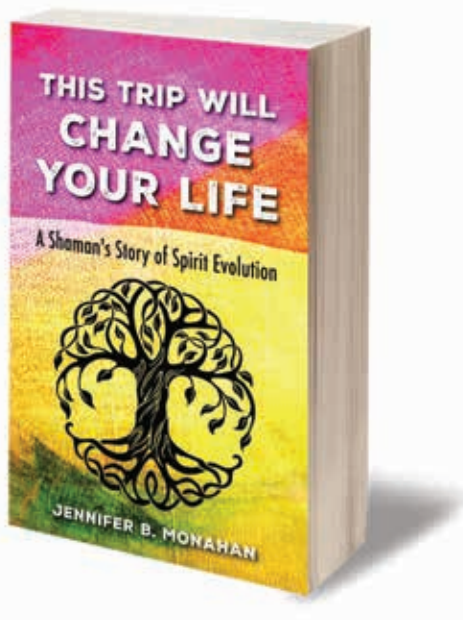


An estimated 70 million Americans suffer from some degree of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and other intestinal disorders. Among them: UB alumnus **Lawrence Bodner '69**, author of *IBS is BS* (Archway Publishing, 2016).

Geared to patients, not professionals, Bodner's book translates medical facts about IBS into easily digestible information for readers seeking help and information about potential cures.

"After years of suffering on my own and never being able to find adequate help from numerous doctors, I found a way to return to normal life," said Bodner. "IBS is not a pleasant topic, but having a better understanding of the condition by learning about the digestion process makes it possible to implement positive lifestyle changes and treatment."

Alumna **Jennifer Monahan '89** was a business-strategy consultant who always felt connected to the spirit world. It wasn't until a spontaneous trip to Yucatan, Mexico, and a chance meeting with a Mayan shaman that she realized how connected she was. The trip inspired Monahan to make big changes, and today she serves clients as a Mayan-trained shaman. Her transformative journey is captured in her debut book, *This Trip Will Change Your Life: A Shaman's Story of Spirit Evolution* (She Write Press, 2016). Bestbooks.com recently named the autobiography a Best Books Award Finalist in its Spirituality Category.



Is there a connection between sugar and memory loss? Human Nutrition Institute alumna **Amy Berger '12** believes there might be, and she devoted her master's dissertation at UB to study if Alzheimer's disease could be triggered by a "systematic metabolic problem rather than some unknowable . . . illness localized solely to the brain." Thanks to her research, Berger feels confident that there are steps we can take to fight memory loss. She's shared her findings in her first book, *The Alzheimer's Antidote—Using a Low-Carb, High-Fat Diet to Fight Alzheimer's Disease, Memory Loss, and Cognitive Decline* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2016).

—Leslie Geary



## Networker extraordinaire



**Keith Hassell**, UB's director of career development, groans when he thinks about his first job search out of college. "I didn't have resources. I remember the anxiety," he says. "That's why it's great being a resource for students at UB. I love working with them, and seeing them reach their goals."

In fact, Hassell is so enthusiastic about putting people to work that the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) asked him if he would run a young professionals group for its members.

They didn't have to ask twice. As it happened, Hassell had already started an informal group for young professionals in the spring of 2016 so he was happy to collaborate with the BRBC. More than 50 showed up for the Bridgeport Regional Young Professional Group's first weekly networking event, dubbed "Thrive Thursday," at the Hub and Spoke restaurant in Bridgeport. In addition to Thrive meet-and-greets, the group hosts career-development workshops and ongoing community service activities for its members.

Hassell's work at the University and the Bridgeport Regional Young Professionals Group may be two separate endeavors, but the way he sees it, networking creates plenty of opportunity for everyone.

"When I hosted my informal group for young professionals last year, I was able to get two internships for our students. It definitely helps my work here," he said. ■ - **Leslie Geary**



## Now starring . . .

Real-world experiences help make classroom learning relevant. Just ask Professor **Ian McDonald**. When he's not teaching stagecraft, McDonald prepares for several roles as an actor. This fall, he was cast in the Noël Coward musical *Hoi Polloi*. He is playing five different characters.

McDonald joined the UB faculty earlier this year. In addition to teaching, he is the University's technical director for major performances of the Music and Performing Arts program.

"I try to keep my students entertained as well as informed," he says. "I find they tend to retain information if they are having a good time learning, so I try to keep my classroom a little light. If I feel I'm starting to lose my audience, I fall back on my old improv training and pivot a bit to something that is more engaging but still on point." ■ - **L.G.**

## Award for CPIA dean



The Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently awarded College of Public and International Affairs (CPIA) Dean **Dr. Thomas Ward** with a research fellowship at the Academia Sinica Institute of Modern History in Taiwan.

During his three-month position as a visiting research fellow, Ward focused

on the effects of Japanese colonialism on Taiwan and Korea.

"This is a great opportunity to conduct research and engage key experts in my field of interest here in Taiwan," said Ward. ■ - **L.G.**



## Entrepreneur of the Year

**Elena Cahill** wears many hats.

She's president of Globele Energy, LLC, a commercial and industrial energy-conservation, generation and brokerage-consulting firm she founded in 2009. She's a senior lecturer at the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business. And she's a pivotal driver of economic growth, according to the Quinnipiac Chamber of Commerce, which honored Cahill with its Entrepreneur of the Year Award at its Women's Achievement Awards luncheon on October 20.

That same day, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) presented Cahill with a certificate of special recognition for her contributions to business.

Picking Cahill for the Entrepreneur of the Year Award was a "no brainer," said Anthony Rescigno, president of the Quinnipiac and Greater New Haven Chambers of Commerce. "She truly is a problem-solver," he said.

Cahill '87, '91 earned her bachelor's and law degrees from UB. She then practiced commercial law from 1991-2000 before working as a consultant for entrepreneurs.

She currently teaches Business Law and Management classes in the MBA program and in 2015 was instrumental in founding the Student Entrepreneur Center at UB. ■ - L.G.

## New VP for University Relations

The University has appointed **Robert P. Cottle** as Vice President for University Relations. In his new role, he will oversee various development and fundraising campaigns at the University as it prepares to undertake the first phase of a newly announced Campus Master Plan.

Cottle most recently served in two capacities at Fairfield University, first as director of corporate relations from 2006-2010, and most recently as assistant vice president for development, from 2010 until this month.

His experience in higher education includes leadership positions at Sacred Heart University, where from 1999 to 2005, he served as director of alumni



relations and annual giving, and from 1990 to 1999, was senior assistant director of admissions.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Sacred Heart University in 1990. ■ - L.G.

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# Focus on: Alex Charmoz '12



“My dream is to combine what I love—being outside, climbing, backpacking—with medicine.”

**Background:** When Alex Charmoz, 32, graduated from Staples High School in Westport, CT, he felt strongly that it would be fruitless to apply to college until he knew what he wanted to do with his life. So he enlisted in the army, serving in a Special Operations Unit with the First Ranger Battalion. An avid outdoorsman, the rigors of the military nonetheless proved to be transformative, triggering in Charmoz an interest in physical fitness that would evolve into a passion for medicine. After being honorably discharged, Charmoz returned to Connecticut, where he met Dr. Joe Muscolino, a longtime lecturer at the University. Muscolino encouraged Charmoz to apply to UB with the goal of becoming a doctor.

The rest is recent history. Charmoz earned his bachelor's in biology from UB in 2012 before graduating from UConn School of Medicine in 2016. He is currently completing his residency in emergency medicine at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Hartford, UConn, and St. Francis Hospitals in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Recent Accomplishments:** Charmoz attended Fairfield Country Day School through ninth grade and recently returned to his alma mater to talk to boys about his decision to delay college. A few months later, he sold his first article to *Climbing* magazine. “I’m not necessarily someone who’s going to be satisfied doing the same thing. As time goes on, I’d like to do more writing, teaching, maybe some research,” he said.

**You took time off after high school to serve in the army. How did that experience shape what you do today?** It was the toughest thing I’ve ever done! It was right out of high school, and we trained long days, every day. It helped me grow up pretty fast. Ultimately, I was only in for two years; I had knee injury and I got an honorable discharge. But it was a wake-up call in terms of jumping into adulthood right out of college. I wasn’t ready for college. I didn’t see a purpose in going because I didn’t know what I wanted to study. I had no direction. I thought the army would be different and exciting. It was the total culture shock I was craving.

**Alex Charmoz, when he assisted at the Human Anatomy Lab at UB. The experience “absolutely” helped him prep for medical school, he said.**



**What sparked your interest in**

**medicine?** I was in super-good shape after the military, and I wanted to stay that way. I started working out at different gyms and considered pursuing a fitness track. That’s when I met [Dr.] Joe Muscolino. He started teaching me about different muscles, bones, organs. He was the one who said, “You’re interested in this stuff. Keep pursuing it.” Joe signed me up for one of his classes at UB, and then I offered to help him set up for his labs. I was so blown away by his knowledge and passion. It went from an interest in fitness to an interest in medicine and something I wanted to do with my life. I applied to UB to get my biology degree.

**Once you were at UB, you worked as an assistant in the Human Anatomy Lab.**

**Was that helpful in terms of preparing for medical school?** Absolutely! We do an entire year’s worth of anatomy and dissection in the first year of medical school. I was already really comfortable in the lab. I still use the anatomy lab every day at work.

And the faculty support at UB—it was so much; I was blown away by how available the professors were. How close I got to them. They want to take the kids who want to be there and let them grow. I’ll never forget the opportunities I got to do research and work as a tutor and help set up the labs. If I had been somewhere bigger, I might have gotten

lost, but the setting at UB was awesome. They even came to my graduation at medical school!

**You recently published your first piece in *Climbing* magazine. Do you see your interest in the outdoors dovetailing with your career in medicine?**

Working in a hospital is doing emergency medicine at its core. But with more and more people getting into remote outdoor activities, there’s a need for providers who are trained to work in the backcountry. My dream is to combine what I love—being outside, climbing, backpacking—with medicine. After my residency, I’d like to do a fellowship in wilderness medicine. That will qualify me to work in the National Park Services system or at base camps and provide care for people who are doing stuff from locations that are far away from hospitals.

**Most valuable lesson so far?** My dad is a businessman. My mother’s an artist. I ended up coming along this path gradually on my own. I’m not sure how it ended up this way.

I gave a speech to the student body at FCDS [Fairfield Country Day School] about not feeling pressured to rush into a career after high school. I don’t know what would have happened if I had rushed into college. I felt like growing up in Fairfield County, there’s a lot of pressure to get out there and make a



lot of money, and a lot of kids feel that pressure at a young age. I was fortunate to take time and figure it out.

I think that’s a great life lesson: try to find something to stay motivated about. If you’re not doing something you really enjoy, it’s going to be a tough path. It’s really worth figuring things out. That’s my message. As a kid growing up, you do things automatically because you’re supposed to. My parents were probably a little worried about me, but ultimately, my family has been great about everything. ■

— Interview by Leslie Geary

“If you’re not doing something you really enjoy, it’s going to be a tough path.”

# Alumni Lines

Would you like to share news of your own or nominate an alumnus to be interviewed for a "Focus On" interview? We're interested in what you're doing, and so are your classmates! Contact: Knightlines, Cortright Hall, 219 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604 or [knightlines@bridgeport.edu](mailto:knightlines@bridgeport.edu). Be sure to include your full name, contact information, and class year.

## 1960

**Dallas Molerin** has been busier than ever, taking nature photographs for a number of exhibitions. His photo, "Near and Far" was shown at the 37th annual photography show at the Carriage Barn Arts Center in New Canaan through January. It was also featured at the Bendheim Gallery in Greenwich. Molerin, an industrial design alumnus, first picked up a camera at 10. Although he never stopped taking photographs throughout his career at IBM and Cravath & Swain, a New York law firm, he has had more time behind his camera since retiring. "If you think of photography as an art form, it's very technology dependent."



"The event gave my family and friends the opportunity to train and participate in a challenging athletic event while helping my University in a small way," said Fries. "Emily and I have run several marathons raising money for charity so we felt this event only being 13.1 miles would be quite manageable. Mother Nature had a different plan, and it poured the entire day, making this far more difficult than any full 26.2-mile marathon we ever ran. That's the time you stay focused on the cause. UB means the world to me, and we are happy to help in this small way. I encourage other alumni to use these events to benefit charities and keep UB in mind."

## 1973

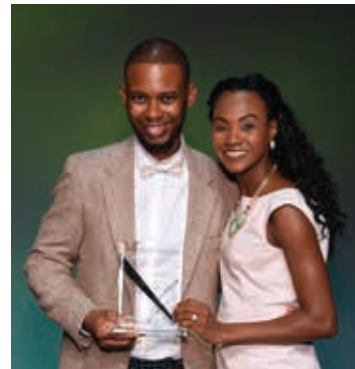
Once a Purple Knight, always a Purple Knight for Board of Trustee **Mark Fries '73**. Fries, a former member of the men's soccer and golf teams in the early '70s, rounded up family and friends to raise money to support UB Athletics. On a rainy November 19, Fries and his son-in-law, Ben Elder, daughter-in-law Lia Arnzen, and family friend Pat Monahan raised \$1000 on behalf of UB student-athletes by completing the Peacock Gap Trail Half Marathon in the China Camp section of San Rafael, CA. The racecourse meandered some 1,850 feet up through the Pacific foothills, offering spectacular, albeit drenched, views of the Bay Area.

## 1993

**Michael E. 'Mickey' Herbert** has been appointed president and chief executive officer of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council. "I am enormously excited by the prospect of promoting the economic well-being of the Greater Bridgeport business community," Herbert said. He received an honorary degree from UB in 1993.

## 1998

**Aytekin Tank** has a lot to be proud about. Tank, a computer science alumnus, launched JotForm in 2006. Now the company has over 2.5 million users worldwide, employs over 75 people, and was recognized as one of the "Best Privately-Owned Companies in America" by *Entrepreneur Magazine* in the fall of 2016. Hats off to you, Mr. Tank!



## 2007

As a naturopathic expert promoting wellness for more than 15 years, Dr. **Sarah LoBisco** ND is dedicated to researching healthful, natural cures. Now she's shared her findings in the *Townsend Letter*, a much-respected journal for naturopathic physicians. Her article, "Sniffing out Pain | Part 1 Olfaction's Complex Connections of Emotions, Memory, and Pain Perception," was selected for the cover article. LoBisco earned her degree from the College of Naturopathic Medicine, and treats patients at her practice in New York.

## 2008

**Nathalie Desruisseaux Alabre** has much to celebrate. She and her husband **Rey Alabre** recently won the National Franchisee of the Year Award from H&R Block after outpacing more than 100 other high-performing H&R Block sites. Their franchise in Bridgeport posts the greatest number of returning clients, growth in returns prepared,

highest customer-satisfaction rates, and other critical indices, according to the tax-preparation company.

The couple, who met at UB, are actively involved in the community, contributing to the Fraternal Order of Police Assistance Fund, Connecticut Food Bank, Bridgeport Public Library, Salvation Army, and the Bridgeport Public Schools. Because of their service and leadership roles in business, the couple was also presented with the Mission Possible Award by from the Bridgeport Regional Business Council.

School of Education alumnus **Ernie DiStasi** has been named Middle School Assistant of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Schools. DiStasi was nominated for the award by his colleagues at Seymour Middle School, where he's served as assistant principal since 2012 and previously taught English Language Arts. DiStasi earned a Master of Science in Education from UB in 2008 before completing his Six-Year Degree in 2009.





Known for his ebullience and energy, DiStasi is credited for spearheading highly successful programs, such as Bound for Success, a mentoring campaign that pairs elementary and middle school students with community members who serve as role models and mentors. DiStasi also teaches Student Diversity at UB School of Education as an adjunct professor.

## 2010

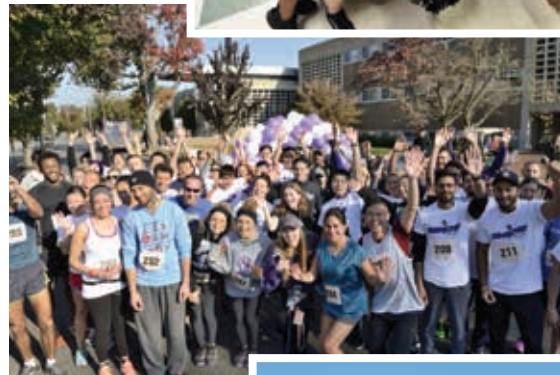
Accusations of press leaks and pointed fingers are nothing new in Washington. Nonetheless, questions remain. What safeguards are in place for whistleblowers? What's the difference between a whistleblower and a leaker? Do they have the same protections? To make sense of it all, C-Span invited alumna **Elizabeth Hempowicz**, who is policy counsel at the Project on Government Oversight, to talk about whistleblower laws. "Going to the press doesn't automatically make you a leaker," she

told *Washington Journal* host Geoff Bennett on February 18. "Whistleblowers are people who go through proper channels to report wrongdoing." Hempowicz earned a B.A. in International Political Economy and Diplomacy at UB and a Juris Doctorate at American University Washington College of Law.



Spc. **Natasha Mitchells Nicholson** continues to go above and beyond. In November, U.S. Army Central recognized her for earning honor graduate status at the Warrior Leader Course. An honor graduate must complete the monthlong course without a negative counseling and rank within the top 10 percent of the class, which is typically made up of 80 to 90 soldiers. "It's always good to know the most senior people are watching and approve of my accomplishments," Nicholson told U.S. Army Central Public Affairs officials.

**Alumni helped to make the Homecoming bigger than better than ever during October 14-16. Highlights included pep rallies, a 5K race to support the Alumni Scholarship Fund, dedication of the UB Veteran's Flagpole, an alumni soccer game, and a special musical tribute to professor emeritus Neil Slater, who directed jazz studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s.**



## Getting by, with help from our alumni!

**The UB Alumni Association joins Student Programming and Student Affairs to host the (Not Quite) Midnight Breakfast on behalf of students during final exams**

By Leslie Geary

Alumnus Miguel Arroyo graduated nearly a decade ago. Nonetheless, he still remembers the annual (Not-Quite) Midnight Breakfast, an all-you-can-eat pancakes-and-eggs extravaganza meant to encourage students as they embark on days of grueling testing.

“It was an opportunity to take time from studying and unwind with friends. I appreciated the effort people made to give us the breakfast,” Arroyo '07, a member of the UB Alumni Association, said as he dropped chocolate candies into hundreds of snack bags.

It was mid-December, and Arroyo was flanked by other members of the Alumni Association in the parlor of Cortright Hall. Their mission: to uphold the (Not-Quite) Midnight Breakfast tradition by assembling 600 finals survival bags that would be distributed to students at the breakfast on December 12. The event was co-sponsored by Student Affairs and the Student Programming Board (SPB),

“This is the kind of event that really emphasizes community at the University,” Assistant Dean of Students Craig Lennon said. “Our students really appreciate it. They can let off steam and have a lot of fun.”

Preparing the goodie bags seemed just as much fun for Arroyo and alumni board members Anne-Fried Drath '09, '11; Senad Ibrahimbegovic '11, '13; Vitoria Tenzyk '11; and Chairman Dennis Brotherton '86.

Working at a clip that would put North Pole elves to shame, they stuffed chocolate candies, granola bars, packs of hot cocoa mix, and lots of UB stickers into bags that were adorned with a small tag and poem Tenzyk had written to inspire test takers:



'Twas the week before finals  
When all through UB  
Not a student was stirring, could it really be?

The halls were all quiet and campus serene,  
Students hoped that their focus would be  
Noticed by the dean.

With a little more studying  
And cracking your books  
We know you'll do well.  
You'll be more than a rook,

Believe in yourself and know you are bright,  
Do well on your finals, be a proud  
Purple Knight!



## Black Student Alliance plans next triennial reunion, Oct. 13-15, 2017 in Philadelphia

Popular weekend includes historic tours, cruise dinner, and more

### By Dr. Gerald DeVaughn '75

Black Student Alliance alumni, family, and friends invite others to join its upcoming triennial reunion from October 13-15 in Philadelphia.

The 2017 reunion begins with a reception in the “Glass Room” of the historic Penn View Hotel in Old City Philadelphia. On Saturday, the group will have a private tour of historic Philadelphia. In the afternoon there will be options for self-guided explorations of the many historic sites in the Old City. The evening will be highlighted with a cruise on the *Spirit of Philadelphia*, which will include food, drinks, dancing, and time with other UB BSA Alumni.

The weekend culminates on Sunday morning with a breakfast symposium on the topic, “Bridging the Achievement Gap.” It will be led by alumnus Dennis Walcott '73, former chancellor of education of the City of New York.

BSA alumni hosted their first gathering in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania back in 1990.

It was such a success, that they vowed to meet again, but it wasn't until 2003 that they hosted their second event. Wildly successful, the group vowed to meet every three years, and, true to its word, the BSA has convened every three years at locations along the East Coast, from as far south as Miami up to Bridgeport.

The most recent reunion, held near Washington, D.C., included a tour of the White House and other historic sites as well as a symposium, “Deadly Force-When is it Legally Justified?” featuring alumni panelists James Swain '75, a former federal prosecutor and author, and Judge Sheridan Moore '75, of the Connecticut Superior Court.

The UB BSA Reunion Committee would like to increase our contact list. If interested, please go to [ub.bsa.reunion@gmail.com](mailto:ub.bsa.reunion@gmail.com) and leave your e-mail address to be included on future mailings and registration materials. ■

Members of the 2017 Reunion Committee include Dr. Mike DeShields '75, Dr. Gerald DeVaughn '75, Pamela Hall-King '79, Ivan Kimble '77, Judy Seigler '78, and James Swain, Esq. '75.

## UB Trustee Ernest C. Trefz dies at 84

The University remembers one of its staunchest supporters. His example inspired, and his generosity opened doors for generations of students.

By Leslie Geary

Ernest “Ernie” C. Trefz, whose decades of generosity and wise counsel as a member of the Board of Trustees were instrumental in guiding the campus from financial turbulence to become a robust center of academic excellence and entrepreneurship, died on Saturday, February 25. He was 84.

Mr. Trefz served continuously as a member of the Board of Trustees since 1980.

It would be difficult to envision a more challenging time for Mr. Trefz to begin his tenure. Within the decade, a series of regional recessions battered cities, institutions, and various sectors throughout the northeast.

The city of Bridgeport, which filed for bankruptcy in 1991, and the University were not immune from the financial turbulence, but Mr. Trefz’s steadying presence on the Board of Trustees proved to be critically important as UB reversed course, said UB President Neil Salonen.

“While many industry leaders and others stepped away, Ernie never wavered with his commitment to the city and the institutions within the city,” said President Salonen. “His intent was always for the good of the University and the city, and we have benefitted enormously because of it. UB, like so many others in the Bridgeport region, will miss his leadership and his ceaseless loyalty.”

Today, the University’s enrollment tops 5700 students, the highest level in 30 years. More than \$86.5 million in capital improvements have helped to transform the campus in the past decade, and new programs, including many championed by Mr. Trefz, are thriving.

In 2014, thanks to Mr. Trefz’s generosity and vision, UB opened the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business, announcing that the curriculum would place greater emphasis on entrepreneurship. Gleaming classrooms, lecture halls, and state-of-the-art technologies all support new online MBA



business courses—which earlier this year were named among the best by *U.S. News & World Report*—as well as new concentrations in the MBA program. Additionally, the school has hired faculty from industry to serve as “entrepreneurs in residence” at its new Student Entrepreneur Center, also funded by Mr. Trefz.

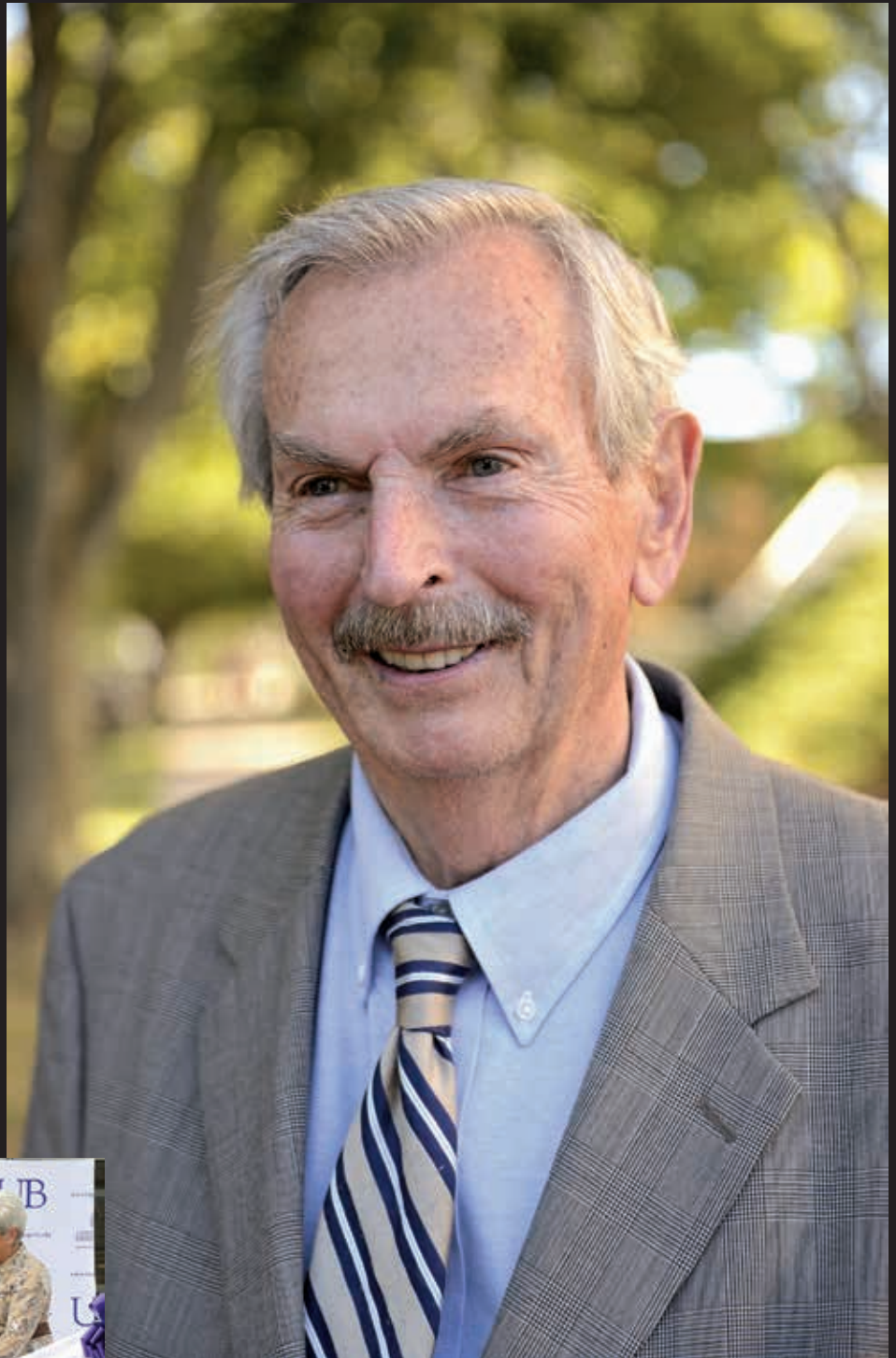
The business school’s new focus reflects the impressive arc of Mr. Trefz’s life.

The son of German immigrants, Mr. Trefz grew up helping his father deliver meat and cold cuts to family-run stores in Bridgeport. Though he could not afford to go to college himself, he nonetheless parlayed his work experience, customer-service savvy, and entrepreneurial drive to open the state’s first McDonald’s restaurant, eventually becoming one of the region’s most important business moguls and philanthropists.

Always aware of his humble beginnings, Mr. Trefz made sure to speak to students when he came to campus, often sharing his life story to encourage them as they pursued their own dreams.

“I’m honored and honestly humbled that the UB business school will carry my name,” Mr. Trefz told Governor Dannel P. Malloy and other dignitaries at the business school’s groundbreaking ceremony on November 20, 2013. “I will be here to support the school and its mission in every way I can.” ■

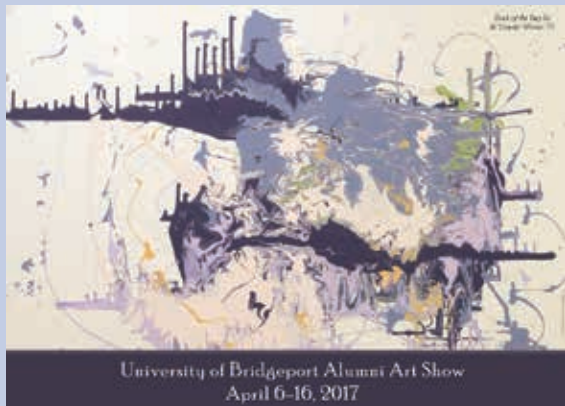
“Ernie never wavered with his commitment to the city and the institutions in it.”



From left: UB Board Co-Chairman The Honorable Frank N. Zullo, Esq. joined Trustee Ernie Trefz, Joan Trefz, and Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman to open the Ernest C. Trefz School of Business on September 9, 2014

## On View

Alumni artists featured at annual exhibition



Works by over 30 alumni will be featured in the 2017 Alumni Art Show at the Schelfhauadt Gallery from April 6 to 16. Located at the Arnold Bernhard Center, 84 Iranistan Avenue, Bridgeport, the gallery is open weekdays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday.



## Soccer Highlight

Women's team captures four out of five awards

By Chuck Sadowski

For the second consecutive year, the women's soccer team remained the biggest winner of the East Coast Conference, capturing four of the ECC's five major Conference Awards for top scholar-athletes and coaching.

In an impressive repeat performance, senior Nicola Worthington was named Player of the Year while sophomore Jennifer Wendelius won Goalkeeper of the Year.

Idoia Agirre won her first Offensive Player of the Year award from the ECC.

Worthington anchored the Bridgeport defense that shut out six of eight conference opponents and allowed only four goals in conference play. She was no slouch on the offensive end either, scoring four goals and dishing off 10 assists on the season.

Wendelius finished with a 10-2-0 mark in the regular season and was near the top of the ECC leader board in all statistical categories. She ranked second in the ECC with a 0.70 goals against average and topped the conference with a .868 save percentage. Her save percentage was among the national leaders as well, coming in at No. 23.

Agirre wrapped up the regular season with an ECC-high 23 goals and 50 points. ■



# Nothing to Lose

How alumna Shilla Omuriwe Buyungo went for it, and won big, when she agreed to become the first woman to coach a men's volleyball team in Uganda

By Leslie Geary



Alumna Shilla Omuriwe Buyungo '05, '09 is standing patiently in a conference room at Whalstrom Library, waiting for a photographer to direct her. But there's a problem. There's not much time to find the perfect setting for the impromptu photo shoot. In fact, she'd only stopped by to say hello to friends at her alma mater. "I'm not dressed up," she says.

What to do? There's a colorful painting that could make a pretty backdrop, but it hangs high above a large sideboard and Buyungo is also eight months pregnant. No worries. Buyungo happily obliges. Hop! Before the photographer removes his lens cap, she's sitting on top of the sideboard, beaming a megawatt smile.

"Oh! I like that!" she says, when he shows her the digital image moments later.

Boundless enthusiasm and athletic grace—both are hallmark Buyungo. She was introduced to volleyball in high school, threw herself into "focusing really hard" on developing her skills, and then played for the Purple Knights while she was earning a master's degree in counseling with a concentration in human resource development. She later served as UB's assistant women's volleyball coach while she was earning her MBA.

Upon graduation, Buyungo returned home to Uganda, but she continued to play the game she loved at Kampala Amateur Volleyball Club (KAVC).

And then, the unexpected.

In 2012, the KAVC men's volleyball team asked her to be their coach. If she accepted, she would become the first female coach ever to manage a top men's volleyball team in Uganda.

"At first, I thought, 'Are they serious?!' But I had nothing to lose. I've played the game. I had been an assistant coach at UB, so I went for it," she recalls.

Her second year on the job, the men's team won the National Volleyball League Championship. It was its first national title since 2010, and the public went wild.

"Shilla Omuriwe Buyungo is proof that Margaret Thatcher was right when she quipped that sometimes the best man for the job is a woman," *New Vision* newspaper reported.

Buyungo remembers her players "carrying me all over the place" when they won the national crown. "I was in a haze." Today, the novelty of being Uganda's only female volleyball coach has diminished. She and the team have found a steady pace. "We have a very good pool of players. They just needed someone to focus them, which is what I did that first year. Now they understand what I want them to do to succeed," says Buyungo.

As for her own game, Buyungo still plays "for fun" with a veteran's women's amateur team. And she and her husband, volleyball player and fellow KAVC coach Peter Buyungo, are committed to raising the next generation of players. Their daughters Peytyn, 5, and Petra, 7, are in a children's volleyball training camp that is run by KAVC.

"I just want to pass on my passion," says Buyungo. "That's what is exciting for me." ■

# Taekwondo Team medals at US Open International

**UB student-athletes return from Las Vegas with silver and bronze**

By Leslie Geary

Call it the Silver and Bronze Age for the taekwondo team after medaling at the 26th annual U.S. Open International Taekwondo Championship in Las Vegas. Student-athletes captured prizes in three events between January 30 to February 4.

They were coached by Dr. Yong Bum Kim, chairman of the Martial Arts Studies Program at the College of Public and International Affairs, who called the championships “very competitive.”

A major annual event in the sport, the International Taekwondo Championship attracted more than 2000 athletes from 63 countries, who competed in a variety of age and class divisions.

UB student-athletes vied for prizes in the *poome sae*, or form, division. A form is a series of techniques, such as blocks or kicks, that are combined in specific patterns. As athletes advance through the ranks, patterns become lengthier and more complex.

Gunsoo Kim captured the silver medal out of a crowded field of 33 competitors in the Under-30 Individual Form competition.

Gunsoo Kim and Hyeun Kim, won the silver medal in the Under-30 Pair Form competition, which had a total field of 20 teams.

Hyunwoon Kim, Gunsoo Kim and Hyeonjong Ahn captured the bronze medal for the Under-30 male team. A total of five teams competed in that division.

Although martial arts study is well established in academic life overseas, UB is the first U.S. university to offer a B.A. in Martial Arts Studies. Combining a range of liberal arts courses with martial arts practice, the program incorporates the historical and psychological dimensions of martial arts as well as other aspects of the sport. ■





# Back on Top

How Kim Kunert got her groove back

By Toby Burns

Imagine recovering from a routine spinal surgery, only to find that the pain that sent you under the knife is getting worse instead of better — so bad you're having trouble just moving around.

Then imagine being told that the reason for your continuing pain is that during the operation a shard of metal broke off a medical device and now sits millimeters away from your spinal cord.



Now picture yourself a year later, sprinting down an 80-foot alleyway of carpeting in front of several thousand cheering gymnastics fans, launching yourself ten feet into the air while twisting and flipping, and then landing almost without a hitch.

University of Bridgeport gymnast Kimberly Kunert doesn't have to do much imagining when it comes to such a scenario — she did it.

The story of her long and triumphant recovery reached a thrilling climax on February 20, when the UB women's gymnastics team took on Division I UCLA and Utah State at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion in Westwood, Los Angeles.

More than just a chance to compete, the UCLA meet was a miniature homecoming for Kunert, who's a Southern California native. It was an opportunity to show off in front of hometown friends and members of her local gym everything she'd learned during her four seasons at UB.

“Her passion for the sport is incredible, and she's the hardest worker on the team.”

-Coach Byron Knox

“She didn't know if she would ever do gymnastics again,” Kunert's mother, Kryssie Chandler, said in an interview during the meet. “And look at her now. Here she is.”

As a lifelong athlete and gymnast, Kunert had experienced minor back issues for years and had always competed through the discomfort, but once she reached the college level, the pain became too much to ignore.

An MRI during her freshman year revealed a benign mass on her spine that would have to be removed if she wanted to keep competing. Kunert and her mother set a surgery date for August, 2014, in La Jolla, California.

“There was immediate relief afterwards,” Chandler recalled. “We thought, ‘Oh, good. This fixed the problem.’ And it was supposed to be a quick recovery.”

But it wasn't. In the weeks that followed, Kunert's back began hurting more and more. Even worse, her range of motion—so essential to a gymnast's ability to perform—was contracting instead of expanding. A month after the surgery, she couldn't even bend over to tie her shoes.

“I've been injured before,” Kunert said during a quick interview in between warm-up exercises at Pauley Pavilion.

Not simply injured: Kunert competed at the California State Championships during high school in 2010 with a broken ankle. At the time, she demanded that her cast be cut off so she could perform her routine on the balance beam, perhaps the sport's most unforgiving event. The performance recalled Kerri Strug's historic vault at the 1996 Olympics during which she had to land on her own broken ankle, miraculously sticking her landing.

An ultrasound uncovered that a piece of an instrument used to remove the spinal growth had broken off and was lodged under the skin, next to the backbone, Chandler said.

“They used a probe that splays out with metal spikes, and one of those spikes had broken off and was sitting next to the spine — exactly where Kim was having the pain.”

Kunert's medical providers did not return requests for information, but a second surgery was immediately scheduled.

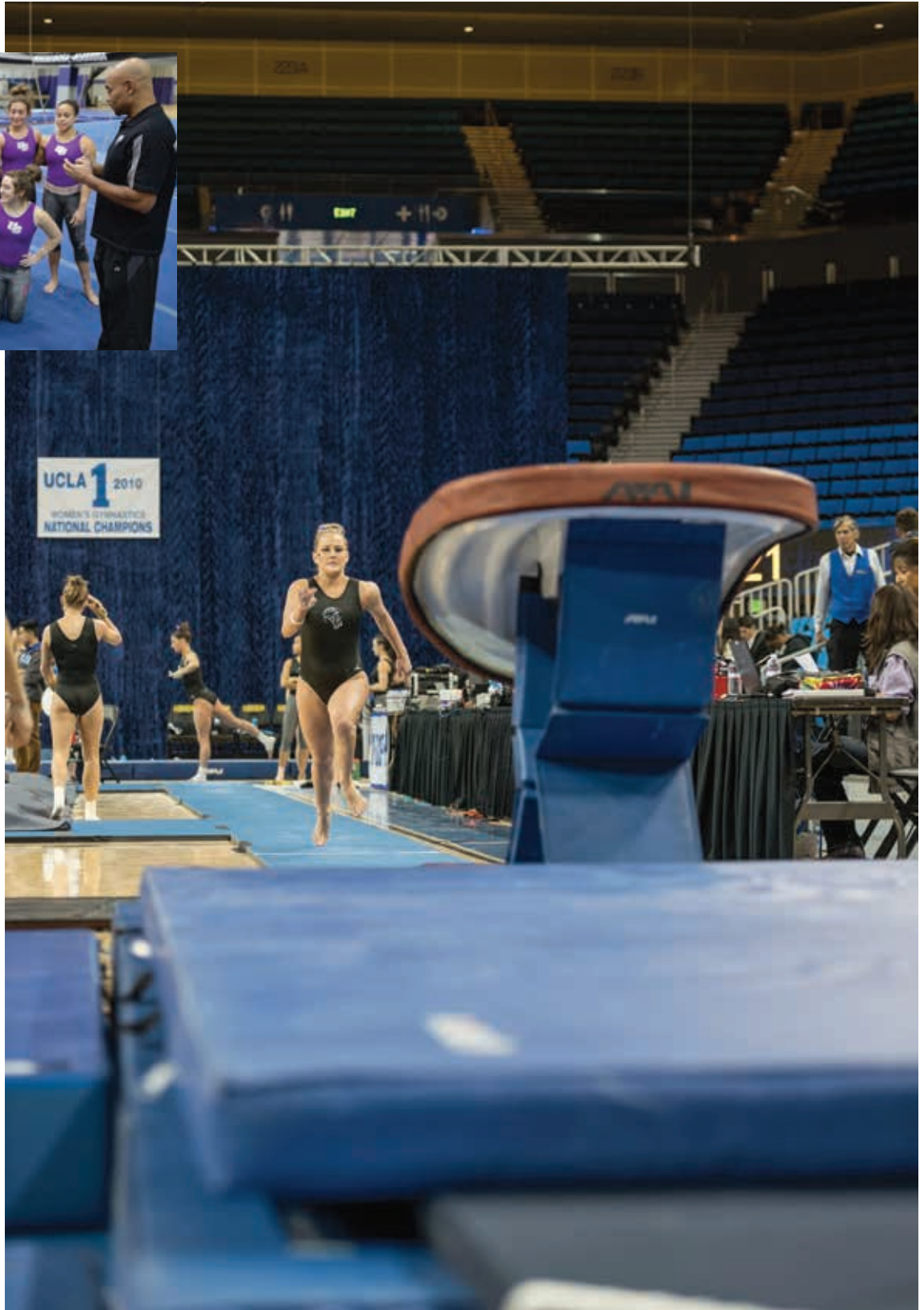
Most gymnasts and coaches would have told Kunert to abandon gymnastics. But coach Byron Knox was committed to making sure that her gymnastics dream would live on. Kunert might not end up a star on the balance beam, but she could still aspire to become a more well-rounded competitor and a leader for her squad.

“Her passion for the sport is incredible, and she's the hardest worker on the team,” Knox said in an interview, “so my philosophy with Kim was, ‘Let's come in and get better. It's not about where you're starting from, but where you end up.’”

*(continued on page 42)*



**A long journey:** Kim Kunert thought she might have to give up gymnastics after a major surgery, but she's now back on track as a fierce competitor. In early February, Coach Byron Knox surprised Kunert at practice by letting her know she'd be competing with the team in Southern California.



Photos by Toki Lee Photography and Kazuhiro Shoji.



Under Knox's guidance, Kunert began to rebuild her routines from scratch. She refocused her efforts away from the beam and onto the vault, an event that requires less torso flexibility and more power and speed.

Step one was executing a handspring off the vault, a head-first flip with outstretched legs and an extended torso. Step two was adding a full-body twist along the vertical axis. Step three was an additional half-twist on that move, to land facing backwards. To date, Kunert is working on yet another half-twist for a "handspring double full," one of the most dynamic maneuvers in the event.

After practice, Kunert followed an equally rigorous regimen of physical therapy, involving stretching, rest, ice baths, heat pads, massages, and even electric muscle stimulation, a treatment that uses low-voltage electric shocks to exercise muscles without the need for physical exertion.

"The process was really tough because if I moved the wrong way or moved too quickly, I would pull something and get set back," Kunert said. "I couldn't take any movement for granted."

But Kunert says she had a secret weapon on the road to her ongoing recovery: the encouragement of her teammates. Her fellow Knights couldn't be more behind her, and as she prepared to compete at UCLA meet, they gathered behind her to cheer her on.

"Kim is always the first one at the gym and the last one home," senior Randi Cutolo said during the UCLA meet. "She's never complained about her injury, and we've only seen growth."

Senior Kimberly Stewart concurred: "She's got more heart and more determination than anybody. She's the hardest worker on the team by far."

The end of college likely won't mean the end of Kunert's involvement with the sport of gymnastics, which she identified in a recent Instagram post as the only valentine who's always been there for her. According to her mom, Kunert still aspires to run her own gym one day.

"The injury was definitely a low point in my career, but it taught me that I can handle anything," Kunert said. "I've learned how strong I am, and how you've always got to continue fighting no matter what." ■



“I’ve learned how strong I am, and how you’ve always got to continue fighting no matter what.”

# Closing Thought:

## How to Become an Entrepreneur

By Elena Cahill

How does one become an entrepreneur? Is it a birthright, studied, or even, possibly, a mistake?



As one with many titles (business professor, CEO, entrepreneur, lawyer), I'm asked this question repeatedly. Upon reflection, becoming an entrepreneur has to do with what's woven within a person's core, and it expresses itself and involves many channels that affect one's professional life, recreational behavior—even personal relationships.

I define an entrepreneur as a person who creates to repeatedly bring various companies, projects, events, or situations to conclusions. The key words are *conclusion* and *repeatedly*. An entrepreneur differs from someone who begins many things but finishes none. A family business owner who creates one business that continually evolves its products, services or, possibly, its location is an entrepreneur.

So is the serial entrepreneur who creates different ventures. Think of the songwriter who turns singer who turns stage writer who turns producer as an example.

How did I become an entrepreneur? As I said earlier, entrepreneurship is ingrained in a person's fiber. Creating ventures was something I did instinctively. My first trade began at a technical high school, where I studied cosmetology. I took the exam before commencement and graduated as a licensed cosmetologist. After working a short time, I wanted to further my studies and went to school in Manhattan to study aesthetics.

Eventually, I returned to Connecticut, where I worked at Zotos International Research Lab in Darien, performing consumer testing on professional beauty products.

Consumer testing was fine, but lab work was more interesting to me. During breaks, I'd volun-

and moved to the West Coast while working on fun projects, like creating a med spa at one of Hollywood's iconic hotels and a tequila that's now sold throughout the U.S. Upon returning to the East Coast, I became involved in and then directed an angel investment group. This eventu-

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## The best part about becoming an entrepreneur? You do not know where the road will take you but you embrace the journey.

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teer in the lab. Management noticed, and during an employee review they suggested I think about attending college for chemistry. I agreed and began college as a chemistry major at Rutgers University. Then I received a scholarship to attend a program in Washington DC., and after attending that, I switched my studies to business with the intent of attending law school. I practiced law for nine years until a serious accident quite literally caused me to shift professional gears.

I was in Bermuda, and had driven my moped into a truck. Severe injuries left me temporarily in a wheel chair, with my mouth wired and arm in a cast. I looked like a cartoon character in the hospital. During the time between many operations, I bought a personal training center and yoga studio to run and help my recovery and evolved into a business strategist for others. I never returned to the traditional practice of law. Instead, after selling the personal training center, I became a consultant for start-up businesses

ally led me to create businesses for myself, one of which I still own, called Globele Energy.

In 2007, I began teaching at UB as an adjunct, eventually joining the faculty of the business school three years ago. As an entrepreneur, I came to the University attuned to seeing opportunities, and when students in our Business Plan classes kept asking me how they could create ventures of their own, I knew we needed a place—the Student Entrepreneur Center (SEC)—for them to keep creating. I spoke with Trefz School of Business Dean Lloyd Gibson, who spoke with UB President Neil Salonen. Since its opening in the fall of 2015, the SEC has received 102 applicants. To accommodate demand, the University is now building a much larger Innovation Center, and the SEC will be moving there.

The best part about becoming an entrepreneur? You do not know where the road will take you but you embrace the journey. ■

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*Elena Cahill is the director of the Student Entrepreneur Center, a full-time faculty member at the Trefz School of Business, and president of Globele Energy, LLC, in New Haven. When not helping clients and students to launch their own businesses, she enjoys yoga, traveling, and, most of all, spending time with her family.*



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