



UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

New Pathways to the Future

THE 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I am very proud to share the University at Albany's Annual Report for 2020-2021, which provides highlights of UAlbany's many success stories in the face of a continued battle against COVID-19.

The report also paints a picture of a unique chapter in the University's history—a time when we found new ways to learn, work, connect and serve.



In Fall 2020 we safely welcomed students back to campus, and we remained open—using a hybrid approach to instruction—throughout the

academic year. This was possible in large part thanks to UAlbany's RNA Institute, which quickly retooled to serve as our own in-house surveillance testing facility, conducting 7,500 weekly tests of all on-campus employees and students—and to our nationally renowned School of Public Health, whose faculty helped guide our response to ever-changing circumstances.

Meanwhile, three dozen researchers working though UAlbany's new minority health disparities research collaborative explored the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color in New York—findings that are providing healthcare providers and policymakers with critical data and

recommendations in real time. This work also became a model of the kind of high-impact interdisciplinary clusters we are building as we lean into the University's distinctive research strengths.

And while we greatly missed many aspects of campus life and events throughout the year, we harnessed the power of remote gatherings to greatly expand opportunities for our New York State Writers Institute, Alumni Association and frequent campus-wide virtual meetings and town halls. The 2020-2021 academic year culminated in the triumphant Great Dane Graduation Experience, a seven-day intimate, in-person celebration for our graduates and their loved ones.

This fall, as we opened our ETEC facility—the epicenter of our nationally leading work in climate, weather, emergency preparedness and sustainability—we also welcomed the largest and most diverse class of incoming first-year students in the University's history.

The achievements and initiatives in these pages not only reflect UAlbany's ongoing progress toward our core strategic priorities—they capture our success in leveraging what we have learned throughout 2020-2021 to better serve our students, our communities and our world.

Go Great Danes!

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "H. Rodríguez".

HAVIDÁN RODRÍGUEZ
PRESIDENT



OUR MISSION

The University at Albany is an engine of opportunity. Fueled by our unique mix of academic excellence, internationally recognized research and world-class faculty, we relentlessly pursue possibilities, create connections and open opportunities—locally and globally—with a single-minded purpose: **To empower our students, faculty and campus communities to be the authors of their success.** *This is the University at Albany.*

OUR VISION

To be the nation's leading diverse public research university—providing the leaders, knowledge and innovations to create a better world.

OUR VALUES

Access: To enable individuals to pursue learning, research and service regardless of economic, societal or physical factors.

Integrity: To be committed to—and expect from all—honesty, transparency and accountability.

Inclusive Excellence: To value diversity of all forms, academic freedom, and the rights, dignity and perspectives of all individuals.

Common Good: To work collectively and collaboratively to benefit our communities—and create a sustainable way of life on earth.

OUR PRIORITIES

Student Success is at the center of all we do;

Research drives our **Excellence**;

Diversity and Inclusion are intrinsic to our success;

Internationalization increases our visibility and impact across the globe;

Engagement and Service foster partnerships with reciprocal benefits.

Student Success



The Great Dane Graduation Experience created an innovative and joyful opportunity to celebrate our students' success.

UAlbany students entered the Fall 2020 semester fully cognizant of the interruptions the COVID-19 pandemic could cause. Their ability to adapt, engage and learn in a new, hybrid setting—with some classmates in lecture centers and others in home bedrooms—led to new, innovative ways of learning, working, staying connected and reaching out to those in need.

Armed with experience gained from the emergency move to remote instruction in March 2020, the University began the 2020-2021 academic year ready to fully engage all students, on and off campus.

The faculty had developed expertise in delivering interactive remote instruction, and the curriculum itself had become more relevant through an update of undergraduate academic programs.

This University-wide, faculty-led evaluation examined and updated every major in the University's nine schools and colleges, ensuring that all degree programs offer innovative, engaging and career-enhancing curriculum, state-of-the-art courses, and redesigned academic pathways. The School

of Business, for example, added introductory business courses in response to high student demand and updated course profiles to reflect the changing landscape of the business world. Several new concentrations have been added, including one in Wealth Management in the School of Business and three in the College of Emergency Preparedness,

Homeland Security and Cybersecurity: Game Design and Development; Risk, Policy and Compliance; and Health Security and Privacy.



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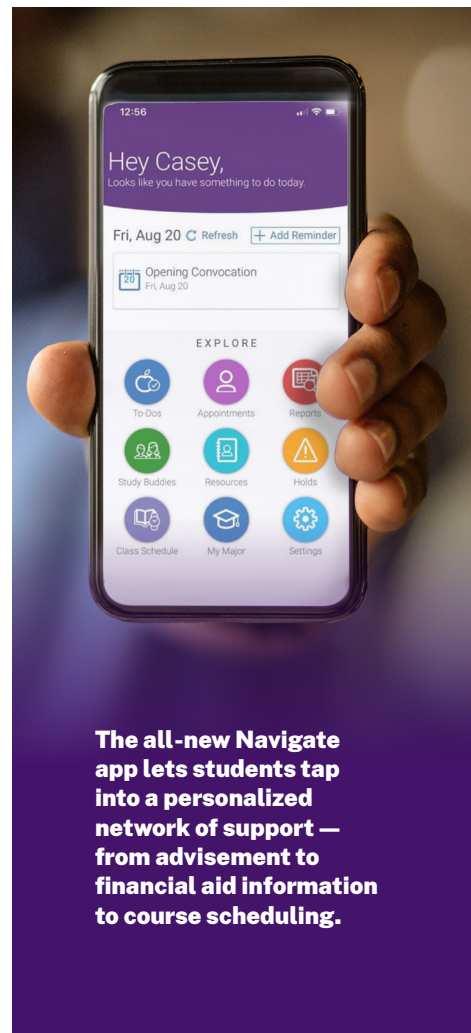
**new student
advisors added
in the past year**

The University also expanded the **First-Year Experience** program, which helps students transition to the academic

rigor of UAlbany; make strong connections with faculty, advisors and staff; and understand campus resources and opportunities. These programs—including Living-Learning Communities, Transfer Communities, first-year seminars and transition-to-college programs—are all high-impact practices proven to increase retention.

UAlbany's new **four-year-advisement model** was fully implemented in 2020-2021, connecting every first-year student

with an advisor who stays with them through graduation. To meet student needs, 10 new advisors were added in the past year and the program transitioned to remote delivery during the pandemic.



The all-new Navigate app lets students tap into a personalized network of support — from advisement to financial aid information to course scheduling.

In a year dominated by a global pandemic, ensuring student well-being was front and center. The University expanded health services, offering online and phone counseling and psychological services as well as a virtual support group to help students navigate the stressors and losses caused by COVID-19. **Student Health Services** continued seeing patients via telehealth, and the University scheduled Wellness Days, when classes were suspended and students were offered recreational activities and opportunities for self-care.

SUNY tapped UAlbany's **Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program** to serve students across the SUNY system. The student-run hotline, which celebrated its 50th year in 2020, is a stigma-free, secure line for connecting about emotional, social and other life issues—and was indispensable during the pandemic as students faced new challenges and uncertainties.

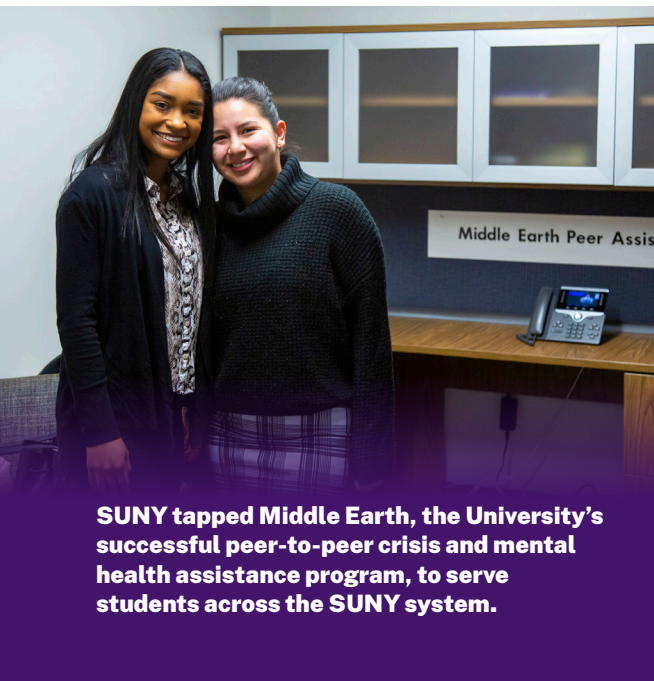
Students were supported financially as well. For the 2020-2021 academic year, the University spent \$9.8 million in undergraduate scholarship commitments and \$17.7 million in graduate

scholarships. The University at Albany Foundation, the University's philanthropic arm, also awarded \$3.2 million in scholarships, awards, prizes and grants.

In April 2021, UAlbany was designated as a **Health Promoting University**, part of an



international consortium of institutions of higher education committed to infusing health into all aspects of campus culture—and to lead health and well-being efforts and collaboration locally and globally. UAlbany will be among the first cohort of U.S. colleges and universities to adopt the Health Promoting University designation. Similar networks are active internationally, including in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, Canada and Central and South America.



SUNY tapped Middle Earth, the University's successful peer-to-peer crisis and mental health assistance program, to serve students across the SUNY system.

Research Excellence

Despite the operational challenges brought on by the pandemic, UAlbany's research in all areas thrived, supported by a significant increase in extramural awards this academic year. As of the end of April 2020, booked awards were up to \$100 million for 2020-2021, an increase of \$22 million, or 28.25 percent, for the same period a year ago.

UAlbany's research community also leaned into its strengths to examine and address some of society's most significant challenges: the global pandemic, systemic racial injustice, health disparities and the climate crisis.



\$100M

booked extramural
awards for 2020-2021



The Atmospheric Sciences Research Center (ASRC) works on a buoy-based flux measurement system funded by \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy. The system monitors air-sea interactions over open water, providing insight into offshore wind conditions that can be used for energy production.

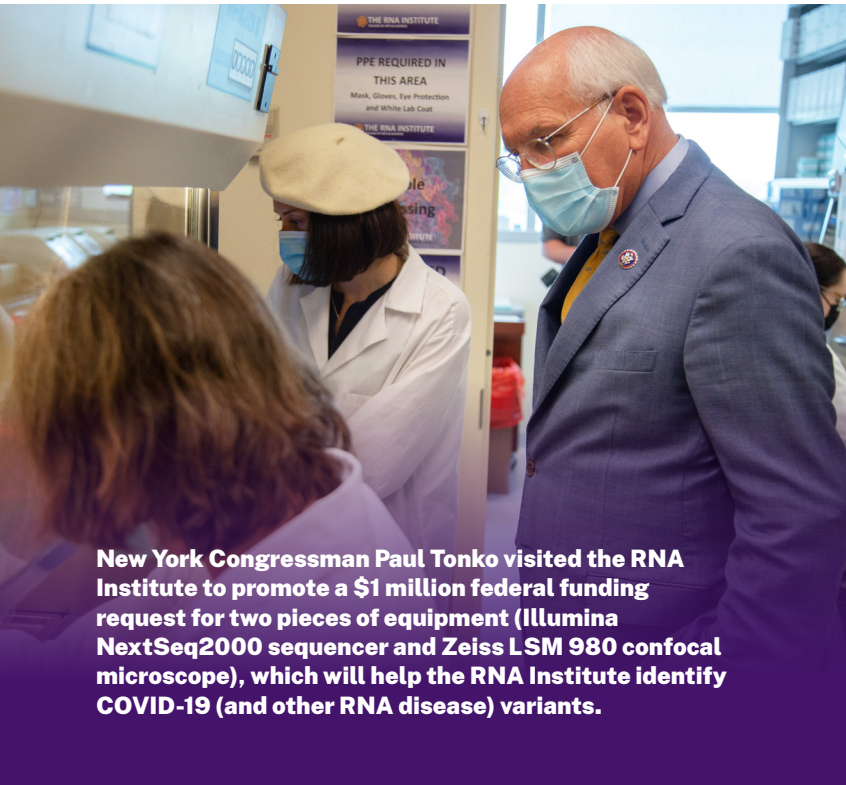
In April 2020, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo commissioned UAlbany to study the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color. In response, the University convened the **Minority Health Disparities Engaged Research Collaborative**, an interdisciplinary group of researchers examining housing and food security, access to healthcare, employment issues and community response, and data-driven strategies to deal with future public health threats.

The group—with representation from public health, emergency preparedness, social welfare, sociology and communications, among others—released its final report in June 2021, examining how the level of risk differs across minority groups; how stay-at-home orders affect infection and death; the critical role the Black church plays in providing accurate and potentially life-saving public health information; vaccine hesitancy; and social and economic impacts

of the pandemic, including food, employment and housing insecurity.

UAlbany continued the conversation by convening a **President's Forum on Health Disparities**, bringing together more than 300 community members focused on ending minority health disparities. Hosted by UAlbany's Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities, along with Upstate Medical University and SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, the forum is a centerpiece of the University's ongoing \$10 million National Institutes of Health grant, awarded in 2016 to increase, improve and accelerate training of doctoral students and faculty in health disparities research.

COVID-19 research from the **School of Public Health** resulted in the first statewide comprehensive epidemiological report on the emergence of COVID-19 to appear in a peer-reviewed publication, and the first statewide cumulative report on the virus in the nation by race, ethnicity, sex and age. Both studies were conducted in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health's Wadsworth Center.



New York Congressman Paul Tonko visited the RNA Institute to promote a \$1 million federal funding request for two pieces of equipment (Illumina NextSeq2000 sequencer and Zeiss LSM 980 confocal microscope), which will help the RNA Institute identify COVID-19 (and other RNA disease) variants.

The **RNA Institute** developed and implemented a COVID-19 surveillance testing program, conducting more than 100,000 tests of saliva samples submitted by asymptomatic faculty, staff and students. While serving a critical role as UAlbany's in-house testing lab, the RNA Institute also made strides in the search for therapies to treat myotonic dystrophy and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Chemistry Professor Igor Lednev received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to advance commercialization of laser-based technology that identifies bodily fluids at crime scenes. And UAlbany's **Center of Excellence in Weather and Climate Analytics** saw state funding more than triple, from \$250,000 to \$800,000, to support the center's research, which includes studying increasingly extreme weather events.

As part of New York's largest-ever commitment to improving the academic and behavioral quality of special education programs for students with disabilities, New York State's Office of Special Education awarded \$7 million to a UAlbany School of Education initiative led by **Associate Professor Kevin Quinn**. This

brings the total funding Quinn's team has received since 2019 to \$22 million.



Melissa Thorne, assistant professor of Studio Art, was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

"My paintings connect vernacular architecture and craft with the visual language of abstraction... The thread through all of this work is its reliance on pattern as an indicator of place and cultural identity."

Photo by Wes Magyar

100k+

tests of saliva samples
conducted by UAlbany's
RNA Institute
under the COVID-19
surveillance testing program

Diversity and Inclusion



Increasing awareness of social justice inequities was the focus of programs and events throughout the academic year.

In a year rocked by unrest

over social justice issues and racial inequities, the University worked to address systemic racism—using its platform to engage and educate the campus and the community. UAlbany also demonstrated its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through several new investments—including the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Endowment for Excellence, the Diversity Transformation Fund, and 2021 StAR (Strategic Allocation of Resources) grants.

UAlbany's new **Bias Incident Response Protocol** allows campus community members to report alleged bias acts or hate crime activity. The cross-functional Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) receives and coordinates the University's response to reports and then issues recommendations to the appropriate campus officials.

The University continued making progress with its ongoing commitment to diversify its faculty and staff. In addition, all schools and colleges have created **Climate Committees** to foster a welcoming environment and create pathways to bolster recruitment and retention. This successful model is now being replicated across administrative divisions as well.



ADVANCE grant from the National Science Foundation will aid in STEM gender equity

A **SUNY PRODiG** (Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth) grant supported the hiring of six new faculty members—two from underrepresented populations and four women in STEM.

The push for gender equity in STEM will be aided by **Project SAGES**, a new initiative funded through a \$1 million NSF **ADVANCE** grant. The funding, paid over three years, will support new programs to increase the number of women in STEM fields, and support their advancement through mentorship, equitable policies and procedures, and research support systems. Its support and direction comes from the very top, with President Rodríguez as principal investigator.

The University's **Racial Justice Committee**, created to provide opportunities for dialogue related to racial equity, diversity and



Lisa Good, MSW '13, shared her story of founding Urban Grief, an Albany-based organization that supports shooting victims and their families in the aftermath of violence. She also discussed her work as a gun violence prevention activist at the local, state and national levels.

inclusion, developed a plan for the University community to deepen its understanding of racial justice and promote an appreciation of diversity and inclusion. This was achieved through listening sessions with senior staff, campus conversations on race and ally training sessions.

Increasing awareness of social and racial inequities was the focus of programs and events throughout the academic year. The **Office of Diversity and Inclusion**, in



A year of planning led to the creation of Harvey House, a new residential community for LGBTQ+ students that opened in Fall 2021. The intentional community, spearheaded by Jake Evans '22 and facilitated by the Office of Residential Life and the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, houses 46 students with room to expand.

partnership with myriad campus offices and entities, oversaw lectures, interactive programs and commemorations, including the annual MLK Celebration with a presentation by LaTosha Brown of Black Votes Matter; a three-part program on anti-Black bias based on *The New York Times*' 1619 Project; and a month-long focus on anti-AAPI bias that included a

campus-wide conversation on what it means to be Asian in America.

As part of this effort, the University hosted a Juneteenth conference, bringing in speakers on topics such as racism as a public health issue, equity and inclusion in education, and resources for self-discovery. The two-day conference, intended to become an annual event,

culminated in a sleep-out for social justice, highlighted by a somber reading of the names of enslaved Africans who had survived the journey to the Americas.

In 2020 UAlbany's **Educational Opportunity Program** was named a finalist as an exemplar under the "Examples in *Excelencia*" program. The University, in partnership

with *Excelencia* in Education, also hosted “A New York Briefing on 25 Years of Hispanic-Serving Institutions,” a virtual event geared toward research and policy recommendations that intentionally serve Latino/a student success.

The **UAlbany Alumni Association** created a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Committee to guide board recruitment, programming and messaging. The DEIB is working to cultivate an inclusive environment that translates diversity of thought into action steps that the Association can take to nurture a collective sense of belonging.

Introduced in 2020 as part of the annual Alumni Association Excellence Awards, the Outstanding Leadership in Diversity and Inclusion Award honors an alum who has made a significant impact in diversity and inclusivity. Marisa A. Sotomayor, Esq., BA '03, MPA '04, was the 2020 honoree.



In March 2021, the University Council voted to change the name of Indian Quad to Indigenous Quad, acting on the recommendation of a working group of students, faculty, staff and alumni. The University is also drafting a land acknowledgement to recognize the Indigenous people who lived on the land UAlbany calls home — and will seek to include Indigenous communities in the education, research, service and cultural life of the University. In April 2021, the University Senate hosted a forum entitled “Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast: Past, Present and Future,” featuring Indigenous authors, storytellers, scholars and activists.

Internationalization



Psychology Professor Bruce Svare, pictured with psychology students at Ho Chi Minh City University in Vietnam, won his third Fulbright Senior Scholar award through the organization's Association for Southeast Asian Nations research program. Svare's goal is to improve the teaching of clinical psychology in Southeast Asia.

Innovation and virtual programming took center stage this year as international travel was suspended by the global pandemic. Despite a hold on study abroad programs, innovative international partnerships continued to thrive.

Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy is supporting a partnership with the Parliament of Zimbabwe through a new five-year, \$3 million grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development. UAlbany experts, working through Rockefeller College's Center for Policy Research, provide training, educational programs and technical assistance to help Zimbabwe's parliament strengthen its legislative, oversight and representative functions—and play a more influential role in the governance of the country.

The Center for Policy Research also is home to Associate Professor Bryan Early's **Project on International Security, Commerce and Economic Statecraft (PISCES)**, which continued its active engagement with international partners despite the suspension of travel caused by the pandemic. This year PISCES conducted outreach to Albania, Argentina, Bosnia, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Kosovo, Kenya, Mexico, North Macedonia, Panama,



grant from the
U.S. Agency for International Development was awarded to **Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy** to support a partnership with the **Parliament of Zimbabwe**

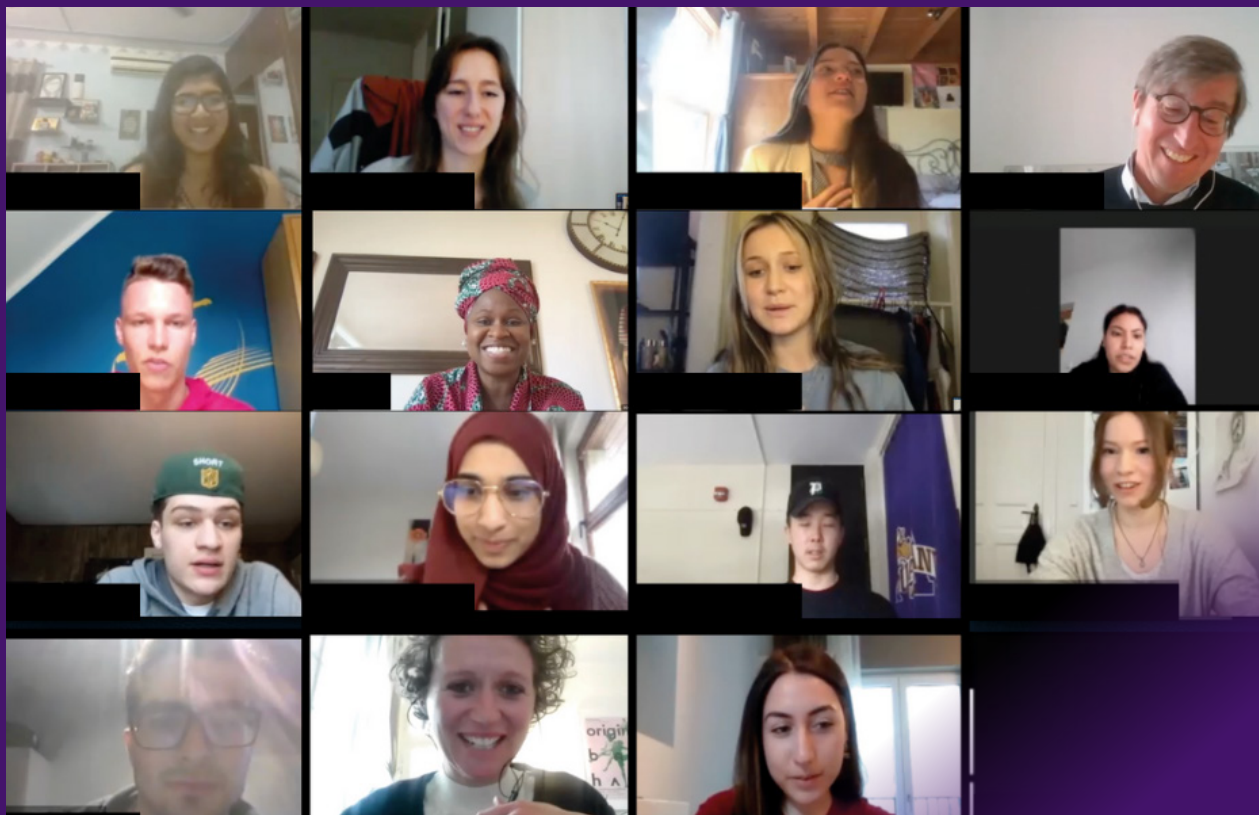
Romania, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, providing training and capacity-building assistance to help prevent terrorists and dangerous states from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Fulbright Awards also allowed faculty members to share their expertise abroad. **Sociology Professor Angie Chung** was awarded a Fulbright in May to work at Korea University in Seoul. Chung will teach courses on social problems, such as race and immigration, and develop her current research project on international education between U.S. and South Korea. **Psychology Professor Bruce Svare** also won his third Fulbright, which he will use to help build curricula and infrastructure to train professional psychologists in Laos, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Here at home, UAlbany continues preparing students for global service and leadership through its **Peace Corps Prep** program, a certification program that teaches sector-specific skills, foreign language proficiency, intercultural competence and leadership development. In October 2020, the Peace Corps ranked UAlbany as 7th of 140 schools offering the program—after only one year in the program. Some 20 students took part in the prep courses in 2020-2021, with 11 earning certificates.



Sociology Professor Angie Chung was awarded a Fulbright in May to work at Korea University in Seoul.



UAlbany faculty partnered with German universities in Spring 2021 to facilitate international project-based learning.

While study abroad programs were suspended for the year, students still had opportunities to participate in international educational experiences. For example, five faculty members taught classes in Spring 2021 where their UAlbany students partnered with students at universities in Germany on project-based learning on global teams.

These COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) courses are part of a SUNY initiative that enhance learning and encourage global thinking.

The program was especially helpful this year, according to **College of Arts and Sciences Assistant Dean for Public Engagement**

Debernee Privott, who taught a criminal justice course. “COIL provides a unique and highly effective vehicle to cross boundaries without a ship or an airplane, particularly as we are challenged with using these resources during the pandemic.”

Engagement and Service

With the global pandemic dominating every aspect of life, much of the University community's service this year was COVID-related. But outreach and community engagement continued in other areas, from environmental sustainability to fighting food insecurity.

UAlbany's **Student Support Team**—an interdisciplinary group of students—helped their classmates by checking in on students in quarantine and isolation, serving as contact tracers, answering mental health hotlines and volunteering at campus vaccine clinics.

Five Quad, UAlbany's student-run ambulance company, sent an ambulance and a dozen student volunteers, all EMTs, to a COVID-19 hotspot early in the pandemic to support the Nanuet Ambulance Corps in hard-hit Rockland County. During April 2020, students covered 12-hour shifts, offering relief to Nanuet's



In addition to hosting New York State COVID-19 testing and vaccine sites, UAlbany held numerous point-of-distribution vaccine clinics for students and employees.

overworked staff and volunteers while attending classes remotely.

Faculty and staff stepped up as well, volunteering at vaccination clinics, assembling COVID-19 surveillance test kits and delivering meals to students in isolation or quarantine.

UAlbany also contributed to a report by the **Association of Public and Land-grant Universities** and the **Coalition of Urban Serving Universities** on the pandemic's effect on food insecurity on campuses. Through interviews, surveys and focus groups involving students, faculty

and staff, the University collected information for the report, which found students struggling to juggle work, school and finances. The report recommended action steps including developing a comprehensive food security strategy and providing integrated student support for basic needs.



The New York State Writers Institute continued to serve the community with rich virtual and in-person programming, including the immersive large-scale projection mapping event, *Passages*.

Also in the food-justice realm, Rockefeller College hosted a **Food Systems Summit Dialogue**, led by alum and former executive director of the UN World Food Program Catherine Bertini '71. Bertini later shared ideas developed at the summit as part of the U.N. Food Systems Summit.

UAlbany was also designated as a **Fair Trade University**—the first SUNY campus to earn the recognition, and one of only 68 in the U.S. The designation, through the organization Fair Trade Campaigns, means UAlbany is committed to incorporating ethically produced products into institutional purchasing as well as educating the campus community about fair trade practices.

UAlbany took other significant steps toward protecting the environment by formally launching its **Climate Action and Sustainability Plan**, installing solar panels on the roofs of the Academic Podium buildings, and co-sponsoring the **Sustainable Futures Conference**—a four-day event aimed at creating a more environmentally sustainable Capital Region.



As part of UAlbany's sustainability efforts, the University installed solar panels on the roofs of the Academic Podium buildings.

The **New York State Writers Institute** (NYSWI) continued to serve the community with rich virtual programming, including conversations with authors and visual artists. NYSWI also produced its inaugural film festival, pivoted its third annual Albany Book Festival to a virtual platform and reopened its airport reading room.

The **Office of Government and Community Relations** launched the **Leading Questions** series, offering interactive online



conversations between students and prominent leaders from different sectors. The first installments featured New York State Attorney General Letitia James, New York State Senator Jamaal Bailey '04 and a group of four head coaches from UAlbany Athletics.

Growth and Opportunity



The 245,000-square-foot, \$180 million ETEC building is poised to accelerate UAlbany's nationally leading academics and research in critical areas including emergency preparedness, climate science, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and environmental sustainability.

COVID-19 posed unprecedented financial and operational challenges for institutions of higher education, and UAlbany was no exception. However, through proactive financial management, the University successfully weathered the storm while continuing to invest in strategic priorities. The resiliency of the campus community and the generosity of its alumni and donors also helped to mitigate the fiscal difficulties.

The University saw record philanthropy, with more than \$18 million in new gifts between March 2020 and March 2021.

This boosted the University's comprehensive campaign to \$12 million above its \$150 million goal. The University at Albany Fund also procured \$6.2 million in operating funds—and is on pace for the upcoming fiscal year to surpass prior year results for online giving, direct mail, phones, matching gifts, 1844 Society members and alumni donors.

The University also launched its most comprehensive marketing strategy to date with campaigns for undergraduate recruitment and retention, graduate program awareness and program-specific

graduate enrollment. The multi-channel marketing push extended to digital media, website, environmental graphics and printed publications, and resulted in millions of views, tens of thousands of website visitors and many inquiries that helped support strong enrollment numbers at a very difficult time for public higher education.

Despite the dramatic increase in institutional messaging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategic communication team continued to tell the University's story proactively through the lens of its five strategic priorities, garnering nearly 2,500 unique media placements in 2020, with top national placements including *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, the Associated Press and CNN.



UAlbany launched its most comprehensive marketing strategy to date with multi-channel campaigns, resulting in millions of views, tens of thousands of website visitors and many enrollment inquiries.



\$18M
in new gifts
between March 2020
and March 2021.



After a successful self-study process and virtual site visit, UAlbany's institutional accreditation was reaffirmed in November 2020 by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Faculty and staff began moving into the new state-of-the-art, net-zero **E**TEC facility. The 245,000-square-foot, \$180 million facility is poised to accelerate UAlbany's portfolio of resiliency research—bringing together the University's College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity; the Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences; the Department of Environmental and Sustainable Engineering; and the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center, among others. Through this unique research and academic cluster, UAlbany will advance

multidisciplinary research to safeguard our communities and our world.

Meanwhile, all 18 Division I athletics teams not only trained and competed—the Great Danes also notched their 12th consecutive women's track and field championship and their 16th for men's track and field. And in women's lacrosse, **Coach Katie Rowan Thompson** was named America East Coach of the Year, sophomore **Clancy Rheude** was named Co-Defensive Player of the Year, and freshman **Katie Pascale** was named Rookie of the Year.



Dwayne Killings launched a new chapter in Men's Basketball as head coach.



THANK YOU

to our extraordinary faculty
and staff, our talented students,
our high-achieving alumni—
and our committed partners
and friends—for all that you do
to advance UAlbany's success.



UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY

State University of New York