

The Last Word

by Zakhar Berkovich, B.S. '08

UAlbany – The World Within Reach and the Ocean of Opportunities



Mark Schmidt

Zakhar (Zack) Berkovich graduated from UAlbany's Honors College last May with a degree in biology and Judaic studies. A Belarus native who moved to the U.S. with his family in 2001, he was one of the University's first Presidential Scholars. Berkovich, who plans to become a physician, returned to the University this fall to begin studying for a master's in educational administration.

Time flies. It seems just yesterday I was writing a graduation speech for high school commencement, and today I am writing "The Last Word."

I wrote this column because I feel it is important to remind alumni, and to let new students know, how important the University at Albany was, is and will become to them. It is very important to me.

My first experience with the University was my first tour, when I met several friends I had worked with during high school. I was also introduced to UAlbany's Jewish community.

Last weekend, when I visited my parents, I found my door tag from orientation. It brought back the memory of 250 freshmen screaming: "I am excited! I am excited! I am excited!" We were truly excited about being at the orientation and becoming members of the University family.

I settled into Mohawk Tower at Indian Quad for the Project Renaissance Program's Pre-Health Track. Dr. [Jonathan] Post's lectures were creative and memorable; learning about the AIDS epidemic and Hepatitis B in Haiti still keeps me interested in medicine and HIV/AIDS research. Freshman-year highlights included the mini-wars between suites 2101 and 2103, my first Broadway show ("Rent"), meeting Christine Bouchard [now

vice president for Student Success], and Fountain Day.

There were other highlights, too: shadowing President [Kermit] Hall for a day; watching the Great Danes score points in the NCAA games; representing UAlbany at SUNY Day and meeting alumni and politicians; welcoming hundreds of potential students to the University; and racing competitively against some of the largest and most prestigious rowing teams in the U.S.

The institution that created these memories truly places "The World Within Reach." Although that motto was announced one month before my graduation, it has been the University's operating principle for 164 years. UAlbany made countless opportunities available to me, particularly the wisdom outstanding faculty generously shared with my classmates and me.

I would like to congratulate the Class of 2008 on a job well done! You have made it, and all doors of opportunity are open for you. As you read this magazine, think about the memories you acquired at UAlbany and cherish them. Go back and visit, and be a proud graduate. I will look for you at the next Big Purple Growl or at our reunion!